

PLEASE... USE OTHER DOOR

Another Look At Exhibition Making



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Contents

2
Introduction

3
Acknowledgement

Chapter 1: Essays

5
Under Maintenance:
checkups on curating and management
Mayumi Hirano

9
To which the ghost says:
“As if through writing, things would be legible”
Iris Ferrer

13
Disillusioning the Exhibition Making:
Based on My Personal Experiences
Eunsoo Yi

17
Practice of Arts Tropical
Sayaka Ashidate

21
Memo to self: Nine Reflections Thus Far
Franchesca Casauay

27
My Practice of Art Management:
a way to make a joyful future
Sachiko Uchiyama

Chapter 2: Roundtable

32
Roundtable Discussion

38
an abridged glossary of encounters:
in search of ghosts in exhibition-making
Iris Ferrer

Supplement

44
Group sharing activity
Denver Garza

Introduction

An exhibition is a platform to "show." The space is elaborately calculated to navigate the sight. An uncountable number of elements, considered distracting, are excluded from the view in order to present the worldview perfectly as planned. Those not only include things, such as electric wires, masking tapes and packing materials used for artworks, but also people who contribute to the realization of the exhibition must disappear from the site before the exhibition opens. Events happening in the backstage are rarely discussed publicly.

This publication aims to consider what it means to make an exhibition from the perspectives of the backstage players, namely art managers. The book contains texts by Sayaka Ashidate, Chesca Casauay, Iris Ferrer, Sachiko Uchiyama and Eunsoo Yi about their individual experiences, methodologies of practice and the significance and value that they see in art. It also contains excerpts of a roundtable discussion among the contributors as well as a glossary of terms compiled by Ferrer, based on the shared texts and discussions. A manual for group sharing by Denver Garza is included as a supplement. I hope this publication will contribute to the collective effort in making the exhibition meaningful and healthy for everyone involved in the process.

MH

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CHAPTER I



ESSAYS

Under Maintenance: checkups on curating and management

Mayumi Hirano

In the early months of 2020, a new virus started to spread across the world. In Metro Manila where I reside, the response of the government to the public health crisis was to impose repressive control on movement. People's lives were literally locked down. It felt like the various connections which sustained everyday life were suddenly interrupted. Many lost ways to make a living and started to suffer from anxiety and hunger. Under such critical conditions, artists and cultural workers promptly activated cooperative networks by connecting digital and physical spaces to deliver support to those who are in need. As the term “deadline” has become a direct reflection of the matter of life and death under the pandemic, “lifeline” is kept intact by the circulation of compassion and the will to share.

This situation urged me to reflect on my own practice, one that revolves around making art exhibitions and projects and may be loosely described as “curating.” Have I been participating in the circulation of care through my practice? As is commonly known, the verb *curate* has its roots in the Latin word *curare* which means “to take care of,” and, traditionally, in the context of visual art, the principle of curating is associated with the function of gatekeeping or determining artistic worthiness for public display and/or conservation.

The distinction that is ascribed to “the category *art* is actually the basis of social form or the form of the ‘social.’” Referring to Néstor García Canclini’s concept, art historian and curator Patrick D. Flores notes that art is:

"constituted in the act of discriminating, let us say, one class or gender from the other as a form of discriminatory judgment, as the foundation of difference or limit. In other words, the institution of art teaches us to be ‘discriminating;’ what we have forgotten is that it also teaches us to be ‘discriminatory.’”^[1]

The practice of curating operates through this mechanism. Flores suggests, “In reflecting on these remarks, we may want to pause and ask ourselves about our own definitions of art in current curatorial practice.” The current suspension of normal operations appears to open up a window of opportunity to do so.

The proliferation of art festivals across the globe since the 1990s has expanded the platforms for curatorial practice. While curatorial work is expected to meet the standards and the desires of the international art community, it also has to address the demands of the local community with respect to their daily life, cultural values, and the moral economy. Mobility is expected in order to function as an actor in the international artworld while groundedness is required to make the exhibition speak to local publics. Consequently, curatorial work is often divided into two classified job positions: a curator and manager. ^[2] The former plays the role of an itinerant concept-maker while the latter performs the on-the-ground task of coordination to realize the plan. This work division seems to also pull apart theory from practice and the ideal from reality within the sphere of curatorial work.

[1]
Flores, Patrick D. 2001. "Make/Shift." *Crafting Economies*. The Japan Foundation; Cultural Center of the Philippines; Ashiya City Museum of Art & History, 11.

[2]
From my experience, the terms, “manager” and “coordinator” are often used almost interchangeably in the actual site of exhibition-making.

In the essay “Cultural Management and the Discourse of Practice,” Constance Devereaux provides a set of skills expected in art management. It includes such responsibilities as “marketing and audience development, economics and finances, public policy, fundraising, real estate, board development, arts education, strategic planning, as well as the diplomatic skills for developing relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders.”^[3] Devereaux continues by problematizing how the discourse surrounding the field of art management is mainly shaped by conventional management theories which promote measurable concepts not quite suited to art management. John Pick and Malcolm Anderton also indicate the fundamental conflict between philosophies of business and art, and emphasize that an essential task of art management is to “concentrate as much as possible upon the art itself, and the aesthetic contract with the audience which gives it life and meaning.”^[4] As the authors leave the content of the aesthetic contract undefined, in this essay I will attempt to propose a possible interpretation by reflecting on the actual work that an art manager takes care of, based on my personal experiences of working with international platforms.

The nature of a contemporary art festival in particular lies in the energy and tension generated by the temporality. Similarly, its operation largely depends on the force provided by freelancers on short-term contracts. The emphasis on temporality accelerates the speed of production while restlessly demanding efficiency. It also requires mental and physical resilience.

