



Global Communities: Curating Modern Art Today

Symposium for Tate Research Centre: Creative Communities

Friday 26 – Saturday 27 April 2019

Tate St Ives

Schedule (subject to change)

Friday 26 April

Film for Friday screening and talk

Clore studio

15.00–16.00

Screenings of Larry Achiampong's *Relic 0* (2017), Sasha Huber's *KARAKIA – The Resetting Ceremony* (2015) and Mai-Lis Eira's *Guovvamánu 6. b. 1981 (6 February 1981)* (2018), with accompanying discussion with the co-convenors of the symposium.

16.00–17.20

Opportunity to visit 'Modern Art and St Ives' collection display

17.20–18.00

Tate St Ives Café open for drinks

Talk by Katya García-Antón

Foyle studio

18.00–19.30

International curator Katya García-Antón explores urgent questions surrounding the role of museums of modern art today in relation to ideas around Indigenous art, curation and criticism.

Saturday 27 April

All-day symposium

Foyle studio

09.30–10.00 Registration

10.00–10.10 Introduction to the day

Morning session co-convened and chaired by Nephertiti Oboshie Schandorf

- 10.10–10.25 *Within and Without: Negotiating Delicate Truces and Other Strategies of Self-preservation (Artists and Institutions)*
Nephertiti Oboshie Schandorf (curator and film producer)
- 10.25–10.40 *Reshaping Collection Narratives? How Contemporary Art Commissioning Can Embody a Collecting Strategy*
Franziska Wilmsen (PhD researcher, Loughborough University)
- 10.40–11.05 Coffee break in the Clore studio
- 11.05–11.20 *Is it Risky Showing Frisky?*
Jonty Lees (artist and curator, Pool School Gallery, Cornwall)
- 11.20–11.35 *Modernism and Mondialité: Staging Modernist Cross-cultural Exchange in the Contemporary Art Museum*
Naomi Polonsky (curator and arts writer, New Hall Art Collection, Cambridge)
- 11.35–12.05 Discussion
- 12.05–12.15 Comfort break
- 12.15–13.00 Artist Lubaina Himid in conversation with artist Evan Ifekoya
- 13.00–14.00 Lunch in Clore studio and opportunity to visit 'Modern Art and St Ives' collection display
- Afternoon session co-convened and chaired by Biung Ismahasan
- 14.00–14.15 *Ethno-Spatiality as Sovereignty: An Alternative Culture of Taiwanese Indigenous Curatorial Practices*
Biung Ismahasan (Bunun Nation curator, artist and PhD researcher, University of Essex and Taiwan Academy of Sciences, Taipei)
- 14.15–14.30 *Geographic Horizons in Defining the Southeast Asia Modern*
Vera Mey (PhD researcher, SOAS, University of London)
- 14.30–14.55 Tea break in the Clore studio
- 14.55–15.10 *A River with Standing: Indigenous Rights and Artistic Interventions*
Mercedes Vicente (curator, writer and researcher)
- 15.10–15.25 *Healing by Making – Duodji as a Way of Life*
Liisa-Rávná Finbog (Sámi archeologist, museologist and PhD researcher, University of Oslo)
- 15.25–15.55 Discussion
- 15.55–16.05 Comfort break

- 16.05–17.00 Group discussion, introduced by Sook-Kyung Lee (Senior Curator, Hyundai Tate Research Centre: Transnational)
- 17.30–20.00 Optional trip to visit *Invisible Narratives*, with an introduction to the exhibition by Lubaina Himid, at Newlyn Art Gallery (transport provided)

Supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Wilhelmina Barns-Graham Trust



With additional support in kind from the Borlase Smart John Wells Trust

Film programme

Larry Achiampong, *Relic O* 2017. 10:10 min, 4k video. Co-Commissioned by Southbank Centre | Hayward Gallery & Jerwood Charitable Foundation.

Relic O forms part of Larry Achiampong's *Relic Traveller: Phase 1*, a multi-disciplinary project including performance, audio, moving-image and prose. Taking place across various landscapes and locations, the project builds upon a postcolonial perspective informed by technology, agency and the body, and narratives of migration. *Relic O*, which is the prelude to the series, is a short film that moves between African and Western-based vistas and focuses on specific structures of colonialism as delivered by an anonymous narrator. The text addresses the sinister way that states of anxiety, fear and displacement are both generated and policed in postcolonial society.

Achiampong's solo and collaborative projects employ imagery, spoken word and visual archives, live performance and sound to explore ideas surrounding class, cross-cultural and post-digital identity. With works that examine his communal and personal heritage – in particular, the intersection between pop culture and the postcolonial position – Achiampong digs through the vaults of history. These investigations examine constructions of 'the self' by splicing the audible and visual materials of personal and interpersonal archives, offering multiple perspectives that reveal entrenched socio-political contradictions in contemporary society.

