

The 4th International Symposium for Media Art

Open Media Culture:

Collaborations, Networks, Exchange

Report [PDF ver.]

Bob Edrian (Curator, Instrumenta / Writer)
Kim Seong-hee (Independent performing arts curator)
Hiroaki Umeda (Choreographer / Dancer / Visual artist)
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Chikara Fujiwara (Critic / Artist / orangcosong)
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Koichi Iwabuchi (Professor, Monash University)
Minoru Hatanaka (Chief Curator, NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC])

Preface

The Japan Foundation Asia Center and NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] organized the 4th International Symposium for Media Art, “Open Media Culture: Collaborations, Networks, Exchange,” in February 2020. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the symposium was not held before a public audience as usual but was instead streamed live on the ICC’s YouTube account.

This series of international symposia on media art have taken place on three previous occasions with the aim of providing a forum for creating, disseminating, and networking art and culture in the new media art and digital creativity fields. The first three iterations of the event were organized jointly by the Japan Foundation Asia Center and Arts Council Tokyo, widely showcasing historical shifts and international trends in the fields as well as the new processes by which culture is formed through digital technology. Presented by the Japan Foundation Asia Center in partnership with ICC, which has established itself as a hub for cultural expression at the intersection of art and technology, the fourth symposium took place in conjunction with the exhibition “Open Possibilities: There is not only one neat way to imagine our futures,” held at ICC from January 11 to February 28, 2020.

Along with introducing new trends in the respective fields in Asia, this symposium aspired to reinterpret art and technology as another means for people to connect openly, and to widely discuss the possibilities for culture and art in the next generation. The symposium’s guest speakers were up-and-coming curators and artists working across national borders, and others engaged in practices that can be described in various ways as “collaboration” or “cooperation.” The guests gave presentations about examples of exchange through culture and art, and about the mobility and networking that is evolving with globalization. Ending with a discussion replete with insights based on the experiences of each speaker, the event proved an opportunity to explore the extent to which openness influences culture in Asia in current approaches among international networks and platforms, and to seek out the potential for that openness. Since the symposium was streamed online, it was also watched widely by viewers both in Japan and abroad.

In closing, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the guest speakers and everyone who helped us organize symposium and ensured that it was held successfully in a live-streamed format.

The Japan Foundation Asia Center
NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC]
(Nippon Telegraph and Telephone East Corporation)

January 2021

The 4th International Symposium for Media Art

Open Media Culture: Collaborations, Networks, Exchange

Possibilities for culture opened up by intersections of art and technology

Among art and technology trends in Asia, two tendencies have emerged: one that responds to technological and artistic demands globally through forms of expression that integrate the latest technologies; another that incorporates technology into historical and cultural contexts in each country to usher in new creative practices. While a prevalence exists across the region for “spectacle” that meets the desire for commercial or festive content, alternative scenes and new platforms that do not depend on existing art systems are also emerging.

Through the latest examples of artistic practices utilizing technology as well as transnational collaborative and collective projects, this symposium reconsidered the nature of art and culture in our globalized and networked society, the challenges faced today, and the possibilities for the future.

Date & Time: Saturday, February 22, 2020, 12:30–5:30 p.m.

Venue: NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] YouTube channel
With English–Japanese simultaneous interpretation

Organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center and NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC]
(Nippon Telegraph and Telephone East Corporation)

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Job titles are those at the time of the symposium. Some profiles have been updated.

[Session 1]

Environments and Expression Made Possible by Media/Art

Exploring new developments in media and the evolution of technology, this session featured presentations from curators involved with shaping better environments for artistic expression, and a dancer who has pursued an innovative practice.

The 4th International Symposium for Media Art

Open Media

Culture:

Moderator

Speakers

Minoru Hatanaka

Chief Curator, NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] [Japan]

Bob Edrian

Curator, Instrumenta / Writer [Indonesia]

Kim Seong-hee

Independent performing arts curator [South Korea]

Hiroaki Umeda

Choreographer / Dancer / Visual artist [Japan]

The Rise and Fall of the Media Art Festival in Indonesia

Bob Edrian Curator, Instrumenta / Writer

Bob Edrian spoke about the rise and apparent “fall” of media art events in Indonesia through his experience as the curator of Instrumenta, a government-funded international media arts festival, from 2018 to 2019. The case of Instrumenta reveals how the art world has developed so far in Indonesia as well as the challenges it faces in the immediate future.



Bob Edrian

A Growing Media Arts Festival

Instrumenta is an annual international media arts festival held in Jakarta at the National Gallery of Indonesia since 2018 (Figs. 1, 2). Initiated and funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture Republic of Indonesia, the event aims to further support and facilitate media artists in exhibiting their works, meeting, interacting, and exchanging information. The festival hopes to bring greater appreciation and understanding among both the Indonesian and international public about the latest developments in media art.

The main idea of the festival is to present works of media art within themes that are quite familiar for a general audience, specifically in Indonesia. It is one of the reasons we prefer to use the term “media arts,” instead of “media art,” as the term “art” carries a historical stigma tied to frameworks of exclusive artistic approaches, networks, and understandings—that is, the so-called art world. As our artistic director, Agung Hujatnikajennong, said in the last curatorial text, “In each iteration, Instrumenta tries to map relations and the overlap between media art practices—in layman’s terms, art that employs the use of ‘media technology’—with the dynamics of contemporary culture.”

Under the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, there is a General Directorate of Culture that supervises the Directorate of Art. In this organizational structure, we find the Subdirector of Media Art under the Directorate of Art. It was formed to develop and organize media art festivals and exhibitions both national—like Pekan Seni Media (Media Art Week)—and international, such as



Fig. 1 Instrumenta 2018: Sandbox. Courtesy of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia



Fig. 2 Instrumenta 2: Machine/Magic. Courtesy of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia

Instrumenta. The National Gallery of Indonesia, located in Central Jakarta, became the main venue for Instrumenta both in 2018 and 2019. In this way, the festival is located within a triangular relationship of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Subdirector of Media Art, and the National Gallery.

I would like to take a closer look at how the Instrumenta was held in the National Gallery. For the first edition of Instrumenta, in 2018, the festival was held in three different buildings in the National Gallery: Buildings B, C, and D. Last year's second edition, though, utilized only two buildings. But this time, they are the main buildings of the National Gallery. This change shows that the festival has gradually become more significant and important because the main building of National Gallery of Indonesia is intended to be the center of attention compared to the other buildings. This second edition of Instrumenta was attended by 12,811 visitors. It grew by at least 60 percent from the first edition in 2018, which had 7,987 visitors. In other words, we got almost 5,000 more visitors.

Festival Themes: From the Open World to the Machinal and Magical World

The first edition of Instrumenta held in 2018 chose the term "sandbox" as the main theme, while the latest Instrumenta (in 2019) came up with the theme "Machine/Magic." Choosing a theme like this is one of the main attractions and characteristics of our festival. I would like to compare these two ideas: 2018's sandbox and 2019's machine/magic.

Instrumenta 2018 presented the idea of playfulness, combining the development of the game industry and the interactive aspect of media art. The idea behind the sandbox metaphor was to invite artists to explore the idea of an "open world," because "sandbox" is actually a popular term in gaming industry. We developed it further into more speculative concepts about the world in general. For the 2018 festival, we invited twenty-five artists—nineteen Indonesian artists and six international artists from Japan, Hong Kong, China, the United States, New Zealand, and the Philippines. The festival then presented their work within a framework of "games." This changed a lot with last year's festival (Instrumenta: Machine/Magic), which pursued a theme exploring how technology is perceived by different cultures, especially in Indonesia: where the machine—or we could say science and modern technology—sits side by side with the ritualistic and magical. These two are almost intertwined in terms of everyday activities, where science cannot be detached from the idea of magic. The mechanical aspect of technology is sometimes seen as a magical, metaphysical phenomenon.

The curatorial approach in the 2018 festival attempted to investigate media art practices through the idea of play or games, which we see as universal paradigms and significant activities in arts, culture, and human life in general. Art has always been embedded within elements of game at its core because it is made through humans' creative processes. Art is strongly tied to games as an activity that comes with sensory and recreational effects.

With the 2019 festival, we explored science fiction as a concept and artistic phenomenon for a discussion of art, science, and technology. Science fiction is a literary genre that we find in novels, short stories, comics, games, films, and other forms of popular culture, characterized by narratives that blend prophetic visions with scientific facts. As an imagination of science and technology in human life, science fiction is an alternative way to discuss the praxis of science, technology, and culture of societies at different points in time. In science fiction, the narratives of the development of science and technology are often synthesized with fantastic, supernatural, and even magical things. The second Instrumenta wanted to question the various tensions between the machinal and the magical.

Commissioning New Works, Inspired by the Old

In addition to the works exhibited at the festival, we also had public lectures by the artists. In 2018, Ryota Kuwakubo was our special artist. His work *The Tenth Sentiment* was presented in

Building B of the National Gallery of Indonesia (Fig. 3). For the most recent Instrumenta, we invited Melbourne-based Australian artist Stelarc (Fig. 4). Both Kuwakubo and Stelarc had to present not only their artworks but also give lectures about how they are developing their practices.

Besides these special presentations and lectures, we have commissioned works. The number of commissions changes with each festival. The first Instrumenta had about five or six commissioned pieces. For the second Instrumenta in 2019, we had fewer commissions—just three or four.

I will now provide an overview of some of these commissions.

Dekomposisi Danarto #1 is a sound and spatial installation produced by a Jakarta-based young collective called DIVISI62, in collaboration with Al Imran Karim and Evans Storn, a Bandung-based instrument builder (Fig. 5). It was inspired by the works of Danarto, a member of the Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia, or Indonesian New Art Movement (especially in 1975–79). In 2019, Dwiky KA, a young artist based in Surabaya and Yogyakarta, built a big spider robot called *X-SPIDER PUNX* in front of the main building of the National Gallery. This work was inspired by Djokolelono, a pioneer of science fiction in Indonesia who published his novels as early as the 1960s. These two examples are typical of the way we commission works for Instrumenta, whereby we challenge the artist to respond to historical works or figures related to the themes we chose for the year's festival.

Another commissioned artist in the 2018 festival was Zaini Alif, a game researcher from Bandung. In collaboration with Hong Community, which he founded in 2005, he tried to preserve traditional games in Indonesia. Zaini produced three commissioned works: *Toekoe Oemar Spel* (The Game of Teuku Umar) (Fig. 6), *Social Game Bench* (which were spread across the B, C, and D buildings of the National Gallery), and *Sondah* (an Indonesian traditional game). *Toekoe Oemar Spel* is related to the era of colonization in Indonesia, especially during the Dutch occupation.

Kusno Drajat and Rico Prasetyo are two young artists from, respectively, Jakarta and Bogor who we also commissioned for the 2018 festival. They built a kind of claw machine entitled *THE 'märkit SHÖ*, which audiences could interact with and collect items or prizes from. The items or prizes available to collect were the artworks made by their peer artists.

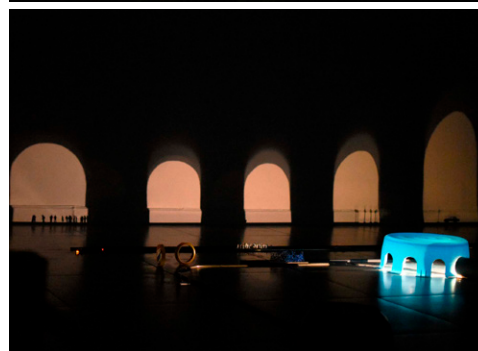


Fig. 3 Ryota Kuwakubo, *The Tenth Sentiment* (2010). Installation view at Instrumenta 2018: Sandbox. Courtesy of Ardiles Klimarsen



Fig. 4 Omnibus of Stelarc's performance works at Instrumenta 2: Machine/Magic (2019). Courtesy of Andang Iskandar, Humanika Artspace

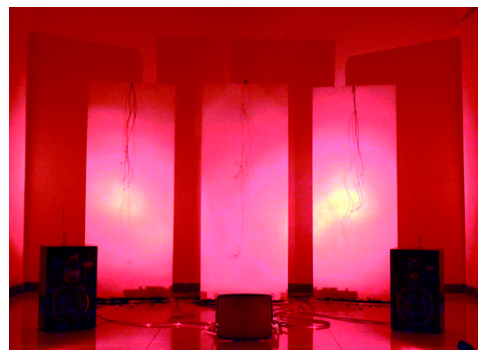


Fig. 5 DIVISI62, Al Imran Karim, Evans Storn, *Dekomposisi Danarto #1* (2018). Installation view at Instrumenta 2018: Sandbox. Courtesy of Ardiles Klimarsen

In the 2019 festival, we commissioned a collaborative work by two young artists, the Bandung-based Rega Rahman and Cilacap-based Bandu Darmawan, titled *Ciburial Project: Sudjana Kerton* (Fig.7). It is a work inspired by a 1980s Indonesian artist, Sudjana Kerton, who said that he had been abducted by an alien—actually, he believes twice! Rega Rahman and Bandu Darmawan were interested in this idea of how the artist got abducted and the work that they made is like a radar to find the missing Sudjana Kerton.

We also commissioned Rianti Gautama, a Jakarta-based artist, who built a bridge out of wood called *Spacetime Architecture: Experiment #01*. Why a bridge? It is intended to function like a portal between the real world and the spiritual world. It is also a work that questioned the idea of the dynamic/moving construction in architecture. This work was presented right in front of the National Gallery of Indonesia.

Organizational Shifts

The internal organization of the festival has changed in terms of the artistic team. In 2018, I was joined by another curator and an artistic director. In 2019, we changed the shape of the team to have three curators. We started off more compact and then the festival grew, but this also entailed further problems when it came to dealing with the larger scale of the festival. This being Indonesia, we had to talk a lot with many different government departments. In the end, we have heavily reorganized how we run things.

There have also been bureaucratic changes that have affected our festival. In 2019, in particular, the present president was reelected and this led to various changes in the ministries, especially the Ministry of Education and Culture. It is basically why the festival will not be happening this year, 2020. In fact, it is proposed for the festival to morph from an annual event into a biennale, so the next Instrumenta is likely going to be in 2021.

The Development of Media Art in Indonesia

From the case of Instrumenta festival, I will now try to expand the discussion to the broader topic of how media art has developed in Indonesia. I will try to map this development, which is spread out over at least four decades (Fig. 8).