A curator is forced to constantly travel and write exhibition plans. Upon receiving an invitation from the curator, artists develop artwork plans that will be implemented at a remote location. As soon as the proposals are delivered to an art manager, she scrambles to realize them with local resources. There is rarely enough time and space for the three actors to reflect on the proposals together. Rather, the energy is concentrated on moving forward with the plan. Thus, the actual set of skills required in art management include the ability to understand the curatorial/artistic proposal on a conceptual level and to promptly, yet accurately, translate it into the language used on-site. It also involves mediating interactions of desires, skills, and materials among organizers, sponsors, carpenters, technicians, installers, shippers, local communities, and other agents to channel the energy toward the realization of the plans made by curators and artists who are not necessarily on-site.

The ability to translate, mediate, and facilitate shapes the foundation of art managerial practice. It requires a critical perspective supported by the study of aesthetics as well as sincere respect for others and the will to act with compassion. Unlike the image of the pristine white cube, the stage for art management is set in an entangled social sphere of conflicting values and emotions which constantly questions the meaning of “art.” In this social space, the aesthetic contract is aimed toward protecting not the prescribed definition and value of art, but the agreement to secure a safe space for expressing and recognizing each other’s reactions, whether it is resistance or curiosity, when encountering unfamiliar ideas. I believe this discursive space opens up a venue to not just reconsider such distinctions as “high art” and “popular culture” or “beauty” and “ugliness,” but to recognize both the centrality of structure as the classificatory and discriminatory mechanism, as well as, our individual capacity and “will to transcend, shape, and reshape the limits of structures and the power of institutional formations.”^[5]

[3] Devereaux, Constance. 2019. “Cultural Management and Its Discontents.” *Arts and Cultural Management: Sense and Sensibilities in the State of the Field*. New York: Routledge, 160.

[4] Pick, John and Anderton, Malcolm, 1996. *Arts Administration*. London and New York: E & FN Spon.

[5] Datuin, Flaudette May V. 2011. “Key Notes: Shifts and Turns in Art Studies, 1959-2010.” *Paths of Practice: Selected Papers from the Second Philippine Art Studies Conference*. Ed. Cecilia S. De La Paz, Patrick D. Flores, Tessa Maria Guazon. Quezon City: Art Studies Foundation, Inc., 108.

An essential function of managerial work is “the maintenance task that enables the making and/or encountering of work.” Art historian and curator Eileen Legaspi-Ramirez raises a question: “Why does art historical ‘genealogy’ still not fully encompass the maintenance task [...]?”^[6] It is not necessary to reiterate here that the system of classification that defines art, which descriptinates maintenance work as backstage matter, has traditionally been operated from a secure position within the social hierarchy. Confronted by the social inequality exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic, I find the need to scrutinize the complex social dimensions contoured by the maintenance work, often made invisible, of art managers. “The outside is no longer the extraneous [...] Increasingly it is where the action is located, and where our attention to building resistance and solidarity might be best directed.”^[7]

Can we reimagine an exhibition as a space where the social norms are reconsidered through reciprocal exchanges? Can curatorial practice abandon the “sanitary preoccupation with distinguishing the pure and the uncontaminated” and study human expressions from “the uncertainties that provoke their crossings”?^[8] With such discursive ideas and questions in mind, I organize this convergence of female practitioners with an in-depth experience of art management. I strongly feel the need for checkups on the practice of curating/management as the world is becoming severely ill.

While I have been initiating my own projects mostly outside the white cube, my work as a freelance art manager is always situated within the larger systems of the art and creative industry. I also have moved back and forth between Osaka and Manila in the past several years, clumsily switching between my mother tongue of Japanese and the “universal” language of English with a sense of guilt for not being able to speak Filipino yet. This restless mental shifting of mind has often caused me physical and psychological instability. However, it is this in-betweenness that has shaped my practice and awareness of the issues of categorization and territorialization. Working as an art manager, I have witnessed how territorial behavior and self-defense mechanisms can lead to not just to simple ignorance but to violence that widens cracks and unevenness. While I have been affected by the power politics of such uncritical and disinterested views of establishmentism, I am also aware that my presence is ingrained in the neocolonial mechanism and I can easily be considered as an intruder by the local communities. As a way for me to remain self-critical, I approach the projects of my own initiative as a platform for learning to unlearn and doing to undo.

Load na Dito, an initiative that I run with my husband Mark Salvatus, also started as a personal practice to unlearn the conventional notions, roles, and values of family. It is a way for us to continue acknowledging the differences between us as individuals and find ways to live together. Developing from this perspective, our projects try to shuffle the relationships that have been conventionally accepted. Load na Dito is run without having a space in order to keep ourselves unbound to a specific territory. We sometimes open our home for projects, but we try to make the door open as wide as possible. We believe reciprocal space allows us to unravel the meanings affixed to words and gestures, and it gives us a chance to weave new meanings.

I met each of the participants in this meeting—Sayaka Ashidate, Franchesca Casauay, Iris Ferrer, Sachiko Uchiyama, and Eunsoo Yi—at different

[6] Legaspi-Ramirez, Eileen. 2019. “Art on the Back Burner: Gender as the Elephant in the Room of Southeast Asian Art Histories” *Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia*. 3:1. Singapore: NUS Press Pte Ltd., 26.

[7] Ross, Andrew. “The New Geography of Work. Power to the Precarious?” *On Curating*. 16:13, 11. <https://on-curating.org/issue-16.html#YMxhG5Mza2l>

[8] Canclini, Néstor Garcia. 1995. *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 175.

times and places. They all seek and develop their own practice from a perspective that is critical toward customary categories and hierarchies, and they have been giving me inspiration and opportunities to check up on my own practice. Each of our practices is intertwined with our respective local contexts. As each context is informed by underlying economic and social agencies, the actual challenges and solutions may differ significantly from each other. However, we could still find similarities and commonalities in our experiences and beliefs despite our distinct locales. I hope this exchange of perspectives will let us connect our individual practices and hence, help us plan steps toward a better future in solidarity.

I have a gut feeling that the participants' abilities, knowledge, and the strategies that they have nurtured after having dealt with a number of unpredictable real-world problems during the exhibition-making process, will suggest ways of circulating ideas and resources more fairly, amidst our current realities fraught with inhumane statements and behaviors. I am deeply grateful to have had this opportunity.