Achiampong's recent project titled *Relic Traveller* is a multi-disciplinary, multi-site project that builds on themes of lost testimony, fallen empire and displacement by deconstructing the architectures of colonialism. The project is currently formed of a first phase involving an original score, two short films and installations, an audio-visual performance and a flag project which recently displayed atop Somerset House in London.

Larry Achiampong (b. 1984, UK) is a Jarman Award nominated artist (2018). He lives and works in London and has been a tutor on the Photography MA programme at the Royal College of Art since 2016.

Sasha Huber, *KARAKIA – The Resetting Ceremony* 2015. 5:20 min, video. Courtesy of the artist.

Sasha Huber travels with greenstone carver Jeff Mahuika (Kāti Māhaki, Poutini Kāi Tahu) to the Agassiz Glacier, between Kā Roimata a Hine Hukatere (Franz Josef Glacier) and Te Moeka o Tuawe (Fox Glacier) at Te Waipounamu (South Island) of Aotearoa New Zealand. On location, Mr Mahuika offers a karakia blessing to symbolically un-name the glacier of its association with the influential proponent of scientific racism, Louis Agassiz (1807–1873).

Sasha Huber is a visual artist of Swiss-Haitian heritage, born in Zurich (Switzerland) in 1975. She lives and works in Helsinki (Finland). Huber's work is primarily concerned with the politics of memory and belonging, particularly in relation to colonial residue left in the environment. Sensitive to the subtle threads connecting history and the present, she uses and responds to archival material within a layered creative practice that encompasses video, photography, collaborations with researchers, and performance-based interventions. Huber's work took a new direction in 2007 when she joined the transatlantic committee *Demounting Louis Agassiz*, initiated by the Swiss historian and political activist Hans Fässler. This long-term project has been concerned with unearthing and redressing the little-known history and cultural legacies of the Swiss-born naturalist and glaciologist Louis Agassiz (1807–1873), an influential proponent of scientific racism who advocated for segregation and 'racial hygiene'.

Mai-Lis Eira, *Guovvamánu 6. b. 1981 (6 February 1981)* 2018. 5:14 min, digital video. Courtesy of the artist. Commissioned by OCA, 2018.

Mai-Lis Eira meets inhabitants from the small town of Máze in Sápmi/Northern Norway – where Eira herself is from – who participated in the Alta Action, giving central attention to the 15 women who occupied the office of Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland on 6 February 1981. Together with other protest actions during this period, the occupation of the Prime Minister's office led to the establishment of the Sámi Parliament in Norway in 1989.

Mai-Lis Eira (b. 1991) is a Sámi film director who uses film and storytelling to problematise contemporary events from a Sámi perspective. She is involved in the *Pile O'Sápmi* project (founded by artist Máret Ánne Sara, fellow co-member of the Dáiddadállu artist collective) as director of a forthcoming film that documents the legal and artistic events around reindeer herder Jovvset Ánte Sara's court cases against the Norwegian state. She is the director of the short films *Jahki ii leat jagi viellja* (This Year is Not Last Year's Brother) and *Turistene* (The Tourists), and has produced a TV documentary for children and young adults on NRK for which she received the prize of Best Youth Programme from Northern Character in Russia.

Symposium abstracts

Within and Without: Negotiating Delicate Truces and Other Strategies of Self-preservation (Artists and Institutions)

Nephertiti Oboshie Schandorf (curator and film producer)

Observing the relationships between artists and public institutions, it appears that we are in a moment where institutions are being challenged to critically re-evaluate their roles in the historic and symbolic annihilation of 'non-traditional' artists. By looking specifically at artistic counter-publics from the Afro-Caribbean diaspora – with practices and communities that have developed within the arts institution, found the institutional framework wanting and thrived beyond institutional regard – I consider how these parties negotiate delicate truces and implement strategies of self-preservation.

The space offered by Tate St Ives is an opportunity to critique, discuss and share excerpts of works that centralise Afro-diasporic experiences within an organisation that is often both highly regarded and also mistrusted by artists of the diaspora. Alongside these excerpts will be an outline of critical points in the formation of post-war and contemporary Afro-Caribbean creative counter-publics. The focus of this outline is how these groups negotiated institutional spaces and have influenced institutional modes of engagement/communication (as expressed through exhibition-making and programming).