In the 1990s, there was the emergence of experimental art by individuals and collectives. It was also during this time that people in Indonesia were introduced to the term “installation art.” In the 1980s, installation was often known as

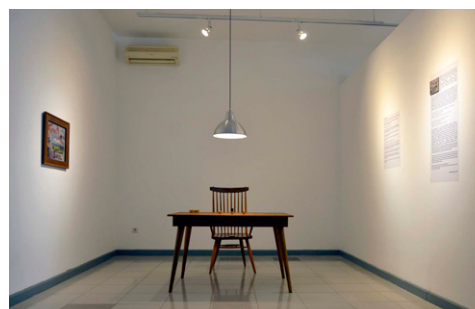


Fig. 6 Zaini Alif and Hong Community, *Toekoe Oemar Spel* (2018). Installation view at Instrumenta 2018: Sandbox. Courtesy of Ardiles Klimarsen



Fig. 7 Rega Rahman and Bandu Darmawan, *Ciburial Project: Sudjana Kerton* (2019). Installation view at Instrumenta 2: Machine/Magic. Courtesy of Andang Iskandar, Humanika Artspace

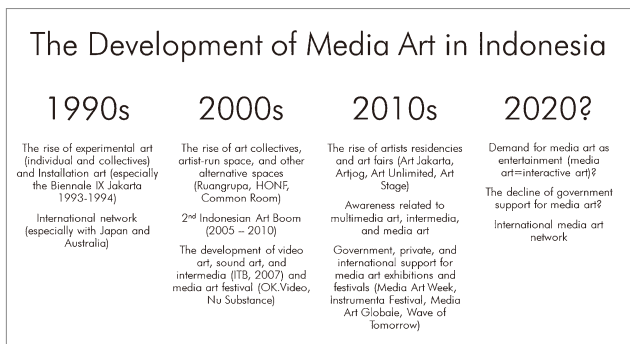


Fig. 8 The development of media art in Indonesia. Courtesy of Bob Edrian

“experimental sculpture.” Even the notion of independent curators was still new in the 1990s. It was the Jakarta Biennale XI in 1993, when Jim Supangkat—a curator, and also a member of the Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia—introduced terms like “postmodern,” “contemporary art,” “installation art,” and “independent curator.” From then, an international network started to appear through the 1990s, which is known, especially in the Indonesian art world, as the era of internationalism. In particular, good relationships were developed with Japan and Australia.

Moving into 2000s, we saw a rise of art collectives, artist-run spaces, and alternative spaces. Newly emerged collectives included ruangrupa in Jakarta, House of Natural Fiber in Yogyakarta, and Common Room in Bandung. There was also a phenomenon of individual artists launching art spaces by themselves. Sunaryo, a well-known and established sculptor built the Selasar Sunaryo Art Space in Bandung. There is also NuArt Sculpture Park, built by a 1970s sculptor, Nyoman Nuarta. Both are known for their openness to the idea of the recent and new exploration of art.

The 2000s were also the time when the commercial galleries were appearing. It was related to the period (especially from 2005 until around 2010) of a second Indonesian art boom. The first one happened in the late 1980s, known as the Indonesian painting boom. During the second Indonesian art boom, a lot of collectors from all over the world came to Indonesia to collect as much art with an Indonesian name on it as they could. This period was also opening up opportunities for collecting media artworks.

Since 2010, we have experienced a decade of increasing artist residencies and art fairs. Of the latter, there was now Art Jakarta, Artjog, Art Unlimited, and Art Stage, held in at least three big cities in Indonesia: Bandung, Jakarta, and Yogyakarta. These events led to more diversity among audiences. This was also the period where the internet became ubiquitous in Indonesia and boosted networking significantly.

More relevant to Instrumenta, the growth of video art, performance art, sound art, and intermedia art was also boosted by the emergence of media art or intermedia art studies in art academies. Institutions like the Bandung Institute of Technology, which in 2007 opened up a new specialized facility, the Intermedia Studio—at the time, the first intermedia studio in Southeast Asia. Alongside this, media art festivals appeared like the OK. Video Festival, which was initiated by ruangrupa, and Common Room’s Nu Substance Festival.

The 2010s saw heightened awareness of the ideas of multimedia art, intermedia, and media art. People started to explore the differences among multimedia, intermedia, and media art. Finally, government, private sector, and international support for media art exhibitions and festivals also emerged.

In this way, Instrumenta is the culmination of various trends in the Indonesia art scene and the media art world in particular. We are now trying to reach the public more widely. Recently, there is also a demand for media art as entertainment. Media art is treated similarly to interactive art. But alongside this popularization of media art is a decline in government support for media art, which is where Instrumenta finds itself right now. It is my hope, then, that 2020 and beyond can see us establish and refine an international media art network to take our efforts to more exciting places in the future.

Bob Edrian | Based in Bandung, Indonesia, Bob Edrian’s writing and curatorial research mainly focus on the development of sound in the arts and media art. He has curated over thirty exhibitions in Indonesia, including “Intomedia” (Galeri Soemardja, 2017) and the international media arts festival Instrumenta (National Gallery of Indonesia, 2018–19). He is a cofounder of Salon, a platform for sound and music performance and discussion, and a director of Audial Plane, the Orange Cliff Records division for sound art and experimental music. He currently teaches and tutors at Telkom University and the School of Business and Management at Institut Teknologi Bandung.

Rethinking Technology: Arts as Critical Intervention

Kim Seong-hee Independent performing arts curator

A curator and producer from South Korea, Kim Seong-hee shared examples of performance and art from both Europe and Asia. These works present artists' acute observations and perspectives on technology, particularly in relation to society today. Such astute and compelling endeavors indicate ways that technology can be perceived through the lens of art, without reducing the results to the merely spectacular.



Kim Seong-hee

Technology-Based Art Directed Toward Critical Thinking

I am a curator and producer. I have been the artistic director of Festival Bo:m, the Asia Culture Center in Gwangju, and the project director of performing arts at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea. At the moment I am preparing for an art and technology festival to be held in October 2020. I would like to share with you some of the questions that I am dealing with in my work as the producer of a number of technologically oriented art projects.

Recently, the South Korean government has made it a policy to promote fifth-generation communication technologies, including virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism announced the allocation of 10 billion won (approximately \$9 million), and created a special sector solely devoted to art and technology within Arts Council Korea. This led to an increase in the number of technologically oriented projects. Cultural policy, however, tends to frame culture only from economic or industrial standpoints. Many concrete projects accordingly focus on economic dimensions, using new technical tools to exhibit innovation as spectacle. I am personally very concerned that the disproportionate concentration of public funding on technologically oriented practices might lead to the excessive fetishization of technologies at the expense of critical thinking.

On the other hand, I clearly sense directions in international contemporary arts with quite different attitudes and perspectives. Last year's Kultursymposium in Weimar and the Politics of Algorithms festival in Munich, for instance, both addressed and responded to the necessity for in-depth understanding of what technologies mean in sociopolitical contexts. A news article about these events described them as follows: "Each session proposes fundamental questions on how artificial intelligence, robots, and other high-end technologies reshape daily lives and offers political, sociological, or philosophical frameworks to deal with such questions. We need more support and funding to facilitate philosophical discourses on technologies." Such a direction is evident in a number of concrete art projects. I would like to talk about examples of this mainly in the work of the Berlin-based digital art group doublelucky productions, led by Christiane Kühn and Chris Kondek.

doublelucky productions: Interrogating Technology Through Theater (or Onstage)

In its performance *YOU ARE OUT THERE* (2017), the artist collective examines our omnipresent self-portraits from the context of the ever-growing power of industry and institutions that can collect digital data for their own commercial purposes (Fig. 1). Data that make up individual identities including birth certificates, driving licenses, health cards, passports, visas, work permits, and biometric photos can be thus collected. *YOU ARE OUT THERE* questions how individual identities can be imagined, controlled, and manipulated by reorganizing identity cards.

The Hairs Of Your Head Are Numbered (2018) is another performance by doublelucky productions (Fig. 2). By means of complex technologies reprogrammed for theater contexts, the piece makes use of audience biodata to visualize the manipulation of personal data. The group demonstrates that we exist as data that are measurable, quantifiable, and controllable.

True You (we know how you feel) (2019) is a lecture performance that questions the technological conditions upon which “truth” is measured (Fig. 3). Tracing the history of varying means to determine truthfulness, including Chinese rice tests and lie detectors, the piece interrogates how advanced technologies change the very nature of what truth means.

Finally, though not by doublelucky productions, I would like to bring up another example, *Uncanny Valley* (2018) by Stefan Kaegi of Rimini Protokoll (Fig. 4). Kaegi worked with Thomas Melle, the author of the bestseller of the same title, or rather an animatronic double of Melle, to be exact. This humanoid takes the author’s place and engages in a dialogue that demystifies the conditions for what is considered “original.” Technology is used onstage to question how our preconceptions of representation and identity are reshaped according to technological changes.



Fig. 1 doublelucky productions, *YOU ARE OUT THERE* (2017). Courtesy of the artist



Fig. 2 doublelucky productions, *The Hairs Of Your Head Are Numbered* (2018). Photo: Kim Albrecht. Courtesy of the artist



Fig. 3 doublelucky productions, *True You (we know how you feel)* (2019). Courtesy of the artist



Fig. 4 Stefan Kaegi, *Uncanny Valley* (2018). Photo: Gabriela Neeb

Virtual Station: A Discursive Art Platform Revolving Around Technology

I would now like to turn to the festival that I am organizing this October, Virtual Station. It will take place at Culture Station Seoul 284, an art museum inside a building that was formerly the central railway station in Seoul.*

While the program of Virtual Station includes artworks that utilize robotics, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and holograms, among other technologically advanced tools, it attempts to construct discursive grounds upon which the philosophical, political, and sociological aspects of new technologies can be explored. I also want to highlight that the majority of the presented works are by Asian artists.

The Deserted is a performative VR project by the world-renowned Taiwanese film director Tsai Ming-liang, following on from his first VR film, also called *The Deserted*, which was shown at the 74th Venice International Film Festival (Fig. 5). In the previous VR film, Tsai reimagined what we know as the cinematic space by depicting a sense of isolation. What I found interesting in this project was the convergence of technology and supernaturalism, which I would like to see him develop further in his next projects.

Ho Tzu Nyen's ongoing *The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia* asks the question: What is Southeast Asia? (Fig. 6) An existing collaborative online database, an "oracular montage machine" where an algorithm selects and weaves together a different set of sounds and images to form an "abecedary" of Southeast Asia, will be rendered as interactive 360-degree VR. Audiences can choose to visit each alphabet as a virtual library.

Virtual Station will also feature several South Korea artists. Kim Ji-sun's *Deep Present* explores the idea of outsourcing as a central concept of our time, and one that is fundamentally changing human cognition (Fig. 7). In *Deep Present*, four types of artificial intelligence (AI) execute outsourced acts of thinking on behalf of humans. It ultimately questions how the division of labor is changing in the age of AI.

Seo Hyun-suk's *Motion Sickness/In a Maze* is a site-specific, participatory performance utilizing a location-aware system to allow participants' physical navigation within a simulation of the actual space of the exhibition featuring distorted physical laws of scale, distance, and time (Fig. 8).



Fig. 5 Tsai Ming-liang, *The Deserted* (2017).
Courtesy of the artist



Fig. 6 Ho Tzu Nyen, *R for Resonance* from *The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia* (2019). Photo: Haupt & Binder



Fig. 7 Kim Ji-sun, *Deep Present* (2017).
Photo: Euiseok Seong



Fig. 8 Seo Hyun-suk, *Motion Sickness/In a Maze*.
Courtesy of the artist

Participants are “trained” to learn new ways to navigate a simulated maze-like space. By deliberately breaking the synchronization of bodily maneuvering and its representation in the VR, the piece ultimately questions and unsettles the modernist conceptions of space, time, and mobility.

In her practice, Jeong Geumhyung has rearranged the boundaries between the flesh and plastic, control and voyeurism, imagination and reality. For *Virtual Station*, Jeong will engage mechanistic props into the most intimate spheres of the human body. Using large-scale DIY robots that she has built and exhibited at Kunsthalle Basel in Switzerland, Jeong will further explore the eroticism of technological animism in the form of performance, using a system of sensors that will interact with choreographed mechanical bodies.

In his new piece *Sci-(no)-Fi*, Royce Ng will use a device that incorporates holograms to interrogate how China projects its own future society through technological means (Fig.9). It will be a contemplation on how the images of future are being realized in everyday life corresponding to China’s new role as an international superpower. Technological means are again used artistically to re-examine the very currents of how technologies are utilized ideologically or politically.

I have also programmed a work by a Japanese artist in the festival. Through experimental video and performance works that mingle reality with fiction, Meiro Koizumi explores the relationships between the state or collective and the individual, and between the body and emotions. In 2018, I commissioned Koizumi to produce his very first VR piece, *Sacrifice*, dealing with the concept of the other. For *Virtual Station*, I have invited him to present *Prometheus Bound* (2019), which allows participants to experience vicariously what it is like to be fully paralyzed (Fig.10). By extending our bodily senses through VR, Koizumi tries to test the limits of empathy and imagine the physicality of the other. To Koizumi, VR is the ground for extending ethical questions concerning otherness.

Art as a Means to Ponder and Question Technology

So far, I have tried to convey my own perspective in regard to facing the demands of high-end technologies in the field of art. Needless to say, I am not suggesting that my attitude is the only valid one. Rather, I am proposing that the rapid advancements of technology require various forms of critical thinking. Creating sensory stimuli and spectacles is the role of commercial industries. The role of art, on the other hand, is perhaps to propose means to ponder and question the ways different technologies reshape our lives and social relations.

Art does not have to offer answers, though. Each of us is responsible for our own way of understanding and interpreting things. The mission of contemporary art is not to indulge illusionary representations of technologies like we might see at a magic show, but to prompt us to confront how reality is changing and to spur critical thinking. Many artists, as I hope my examples have demonstrated, are already through their work advancing our understanding of the implications of new technologies. What is needed now are more spaces to accommodate and support such artists.

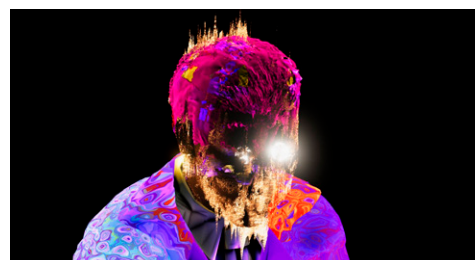


Fig.9 Royce Ng, *Sci-(no)-Fi* (2020). Courtesy of the artist

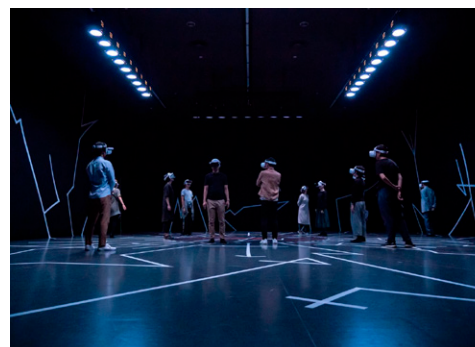


Fig.10 Meiro Koizumi, *Prometheus Bound* (2019), Aichi Triennale 2019. Photo: Shun Sato

*Due to the coronavirus pandemic, this was postponed until the last week of February to the first week of March in 2021. It will take place at the Oil Tank Culture Park, a complex of cultural spaces that was formerly the oil depository in Seoul. Along with the change in date, there are also some changes to the programming.

Kim Seong-hee | Kim Seong-hee is an independent performing arts curator based in South Korea. She is currently the founder and artistic director of the Ob/Scene Festival. From 2017 to 2018, Kim served as Project Director of Performing Arts at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea. From 2013 to 2016, Kim served as the inaugural artistic director of the Asian Arts Theatre at the Asian Culture Center. Kim was also the founder and artistic director of Festival Bo:m (2007–13), an international interdisciplinary arts festival, the artistic director of Station 2 at the Nam June Paik Art Center's Inaugural Festival (2008), and the organizer and director of the International Modern Dance Festival (Seoul, 2001–5).

Dance Performances as Forms of Visual Art

Hiroaki Umeda Choreographer / Dancer / Visual artist

Hiroaki Umeda began his career as a dancer and choreographer and has presented dance performances in more than 160 cities all over the world. He also designs the sound, video, and lighting himself using a computer, traveling to each location with just one device in tow for his performances. In recent years, he has deployed these skills to create installations, presenting and performing many of his works in the fields of technology art and music. According to Umeda, technology has boosted his efficiency in creating these works, while also helping to expand the concept of choreography.