Mayumi Hirano is a curator based in Manila and Osaka. She has been running the art initiative *Load na Dito* project with artist Mark Salvatus since 2016. Mayumi is interested in exploring various curatorial approaches to explore the gray zone between public and private spaces. She worked as a project manager of Gwangju Biennale 2018 in South Korea, Asian Public Intellectual Fellow (2013-4), curator of Koganecho Area Management Center (2008-13), researcher of Asia Art Archive (2006-8) and curatorial assistant of Yokohama Triennale 2005. Her curatorial practice involves research and on-site work. She completed her Master's studies at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College. She is a senior lecturer at the Department of Art Studies, University of the Philippines Dilliman.

To which the ghost says: “As if through writing, things would be legible”

Iris Ferrer

Exhibition methods are pretty much similar regardless of platform or theme. There are pre-existing templates, tips on communication and production, procedural manuals, and contact lists that may be passed around. Content, scale, and actors may differ with every project, but the frame remains the same—always going back to the basic steps of ingress—event proper—egress. And like with most practices, this requires constant exercise. Eventually, muscle memory forms and things get easier.

Or not.

It is easy to blame the unpredictability of artists/curators/writers, the traffic and chaos in Manila, the moods and ego of one's colleagues, lack of governmental support, and the whole neoliberal structure for changes, delays or postponements. However, as much as these hold water, there might be something inherently problematic about the act of organizing these presentations of display in the first place.

Exhibitions are all about visibility. It is a *demand to look* at objects and fragments of knowledge. It assumes that this *thing* is valuable enough to be displayed, to be looked at, to be listened to, to be experienced—a materiality, an object-ness worthy of a subject's senses. This materiality presumes a source, as exhibitions are deliberate human-made platforms, which varies from artist to curator to organizer to its other variations, intersections, and labels. Despite the fluidity that come with the contemporary, with its mention of the *participatory* or the *interactive*, a certain authority is maintained. It is never as open or democratic or communal as one's press release says, as there is still a starting point and this point is ultimately set by someone. The act of exhibiting is a call and it says: Come, you have to listen to what I say.

Note that it is previously mentioned that exhibitions may be seen as inherently problematic, not that it is *wrong*. It is said to be so due to its porosity to the neoliberal and colonial values of individualism, speed, and quantity in production. Because these are the intrinsic characteristics of this type of platform, what is required is a slower and more mindful type of working methodology. It should not merely be used as a checklist for one's career trajectory. There is, of course, relativity in terms of one's needs, privileges and on how one defines worthiness; but if you are demanding people to look, especially at a time when people everywhere are literally dying, at least give them something worthy of their time. We should, at the very least, be responsible and accountable for what we put out into the world.

Here then comes the proposition of looking at ghosts on several levels: of the workers' (persons involved in its internal workings), of space and time's (non-human aspects of the project), and of the public's (receivers of the material provided by the exhibition). This text aims to parallel the obsessive visibility of exhibitions with the invisibility or translucency of everything else surrounding it. It attempts to say that maybe instead of ignoring, running, or exorcising these

ghosts, one should be ready to carry it with them each and every time one commits to creating an exhibition.

The propositions below are meant to be considerations and does not definitively solve any problems.

Pre-

With an idea burning in your chest, you decide to proceed with creating an exhibition. Being in the field of the visual arts, and as proven by centuries worth of history, you choose a platform that demands you to look—the *visual* in visual art cannot be stressed enough. You ask people to help and/or participate. You believe you are an important voice of your community in this generation, and that what you have to say *should* be heard. In due course, the exhibition's schedule, venue, and the works to be shown are set.

Questions to be considered: What is the history of the space and the land where you are exhibiting? Does it hold any complicated pasts and/or presents? Who are its owners and its funders? What socio-political network does it subsist on? What are your collaborators' pasts and presents? How do the collaborators' involvement relate with the space's complex pasts and presents? How do the works converse with the space? Where is the money for your exhibition coming from? Why are you doing this project now and not next year? How is it relevant to the communities surrounding the space? How is it relevant to the art community in its vicinity? How is it relevant to everything happening where it is located (city/country/world)?

Suggestion: Visit the space at 3AM and wait for the ghosts to reveal themselves—remember that their agency too should be respected. Light a candle and pray three Hail Mary's. Once you get their trust and you are comfortable listening to them throughout the run of your exhibition, we move on.

Ingress

You hire people to do the installation, because your skill sets for production and power tools are limited. Busy running around making sure everything happens according to plan, you are the primary decision-maker and troubleshooter of the project. You wait for deliveries and pray that the works come on time. Your friends who are also from the arts visit, and you rant to them how stressful doing this is. Driven by your vision and message, you say that you will make sure this happens no matter what it takes. They laud you for your determination and buy you a beer.

Questions to be considered: Are the workers getting paid at the least minimum wage according to the city's standard? Will they get overtime pay? Do they get free meals, unlimited water and coffee, free rides? Do you have health and safety procedures in place? Are you still kind despite the stress and delays? Are you still kind to the messenger who was three hours late? Or the worker who suddenly could not come on the last day of install? Or your assistant or intern who did not submit the excel sheet on time because their internet at home was not working? Are you perhaps only extra kind and forgiving to the artists, curators, museum directors or gallerists who can give you the next opportunity? Are you able to have a balance between compliance to the agreed work and basic humanity? Are things really extremely stressful or did you just want to claim victim for that free beer?

Suggestion: Talk directly to the ghosts, for they hold secrets you never knew existed. If your intention is genuine, they will answer back. Take note of these conversations. Turning your shirt inside out might also be helpful when you are feeling lost.

Event Proper

You survive and are able to open the exhibition. The press and VIP's arrive, and you are asked about your vision. You proudly give them a tour, a monologue. You say that it took you a lot of time and effort. Visitors, friends, enemies and ex-lovers congratulate you. Critiques come, but it doesn't really faze you. You drink the night away because you sincerely believe you deserve it.