Reshaping Collection Narratives? How Contemporary Art Commissioning Can Embody a Collecting Strategy

Franziska Wilmsen (PhD researcher, Loughborough University)

Faced with increasing competition between art institutions due to the number of venues opening worldwide and influenced through current cultural heritage discussions, art museums are having to rethink their collecting strategies and focus. As a consequence, they also need to develop alternative means of expanding their collections. Although there is a steady growth of exhibition venues and collecting bodies worldwide, art museums struggle at the same time with smaller acquisition budgets. Mostly, these austerity measures do not allow them to purchase works by some living artists who reach record prices on the art market. Against this background, can art *commissioning* function instead as an alternative way to pursue contemporary collecting in the art museum? What logistical and financial challenges do art institutions face with employing this practice? What institutional collecting visions are narrated when works of art are purposely conceived for such holdings?

In this paper, I shall debate how art museums can pursue new collecting agendas by art commissioning. Although it is not new that western public and private museums use newly emerged works to highlight temporary exhibitions, less is hitherto said in recent scholarship about commissions affecting and shaping collections. The cases I shall consider demonstrate institutional commissioning as a practice that is relying on the intersection with the art market (i.e. the artist's gallery) for the facilitation of new artistic work. Departing from the exploration of its networked or cooperative structures, each case allows me to debate commissioning as a means for the institutional customisation of new art canons.

Is it Risky Showing *Frisky*?

Jonty Lees (artist and curator, Pool School Gallery, Cornwall)

The Cornwall Council Schools Art Collection was created in 1961 with the intention that children in Cornwall should have access to great art. Artists represented include Jacob Epstein, Barbara Hepworth, Alfred Wallis and Terry Frost. Many Collection works are fragile and valuable, which means the Collection is rarely displayed in schools.

Begun in 2018, Pool School Gallery makes art accessible to a wider, under-represented and disadvantaged audience. We believe that a school is at the heart of a community. Pool School Gallery is supported with enthusiasm because the wider community is invested in the young people we work with. Over the next 24 months, Pool School Gallery will ask if showing works from the Collection in a school as intended is a risk worth taking, as we open our exhibition displaying *Frisky* (1953), a bronze sculpture of Epstein's dog and the first work acquired for the Collection, alongside works by students from across the county.

The risk of not engaging with the audience – which can happen when art is 'parachuted' into a setting without explanation or support – is reduced in this case because students from Pool Academy work directly on the project through all stages. Students bring their own knowledge to the artworks and, through the process, value is placed on this knowledge. As custodians with responsibility, the risk of damage through 'lack of care' is also reduced. The greatest actual risk for this Collection is that key works will be stored away where young people have no access, which goes against its core value: that an early encounter with art can be significant.

This public-facing project will be used by Cornwall Council to inform how the Collection can be utilised in the future. Pool School Gallery is supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Modernism and *Mondialité*: Staging Modernist Cross-cultural Exchange in the Contemporary Art Museum

Naomi Polonsky (curator and arts writer, New Hall Art Collection, Cambridge)

My paper will draw on postcolonial theorist Édouard Glissant's concept of *mondialité* ('globality') as a way of preserving diversity and negotiating the local and the global. As an illustration of Glissant's model in relation to modernist art, I will examine the five-decade-long collaboration between artists Nicolai Michoutouchkine and Aloï Pilioko. Michoutouchkine (1929–2010), a French-Russian artist and collector, and Pilioko (b. 1935), a Pacific Islander painter, met in New Caledonia in 1959 and began exhibiting their works across the world, from New Guinea to Sweden to Morocco. Blending Polynesian and western modes of expression and juxtaposing their own works with ethnographic artefacts, the artists showed the potential for cultural cross-pollination in art and simultaneous engagement with the local and the global. This nomadic partnership shows modernism not as a process of diffusion from western centres to non-western peripheries (as it is traditionally constructed in western narratives), but rather as a complex web of mutual influences and exchanges across the globe. Building on Hans Ulrich Obrist's *mondialité*-inspired approach to curating contemporary art practice, my paper will interrogate different strategies for staging exhibitions of twentieth-century modernist art following Glissant's model: either through 'transcultural' exhibitions that juxtapose international modernist works with works by artists local to the museum; or by

means of a meta-curatorial approach which historicises and re-stages the practice of crosscultural modernists like Michoutouchkine and Pilioko.

Ethno-Spatiality as Sovereignty: An Alternative Culture of Taiwanese Indigenous Curatorial Practices

Biung Ismahasan (Bunun Nation curator, artist and PhD researcher, University of Essex and Taiwan Academy of Sciences, Taipei)

'Indigeneity' is a politically enabling construct in the resistance to ongoing colonialisms and expropriations, and performance and installation art are vital expressions of its emergent, processual and contextual nature. My 2018 exhibition, *Dispossessions: Performative Encounter(s) of Taiwanese Indigenous Contemporary Art*, defied expectations of primitivism and primordialism, emphasising instead self-made and re-appropriated identities. Offering an example of Indigenous curation from an Austronesian perspective, *Dispossessions* responded to the radical flourishing of Indigenous performance and installation art despite – and in response to – social and environmental disruption, instability and change.