Hiroaki Umeda

Developing a Practice Abroad with Just a Single Computer

I am active in the fields of choreography and dance, as well as visual art.

Originally, I studied photography at university, but I couldn't really get into it or take very good photos. I came to dance as I was searching for another art form to pursue. I've been dancing since I was twenty years old. I wasn't very good when I first started, but I also found out that producing a work of dance was very expensive. This was about twenty years ago, but today computers are well within our reach, so I figured that it would be better to polish my computer skills instead of spending money on labor costs. The idea was to create a setup where we could edit the sound, create music and videos, and control the lighting, all using computers.

Currently, I mostly perform outside of Japan. I have given performances in over 160 cities in forty countries to date. My style consists mainly of solo dance pieces. I travel to the venues and do the performances myself, and I have a system in place that allows me to get onboard, so to speak, just by myself with my computer. It seems to me that this was fairly unusual at the time, about fifteen years ago. As this system kept production costs quite low, I think it's also fair to say that this made it relatively easy to get invited overseas. Today, I feel quite keenly that keeping costs down was important in terms of circulating my work.

I also have a keen interest in the visual arts. I try to incorporate elements of visual art into my dance works. When producing works like these, it's very important to get the design of the lighting and the quality of the images right, and I've also been recognized for these things. As a result, I have had many opportunities to give dance performances in the fields of technology art and digital music.

In addition to my solo dance output, I also choreograph works for several dancers, and sometimes I choreograph for dance companies not just in Japan, but those abroad as well. At the same time, I have a style that is an extension of my dance works, and I produce video installations too.

As for my own dance works, rather than pieces where people are at the center, I place

lights, images, and music in my work by treating them as elements with the same value. In dance, the human body tends to occupy the limelight, but I treat all these constituents as having equal value. I consider the music, choreography, video design, and lighting design in my work to be part of the choreography.

In my view, elements of visual art come through very strongly in dance. One day, I realized that you can't really see the dance unless you design the lighting properly, and that choreographing a dance is pretty much equivalent to designing the lighting, so I became interested in how the eye functions and the psychology of vision. I try to incorporate these things into the elements in my work.

I also have a dance method of my own. I wasn't good at dancing, so I've built this method up through discovering what movements I could perform with my own body.

I've been traveling abroad quite frequently, and one of the things that I pay attention to in my work is how dance contains many different elements. From the extremely primitive to more societal elements, a wide range of things can end up inside a work of dance. If you deal with gender, for instance, it can become a very socially conscious piece. If you choose to show lines, contours, and shapes of the body, then the emphasis will be on the primitive elements. As for myself, I create works that allow me to fall somewhere in between. I deliberately seek to create pieces that can be appreciated without being bound by one's cultural background.

Works of Dance That Deploy Technology

The reason my work is performed in the context of technology art and digital music is because it has a strong musical and, of course, visual character to it. Let me give you some individual examples.

In 2011, I created a piece called *Holistic Strata* in collaboration with the Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM] (Fig. 1). They had a great depth of knowledge and technical capability with regard to technology, and fully understood what I wanted to do. I think I was able to create a piece of work that went over and beyond my own methods. The people at YCAM taught me a lot regarding various things including sensor technology, and allowed me to conduct many experiments. Their programmers also helped me in terms of the visual design, and I think I was able to create a piece that connected the dance with the visuals through technology.

This piece was created in 2011 and was performed at such locations as a technology art festival in France or in Spain and Montreal, Canada, and is still frequently performed abroad. It has also become a piece that is often performed at music festivals. This work has allowed me to operate a little bit beyond the field of dance.

In 2015, I created a piece called *Intensional Particle* in France (Fig. 2). Performing *Holistic Strata* abroad has meant many people are aware of my style. This made it easier for me to convey a sense of the kind of work I wanted to create, and I consulted with people from overseas theaters and



Fig. 1 *Holistic Strata* (2011). Photo: Ryuichi Maruo (Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM]). Courtesy of Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM]

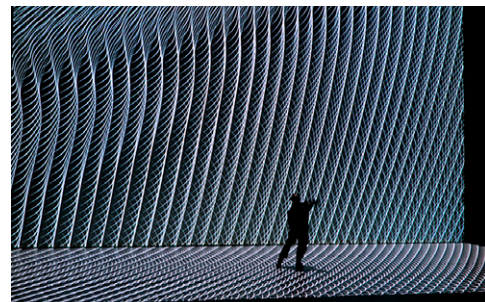
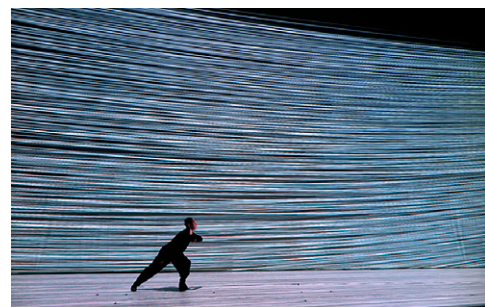


Fig. 2 *Intensional Particle* (2015). Photo: S2o

festivals so that they could collaborate with me on the production. *Intensional Particle* is the result of a collaboration with Stereolux, an event space in Nantes, France, that specializes in technology, and a center for technology art in Jeumont, a small town in the French countryside. With *Holistic Strata*, we were able to get people to acknowledge the kind of work I was making, which subsequently made it easier for us to make proposals.

For *Intensional Particle*, I was able to obtain the support of the staff at the Yoshihiko Nakamura Laboratory at the University of Tokyo, who enabled me to capture the data of my own muscle movements. They had a great sensor and motion capture system, so I tried to make it so that my dancing could be reflected in the video imagery, creating a work where both the dancing and the video playing behind it would be treated as similarly as possible. This work is also becoming more and more accepted in the fields of digital and technology art.

The next work is a dance piece called *Median*, which I created in 2018 (Fig. 3). It is a video work with cell motifs that was produced by a programmer. I had a desire to choreograph things like natural objects and cells, so I collaborated with the programmer by sharing my desire to make these cells dance and had him write the program. In making this work, I wanted to put the human body and cell-like visuals and movements onstage, and incorporate things with a different scale from them into the piece. *Median* was another collaboration with Stereolux in France. It can also be considered a piece of technology art. Last December (2019), we performed it at MUTEK.JP, a digital music festival in Japan.

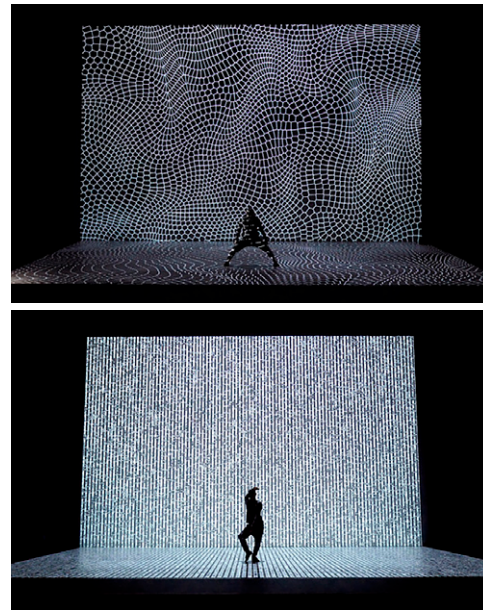


Fig. 3 *Median* (2018). Photo: S2o

Expanding the Concept of Choreography

If I had not had a computer, I probably would not have been making dance works, even though I got interested in dance about twenty years ago. As I previously mentioned, I wanted to see choreography as something a bit more expansive than the act of only choreographing the human body. In thinking about how I could engage with things like lights and sound in terms of choreography, I think it was the computer that allowed me to do that.

First of all, it has been very gratifying to be able to expand the concept of choreography within production. Having this technology has also made production more efficient. When I create a dance piece, for example, I use music software, and I can input all the choreography, music, and video scores into it, which makes me more efficient both when I'm producing and when I'm performing. I think technology has boosted my efficiency in producing these works.

At the same time, by converting the movements of the human body into sensor movements and expressing them through other media and materials, and making it possible to visualize such movements from the human body, for example, I think we have made it possible for choreography to go beyond the human body. In addition to boosting the efficiency of how the work is produced, technology has also expanded the concept of choreography.

Likewise, technological advances have helped to expand the format and concept of what constitutes a work of dance, something that is linked to my installations. I have presented video works in France and visual installations as extensions of my dance works at the Tanz im August dance festival in Berlin. My sense is that thanks to technology, we are seeing a thriving process of transformation in terms of how dance is being interpreted.

The installation I'm currently showing at ICC (NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC]) is also based on the idea of dance (Fig.4). It's an interactive system, where data from the audience's movements are reflected in the video based on the center of gravity and force of the human body, just like in dance. By so doing, I wanted to create an installation that mixes up my own movements with those of the environment.

To make the point again, dance is something that basically takes its point of departure from the body, while my practice has sought to use technology to expand the remit of something that started with the body. The visual installation I presented at the Tanz im August festival I mentioned earlier is one such example, and recently there has been an increase in the number of dome-shaped spaces, where I have been presenting images created through dance, converted into a form that can be viewed in these domes (Fig.5). In this way, we find that we no longer have use for the human body: only images have become able to traverse the entire world. While there is something a bit sad about this situation,

I do think there will be more and more dance works that will become mediatized, such as through virtual reality, and won't require the human body to be present.

In fact, in Montreal, there is an institution called the Société des arts technologiques, which is an art center that specializes in dome-shaped projections and focuses its efforts on technology. In May this year (2020), I will be presenting a dance piece there, with the involvement of a dance festival in Montreal.* The way that dance is perceived and its various formats are becoming more diverse, and I have been performing and creating more prolifically in that context.

*This dance performance had been planned for May 2020 but was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

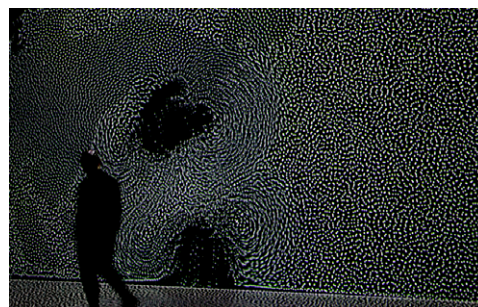


Fig. 4 *kinesis #3 - dissolving field* (2019).
Installation view at "Open Space 2019: Alternative Views"
(2019-20, NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC]).
Photo: S2o



Fig. 5 *Intensional Particle Dome Installation* (2015).
Photo: S2o

Hiroaki Umeda | Since 2002, Hiroaki Umeda's choreographed works have been staged at more than 160 cities in forty countries, including at the Théâtre National de Chaillot in Paris. In addition to the choreography and dance in his performances, he also creates the sound, video, and lighting design, the results of which have been presented as technology art and music. In recent years, he has made installations with a special focus on physical sensations as well as standalone video works for such exhibitions as "AUDIO ARCHITECTURE" (21_21 DESIGN SIGHT, Tokyo, 2018), or video works based on his dance pieces and shown as dome projections at festivals around the world. His work was included in the exhibition "Open Space 2019: Alternative Views" at NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] (Tokyo, 2019-20).
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[Session 2]

The Future of Collaboration and Networks

In this session with a focus on cultural exchange between Japan and the rest of Asia, an artist and a representative from an arts support organization gave reports about their work staying, doing research, and holding events in various Asian countries.

The 4th International Symposium for Media Art

Open Media

Culture:

Moderator

Speakers

Koichi Iwabuchi

Professor, Monash University [Japan / Australia]

Fumi Hirota

The Japan Foundation Asia Center [Japan]

Chikara Fujiwara

Critic / Artist / orangcosong [Japan]

Collaborations, Networks, Exchange

Opening Media Art in Asia

Fumi Hirota The Japan Foundation Asia Center

At the Asia Center, which was established as a specialized unit within the Japan Foundation, Fumi Hirota has overseen the media art exchange initiative. While conducting research and planning events specific to Asia, she noticed that there was an art style that differed from so-called Western art history, and a characteristic of Southeast Asia was that the young artists in particular came to the fore. She spoke about the events organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center and the practices with which she was involved.



Fumi Hirota

The Japan Foundation Asia Center's Media Art Exchange Initiative

Today, I would like to present a summary of the media art exchange initiative I have been working on at the Japan Foundation Asia Center for the last five years.

First, to give a brief introduction to the Asia Center, it was established in April 2014 as a specialized unit within the Japan Foundation. Looking ahead to the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, it aimed to promote exchange programs among the people of Asia in a wide range of fields from music, cinema, performing arts, and sports to Japanese-language education and scholarship. In this context, the media art exchange initiative was not intended to be simply a series of media art exhibitions. Today, I would like to explain the reasons for this decision by introducing the activities that we have undertaken across several projects.

The mission of the Japan Foundation Asia Center consists of concepts referred to as the four Cs: “communicate,” “connect and share,” “collaborate,” and “create.” The concepts refer to communicating and understanding one another, to connecting and sharing knowledge and experiences, to collaborating in a wide range of disciplines, and to creating new culture. I believe that all of these apply to what has been advocated as the approaches based on information environments and creativity prevalent since the multimedia era.

In terms of projects implemented in Southeast Asia, I will first introduce the festival created collaboratively by the Asia Center and Indonesia Netaudio Festival in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 2018 (Figs. 1, 2). Yogyakarta is a hub for collectives such as Lifepatch, and alternative activities are very prolific, but media and art are here positioned as a means of engaging with society more practically and critically, and which does not rely on the existing art systems, evaluation of works, or art criticism.

The festival originally does not have a type or category, but rather intersects various ones. In terms of type, it is a mix of art, music, and education; in terms of category, it could be media art, contemporary or modern, pop or experimental. The distinctive feature is that everything is mixed. As the festival director, Wok The Rock, also said, these characteristics manifest themselves due to a basic premise of the values and spirit of sharing and commonality through media technology.

As we look at the situation in Southeast Asia, we see many examples of community-

building and social problem-solving not only with technology, but also with works of with media art that fully embody this spirit and with media technology-based workshops.

In this initiative, which is focused on Southeast Asia, through these and other activities in the area, we considered media and art as a means of cultural exchange, and aimed to implement the four Cs mentioned earlier. If we create while sharing information and tools, and share abundance through that, or if we can take advantage of the creative methods of our time with media technology-based creativity for things such as pursuing public value or forming communities, we thought it might present new cultural approaches.

The initiative consisted of projects organized across four programs to represent the state of contemporary media culture and to respond to new trends in artistic expression. They are exhibitions of media art, workshops, a music program called Sounds in Culture, and conferences, such as symposia like the one we have today. With these multiple developments, we aimed to systematically capture contemporary creativity in media culture. At the same time, an important part of this initiative was to find works that are “representations” of media culture in Asia, and furthermore to establish an environment and a network that allows for creative expression.