Questions to be considered: Have you been truthful with your speeches and tours? Did you properly acknowledge each and every individual involved in the process? Is your intended public present, or did you just use their stories for your 15-seconds fame? Did you perhaps suspiciously prioritize the VIP's in your guestlist? Are the workers, who have eventually become collaborators, even invited? To whom are you giving attention and time to during this phase of the project? Are they really worth it? Are the critiques really useless and the compliments warranted if you are being fully honest with yourself? Do you really deserve to drink the night away?

Suggestion: Look in the mirror of the space's bathroom and say the name of its ghosts three times. Do it every night after everyone leaves for the duration of the project. List down the words that will be revealed on the mirror for it shall form your most truthful and up-to-date bio.

Egress

The project closes and you pat yourself on the back for what is relatively a successful run. You have been invited to do another exhibition in another space. You are feeling proud and excited. You believe that this is the start of your future.

Questions to be considered: Aside from surviving a strenuous race, are you really happy with how it turned out? Did you give justice to the belief that you are the voice of your generation? Did you give justice to the belief and support of your friends and community? Did you give justice to the ghosts? Is that pride for a future warranted?

Suggestion: Light incense to cleanse the space you have occupied in honor of every ghost you met. This allows whoever will occupy next to process things on their own time and accord. Go straight home afterwards, so you can bring the ghosts and their stories with you.

Post-

It has been a habit to easily applaud each other for surviving projects – comments of 'congrats!' flooding every Facebook and Instagram post even before the exhibition opens. We know how the stress feels; we know the work is not easy. These deserve pats on the back, sure, but does it really merit these 'congratulations'? This resilience, however deserving of praise, should not be glamorized or romanticized especially when it is clear that the issues which push us to *just survive* and *just be resilient* are deeply systemic – including the thinking that exhibitions are easy ways to beef up one's CV.

Is it then real support if we are merely cheering each other's participation in this rat race? Is it not a more truthful expression of concern to really look at the project first before commenting 'congrats'? Is it not a more truthful expression of encouragement to take the time to converse about how much time was given to face the ghosts? Perhaps it is more apt to commend people for carrying the burdens of the past and the present; for admitting one's humanity in its frailty and errancy; and for remembering that you are just one of the dwellers in any space you enter.

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Disillusioning the Exhibition Making: Based On My Personal Experiences

Eunsoo Yi

#1

From a gallery, a private museum, a public museum supported by sponsors and foundations, to an international biennale and a state-owned museum. During my short career in exhibition making, I have passed through art institutions funded in various ways, as I was unable to stay more than a year in any one workplace. Additionally, there were also times when I scraped up the money to hold my own exhibition. At present, I am waiting for my current contract to be terminated so that I might renew it for just another year.

The knowledge, creativity, social relationships, and emotional lives of artists have long been assets used to generate financial value. The archetype of the artist as self-employed entrepreneur is increasingly prevalent in neoliberal society, with the terms entrepreneur and entrepreneurship charged with positive notions of being proactive, adventurous, independent, and free. This situation has been enforced by the contemporary “free market” and the capitalist ideologies of government supporting such a market, which serves to promote the enhanced flexibility of the labor market while concealing the precarious economic and social conditions this engenders. As a free agent highly dependent on their knowledge, entrepreneurs need to expose—whether to consumers or commissioners—their entire selves as a person to prove they are fully capable of meeting the potential requirements. Ironically, this also means they are barely protected from financial difficulty in the event they fail to sufficiently control and regulate themselves.

Very few artists become celebrities with sufficient power and wealth to alleviate concerns about how to maintain their lifestyle while producing new work. Additionally, few people can secure those stable or permanent positions in the artworld’s wealthy museums, galleries, and educational institutions. Everybody else supports the system in precarious conditions, constantly searching for better opportunities. Although many are highly educated—speaking multiple languages, deeply researching the theoretical contexts of their work, communicating exceptionally—the positions available to them are mostly short term contracts paying minimum wage. Hoping to secure themselves in the art world, they move from one institution to the next to continue turning themselves into an ever more valuable asset.

While this ruthless capitalist logic is prevalent throughout the art industry, behind the scenes of international biennales might be described as art capital’s brutal battleground. At such events, empty spaces need to be filled, but resources are limited, and there are too many stakeholders: hundreds of artists from around the globe—some of them stars, some barely known—directors, curators, museums, private and public foundations, sponsors, galleries, and government officials, to name a few. Although these biennales are always underbudgeted, savvy operators can always find ways to expand the budget for one component at the expense of funding for another component. Obvious and less-than-obvious competitiveness is apparent everywhere; from time to time, the power relationships at play

become absolutely blatant. Following involvement in the exhibitions of international biennales, their grand, humanitarian, and often anti-neoliberalist themes not only lose their magic but become plainly hypocritical.

#2

When I had the builders build a white wall for an artwork, I saw a crack on it. It was just a very thin line that was unnoticeable for the visitors, but everytime I passed by it, it looked like a huge gap to me, and I could not stop thinking about it. It was engraved in my memory as a symbol of unfortunate defects that would ruin the viewers' appreciation of the artwork. Why was I so obsessed about creating perfect, flawless space?

In the article *Global Conceptualism Revisited*, Boris Groys wrote "Conceptual artists shifted their attention from individual objects to their relationships in space and time. (It was) a shift from the exhibition space presenting individual, disconnected objects to one based on a holistic understanding of space, in which the relations between these objects are exhibited in the first place."^[1] In contemporary art, the space itself is recognized as a component constructing and completing the artwork. However, in the contemporary art world, it is surprisingly rare for an artist to get the chance to spend substantial time on site, especially to the degree of actually controlling the space.

^[1]
Boris Groys, *In the Flow*, London:
Verso, 2016, p.121

While artworks regularly travel to exhibitions around the world, the financial situation of art institutions do not allow the artists to travel with them. To contend with this reality, assistants, exhibition coordinators, and fabricators are hired by the artist or institution to construct the space. This requires creative solutions to problems arising during the installation process, solutions demanding knowledge and specialization. Additionally, these actors supervise and control the space on behalf of the artists. However, their names are unlisted, their work uncredited.