This presentation explores the ethno-aesthetic nature of Taiwanese Indigenous performative art through the works of Truku performance artist and activist Don Don Hounwn, Rukai sculptor Eleng Luluan and myself, a Bunun curator (Truku, Rukai and Bunun are three of Taiwan's sixteen Indigenous groups). It will discuss the performative exchange of Indigenous artists from Taiwan in an international context through focusing on two exhibitions: *Dispossessions: Performative Encounter(s) of Taiwanese Indigenous Contemporary Art* at Goldsmiths and *Let the River Flow: The Sovereign Will and the Making of a New Worldliness* at the Office for Contemporary Art Norway in 2018. I examine our performative approaches and curatorial strategies as Indigenous artistic practices, with a particular focus on those pertinent to cultural loss, recovery and activation, and in relation to the discourse surrounding Indigenous and cultural sovereignty. In this presentation, I attempt to refine mixed descriptions of 'Indigeneity', based upon practices and experiences, considering the growing 'Indigenisation' of the international art world. This presentation begins by looking at how Hounwn performs Indigeneity, sorrow and solitude, thereby exposing hybrid identities. I will then go on to demonstrate how Luluan uses her Indigenous minimalist installations to explore intrinsic and extrinsic performativity through material objects and soft sculptures. Finally, I will look at how I myself structured a performative encounter with Taiwanese Indigenous contemporary art by curating in a non-gallery or non-institutional space with cultural resonance.

Geographic Horizons in Defining the Southeast Asia Modern

Vera Mey (PhD researcher, SOAS, University of London)

In this presentation, Khmer Buddhist mural paintings from Cambodia's independence and modern period will be compared with artistic strategies used by artists in Indonesia's late modern period (the 1960s and 1970s) where art installations were created for encounter outside of the gallery walls. Both case studies demonstrate how issues of site-specificity and materiality challenge the possibility of these works being inserted into museological and therefore art-historical discourses, which are primarily built around what is physically permissible for acquisition. My interest in these art forms is twofold: they usually fit outside of the remit of the 'modern' because of their site-specificity as part of vernacular and localised visual vocabulary; they also challenge the modern canon as they are not necessarily heroic or abstract images that could translate internationally.

The political context of the modern global condition is inseparable from these artworks. This period in Southeast Asia is one that enabled a 'return' to artistic forms that demonstrate a sense of locality and are indigenously rooted in notions of the region, in contrast to the problematic but dominating delineations of the nation and its association with the 'modern'.

A River with Standing: Indigenous Rights and Artistic Interventions

Mercedes Vicente (curator, writer and researcher)

This paper presents the early stages of my research project on the Whanganui River in Aotearoa New Zealand, which in 2017 became the first river in the world bestowed with personhood rights as a result of Māori activism. The historical political struggles of the 1970s, known as the 'Māori Renaissance' – a movement that sought Indigenous self-determination, standing against colonialism and its enclosures of Māori land – set the ground for this significant new law today that redresses Māori sovereignty and recognises Māori worldview and their ancestral kinship with the river. The paper also draws some reflections on video artist Darcy Lange's *Maori Land Project* (1977–80) and the politics of representation surrounding his work, as an example of a Pākehā (New Zealander of European descent) documenting Māori struggles over their land rights and for which he collaborated closely with Māori activist and photographer John Miller. Through these connected case studies, I reflect on the evolution of Māori cultural debates as well as on some of the ethical concerns and collaborative working processes, drawing from notions such as the coloniser–indigene coupling or 'hyphen', as explored by Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins, and examples of both Māori and Pākehā contemporary artists in Aotearoa New Zealand (including Local Time, Joyce Campbell, Nova Paul and Natalie Robertson) embracing *kaupapa* Māori, so working through and from the position of Māori customary practices, principles and ideologies.

Healing by Making – Duodji as a Way of Life

Liisa-Rávná Finbog (Sámi archeologist, museologist and PhD researcher, University of Oslo)

The Sámi, a people Indigenous to northern Fenno-Scandinavia and the Kola Peninsula in the Russian federation, have a long history and a rich cultural heritage. During the colonisation of their customary regions (Sápmi) and the consequent assimilation politics of four different nation states, much of the Sámi population experienced a loss of their language, cultural heritage (both material and immaterial), and ethnic identities. In the last decades, those having first-hand experience of colonisation and assimilation along with their descendants have begun a painstaking process of regaining what was lost and healing their colonial trauma. In my paper, I explore some of the ways in which such healing may be achieved, and I suggest that learning duodji – customary Sámi handicraft – not only facilitates the return of traditional knowledge (*árbediehtu*) and epistemology, but also strengthens connections to heritage, to ancestors, to kin (*fuolkit*), to community and to individual identities.