Fig. 1 Performance by Barakatak at the music program of Indonesia Netaudio Festival 2018—Sharing Over Netizen Explosion (2019, Jogja National Museum). Photo: Ciptadi Kusuma. Courtesy of Indonesia Netaudio Festival

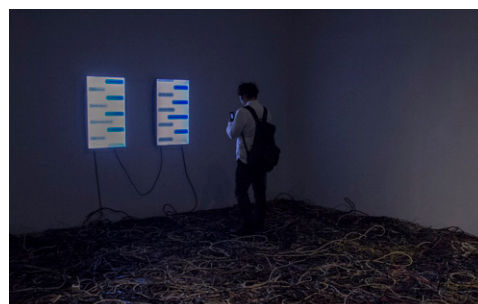


Fig. 2 exonemo, *I randomly love you / hate you* (2018). Installation view at “Internet of (No)Things” (2018, Jogja National Museum). Photo: Swandi Ranadila. Courtesy of Indonesian Netaudio Festival

Collaborations with the Younger Generation in Southeast Asian Countries

I will look at where in the Asian region and to what extent programs have been implemented. In order to realize a project within the program, we first do preliminary research in Japan and then actually go to the region to meet people and see what is happening in the culture, artistic expression, and scene at each place. It is a simple approach that specifically involves cramming appointments into the schedule for the duration of the stay, interviewing many people even while traveling with the ride-hailing app Grab, and taking notes of the kind of people we meet so as not to forget. In the midst of this, it was apparent that the younger generation, who are oriented toward technology-based expression, were trying to create a new place for that. As such, we came up with the idea of developing the program in partnership with them so that we could create this “place” together.

Let’s take a step-by-step look at the actual projects.

First, in 2016, here at ICC (NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC]), we held a small exhibition with Lifepatch, “‘Media Conscious’ in Asia: Lifepatch *Rumah and Halaman (Home and Yard)*.” Since then, we have collaborated with communities and festivals from various regions to hold exhibitions in Manila, Tokyo, Indonesia, and Singapore. And this process is now being concluded at ICC in the current exhibition, “Open Possibilities: There is not only one neat way to imagine our futures.”

In Manila, for example, the Japan Foundation collaborated with the local festival WSK (pronounced “wasak”) to make sure the Japanese works were properly localized and not just brought there. As a result, interaction and collaboration among artists and production teams was fostered, and a lasting network could be built among participants.

Yamada Taro Project, which was developed by Japanese artist Katsuki Nogami on the streets of Manila, would not have been possible without collaborating with a local festival (Fig. 3). It was achieved through the partnership with WSK as well as the Manila Biennale 2018, and was fortunate to attract a large number of participants from the region. I was also worried about safety and other issues, but in the end, police officers accompanied us on the street and we were able to finish it peacefully. In this way, by collaborating with local festivals and with the support of various art networks, I feel like I have taken on many challenges in various places.

I will introduce the workshop program next. We have conducted one-off workshops as exhibition related events and intensive workshops in the style of camps that are run for about a week. The camps are held twice, with participants selected from an open call for participation. The first was organized with the Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences [IAMAS] in Gifu Prefecture, and the second was organized with a Tokyo-based team called BioClub.

BioCamp: Gardens as 'Biotechnik' was held in 2018, led by a team of three directors consisting of two people from BioClub and one person who was a member of Lifepatch from Indonesia (Fig. 4). The theme was very intriguing and included two intentions. One of them, "Biotechnik" (biotechnology), or in other words, viewing biotechnology as a new way of life, was distinctive. The other was "gardens." The term for "garden," whether it is *niwa* in Japanese, *garden* in English-speaking countries, or *halaman* in Indonesia, has different characteristics and functions depending on the respective social and cultural context. By focusing on these characteristics and functions, we saw the garden as a platform to promote mutual understanding of society and culture.

These workshops are what we call "two-way exchange," and this is not by any means made up of outbound communication, where a particular culture would show some sort of superiority, but rather achieved both exchange among participants and inbound communication, rooted in the experience and abilities of the artists themselves. I think being together for a period of time also had quite an impact in terms of creating an ongoing network of artists.

Next is the music program. Although I say music, it was not experimental music performances or international touring performances, as is often the case with cultural projects, but rather collaborative production focused on electronic music. This is because of the worldwide expansion of internet-based environments as a service as well as a creative source.

I will introduce the live music events we did in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, Vietnam (Figs. 5, 6). This series of event was held as part of Bordering Practice. In this project, performances were held in Tokyo, Manila, Jakarta, Ho Chi Minh City, and Hanoi, with thirty-four artists participating from seven countries, and it eventually led to the challenge of artists collaborating together to create video works in Imaginary Line. The development of the project title is also interesting. Under its initial name, Bordering Practice, artists who were making internet-based works participated, and the concept was that they would deliberately draw "borders" between one another, intentionally setting boundaries. This is packed with the significance of an approach to exchange unique to the next generation, whereby they deliberately connect and draw



Fig. 3 Katsuki Nogami, *Yamada Taro Project* (2014–) at "INTERSTICES: Manifolds of the In-between" (2017, WSK Festival 2017)



Fig. 4 Workshop from BioCamp: Gardens as 'Biotechnik' (2018, FabCafe MTRL). Photo: Aya Suzuki

boundaries in order to know where their identity lies, precisely because they are connected by networks. In contrast, for the final iteration of the project, Imaginary Line, we added a perspective turned toward the future, in which we tried to draw a hypothetical line of thinking about how we can be connected in the future. Maltine Records head tomad, who was one of the directors of the project, came up with these concepts, which not only embodied contemporary cultural exchange but also served as great motivators for the participants.

In Imaginary Line, three artists and musicians from Japan, a video production team from Vietnam and Indonesia, and a musician from the Philippines collaborated on three video works. One of them was for “Leap (feat. Mantra Vutura & similarobjects)” by PARKGOLF, in which not only the video but the music itself was also collaboratively produced in Jakarta, Indonesia. This music was created while staying in Jakarta, working with local performers of such instruments as piano, flute, saxophone, and percussion. In the video, directed by the Jakarta-based Double Deer, the traditional dance of *lengger*, which is performed by men dressed as women, is depicted in the form of a woman dressed in the male costume pattern *lurik* (Fig. 7). It incorporates topics such as how dance and fashion have changed with modernization, the history behind textiles for those heading off to war, the former ban on women dancing, and even current gender and LGBT issues. It was truly amazing to see this group of young people in their twenties from different regions, actively joining forces to create a single piece of work that ended up being as multifaceted and well-made as a film.

The project also provided an opportunity to work dynamically with Asia in mind, especially for the next generation of musicians in the country facing the urgent challenge of how to attract listeners now that music subscription services are so widespread. I think the project provided a model for how the next generation of Japanese artists can demonstrate their internationalism and communication skills.

Finally, I would like to explain about the symposia. Three have been held so far, and today’s symposium is the fourth. The first gave an overview of the history and status of art and technology in various regions, including Japan. The second introduced the situation in Asia, including Japan, and Europe regarding production, education, and archiving with a focus on media art. The third, held last year (2019), presented changes in creativity and distribution methods since the internet, and how the next generation is navigating these. Though this will be the last symposium, we are holding it because we want to give you an opportunity to think about the potential that media culture and cultural exchange have for creativity, collaboration,



Fig. 5 “Cloud Room—Pop & Electronic Sounds in Asia” (2019, Lighthouse, Ho Chi Minh City). Photo: Jun Yokoyama



Fig. 6 “Call Back from Hanoi—Pop & Electronic Sounds in Asia” (2019, Japan Foundation Center for Cultural Exchange in Vietnam, Hanoi). Photo: Jun Yokoyama



Fig. 7 Music video for PARKGOLF, “Leap (feat. Mantra Vutura & similarobjects).” Director: Reinhard Samuel Maychaelson Gunawan (Double Deer)

and networking.

Since the symposia are held in Japan, we also aim to educate Japanese audiences about the international situation. Each time, we compile a report in Japanese and English. All the presenters' talks are put together and published in a printed format and as a PDF available online. The PDF can be downloaded for free on the Japan Foundation website, so please check it out.

Sustainability in Arts and Culture

In 2006, there was an exhibition in Ogaki, Gifu, exploring the theme of media art in Asia. This was the Ogaki Biennale 2006. The following text, which explains the cultural uniqueness of Asian media art, was written by Gunalan Nadarajan from Singapore, who was the co-director of the event.

This oft-neglected disjunction between the rhetoric of globalized media and the specific ways in which media technologies are actually being interpreted and exploited is most conspicuous in the media arts developments of Asia.

The thrust towards new media arts in many of the Asian countries seem to be caught between two parallel and related trends—a) the need to develop culturally specific and located ways of engaging with and incorporating the new information, communication, experiential, and biotechnologies; and b) the need to respond to the global imperatives that drive these technologies and their related artistic developments.¹

What I felt through the media art exchange initiative was that the first thing we had to do was to look at this “disjunction” and come up with a way to overcome it together. I think that Japan, in particular, seems to have grown in response to these “global imperatives” because the media art trends in Europe and the United States were introduced here from the 1990s, before other places in Asia, both in terms of education and the development of art centers. This is why, when you go to Southeast Asia, people often say, “Japan is a nation of technophilia.” Therefore, when considering the structure and development of this initiative, it was a struggle to figure out how these two directions could be balanced.

However, one thing that was consistent in this initiative was the focus on people's connections since the emergence of the internet. We also placed the greatest importance on building a team with people who represent the next generation of talent. As a result, I think it led to the spontaneous creation of many networks and collaborations. Personally, through this initiative I learned how to view culture itself as something very dynamic, not as a social structure, hierarchy, or sector of cultural policy.

Finally, in response to this commentary, I would like to introduce the exhibition “Open Possibilities,” which is currently on show. This exhibition has come from Singapore and is now being held here at ICC with some changes and additions to the works on display. ICC's Yasuko Yubisui and Riar Rizaldi from Indonesia are co-curators.

The theme of the exhibition is based on the advice Rizaldi gave me when I invited him to the third symposium. As he listened to the presentations of the Japanese speakers and talked to people involved in art and culture in Japan, he said, “Why don't you think about the open possibilities again?” This is because, since 2010, Japan has been in a situation where regionalism and cultural specificity in culture and art have been demanded in different contexts, such as in the response to earthquake recovery and the Olympics. Given that arts and culture are now seen as part of social structures and economic value under the 2017 amendments to the Basic Act on the Promotion of Culture and the Arts, their role will continue to be multifaceted in the future.

Personally, I think there are infinite stakeholders in arts and culture, so I understand that this direction, depending on your position concerning arts and culture, could be a goal or a form of publicity, or, depending on the person, it could be a challenge and a problem. There may also be a distrust of the loss of freedom of expression since public interest is a precondition.

Furthermore, I feel that a certain sense of entrapment has been created by singling out arts and culture as an alternative solution to social issues or as an economic benefit. Here is an excerpt from a text that Rizaldi wrote with Yubisui.

*In this context, our vision of the future in Asia likewise need not only be a single, homogeneous one. It is possible to have alternative futures. With these common tools and practices that are fostered by media technology, can we know each other and see these differences better than before? How do these differences present alternative visions of the future?*²

The English exhibition title, “Open Possibilities,” deliberately uses the plural form. This five-year initiative has certainly fostered collaboration and networking, and has achieved a certain degree of cultural exchange in that we have been able to get to know each other and take a look at ourselves critically. I think what I learned from them was the attitude of being open to others, to look critically at society through art, and how to practice that through art and media. This seems to have been the methodology employed by the next generation of Asian artists and curators, who continue to take the initiative in thinking about open possibilities, and to put these into practice.

In five years, the media art exchange initiative has implemented sixty-nine events, featuring a total 268 participating artists. Including the international teams on the production side, the projects have involved about 500 people. In addition, through this initiative, we have been consulted by production companies, agencies, publishers, and various artists, and I can sense an intrinsic sustainability in this situation where various collaborations are still emerging in a rhizomatic way.

1. Gunalan Nadarajan, “The Cultural Specificities of Asian Media Arts,” *Ogaki Biennale 2006—Janken: The Power of Chance* (catalogue), Ogaki: Center for Media Culture, Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences, 2007, p. 52.
2. Riar Rizaldi, Yasuko Yubisui, *Open Possibilities: There is not only one neat way to imagine our futures* (catalogue), Tokyo: The Japan Foundation Asia Center, NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC], 2020, p. 7.

Fumi Hirota | After completing graduate studies at the Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences [IAMAS], Fumi Hirota worked as a researcher for the Cultural Media Center at IAMAS. She joined the Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM] in 2008, where she was involved with production and planning for new media art and other projects. From 2012, she was a researcher in the Arts and Culture Division of the Cultural Affairs Department at the Agency for Cultural Affairs. She worked on initiatives promoting media arts, including efforts to expand the reach of the Japan Media Arts Festival overseas and in regional Japan. During this period, she also launched a project related to restoring and archiving media art. She left the Agency for Cultural Affairs in 2015 to work at the Japan Foundation Asia Center, where she was involved with media art projects as part of cultural exchange initiatives between Japan and Southeast Asia. She currently works at the Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture and is also a part-time lecturer in the Urban Culture Design Department at Nishogakusha University.

Performing Arts That Emerge from Asian Partnerships

Chikara Fujiwara Critic / Artist / orangcosong

Chikara Fujiwara is a critic, artist, and dramaturg, working primarily with theatre-based approaches. He is active internationally, creating and presenting his itinerant touring project *Engeki Quest* in Yokohama, Kinoshita, Manila, Düsseldorf, and other cities. As a reflection of this, he started the theatrical performance *IsLand Bar*, which he reinterprets for each country he presents it in. Fujiwara spoke about the significance of collaborating with artists from different countries to create works and the relationships that are built through this process.



Chikara Fujiwara

Who Should Ultimately Benefit from the Financial Assistance and Grants for Artistic Activities?

As a performing arts critic and practitioner, I have been working primarily in Asia, particularly over the five-year period since 2015. Today, I would like to give a short presentation drawing on those experiences.

It was Performing Arts Meeting in Yokohama (TPAM) in 2015 that first provided the impetus for me to work in Asia. Theater producer Takuo Miyanaga, who was one of the directors of TPAM at the time, picked up my *Engeki Quest* (*engeki* meaning “theater”), which allowed me to get to know a variety of producers from both Japan and abroad. *Engeki Quest* is a project where participants move freely around the city with an “Adventure Book” in hand. This book contains instructions and a continuous story in which you can “choose your own adventure” by turning to a certain numbered section if you want to go right, or another section if you want to go left, allowing you to enter real urban spaces or the world of your imagination (Fig. 1). It’s more of an ultra-analog book than a form of media art, though.

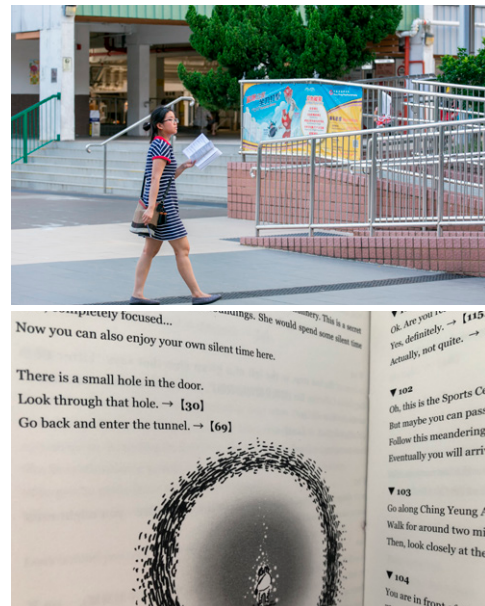


Fig. 1 *Engeki Quest* and the Adventure Book

Engeki Quest has been staged in Yokohama, Kinoshita, Tokyo, Manila, Düsseldorf, Ansan in South Korea, Hong Kong, and Bangkok. Typically, I spend about two months in each location doing the research up until the Adventure Book has been completed, in order to create a work that is unique to that city. I also traveled to Taipei and Shanghai for *IsLand Bar*, a project that I will

introduce later, and to Busan, Shanghai, Yangon, and Yogyakarta for a project called *Hitsudankai* by Minori Sumiyoshiyama, with whom I have formed a collective called orangcosong.