Given creative industry employees are often free agents whose work is not compensated with a secure income, giving auxiliary crew credit is crucial because this can be the only proof of their contributions and achievements. While such a system is relatively well established in the film industry, it has not become common in the art world. It might be argued that this is because art having multiple people involved at the creation or production stage is a new practice. However, there is a long history of collaboration in the arts and, instead, it is certain schools of art theory that have worked against crediting such participants in artistic production.

#3

I once curated an artist's solo show and gave the artist my opinion on the paintings, video works and the overall installation. Although it was such a fulfilling experience, I cannot deny that I felt a certain discomfort, being somewhat anxious about seeing my name among the video work's end credits. This meant that whenever I made comments, I would ask myself whether I had crossed the line.

Once an artwork or a different style of artwork is ascribed to the artist's originality, it becomes difficult for viewers to recognize that other people aided their creation. This is exemplified by modernist art, defined, in part, by the principle that the artist was the sole creator of an artwork, just as God created this world.

The idea of studio assistants touching the work of modern masters such as Pablo Picasso would thus have appeared to be sacrilege.

Contemporary art has since destroyed and deconstructed many of the norms and rules of modernism, including by making clear that many artworks have not even been touched by the artists. The public—or, at least, those familiar with the realities of the artworld—is conscious of contemporary masters running multiple studios and hiring assistants. In some cases, artists have explicitly positioned themselves as directors or organizers—rather than as a work’s fabricator. For *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002), Francis Alys gathered five hundred volunteers to move a mountain; the video recording the process was displayed in the exhibition space. Still, the work solely belongs to the artist, as does the privilege the artwork generated. As such, this is not only a matter of originality.

According to Groys, artistic practice is none other than self-presentation to the gaze of the other, which presupposes danger, conflict and risk of failure. In art, subjectivity comes to self awareness through self-exposure, and what contemporary art practices is the radicalized subjectivation through radical self-exposure.^[2] Artworks are often considered the complete exposure of an artist’s inner world—including their most intimate thoughts and feelings—to the other, the spectators. Hence, the contributions made by others during creation are unrecognized by viewers, meaning those assistants are not allowed to take any responsibility for the work; in contrast, the artist takes complete responsibility for all of the work’s vulnerability. This complicates the possibility of contributors claiming their role in the work’s creation. Given these theoretical foundations and its own norms, the art world had been reluctant to change the established system.

[2]
Boris Groys, *In the Flow*, London: Verso,
2016, p.128-131

#4

At multiple of the institutions that I worked for, the predominantly male shippers, technicians, and installers kept a list of female staff ranked by appearance. They would sometimes joke about it in front of me. I tried hard to ignore this and cater to them, hoping to encourage them to listen to me and improve their attitude. This led me to, at one point, consider it a shame that I didn’t smoke, thinking it might have helped me to get along with them and build better relationships.

Even if the established system within the artworld prevents contributors from being credited, their efforts might, instead, be properly compensated financially. This brings us back to where we started from: most art institution employees are being paid very low wages no matter how the art market is flourishing or how rich the institutions are.

One major factor in this—one which is often overlooked—is that the art industry is a female-dominated field. Careers dominated by women are considered less crucial, something that can be easily abandoned because women can always return home to take care of their families. Moreover, female workers in the art industry are often positioned as caretakers and often expected to operate behind the scenes. The role of assistants and exhibition makers in bringing artist and curator visions to life increasingly resembles “care work”—organizing many things at once while looking after everybody’s physical and mental soundness. Given such care activities have been largely formed around relationality and connectedness with others, it can be difficult for care workers to fight for their rights and make their voices heard.

To interrupt this existing order and shift the status quo, Isabell Lorey suggests carrying out a care strike in all political and economic contexts where care is devalued and depoliticized through a perception of being private, feminine, and unproductive. That is, contexts producing perspectives through which care work is perpetually invisible and its associated conflicts consequently unrecognized. Such a care strike would specifically articulate these debates and struggles, starting from them to create the “instruments of vision” that “vision requires.”^[3]

Still, as a worker actually involved in the care work that is exhibition production, putting such ideas into action seems extremely difficult, even unrealistic. Neither does it seem like an approach leading institutions to credit all the people involved in the exhibition-making. Yet, it is possible to take small steps resisting the current order and system. For instance, in the exhibition catalog for Sophie Calle’s *M’as tu vue*—published by Centre Pompidou—all of the people who participated in the exhibition’s creation are listed, including, for example, the person who adjusted the lighting. If names cannot be put on the labels next to the works, allowing their names space on a page of the exhibition catalog might be the next best thing. Additionally, public discourse regarding the political and economic situation artworld care workers find themselves in might foment greater solidarity. Above all, exhibition makers need to consider themselves laborers with the right to ask, and subsequently fight, for protection and compensation.

[3]
Isabell Lorey, *State of Insecurity* (London: Verso, 2015), 97.

Eunsoo Yi is a curator, writer and researcher based in Seoul. She is working as an International Relations Officer at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (2020-). Recently, she curated “Effaced Faces” supported by Arts Council Korea and Danish Arts Foundation, where she revisited the distorted relationship between the official history and personal memories of Korean women after the Korean War. Her research interests include the intersection of history and memories of social and political minorities expressed through visual languages. She worked as an exhibition coordinator at Gwangju Biennale 2018, and finished her internship at Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2017. She holds a MA in History of Art from Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

Practice of Arts Tropical

Sayaka Ashidate

For my family to live meaningfully

Four years ago, I got married. As I also became pregnant around the same time, I started to think about how I could live a meaningful life as well as the family life I was about to enter. The state seems to approve of marriage on a piece of paper, and imposes some sort of an ideal "family" or "marriage" on us. Such frameworks often do not suit my life with my husband who is an artist, so I wanted to explore our own form of a good family. I was living in Kyoto at the time, and I saw many different forms of "family" existing around me. Artists are all tough, and they live with their families in various ways. Some live with other families, and some open their home by turning it into a guesthouse.

Among these artists, I was most greatly influenced by the activities of Kumon, an after-school center run by artist Toru Koyamada and his family who have been developing shared spaces and community cafés. At first glance, their Kumon appeared to be an ordinary franchise school, but the students' desks were not ordinary conference desks, rather they were handmade by Mr. Koyamada. Occasionally, other artists would come and interact with the students as workshop teachers. There was a waiting area by the entrance of the classroom where the students' parents could relax, read books, or mingle with Mr. Koyamada. At the end of the day's work, people, including the part-time staff who were college students, gathered around the table and ate together. It was not a place where we would expect to have special events but it was a place in the neighborhood where we could talk casually, and this brought a very enriching time to those who were involved. As my family lived in the same neighborhood, we were often invited to join the table. Eating meals together alleviated my anxiety especially when I was pregnant.

Because of the relationship forged through such exchanges, the Koyamada family of five let our 10-month-old daughter and I stay with them for half a year while my husband was away for a research residency in London. At the Koyamadas', our daughter had the chance to eat and play with various people, and we were able to do things that would not have been possible had I been parenting alone. I also participated in their family meetings where each of us shared our personal challenges. This gave me the opportunity to learn about diverse values and possibilities. The Koyamadas have become my second family to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for creating such a valuable time for me. The time I shared with them has been very influential in forming the way I've been raising our daughter.

Trying to run an art space as a family

In search of a new environment, we moved from Kyoto to Okinawa where my husband's family lives. Rent in Okinawa Prefecture has skyrocketed in recent years due to the rise in tourism and the increasing number of migrants both from outside the prefecture and abroad. Even if a property has been vacant and abandoned for a long time, its landlord can be so insistent on maintaining the high

rent. In spite of such a situation, we were able to find a cheap commercial space with a residential unit which had a battered yet lovely atmosphere.

The property we rented was previously a café, but it only had a fine-looking DIY counter. Ventilation fans, sinks, and other equipment essential for the café's operation had mostly been removed. Initially, we had no intentions of running a space, but we felt like we might be able to initiate and generate something there. With such hopes, my husband and I began running a space with two functions. While it was a gallery space where my husband (who is an artist) and I (who had coordinated art projects in the past) could apply our experiences, we also ran it as a café so that various people could enter easily. We hoped it would eventually expand our networks. My husband and I hurriedly built and painted the gallery walls and prepared an inaugural exhibition. We did almost everything by ourselves with occasional help from our daughter, and we opened the gallery a month and a half after we had moved in. After opening the space, we spent most of our time together as a couple discussing ways to improve the space.

Details of activities

Instead of charging an admission fee or renting out the gallery space, as is often the case in Okinawa, we covered the operation costs of running the space with sales from the café and by selling products. This was because if we were to charge artists a fee to use our space, they would have become our "clients," but we wanted to create a space where we could freely play together with artists as equals. Although the exhibition space was quite small with a floor area of 3m x 4m, we focused on creating an exhibition that could only be realized in that space. We engaged in discussions with the artists to explore what could be expressed in the box. There were times when the artists tried to present experimental works that were quite different from their previous works. My husband had his own views and opinions and would question the essence of the work, while I tried as much as possible to brush up the exhibitions by sharing some pointers from shows that I had seen previously or been involved in. There were times when, even after thorough discussions, we did not find the exhibition convincing. Consequently, the relationship would break down, which would result in the closure of the exhibition. This was how seriously we would engage ourselves in exhibition-making.

We tried to find out how far we could go with an economic cycle without relying on money by keeping the raw material costs as low as possible. We also tried to see how much we could achieve with a DIY approach. We studied various recipe books and taught ourselves how to blend spices and cook curry from scratch. We also bought raw coffee beans and hand-roasted them. We introduced the option of bartering so that artists who had financial difficulties could also enjoy the exchange. Whenever we were given homegrown vegetables, fruits, and other fresh products, we would give coffee in exchange. In our house, there always were local Okinawan vegetables and fruits such as bitter melons and mangoes on the table. People from all walks of life came to our space, rejoicing in our daughter's growth and sharing updates. It was a pleasant, picture-perfect time.

Our memorable first exhibition consisted of diaries and photographs of daily life by my husband's old friend, Yoshihisa Miyagi, who grows organic vegetables and other products. It was very natural for us to name our space Arts Tropical. It is "arts," not "art." We were not particularly interested in art for art's

sake, but we were interested in those moments where something emerges and starts to take form. Mr. Miyagi's expression exactly articulated that, and thus the exhibition played a crucial role in conveying the concept of Arts Tropical.

Challenges of running a space independently

Even if people came to see the exhibitions in our "gallery," there were no spectacular paintings or sculptures. Frankly, our space was low-key. Those who came to see "art" would tilt their heads in confusion. In the beginning, there were not a lot of local Okinawan customers who looked forward to the "art" that mattered to us.

Due to the fact that our space was also a house, it was quite a hurdle for first-time customers to enter to eat and drink. The number of customers did not increase so quickly. After a while, I started to work four days a week at the Okinawa Arts Council, an auxiliary organization of the prefectural government. It was in order to establish an in-prefecture network that was necessary to run Arts Tropical as well as to compensate for my lack of experience. It was also a way to earn living expenses while gaining a multifaceted perspective on cultural projects in Okinawa.

I was also told many times that life would be easier if I took a full-time job. But I decided to focus on running the space and shop because I thought I should make use of my own experience, use my time freely, and gain more experience through my own projects. I believed it would lead me to a meaningful future. Within Okinawa, there are only a few projects in contemporary art, the field of my focus. There are many projects for traditional arts and crafts that are unique to Okinawa that need to be preserved and passed down to future generations, and the efforts of the government are focused on supporting the traditional expressions. Furthermore, the exhibitions at the Okinawa Prefectural Museum & Art Museum mostly focus on introducing deceased artists and senior artists. There are also only a few venues for young artists to present their works. Young artists are creating their own spaces and opening up their studios, which sometimes function as rental spaces. The idea was simple: if there is no place to see the "art" that excites us, then let's make it.