Although money is often an issue for these kinds of site-specific projects, we have received a great deal of financial support from the Japan Foundation Asia Center and branches of the Japan Foundation in the respective local cities as well as grants from The Saison Foundation and the Agency for Cultural Affairs East Asian Cultural Exchange Envoy initiative. That is why I have been constantly thinking about how and to whom I should pay it forward after having gained the experiences that I have from these projects. I have also been thinking about building tough and tenacious networks.

So the question is: Who ought to benefit from this paying it forward? Should it just be Japanese people? I hold a Japanese passport and my first language is Japanese. Over the past few years, however, I've met so many people, especially in Asia, eating, staying, and even crying and laughing with them, that I've started to lose sight of my nationality. At the very least, I get the sense that my close friends think of me not as a "Japanese artist," but just as "Chikara." It's very dangerous for a Japanese person to represent "Japanese people" in general when abroad, and I've personally felt that there are certain limits to how much we can communicate about the historical past in Asia, for example, by representing "the Japanese." As a single human being, I would like to challenge myself to confront these historical ruptures and engage in a dialogue with them. This may be difficult to do in the political arena, and it may sound like a rather commonplace sentiment, but I do believe that there are things that can be done precisely through the medium of art.

Bearing all this in mind, it seems to me completely unnecessary to limit myself to Japanese people in terms of paying it forward through my activities as an artist. Rather, what is important is to have ideas that go beyond such a "national" framework. Personally, I have a desire to seek out a transnational way of life.

The Importance of Continuous Relationships

I didn't start out thinking this way, either. In fact, I was a rather "typical" Japanese before I first went to the Philippines in 2015. When I performed *Engeki Quest* at TPAM in 2015, I met the Manila-based artist JK Anicoche and his right-hand lieutenant, Sarah Salazar, who were looking for a Japanese artist to invite to Karnabal Festival in Manila.

As I was walking around Yokohama with Sarah, she told me, "My grandpa hates Japan because of the war, but I don't." Upon hearing this, I was at a loss for a response.

As a Japanese person, I was worried about how people would react if I went to the Philippines, given the disparity with Japan and the history of exploitation between the two countries. The first time I went to Manila, I was seriously worried that if I brought with me, say, fancy chocolate as a gift, it would be perceived as a sarcastic gesture.

Anyway, I went to Manila in 2015. I wasn't staying in a luxury hotel, so there were bugs in my room, no hot water for the shower, children begging, nasty traffic, and terrible air pollution. The internet was also very slow. You are almost guaranteed to get ripped off by your cab driver. I even got on a motorcycle taxi-like vehicle called a tricycle all by myself and got lost.

However, thanks to my kind host JK Anicoche and his friends, fun and enjoyment prevailed (Fig. 2). As we talked late into the night over beer, I think I learned a fair bit about Filipino culture and politics, and also improved my English. Another major takeaway had to do with



Fig. 2 Visit to Manila in 2015

what I learned about means of transportation. In the Philippines, there are minibuses called jeepneys that are quite tricky to navigate. By learning how to get on and off these vehicles, I felt as if I had gotten a lot lighter.

Incidentally, JK Anicoche told me that he wanted to invite two other Japanese artists, and so Riki Takeda and Natsuki Ishigami went to Manila with me. Takeda stayed in the Philippines for a long period of time and started to create a work that involved making *takoyaki* octopus balls in the slums, while Ishigami went to the area formerly known as Smokey Mountain—a giant trash heap—to make a work together with a local nonprofit. Although we collaborated with each other in Manila on research and shared information, we didn't just stick together in a Japanese group. This, I think, is important in light of today's keyword, "openness." I think the real pleasure of this kind of residency program lies in getting actively involved with the local people.



Fig. 3 At Karnabal Festival

Another significant factor had to do with the fact that the Asia Center had unofficially agreed to provide continuous support for Karnabal Festival for three years. I was grateful that JK Anicoche had told me from the beginning that he would be running the festival for three years, and asked me to come along for the ride based on that intention. I was able to think long and hard about how to deal with the Philippines over a three-year time frame, rather than just going there and expecting to produce immediate results (Fig. 3).

Karnabal Festival lasted for three years from 2015 to 2017, but my relationship with the Philippines didn't end after those three years. JK Anicoche came to Japan, or invited me to go over there: he ended up coming to Japan several times as an artist in residence, and has been gradually building up a body of work here. He has also been doing projects in various Asian cities, and I think that he will go on to become a key figure in the theatrical arts in Asia in the future. He's a funny, bright, and energetic person full of sunshine who holds his friends dear to him and thinks of them as a "big family." I felt that this family also included Japanese people like me, and I never got tired of being around him because there was something happening every day.

I've been thinking about the idea of "gravity" as opposed to "mobility" recently. It seems to me that JK Anicoche has a strong gravitational field around him that sucks all kinds of people into it. I've been building a close relationship with him and his colleagues for five years now, and I'd like to continue to deepen that relationship.

Developing *Island Bar*

Next, I turned my attention to this region called East Asia. South Korea, Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, and Macao: What possibilities do these places hold? I also wanted to explore the potential associated with their currencies, like the Korean won, Taiwan dollar, Chinese yuan, and Hong Kong dollar. In order for Japanese people to get out of the national framework of "Japan," I had been thinking that we needed to overcome the barriers posed by the Japanese language and the Japanese yen.

On that note, I also want to mention my relationship with the Taipei Performing Arts Center. In 2017, I was invited by the curator Tang Fu Kuen to participate in the Taipei Performing Arts Center's artist laboratory program, Asia Discovers Asia Meeting for Contemporary Performance (ADAM), where seventeen or eighteen artists from all over Asia were invited to spend two weeks together. I got to know many artists there, and I hit it off particularly well with Scarlet Yu, who is from Hong Kong but lives and works in Berlin, and we did some research together. Of course, I had exchanges not only with Scarlet but many other artists as well, and the

work that emerged out of these interactions was called *IsLand Bar* (Fig. 4).

IsLand Bar is a performance in which each artist takes a table and hands a special, self-concocted cocktail to an audience of one or two people. The cocktails have a connection to the artists themselves or some kind of historical and political context, allowing the audience to get a sense of the world behind the cocktails as they sip them. In this work, multiple tables are set up in the same space.

The idea for *IsLand Bar* came from the fact that ADAM has the feeling of a market, like how a trade fair would be. At the time, I felt that ADAM had a fervent desire to become the “best market in Asia.” On the last day of the festival, for example, producers from all over the world come, which naturally leads to a sense of expectation over what these artists are going to show us. This expectation leads to future possibilities for the artists, and ADAM has provided us with such opportunities. However, I also had the feeling that I was being “priced out” of the market. At the time, ADAM had a matching program called Speed Networking where people could introduce themselves to each other in ten minutes, and so we decided to turn the concept around and try to create a space for “non-speed networking.” The vibe surrounding *IsLand Bar* went something along the lines of: “Thank you for coming all the way out here. Would you like to see a dance, or a piece of theater? In any case, please, come have a drink and relax.” It was surprisingly popular, and Tang Fu Kuen offered me the chance to present at the Taipei Arts Festival the following year. While I don’t have the time to talk about it in detail today, the response was that we seemed to have succeeded in demonstrating a certain format.

The thing, however, is that *IsLand Bar* emerged out of the ideas of various artists. I can’t claim that it belongs to Scarlet and I. So we decided to think about what would constitute the happiest outcome for this project, and after consulting with the Taipei Performing Arts Center, we decided to make it open source, with no one owning it. As long as they put a disclaimer on it that says “*IsLand Bar* is an open-source project first initiated as an experiment at ADAM 2017 and commissioned for Taipei Arts Festival 2018, led by principal artists Scarlet Yu (Hong Kong/Germany), Chikara Fujiwara (Japan), and Lee Ming-Chen (Taiwan),” this is a work that anyone can stage and perform. This, to me, is a form of openness.

In 2019, two productions of *IsLand Bar* were presented. In Taipei, it was presented by Huang Ding-Yun and Henry Tan. On the other hand, I created a completely different version of *IsLand Bar* at the Rockbund Art Museum in Shanghai, for three hours each night and seven nights in total. On the last day, nobody went home when it turned midnight, the time that the event was supposed to end. We extended it until about 1 a.m., and I was thinking, “Oh, so it’s OK to do this in a museum.” That’s how much fun it was, and I think it generated a good response. I was so exhausted that I thought it would be enough to do the next one only about three years later.

However, the artist River Lin, who was also a curator at ADAM, wanted to present it at TPAM next with all the past members of ADAM—that is, as the “ADAM’s Family.” I told him that it might be tricky to produce *IsLand Bar* at a pace like that since it is a transnational work made together with people who don’t share a common language, but Sumiyoshiyama was really keen and hit it off with River, so I ended up being pushed to do it. The result was called *IsLand Bar (Yokohama)—Port Undersea*, which we performed just a few days ago in Yokohama at the TPAM 2020 Fringe program.



Fig. 4 *IsLand Bar* performance (2018).
Courtesy of Taipei Performing Arts Center

Relationships of Trust in the Production of Artworks

In the end, I was glad that we presented *IsLand Bar* in Yokohama. It also helped that we were able to meet with River Lin at the end of the year in Kansai and align our values with each other. The schedule was tough, with the members arriving on-site just two days before the show, but I was reassured as long as we had River with us. The Cave, the venue where it was presented, is an art space run by Natsuki Ishigami, whom I mentioned earlier when talking about Manila. By also having Natsuki join the event as a performer, we felt that we were able to harness the power of the place for our purposes (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 *IsLand Bar (Yokohama)* performance (2020).
Courtesy of Taipei Performing Arts Center

We had some difficult discussions during the creative process, too. In the beginning, it seemed that the people at the Taipei Performing Arts Center wanted to present *IsLand Bar* as a so-called “performance,” and control the movement of the audience. I, on the other hand, wanted to exert as little control as possible, and let the audience take the initiative. Even if there were people who didn’t quite know how to behave as a result, I wanted them to also be a part of *IsLand Bar*. No amount of discussion via email is going to bridge these discrepancies, and there are also limits to having these discussions in English, a language that is not native to either party. As such, we decided to just let everyone do as they pleased during the dress rehearsal. For the time being, we had a foundation to build on, so we proceeded to have a concrete discussion with constructive arguments about where to go from there.

For example, we had decided to allow bookings of up to twenty-five people for each performance, but I made a loose estimate of the numbers so that we would be able to accommodate audiences even if there were a few more. The Taipei Performing Arts Center, however, came back to me rather sternly and said that the number had been fixed and they couldn’t take in more than that. As it turned out, when a number of people arrived without reservations on the day of the event, instead of turning them away, they came to me to discuss how they ought to respond: “Chikara, what shall we do?” I thought that was cute of them—or rather, that they were surprisingly nice about the whole thing. I could see that they had a human, flexible side to them as well. That was the moment I knew I wanted to continue working with these people.

I think there are ways in which an artist can push through and make a strong case for the overall design right from the beginning. Personally, though, I’m interested in the variable nature of human beings. You change, and therefore the other person changes as well. This may seem like something of a compromise, but I think it’s fine as long as you zealously guard the core of your work. In the case of *IsLand Bar*, what is important is to create a sense of organic circulation within the site. As long as you can maintain that, I think it’s more interesting to leave room for negotiation and reflect the opinions of various people as you make the work. This, to me, is also a form of “openness.”

I believe that I have established a relationship of trust with the people of the Taipei Performing Arts Center, but what exactly is this “trust”? Words like “network” and “collaboration” are often used in the art world. These words are certainly beautiful, but it is not easy to actually build a relationship of trust. Today, more than ever, we live in an era of divisions. People are quickly divided into black or white, friend or foe. It is no longer easy for the gray area in between to exist. We believe the fake news that our allies tell us, but find ourselves unable to listen to what our enemies are saying. An invisible wall in between stands so high that it becomes very difficult to imagine what lies on the other side. We can spit over this wall, but we cannot know the world that lies beyond it. We are unable to understand each other. All we can do is to keep

persistently engaging in dialogue and negotiation with people whom we don't understand. What's more, this is an enterprise that will always fail. We are unable to understand each other. The person on the other side of the wall may see a different landscape than you and I—a landscape that exceeds the limits of our imagination. Are we really unable to understand each other?

We are running out of time. At the end of the Yokohama presentation of *IsLand Bar*, we handed each guest a card with a QR code so that he or she could gain access to a secret message. I would like to conclude my presentation today by reading out that message.

First of all, I'm pleased that the audiences and the participating artists have gathered here tonight. Although she is not here, Scarlet Yu, a Berlin-based artist from Hong Kong, also participated via letters. She sent us five letters, but only four arrived in Yokohama. Where did the other one disappear . . . ? Undersea?

IsLand Bar is a platform for artists who have diverse backgrounds to meet you as an audience. It's not possible without mobility across borders. But our mobility is vulnerable. For example, by the coronavirus. Governments limit people's mobility very easily. As Prime Minister Abe talked about Fukushima seven years ago, "the situation is under control."

Nevertheless, we continue to move. Sometimes against gravity, sometimes according to gravity. You too, right? In this world, some people are difficult to move because of financial problems. Some people, such as refugees and disaster victims, have been forced to move undesired. But artists and producers have privileged mobility. At least you could come to this "fake bar" in Yokohama tonight, and toasted with people from all over the world. The privileged cocktails may have the hope of the people.

The last music is called "Farewell Waltz" or "Firefly Light (Hotaru no Hikari)." In Japan, it's a very popular song as a closing song for department stores or pachinko parlors, etc. The original song is Scottish "Auld Lang Syne": a song to toast for friendship. It was sung in the European Parliament just a few days ago when Brexit was enacted. In Japan, it has been sung since 1881. No. 4 lyrics express the territory, such as "Chishima, Okinawa." At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was replaced by "Taiwan and Karafuto (Sakhalin)."

Just as music has histories, the various gadgets and alcohols you have touched here also have histories. They crossed from someone to someone on this planet and finally appeared in front of you tonight, in 2020. Now, it may be in your stomach.

IsLand Bar—Port Undersea ends now here. But our lives will continue. Just like Brexit is not only the end but also the starting point . . . We are weak creatures, always fail. Not perfect. Can we learn something from that failures? In this severed world, can we restore our imagination and trust in each other?

Hope to see you again somewhere.

Message translation: Chikara Fujiwara

Chikara Fujiwara | Chikara Fujiwara is based in Yokohama and active in Japan and overseas as a critic, artist, curator, mentor, and dramaturg. With the aim of connecting a world divided by what he calls "invisible walls," he has produced the flaneur-style touring project *Engeki Quest* in Yokohama, Kinoshita, Manila, Düsseldorf, Ansan, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Bangkok. Inspired by his interest in human mobility, he created the performances *Woman in A Port* (2017) and *HONEYMOON* (2018), and the *IsLand Bar* project with transnational artists at Asia Discovers Asia Meeting for Contemporary Performance 2017 in Taipei and at the Taipei Arts Festival 2018. In 2017, he was a Senior Fellow of The Saison Foundation and an East Asian Cultural Exchange Envoy for the Agency for Cultural Affairs. In April 2019, he founded the art collective orangcosong with Minori Sumiyoshiyama. <http://hiroakiameda.com>

[Session 3]

Trans-Asian Approaches and Practices

How can we understand “Asia”? What are the cultural differences between Japan and other Asian countries? In this session, speakers presented new approaches for thinking about the future of international exchange.