During a year and a half of operation, exhibitions and talks were held continuously, our publicity efforts through SNS gradually began to take effect, and many artists and art professionals from inside and outside Okinawa began to visit our space to see the exhibitions. By extending the opening hours until evening, the number of customers began to increase. Actually, many came to get drinks and eat our homemade curry. We hosted a number of talks that gathered renowned speakers who would normally give such talks at museums and institutions. We gradually gained enthusiastic supporters. We also organized a study tour for young artists from Okinawa and we traveled together to Tokyo, Nagoya, and Kyoto to visit art facilities, including museums and artist-in-residency programs that provide support to young artists, and to interview various actors behind the scene.

There were many repeat visitors who would come every time the exhibition changed, and Arts Tropical was becoming the place to see "art" in Okinawa. It started to function like a salon, where visitors would exchange their reflections on the exhibition. It became a place for customers to make new friends. Sometimes, we would be asked for advice. A small community was definitely forming.

Continuity is truly a powerful thing.

Our daughter was open to having different people visit the house one after another, and she was gradually growing to the age where she could converse and interact with various artists. I could see her eyes sparkle seeing the gallery space transform.

As our income started to increase, our confidence grew little by little and things finally started to get off the ground. But the deterioration of the aged building was becoming quite severe. The landlord finally asked us to move out. Numerous people gave us advice on ways to maintain the building, but in the end we were unable to resist the landlord's request and thus, we had to close the space.

Future Challenges and Possibilities

We thought about relocating and reopening, but we would need a space that could be used for exhibitions, and no such place was readily available. Additionally, when running the space, we often had to leave our daughter with my mother-in-law. We started the space to grow as a family but we often had to be away from our daughter. I wonder if we were able to get closer to our notion of an ideal family. We also had to consider the effects of COVID-19. Although things were just starting to roll, we chose to pause and contemplate on how we want to live as a family and how we want to develop our practice in the future.

Because of my profession, I have a habit of considering everything as an art project. If I were to use my family as an analogy, my husband and I are co-directors, I am also the office manager, and our daughter is a staff member. Now that my husband and I are both freelancing, I believe that we will continue the process of experimentation and reflection in search of our own way of living meaningfully with minimum expenses. As the office manager, I have to stay close to the artist/director's ideas and actions yet always retain a good sense of distance from him, and look for ways to improve the operation. This training is something I have never experienced before, and it is also a unique challenge that I can't solve using my expertise. I believe this will lead us in a better direction.

Sayaka Ashidate is an arts coordinator. She received a grant from the Japan Agency for Cultural Affairs to work with Residency Unlimited and to research on the New York art scene in 2010. From 2005 to 2007, she worked at BankART1929 in Yokohama as a curator and coordinator of the artist studio program. In 2005, she graduated with a degree from the Department of Arts Policy and Management at Musashino Art University in Tokyo.

MEMO TO SELF: Nine Reflections Thus Far

Franchesca Casauay

Since I feel this project is, at its core, an exercise in standing up for one's truth—a lived truth—I begin with:

1. A Disclaimer

When I was first invited by Mayumi to contribute to this project—“as a multitasker in the site of exhibition making” and share experiences in “being forced to (or voluntarily) deal with emergent situations in the process of building an exhibition”—my first thought was: *Piece of cake*. After all, I had in my possession—scattered here and there and just awaiting retrieval—various notes filled with rants/raves/recommendations gleaned from having worked in different capacities in the field of cultural work since 2007.

But I was wrong. It is with some difficulty that I articulate these aforementioned insights. They had always existed as fragments that I never really attempted to put into a cohesive piece of writing, especially with the option for public distribution, until now. And these insights had always functioned as a sort of embodied and free-flowing intuitive knowledge, guiding my feelings and actions, consciously and/or unconsciously. In this first attempt to pin some of them down, I came up with 9 reflections as a starting point in reviewing my learnings and ongoing insights from 13 years of practice. I craft for myself this memo as an expanded note to self, a work-in-progress document that I can go back to when I'm at a loss on what to do next, or anytime I need *gentle reminders* on why I do how I do what I do.

2. Setting the (back)stage

Stories on the problematic conditions we sometimes find ourselves in when doing art projects—whether this is for an exhibition, festival, performance, screening, conference, etc.—have mostly been relegated to behind-the-scenes discussions and rarely take place out in the open. Official program agendas usually tackle, front and center, artistic processes, aesthetics, conceptual framings—but rarely do we ever problematize at length and in depth the actual work conditions surrounding the production of these programs and projects: the human resources aspect. I guess it's not sexy or cool enough. But it is a necessary conversation and I'm grateful for this timely prompt.

As I write this, I hold this image in my head: sharing an art venue's restroom along with other women, transforming said space into a literal room for rest, collectively seeking solace in that one place in the whole gallery that temporary shields us from the toxic masculine energies that often abound when tensions are running high. The women's comfort room is where we go, to comfort a tearful colleague (sometimes this is ourselves) who had just been yelled at and is now (justifiably so) thinking of quitting, due to the stress and anxiety of what Mayumi accurately describes as—and what my co-contributors would probably likewise relate to, again, “being forced to [...] deal with emergent situations in the process of building an exhibition.”

Why all the hush-hush? I suppose, partially to blame is cultural upbringing, our so-called non-confrontational temperament. But I suspect it's more because: those conditions that "forced" us to take on roles that were beyond our scope of work, that conditioned us to feel unable to say no, were the selfsame conditions that made us feel unsafe and powerless to open up and call out this problematic practice in the first place. This is learned behavior. More than asking "Why didn't you say something at that time?" I find it more important to ask, "What happened before when you tried to speak up that taught you not to do it again? What conditions *conditioned* you to allow it?" Often it means working in an environment that is hostile, dismissive, and/or non-supportive. And in an already high-stress situation such as preparing for a major event, additional conflict is often the last thing you need. So you keep quiet, rant and cry in the bathroom, force yourself to forge on. And despite the hiccups—lo and behold—you still have a great event (at least on paper), until the next project comes and the vicious cycle repeats. Clearly there has been a lack of critical reflection in this aspect of art production, which this self-memo tries to address. As they say: what we allow to happen will always continue. (If there is a someone out there who finds herself nodding while reading this, I encourage you to really dig deep and think hard before saying yes to that next opportunity.)