The 4th International Symposium for Media Art

Open Media

Culture:

Moderator

Speakers

Minoru Hatanaka

Chief Curator, NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] [Japan]

May Adadol Ingawanij

Professor, University of Westminster [Thailand / UK]

Koichi Iwabuchi

Professor, Monash University [Japan / Australia]

Collaborations, Networks, Exchange

Experimental Curatorial Practices Through Small-Scale Collaboration and Networks

May Adadol Ingawanij Professor, University of Westminster

The researcher and curator May Adadol Ingawanij outlined her vision of collaborative and international practices that operate on a smaller scale consciously in tune with the identities of the location, from Southeast Asia to Europe. Such practices are rooted in our relationship with technology and in approaches that emphasize the nonhuman and animistic.



May Adadol Ingawanij

Large-Scale and Small-Scale Collaboration Models: Inter-Museum Versus Trans-Local

I will mainly talk today about Animistic Apparatus, a research and curatorial project that I initiated, and which has a screening program as part of the “Open Possibilities” exhibition at NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] (Fig.1). I hope that my presentation will tie in well with some of the themes that have already been raised in the previous panels concerning the question of: What makes a network?

When we talk about networks and relations, one facet of it is interpersonal relations. My Animistic Apparatus project approaches the question of relations in another sense, a more cosmological, ecological one asking about the place of humans in the broader cosmos: human and nonhuman relations. This links to the theme of technology’s relation with ritual forms, and new technology’s relation with very old technology as practiced through ritual and religious forms.

Let us start by making some broader remarks about this question of possibilities and models of collaboration and exchange. I live and work in the United Kingdom. I practice and research in Southeast Asia, specifically in Thailand, as well in the UK. As such, my zone of practice is somewhere between Southeast Asia and the UK.



Fig.1 Installation view of screening program “Animistic Apparatus: Cosmos” at “Open Possibilities: There is not only one neat way to imagine our futures,” NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC], 2020. Photo: Keizo Kioku. Courtesy of NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC]

When I talk about models and possibilities of collaboration, it is important to foreground my comments with where I am situated and how I observe this.

It is useful to make a simple distinction when we talk about models and possibilities of collaboration between large-scale possibilities of collaboration and exchange and small-scale ones, what I will be calling trans-local scales of collaborations and exchange.

There are two kinds of possibilities of integrating the UK as part of emerging trans-Asian networks. The first is the large-scale one of inter-museum collaborations. One recent example of this took place at the Tate Modern, London, with a retrospective of Nam June Paik's work, which was made possible through a collaboration of several major museums in the world.

The other model, which is the one I am much more interested and invested in, is that of small-scale networks of collaboration. Those trans-local networks of collaboration consist of artist-led groups, micro-festivals, and practitioners who are in between cultures and worlds. This is something that has been appearing increasingly in the spheres of art and artists' cinema in the UK within the past decade or so: a network of exchange of people, knowledge, and information, consisting of small-scale film and arts festivals in various cities or towns in the UK that connect with various cities or towns in Southeast Asia. The linkage, the ecology that is created quite informally, is creating a space where art films, independent films, and moving image works by artists made from and in Southeast Asia acquire a level of visibility in the UK.

Micro-Festivals Bridging Southeast Asia and the UK

An example of this micro-festival model is Aperture: Asia & Pacific Film Festival, which was initiated by the founder of a micro-film distribution label Day For Night, with some internal assistance from CREAM, the research center that I co-direct at the University of Westminster. One of the festival's foci is finding interesting ways of juxtaposing independent Southeast Asian films with films from the Pacific islands and from Central Asia, and using the space of a micro-festival in order to show some of these films in the UK.

Another example is the Open City Documentary Festival. This small-scale festival is funded by University College London and recently started a production development program. In this way, it is moving from being a small-scale, very well-curated festival of documentary films into also making a certain amount of funding available to support documentary filmmakers from anywhere in the world. Anyone can apply to join its preproduction/production development program. Along with Aperture: Asia & Pacific Film Festival, Open City Documentary Festival is an interesting example of a model of funding for the arts and culture in the UK, which these days can tap into some degree of collaboration with universities. This is coming out of a context whereby universities are under pressure to open up and engage with the public. There is also a sense of a historical responsibility to do some overdue work in the UK of cultural decolonization, acknowledging the UK's implication in imperialism and colonization.

Another example of a small-scale festival that forms part of this trans-local micro-festival network is a very successful Korean film festival in the UK called the London Korean Film Festival. It is interesting for many reasons. One is that the scale of the festival is quite small. Secondly, it is well funded by the South Korean cultural agency. Thirdly, and what makes this festival so distinctive, is the fact that its reputation is derived from the quality of its programming, which is well respected by experts and curators. The director of this festival has been in London for a long time and is regarded as part of a group of emerging curators of world cinema and moving image artworks, and with knowledge beyond that of practices in the UK and North America. All this means the festival goes beyond being just an arm for Korean soft power.

The final festival I will highlight is the Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival, which is held in a border town. Berwick-upon-Tweed is located by the border between England and Scotland. Historically, Berwick has existed within the borders of both nations, so this border town character very much informs the identity and adventurousness of the festival itself. I will return to discuss this festival further at the end.

Animistic Apparatus: Integrating Curatorial Methodology into Research

Animistic Apparatus is an academic research project with a strong curatorial dimension. This curatorial project is reliant on trans-local networks of collaboration, exchange, relationships among practitioners to do two activities: one took place in the northeast of Thailand in a province called Udon Thani; the other one in Berwick, as part of the Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival (Fig. 2).

I wanted to experiment with looking differently at contemporary Southeast Asian artists' moving image and art cinema practices. I wanted to find a way of thinking about the form of these works and their significance by placing these works in a conceptual relationship with practices of Southeast Asian animism. The result is a project that experiments with the method of looking at contemporary artists' moving image work through a curatorial and media archeological lens: thinking about the affinity or resonance between contemporary artists' practices and very old practices of Southeast Asian animism, defined as the rituals, tools, apparatuses, and forms of communicating with spirits.

As part of the process I co-curated a trip to Udon Thani province in the northeast of Thailand. We called the trip a number of things in order to move away from thinking and doing curating as an exhibition. Sometimes we would describe our trip as fieldwork; or an artistic field learning lab; or a sociable field learning lab.

The project explores the idea of technological apparatus and the forms that technological apparatus can take when they travel the world and exist in a wide variety of cultural and ritualistic contexts, which then make their own demands. In the case of the history of the cinematic apparatus in northeast Thailand, the question that this project asks is: What became of this apparatus, especially the apparatus of outdoor cinema screening, when they intertwine with animistic ritual practices of relating and communicating with powerful local spirits?

We took around forty artists, curators, writers, and cultural producers, mostly from around Southeast Asia, to Udon Thani, to learn about the history of outdoor cinema projection in the province, to encounter its spaces of animistic rituals, and to experiment with using the apparatus of outdoor film projection (for ritual and commercial purposes) as part of media arts and artists' moving image practices. In Udon Thani, we spent time with a film projection troupe owned by a skilled technician and projectionist called Khasem Khamnak. They are experts in setting up very big screens in outdoor settings, and projecting films using a combination of digital projectors with some additional tools from the analog era. The idea behind this field trip to Udon Thani, what we also called a sociable field learning trip and an artistic research lab, was that we would go as a group to learn from the open-air projectionists. What are the considerations they have when they are commissioned to do ritualistic film projections addressed to spirits? We saw how they put up the scaffolding and sound system. Even the truck they used is not just a vehicle for transporting the equipment but also part of the apparatus of open-air film projection itself. The projectors are placed on the truck, which is where you control the sound system from.

Over the roughly one-week period in Udon Thani learning from this troupe, we experimented with using some of the tools of ritualistic film projection, integrating them into our own artistic, curatorial, or written practices. We had three evenings where we could try out the



Fig. 2 Animistic Apparatus

equipment and improvise some practices of performance and projection, or simply play around with the audiovisual tools that the projectionist troupe routinely used for outdoor projection to see what we could create with them.

During one of the nights when we were given permission to use this open-air space in the village of Ban Chiang in Udon Thani, various activities unfolded organically. Among the attendees was a collective from Taiwan called lololol, which is two artists—Sheryl Cheung and Xia Lin—whose practice revolves around the relationship between post-internet and posthumanist technology, and older forms of practices of channeling the body's energy. It led a session where Xia Lin, who is a tai chi master, drew inspiration from the apparatus of ritualistic film projection and created tai chi moves, which she taught to the rest of us in front of the large projection screen.

A Resulting Network Connecting to Tokyo

A kind of network then emerged, linking the participants who responded to our call to come and take part, but also linking us with the projectionists, who are themselves very mobile in their own way. They have their own circuit of doing mobile projections, traveling around the north-eastern region of Thailand and sometimes beyond.

From this group of people, we can trace links with the “Open Possibilities” exhibition. Participants of the field learning lab included Riar Rizaldi, who co-curated “Open Possibilities,” which features the work of Rei Hayama, a Japanese artist who also took part in the Animistic Apparatus lab. Zai Tang, the Singaporean sound artist whose work is in the exhibition, likewise participated in the Animistic Apparatus lab. The exhibition includes Thai artist Tanatchai Bandasak's installation *Central Region*, comprising standing stones in the highlands of Laos, and which came out of his experience of the Animistic Apparatus lab in Udon Thani. It is a work that responds directly to the interests and the concerns of this project, asking questions about the linkage and relationship with old ritualistic forms of animism, communicating with spirits, and the possibilities of contemporary moving image art.

Linking Southeast Asian Animism to the UK

After the trip to Udon Thani, I came away with the idea that I would try to curate an exhibition in the UK, a place that has no direct relationship to Southeast Asian animistic practices. And so my question became: What if we do an exhibition of Southeast Asian works in the UK, but not in the usual way? We did not want to do an exhibition that claimed to be showcasing works by Southeast Asian artists in the UK, nor an exhibition that claimed to be saying something about Southeast Asia as a region. We wanted to do an exhibition in a more speculative register. The exhibition would be curated and programmed in response to this question: What if exhibitions did not need to primarily address humans? The problem that I set for myself was how to do this kind of an exhibition with a speculative curatorial slant in the UK, featuring works by Southeast Asian artists without claiming to be representing a region in its totality, and without claiming to be introducing Southeast Asian artists to the UK.

This is where Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival comes back in. I was attracted to it because it is a small-scale yet adventurous festival. Its director, Peter Taylor, is part of this translocal network of curators, artists, and film programmers in the UK who are very outward-looking. But it was also the location of Berwick itself as a borderland town with a long history of conflicts, and with interesting sites of ruins and archaeology. I was able to translate my curatorial idea into a series of installations outside of gallery spaces; a series of onsite installations where I could stage an encounter between an artist's work and a site of historical ruins or a site of exposure to Berwick's very wild weather.

We installed Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Fireworks (Archives)*, an installation responding to the history of anti-communist suppression in the northeast of Thailand, in a cavernous site in Berwick. You enter the site through a stone passageway, a kind of tunnel, which then opens up into

a big stone lined space under one of the arches of a bridge going across the river Tweed. In the eighteenth century, this was where blocks of ice would be stored in order to facilitate the salmon trade linking Berwick to places like the United States. Berwick is on the sea and also at a river mouth, so it was a town of trade and exchange. During World War II the site became a bunker.

Tanatchai Bandasak's *Central Region* was installed in a tiny tower cut into a hill, which was formerly used as a surveillance site during the conflict between the Scots and the English in the premodern era (Fig. 3). Tanatchai's work was situated there as a kind of installation that could respond directly to the actual site of the tower itself, an encounter creating a surprising beauty.

I also curated an outdoor projection of *A Lullaby to the Sorrowful Mystery* by Filipino filmmaker Lav Diaz, who is famous for making very long films (Fig. 4). *A Lullaby to the Sorrowful Mystery* is no exception—over eight hours long. We asked that the projection be announced not as a film screening but as a projection and an offering to the spirits of place of Berwick. We wanted to see how that gesture would sit within a film festival and how people would respond to it. The location we got to set up the screen was near a sixteenth-century wall, overlooking the sea,

which meant that as soon as the sun went down, the area became intensely dark, as there were very few street lights or lights from buildings and houses in the vicinity. We started projecting Lav Diaz's film from some point after the sun had gone down, and tried to estimate the running time so that the film would end as the sun was coming up the next day. We called this a "projection ritual." Who was the audience in such a place? The harvest moon in September, some stars, a handful of bats and other creatures, and very, very few humans.

This demonstrated the potential for experimentation at play, which in my experience so far of curating Animistic Apparatus seems more possible within a network of collaboration and exchange involving practitioners in groups working on a smaller scale.



Fig. 3 Tanatchai Bandasak, *Central Region* (2019), Coxon's Tower, Berwick-upon-Tweed. Commissioned by Animistic Apparatus. Installation view at Animistic Apparatus, 15th Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival



Fig. 4 Lav Diaz, *A Lullaby to the Sorrowful Mystery* (2016), Rose Garden and Flagstaff Park, Berwick-upon-Tweed. Installation view at Animistic Apparatus, 15th Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival

May Adadol Ingawanij | May Adadol Ingawanij is a writer, curator, and teacher. Her research explores genealogies of cinematic and media apparatus, potentialities of contemporary artistic and curatorial practices, and the aesthetics and circulation of artists' moving images, art, and independent films in, around, and beyond Southeast Asia. She co-directs the Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media. She is the recipient of the British Academy's Mid-Career Fellowship (2018–19) for her curatorial and publication project *Animistic Apparatus* (2018–). Her recent English-language publications include "Comedy of Entanglement: The Karrabing Film Collective" (*Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 2019) and "Making Line and Medium" (*Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia*, Vol. 3, 2019). <http://mayadadol.info>

Trans-Asia and Media Arts: Collaboration as Method

Koichi Iwabuchi Professor, Monash University

Koichi Iwabuchi has devoted himself to re-searching cultural fluidity, diversity, and multicultural societies in the Asian region, based on the idea of what he calls “trans-Asia as method.” In particular, he has been focusing on media arts and activism that promote international exchange and cross-border collaboration in Asia in the digital era. Iwabuchi spoke about international exchange and cross-border connections, while also introducing the activities of Trans-East-Asia Multiculturalism, a project that seeks to promote expressions of cultural diversity in East Asian societies.



Koichi Iwabuchi

Dialogue with Experiences of a Similar, yet Different Asia

I have been working on a project called Trans-Asia as Method for a long time, so today I would like to share my thoughts, or some recent developments, from that point of view. First of all, I would like to explain the title. I chose the plural form of the term “media arts” because it encompasses a wide variety of cultural forms, such as video, music, and visual arts. Also, in my own field of cultural studies, an intellectual movement centered on the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Society, which organizes conferences and publishes a journal, has been flourishing since the year 2000 or so, but I use the term “Trans-Asia” instead of “Inter-Asia.”

One of the fundamental reasons for using the term “Trans-Asia” is the interest in the phenomenon of the increased movement of people, goods, money, and media across borders in a historical and social context over the last thirty years or so. This interest has also flourished in the Asian region. Various problems are being shared across borders: more and more, we are seeing that even if problems cannot be resolved within a particular country, new solutions and insights can be gleaned by tackling them together. Of course, there are a variety of ways to forge such connections. Some of them are based on dialogue and goodwill, while others invite fragmentation and conflict. A wide range of connections and links have taken root in the Asian region.

In this context, movements and ideas that go beyond an Asian or even national framework have emerged, while geopolitical pigeonholing and perceptions that seek to fix countries and regions have also come into question. The various dialogues found within Asia, for example, were not as lively in the 1980s as they are now. A particular situation has become more conspicuous over the last thirty years or so: the links and dialogues among not only academics, but also the people of Asia, the grassroots, and artists, or among the media and producers, have become very active. “Trans” rather than “inter” is meant to allow us to examine these contexts of growing transnational and cross-border flows and linkages, and the various phenomena that are occurring within these contexts.

So, what does the project Trans-Asia as Method mean to me? First of all, it represents an

attempt to reflect on and analyze how the encounters, exchanges, and dialogues, or competition and hostility that emerge through regionalization or media cultures across the Asian region have increased in the context of globalization. In addition, Trans-Asia as Method focuses on the new possibilities that emerge from the active production of knowledge that has been de-Westernized—of intellect in a broad sense, if you will. By reflecting on visions of a new kind of knowledge, imagination, and future drawn from the Asian experience, and the history of the past, can there be a dialogue that transcends Western-centric perspectives, and how can we go about fostering such a dialogue? The Inter-Asia Cultural Studies project also has a keen interest in these questions.

In Japan, Yoshimi Takeuchi discussed the idea of “Asia as method” during the 1960s.¹ Although Takeuchi only posited “Asia as method” as a possibility, various scholars have paid renewed attention to this notion over the last twenty to thirty years. One of the main reasons for this is that we cannot escape the history of the modernization, imperialization, and colonization of the West. As such, although we might share a common perspective on the scars left behind by these events, there was also a shared acknowledgement of the necessity of not only confronting the West as we have done in the past, but also seeking out new forms of knowledge through the fostering of dialogue while making reference to the experiences of other Asian countries. Taiwanese scholar Chen Kuan-Hsing, one of the pioneers of the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies project, argues in his book *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* that dialogue within the Asian region may have the potential to give rise to a new worldview or vision oriented toward deimperialization.² Chen’s book was full of expectation, and was a statement of intent, with regard to how a new vision of modernity or the future and a historical viewpoint would emerge, not only through dialogue with experiences of the West, of Europe and America, but also the diverse experiences of Asia and the cultivation of a transnational, transversal dialogue.

Like Singapore’s Chua Beng Huat, I also use the term “inter-Asian referencing.” What is important to me is that this cross-referencing across Asia happens not just among intellectuals, but at the grassroots on a daily basis. These days, Korean TV dramas and K-pop are at the center of this phenomenon, but as the transnational, border-crossing flows of media culture and its mutual consumption across Asia become more commonplace, many people are experiencing Asia as method in their everyday life. This has been empirically demonstrated by various researchers, myself included. When Japanese or Thai people watch Korean TV dramas and movies, for example, they feel a strong sense of sympathy and become aware of certain similarities and differences pertaining to gender, sexuality, work, and family issues. There are many cases where such culture provides an opportunity to reassess their daily lives and society. It may not be possible to have a face-to-face conversation because of the subtle interplay of feelings with regard to similarity and difference, or proximity and distance. Through mediation, however, these experiences can lead us toward new modes of critical thinking, providing an opportunity to rethink our own lives, society, the relationship of the self to the other, and our historical relationships. The trans-Asian fluidity and dynamics of consumption of media culture foster cross-border dialogue. To me, this is what is crucial about Trans-Asia as Method.

Trans-Asia’s Efforts to Promote Multiculturalism

The prefix “trans” has various meanings: to cross, traverse, or be between something. The important thing, however, is that it implies a shift toward a new situation. While the same is true of translation, it seems to me that “trans” is linked to “something as a method,” in the sense that it represents a method or tool for arriving at a new situation. In this next section, I would like to address the topic of what becomes evident when thinking about media arts as a method.

The other day, I happened to see an interview with Ryuichi Sakamoto, in which he said that “the power of music” was his “least favorite phrase.”³ As an artist, Sakamoto believes that it would be too presumptuous to proclaim that the music one makes will change society and the world, and so such a declaration would be repellent. I could see his point: art and artistic

practices don't necessarily have to exist to effect social change, and there is no need for musicians to be deployed for political activism. As Sakamoto also acknowledges, however, it is of course highly possible that those on the receiving end will end up feeling or thinking something, thereby triggering some sort of change.

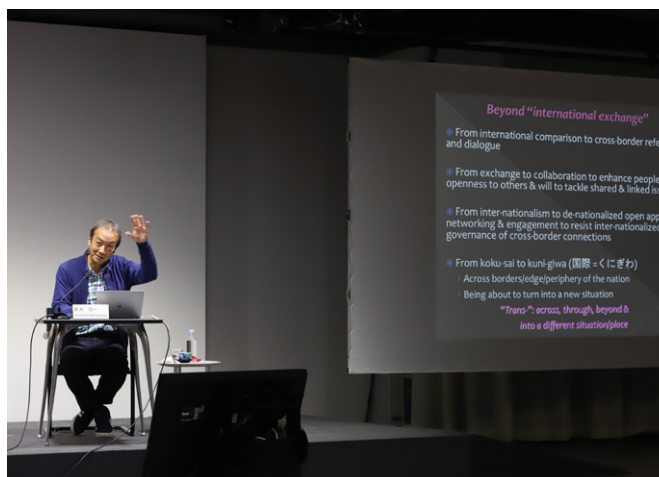
There is a growing interest in the power of such media arts, and in the use of diverse expressive practices and tools for social purposes. For example, an obvious example is the revitalization of rural areas. Many rural areas in Japan are now partnering with art and museums to revitalize their local economies and communities. There is also a movement happening where companies are incorporating and encouraging activist-style civic media arts practices for business innovation. What I am interested in, however, is how media arts can contribute to fostering a critical view and dialogue that rethinks existing social relationships and ways of being.

There are several chapters devoted to art in the handbook *The Routledge Companion to Media and Activism*, published in 2018, demonstrating that the role of art—or artistic activity in a broad sense—in activism has grown in the digital age.⁴ Stephen Duncombe and Steve Lambert argue that while the power of art has previously been understood as what Kant would call the “supersensible,” which transcends reason and rationality, the power of art in the present lies in its “affective effect.” “Affective” refers to the emotional power of art and artistic activity, while “effect” refers to the social effects and results that activism and social practice in a broad sense seek to achieve. Duncombe and Lambert introduce the coined word “æffect” to show that “affective effect” is a combination of all these factors. Media arts give a certain form to critical imagination and emotions that are difficult to put into words. While there are various modes of expression in media arts, be it through sound or visual culture, the word “æffect” is used to denote the fact that it has the power to spur people on to some kind of social practice by giving these things a form.

It is often said that in the age of digitalization, social movements have shifted from collective to connective action. As the rise of major social movements such as the Arab Spring has demonstrated, social media, the internet, and digital media have an immeasurable power to elicit emotion and mobilize a sense of solidarity among people. In some cases, this can work positively, while it can take a very negative turn in others. In any case, however, by combining the affective and the connective, we are looking at the power to change existing systems and ways of thinking, and the possibility of creating new relationships.

The British sociologist Roger Silverstone once said that in the age of digitalization and the internet, all things, forms of consciousness, ways of thinking, and visions have become shareable. Shareable, however, doesn't necessarily mean that we can share something and tackle or engage in it together, or that we feel sympathy for what is happening elsewhere. How can we move from “shareable” to “shared”? This, I believe, is why the power of media arts is being reevaluated.

A variety of practices are emerging in Japan as well. There are the fairly uninspiring stories of dubious attempts to incorporate art into business of the sort that ad agency Dentsu would lead. On the other hand, there have also been initiatives getting started among various Japanese museums and curators that seek to promote debate and critical thinking among citizens about how to deploy art in the service of diversity and inclusivity, by the people at the Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito, for instance. Projects and exhibitions that combine trans-Asia and media arts are being held, including this one at the NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC]. I



don't have the time here to go into too much detail, but these are all very exciting efforts to develop a sense of critical public pedagogy through media arts.

My main interests at the moment are the sense of inclusivity and coexistence brought about by diversity in relation to immigration in a broad sense (including short stays in another country) and the diaspora made up of second-generation migrants and beyond. I am interested in how we might encourage the development of multiculturalism, coexistence between different cultures, and a sense of inclusivity arising from diversity, as well as how we can move beyond racism and hate speech. While these things do not have to be limited to Asia, I have led several projects that combine the inclusivity and coexistence brought about by diversity with artistic activities, using trans-Asia as a keyword.

One of the projects, focused mainly on East Asia, was called Trans-East-Asia Multiculturalism (TEAM) and funded by the Toyota Foundation. With scholars from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, including myself, acting as intermediaries, we set up a place where a variety of players and stakeholders, including visual and musical artists, nonprofits, NGOs, civic groups, migrants, minorities, and local government officials, could come together and have a dialogue with one another. In this way, TEAM sought to spur the development of inclusivity as a result of diversity in a transversal, cross-border fashion. We've done about one such event every year from 2015 to 2017 (Fig. 1). The scope of TEAM was limited to East Asia because the situation in Southeast Asia is rather different. Human migration, immigration issues, and discrimination and exclusivity are shared concerns, however, and by introducing various experiences that are slightly different in this context and discussing them with each other, we have come to see new perspectives on multiculturalism and coexistence between different cultures. We have also been able to promote cross-border collaborations among diverse actors, and share with everyone the know-how and difficulties related to our efforts to encourage cultural diversity.

The other project is called Migrant Diplomacy. I currently live in Melbourne, which has a fairly large Immigration Museum. I received a grant from the Australia-Japan Foundation to work on an exchange project between the Immigration Museum and the artists who collaborate with it, and people who are working on similar issues in Japan. There were people in Japan who had been influenced by the Immigration Museum and were engaged in similar concerns, and Australia is actually part of the trans-Asian movements of people, so we thought it would be a great opportunity for people from both countries to interact with each other. A core component of the exchange is to recognize the role that museums and media arts play in raising awareness of the cultural diversity associated with the migrant experience, or boosting its inclusivity, and to develop these practices in a collaborative way. We have been working toward this goal through a series of reciprocal visits and jointly organized events between Australia and Japan (Fig. 2). In Japan last year (2019), I visited Hamamatsu and Nagoya, two Japanese cities with some of the most migrants in the country, where the local government has been trying hard to promote multiculturalism for a long time. We asked programmers and artists from the Immigration Museum to talk to local citizens in Hamamatsu and Nagoya as well as young people with diverse



Fig. 1 Trans-East-Asia Multiculturalism projects underway

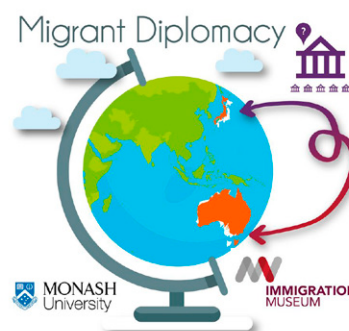


Fig. 2 The Migrant Diplomacy exchange project was carried out in partnership with the Immigration Museum in Australia.

cultural backgrounds about what it means to express oneself, and also held a workshop where participants wrote their own stories (Fig.3). According to the questionnaire they completed afterwards, the participants gleaned new perspectives and stimulating experiences regarding the practice of multiculturalism through art. While residents of Hamamatsu and Nagoya were also very interested in fostering a sense of diversity and coexistence among citizens through art, they did not know how to go about it, so they found the workshop very helpful. In the future, I believe there will be more events like this in Japan that aim to promote diversity and coexistence through the arts, and I would like to continue to be involved in them.

The Significance of International Exchange, and Mobility

Finally, I would like to talk about how we can go beyond the idea of international exchange. If we were to do that, the Japan Foundation would cease to exist, but that doesn't mean that we should do away with the term or abandon all such initiatives. The term "international exchange" can sometimes imply international comparisons, but as I have argued today, I think it's less a matter of comparison and more about how we can foster practices of dialogue and sharing with each other, and encourage cross-border collaboration and cooperation. We want this to be a starting point and then go one step further, without letting it remain at the level of "that exchange was fun." The question is how to motivate people to work together to address the problems that are common to all societies, such as living in harmony with diversity. I think this is an important issue for the future that we should be aware of when we use the term "international exchange" in carrying out our projects.

Another issue has to do with the limitations of international exchange objectives that are built on existing national frameworks of exchange. Rather, how can we create an approach, a network, or form of engagement and commitment that is denationalized? This is not the same as post-national. Around the year 2000, the term "postnational" was being used in a fairly optimistic way, in the sense that globalization transcended the concept of a nation. A postnationalist would say, "We don't need nations." In reality, however, nations do exist, and they are gradually becoming more powerful. There is no point in simply denying the nation. In this context, what would a framework that transcends the existing concept of the national look like, how do we create it, and how can we promote collaboration and dialogue that would address common problems? I believe that we need to address these issues seriously.

The Japanese word for "international" is *kokusai*. The character for *sai* can also be read as *kiwa*, which means edge, or borderline. This latter reading suggests a kind of internationality that is based not on existing national frameworks, but rather a way of reinterpreting relationships from the periphery or boundary. *Kiwa* also means "a state in which something is about to take place," which overlaps with how "trans" indicates the act of "moving toward another state." By understanding the concept of international or *kokusai* in terms of edges or borders, I believe that we can turn our attention to entities, values, people, and groups existing on the periphery of a country that have previously been overlooked, and then rethink the nature of nations and



Fig.3 Flyers for events held in Hamamatsu and Nagoya

bring them to a new state of being with a focus on these people. The Migrant Diplomacy initiative that I mentioned earlier is one example of this. It is also a project that seeks to rethink the notion of international exchange and diplomacy by focusing on the experiences and issues of people who have never been the main protagonists in international exchange, cultural diplomacy, and migrant diplomacy.

There is an urgent need to restructure the national framework into one that is more interactive and encouraging of solidarity, and I believe that we need to explore and practice the possibilities of cultural forms and media arts in order to achieve this. Governments are increasingly colluding with the market to deploy culture and media arts in the service of soft power and nation branding. Of course, while it is important to promote and encourage media arts, it is problematic that this is being tied to national interests in a narrow sense. Cool Japan and soft power may quickly become policy issues, but they display no commitment to the problems of immigration and multiculturalism. Exclusionary nationalism is also on the rise in Japan, but the issue of living in harmony with social diversity has been left behind. There is a clear polarization of cultural policy in the name of promoting national interests.

In my view, media arts can also play a significant role in society in terms of thinking critically about this issue. I recently learned that in Austria, they have an annual media arts festival called Ars Electronica. Saki Hibino quoted the overall artistic director of last year's festival, Gerfried Stocker, in the online magazine *Axis*. Stocker said that:

Before we realized what was happening, the evolution of technology became strongly linked to the power of corporations and the state. It has become commonplace for us to live in a kind of box enclosed by them. Art plays an important role as a "second opinion"—a means of critiquing the essence of this box (preconception), and of escaping from it.⁵

The possibilities of digitalization are hemmed in by the state and corporations, and they have only developed in one particular direction. The purpose of this festival is to use the power of art to think about how we might extricate ourselves from that situation. This kind of media arts initiative, which seeks to interrogate the way in which we are being governed by the state and corporations, and forge new conceptions of social solidarity, promises to be extremely important moving forward. I believe that we will be able to promote it more effectively through cross-border collaborations, like this symposium.

All of today's presenters think and work in solidarity while moving from one place to another. I, too, continue to have that experience, and I believe that movement can confer on us three kinds of perspectives. Firstly, a bird's-eye view that encourages you to take a panoramic look at things, relativize your own experience, realize where the exercise of power and authority is considered "natural," as well as confront different common experiences in different social contexts. Secondly, a "fish's eye" that is attuned to larger social trends and the zeitgeist brings a physical understanding of transnational currents from multiple sites, as well as an appreciation of the importance of creating networks that bring about cross-border connections and collaboration. Finally, the compound vision of a "bug's eye," which views things from multiple angles, reminds us of the importance of making our commitment to a particular local context the foundation of a kind of translocal solidarity, in order not to end up only with an aloof, top-down cosmopolitanism.

If the coronavirus pandemic drags on, significant restrictions may be imposed on cross-border physical movements in the future. Imaginative movements across boundaries, however, will not be restricted. What is important is to remain rooted in the here and now while maintaining a willingness to foster more interactive and open connections, a sense of imagination, and solidarity. In that sense, I believe this symposium, held online at short notice, was a thought-provoking occasion for those of you who followed it, and I am very happy to have participated as a presenter.

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1. Yoshimi Takeuchi, *Asia as Method: Our Prewar, Wartime, and Postwar 1935–1976* (Tokyo: Sohjusha, 1978).
 2. Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
 3. “The ‘power of music’ is my least favorite phrase: The Trauma of Ryuichi Sakamoto,” *Asahi Shimbun Digital*, January 30, 2020. <https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASN1Y4WTYN1WUCVLo05.html>.
 4. Graham Meikle (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Media and Activism*, New York: Routledge, 2018.
 5. Saki Hibino, “The Power of Art that Leads to the Overturning of Common Sense: *Ars Electronica* 2019 (part one),” *AXIS Web Magazine*, January 10, 2020. <https://www.axismag.jp/posts/2020/01/161123.html>.

Koichi Iwabuchi | Koichi Iwabuchi’s research interests are trans-Asian cultural flows, connections, and dialogue as well as diversity, multicultural questions, and cultural citizenship. His work engages in transnationally enhancing cultural diversity through artistic practices, such as by collaborating with the Immigration Museum in Melbourne in addition to leading the Trans-East-Asia Multiculturalism project. His recent English publications include *Resilient Borders and Cultural Diversity: Internationalism, Brand Nationalism, and Multiculturalism in Japan* (Lexington Books, 2015), “Migrancy and Diplomacy: Fostering Cross-Border Dialogue and Collaboration in the Age of Hyper-Mobility” (*The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 2018), and “Trans-Asia as Method: A Collaborative and Dialogic Project in a Globalised World” (*Trans-Asia as Method: Theory and Practices*, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019). In April 2020, he took up a position as a professor in the School of Sociology at Kwansai Gakuin University.

Rethinking the Relationship Between Technology and Culture

Discussion by the Moderator and Presenters

Moderator



Minoru Hatanaka

Chief Curator, NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] [Japan]

Minoru Hatanaka graduated from Tama Art University. He joined NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] in 1996, prior to its opening. He has curated such exhibitions at ICC as the group shows “Sound Art – Sound as Media” (2000), “Silent Dialogue” (2007), and “[Internet Art Future]—Reality in Post Internet Era” (2012), and solo shows featuring the work of Dumb Type, Maywa Denki, Laurie Anderson, Kazuhiko Hachiya, Rhizomatiks, Arata Isozaki, Otomo Yoshihide, and John Wood and Paul Harrison. <https://www.ntticc.or.jp>

Climate Change and the Internet

Minoru Hatanaka: As I was listening to Koichi Iwabuchi’s presentation, it occurred to me that there is a certain power to be found in music. There are genres like protest songs, and I personally feel that music is capable of making an incredible impact. How we make use of it, though, is perhaps what his phrase “as method” was referring to.

In that sense, I don’t think the theme of “open media culture” at this symposium pertains only to the realm of media art. The trend of socially engaged art, for instance, also emerged out of this context. As Walter Benjamin once said, a work of art used to be something that you had to go somewhere to see, or else you had to spend quite a bit of money to get there, and it involved a lot of waiting in lines. Now, though, we don’t have to go there to see this art. In addition, there is an inherent mobility in technology today that allows one to go anywhere with a single computer, like Hiroaki Umeda does.

No matter how many borders get drawn, any one culture contains elements of another culture within it. If you take any musical instrument, for instance, not all Western musical instruments were born in the West: they arrived in the West by crossing the Silk Road from Asia. In that sense, I thought that Chikara Fujiwara’s approach makes explicit the historical viewpoint and perspective implied by the word “mobility.”

I’ve shared my impressions, but I was also hoping that the various participants would ask each other questions and have a bit of an exchange. What do you think?

May Adadol Ingawanij: We are talking about the “potential of mobility” now, and while there have been many forms of exchange so far in this century, the emergence of the climate change issue is also important. On this front, we need a model that is capable of reforming these collaborations and exchanges. What kinds of discussions are the other presenters having in their work in cultural organizations? You mentioned mobility earlier, and various institutions are now advocating for mobility, which also has to do with escaping from climate change. How are organizations responding to climate emergencies within the framework of diversity of cultural contexts?

Chikara Fujiwara: Before the symposium started, in the waiting room, we were discussing whether mobility is exerting a negative impact on climate change. Nowadays, the idea of mobility is becoming more widespread in Asia with the rise of low-cost carriers, for example, but in Europe we are starting to see artists who refuse to travel by plane. I still don’t have a clear answer regarding how we ought to respond to this. Unlike Europe, in Asia we have no choice but to cross the ocean, so we must rely on airplanes. At the same time, I think we have to constantly think about whether this is a good thing or not.

There is an Australian artist named David Finnigan, for example, who often works with the Filipino artist JK Anicoche, producing work that deals with the theme of climate change and

questions it.

Hatanaka: Fujiwara's presentation talked about mobility and gravity as being opposed to each other, but that there could be a way to prevent them from coming into conflict. My sense is that this is exactly what network technology will achieve.

Fujiwara: For me, today's symposium was another experiment in using the internet without an audience. Despite there being some problems with the technology, I think we're going to see more and more of these kinds of performative acts in the future. So I think it will be possible to have meetings and projects that don't necessarily involve moving around and going to these places.

At the same time, however, as an artist myself, I don't always get a good sense of things unless I travel to the actual site. Or rather, maybe I'm just someone who likes being at these sites, so I would want to carry on being "mobile" while my body can take it. Perhaps that's just a matter of having the privilege of being on the move, and there's always going to be some pain and suffering involved. I wonder if that means that my actions are going to cause potential harm, as well as the fact that I will have to remain active.

Fumi Hirota: I've actually never been in a place where these issues are discussed at an institutional or organizational level. I don't think Japanese museums have been very conscious of them. However, I did perceive a certain shift in the situation in how Mami Kataoka, the director of Mori Art Museum, has been proactively calling for the need to consider environmental issues when discussing how to circulate contemporary art to other countries—a message that she has been pushing since she took on her role at the museum.

A Continuation and Rediscovery of Animism

Hatanaka: Another thing that I thought was going to be key as I was listening to all the speakers was Bob Edrian's mention of "magic" and "animism" during his presentation. There is a kind of re-enchantment that happens with technology, and it's also sort of the endpoint of modernization. Animism, meanwhile, points in the opposite direction, and if this process of re-enchantment goes ahead, I think a different kind of animism will be born.

Bob Edrian: In Indonesia, there are many different rituals and customs, and each island has a distinct way of thinking about magic and metaphysics. The question is how these modes of thought are being used in Indonesia. Indonesia is a big user of technology, but not the main player in terms of the production of it. It seems to me that the way technology is used in Indonesia is somehow related to the fact that "magic" happens in some way, in a realm that is invisible to the eye.

For example, if a television breaks down, there are still Indonesians who might think that it was because a spirit or demon played a trick on it. They sometimes associate technology with the magical. Often times in everyday life, this is also a matter of how the magical mindset relates to religion. In Indonesia, there are five official religions and probably many ancestral unofficial religions. To take another example, if we talked about climate issues or natural disasters in Indonesia, some people might think that it happened because God has a reason behind it or God is furious.

Indonesians often tie things to God's will. No matter what happens, most Indonesians will say that it's God's will. As such, we are in a situation where modern technology is also associated with the magical.

Kim Seong-hee: When Asian curators and artists talk about things like animism or the supernatural, it seems to me that they are taking an approach that seeks to mystify things. I don't think this is that interesting, though.

For example, the German curator Anselm Franke deals with the issue of animism. His point of view, however, is that the West has resorted to the old divisions in this modern era: basically, a dichotomy in which the West occupies the center and the others on the periphery are not scientific, rational, or logical. While there are truly supernatural ideas to be found in Asia,

Western modernization has forced these out onto the margins. That era is over, however. The thinking of the twentieth century is no longer sustainable, and I think we need a mode of thought that is appropriate for the twenty-first century.

What is needed now is to reconstruct the relationship between nature and human beings. So I think it is possible that we will see the return of animism. This return may provide some kind of inspiration and help to rebuild the relationship between humans and nature. In this context, I think the climate issue may also be involved.

Hatanaka: I think you're right. In fact, technology makes us forget about things like climate change, in a certain sense. Whenever a disaster occurs, for example, we remember what it was like in the era before technology, and how people were able to communicate a sense of it. Animism and so on encompasses things that we have forgotten in a world that has become so convenient through technology that has kept us away from disasters, or given us the illusion of security. So we need to recover that relationship. In the twentieth century, we detached animism from technology, but the twenty-first century entails a situation where it is being reconnected.

Edrian mentioned that in Indonesia, nature and technology have always been inseparable. This is perhaps due to a certain cultural and historical upbringing, which may well persist thanks to technology. Those historical and empirical links that have been forgotten as a result of the established myth of technology may become reconnected and transformed into something sustainable. This, it seems to me, is the opportunity that is being presented to us at the moment.

Fujiwara: What I've been thinking about in terms of technology and animism has to do with how I feel I'm getting older these days, because I'm not a digital native or an internet native. The younger generation, though, have become internet natives. One of the plays that was recently nominated for the Kishida Prize for Drama was *Mixture*, written by Yuri Yamada of the ZEITAKU BINBOU ("Luxurious Poverty") theater company. The voice of a yoga teacher appears in the play, but it's the voice of a machine. It's not a person, but a machine that is teaching yoga. It occurred to me that for a younger generation of artists, perhaps, we live in an environment where this is the default. And if that's the case, there can no longer be a return to the nature of the past, but an environment where they can coexist with machines, which is "nature" for them. It will be interesting to see what might emerge from this situation, but also a little scary at the same time.

Hatanaka: Speaking of that sort of situation, Kim mentioned robot theater earlier on. Is this some kind of sensibility that might be unique to Asia?

Ingawanij: It might be important for us to abandon the old habit of tying technology to the idea of modernist progress, and defining technology in opposition to nature. In my most recent writing and curatorial practice, I have been trying to explore how we can approach cinema and moving image in an ecological sense, and as practices and concepts connected with or resonant with animistic notions of human-nonhuman relations and communication, and notions of the intertwinement of nature and technology.

Who Is Using the Technology?

Kim: In my opinion, technology itself is not the problem. Rather, the big issue has to do with who is using the technology—and the even bigger issue is: Who is controlling it? It's a question of who becomes empowered by the technology by using it. That's what we should be focusing on and understanding. That's why art, through its use of technology, is about what we actually visualize and do with this particular device. Perhaps this is what is required of our work in terms of its approach.

Koichi Iwabuchi: I think that's true, but when I look at the young digital natives of today, I feel like the idea of progress and technology as connected may no longer be the case anymore. There are so many people who are happy with the conveniences of life today, but are pessimistic about the future. They also seem to be quite lacking in an appreciation for social and historical issues.

It's quite surprising how little interest they have in memories of the past, and it's not just in Japan. They don't know the contexts of history or time—they don't even know what happened ten years ago. I think the question of how the increasing development of digital technology is connected to the loss or revival of a sense of history is an extremely important one.

Hatanaka: In the digital environment, history is no longer linear in the sense that things are laid out in a certain order. Things are arranged in the order that we come to know them, so there is only a very shallow awareness of how things have changed. I think what you are all talking about is a sense of history that allows us to rethink our culture once again.

Fujiwara: In terms of the relationship between young people and history, when I was in the Philippines, I felt that young people were very knowledgeable about history. For example, their parents' generation overthrew the Marcos regime during the People Power Revolution, so they seem to have a better sense of time in relation to the past compared with the average Japanese. If cultural exchange and migration continue among the younger generation, then, their perception of history may change.

Also, while I think that the question of who uses the technology is an important one, with technology itself being used in an open-source manner, and information accumulating in systems like Google, the issue of who uses and controls technology may have become obscured. I myself probably have a strong awareness of who holds the reins, but I think it is important to consider how far things like subjectivity and authorship can be accepted, and what will be created when they disappear, when thinking about the openness of media culture.

Kim: In my view, it would be corporations that best understand technology—not in terms of one particular country, but rather corporations that transcend borders. Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple, for instance, are companies that collect all this information from all over the world, but I don't think each country has been able to organize that information in a consistent way. My sense is that corporate networks now contribute much more to controlling people than countries.

Hatanaka: Although I would like to delve deeper into the discussion, unfortunately we are running out of time. The theme of this symposium was openness in media culture, and I feel that this openness can take different forms in various cultures. Thinking about how technology can overcome the influence of companies like Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon that were just mentioned will in alternative ways lead, I think, to a sense of openness in each culture.

I would like to thank all of you today for participating in today's rather long symposium.

Symposium Organizers

The Japan Foundation Asia Center

The Japan Foundation is Japan's principal independent administrative institution dedicated to carrying out cultural exchange initiatives throughout the world. The Asia Center, established in April 2014, is a division within the Foundation that conducts and supports collaborative initiatives with its Asian—primarily ASEAN—counterparts. Through interacting and working together in Japanese language education, arts and culture, sports, and grassroots and intellectual exchange, the Asia Center aspires to develop the sense of kinship and coexistence as neighboring inhabitants of Asia.

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NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC]

NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] is a cultural facility established to commemorate the 100th anniversary of telephone service in Japan in 1990. Operated by Nippon Telegraph and Telephone East Corporation (NTT East Corp.), ICC was created firstly to facilitate dialogue among science, technology, and artistic culture, and secondly to serve as a center for networking and information exchange connecting artists and scientists worldwide. In addition to the annual "Open Space" and "Kids Program" exhibition series, ICC organizes a variety of other exhibitions, events, and activities across its galleries and online spaces.



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Left:

Gallery A entrance, NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC].

Photo: Keizo Kioku. Courtesy of NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC]

Lower left:

Etsuko Ichihara, *Digital Shaman Project* (2015–).

Installation view at Japan Creative Centre (JCC), 2019

Lower middle:

Tanatchai Bandasak, *Central Region* (2019).

Installation view at NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC], 2020.

Photo: Keizo Kioku. Courtesy of NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC]

Lower right:

Heri Dono, *GAMELAN OF NOMMUNICATION* (1997/2020).

Installation view at NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC], 2020.

Photo: Keizo Kioku. Courtesy of NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC]