It has been for me an eye-opening journey of unlearning harmful ways of doing work, and I am still in the process of re/learning more inclusive, reflexive, and thoughtful approaches to integrate into my practice, mostly from other women & queer mentors and peers. And if this document in one way or another helps others think through their own practice and move towards improved ways of working, then all the better. May those days of tearful encounters in restrooms be soon behind us.

3. Doing the Homework

When taking on an art project, consider the proponents involved in an undertaking. Assume that particular agendas of different parties will come into play and shape the working conditions accordingly: *Is this something I am willing to work with? If not, can I survive the next few months without the salary it affords me? Is there a way to negotiate for better conditions?* By now I've established that there is no room for naivete: applying due diligence regarding the nature of any given project, its objectives, and its co-producers help me prepare ahead and honestly assess if our intentions and values align together, if not completely, then at least converge at some reasonable point. If I have no direct knowledge or experience regarding the partners and collaborators, asking trusted colleagues that do, helps inform this decision. If I do know these potential partners, now is the time to do the internal homework: *How do I really, truly, honestly feel about this organization and why? Have there been instances in the past where I felt safe/unsafe in their presence in whatever way? Have they demonstrated that they know how to take full responsibility and hold themselves accountable when problems arise? Am I willing to exert energy in renegotiating my terms and conditions with this proponent if it comes to that, and risk being subjected to practices or treatment that I don't agree with?*

4. Forced vs. Voluntary

Being invited or selected to collaborate in an art project is a huge privilege and responsibility, and the whole experience can be incredibly enriching and fulfilling, especially if there are (1) adequate resources: funding, manpower, and knowledge/skills, (2) adequate time to prepare and plan, and more importantly, (3) an alignment of values and work ethics, which spells the difference between work that feels forced, as opposed to work that is voluntary, a.k.a. stuff I am happy to do.

I've been involved in projects that had a comfortable timeline and equally comfortable budget, but my main takeaway from 13 years of cultural work, is that the whole thing can turn stressful—and traumatic—very quickly when core values and work ethics don't align: e.g., when accountability, a practice of care, and a sense of responsibility are amiss (my non-negotiable three). To be fair, the reason for this misalignment is mostly unintentional, such as inherently irreconcilable differences in personalities/worldviews which are often revealed a little too late. Still, it doesn't lessen the damage done to the actors now forced to deal with the fallout and the resulting poor working conditions. It does point to the realization though, that perhaps the relationship was actually not a good fit, and this is the point where you critically reflect on why, and work towards learning from it (see 3. Doing the Homework).

5. Forced Work: The *Tagasalo*

There are those key moments that lead to the scales tipping, that shift in power relations that takes agency away from the actors—that moment when, a collaborative endeavour between agents—such as an exhibition—fails to be a true collaborative effort and becomes the cargo of a few people, or in some cases, one person. This shift in dynamics is not so much a result of power-grabbing as it is of responsibility-shirking: when one finds herself suddenly, in Tagalog, what we call a *tagasalo*—somebody who is forced to “catch” the problem or the work dropped by somebody else. A *tagasalo* is by default now charged with the sole responsibility of saving the day, and—of course it follows—also taking or “catching” the blame if she is unable to. Most of the time, taking on the role of *tagasalo* falls on the shoulders of the multitasker, and is something we are unaware of until the last moment—is something we did not expressly agree to. Yet we take this on, forcedly, grudgingly, because (a) nobody else will do it, (b) we care deeply about the project, which includes honoring commitments, (c) we have cultivated enough trust in our abilities to know that we can solve the problem, albeit alone, (d) we don't know *yet* that we can say no.

Alas, the multiple skillsets we have spent years developing, which makes us great multitaskers, now becomes our curse.

6. Work I'm Happy To Do: *Hilahan Pataas*

On the upside, there are thankfully those situations where you do get to work with people and organizations with whom your core values and work ethics *do* align. It takes some time and effort to establish and negotiate this kind of rapport, so it is an incredible privilege and stroke of luck that in the span of my practice I've found partners and collaborators where this happened organically—instantly, or after a series of deep, careful conversations. There is a certain irreducible joy upon jointly discovering that you and your collaborators all adhere to similar principles

of working, and so, proceed with trust and confidence. In this scenario, there is little or zero resistance when dealing with any conflict and emergencies that come up, because there is clarity and agreement on who does what, and how. That is, because I trust my colleagues to do their part as I have committed to do mine, each one of us is pulling our own weight, and in this manner we are all collectively pulling each other up—*hilahan pataas*. When one feels safe and supported, there is a sense of buoyancy and lightness to the work; and when the problems come, as they will surely come, no one panics: you all separately and collectively rise to meet these challenges with grace.

More importantly, there is no urgency for anybody to multitask because everyone is doing their role, and doing it well. Once you've experienced this mode of working, there simply is no going back.

7. Equals, Not Subordinates

Last year, on a cold February evening in Yokohama, after watching a performance at the Kanagawa Arts Theater, I found myself walking back to my hotel with my TPAM^[1] co-delegate Gita Hastarika. She had been newly inducted as the director of Yayasan Kelola^[2] after being its program manager for two years, and I offered my heartfelt congratulations. During that 16-minute walk, we exchanged insights on the traumas and triumphs of managing art projects in our respective cities—Jakarta and Manila—which operated under similar sociocultural conditions. I paraphrase below something she said which really resonated with me, and which summed up all the things I could not articulate at that time:

Arts managers do not exist to serve your every whim or command. In every project, they are your partners, and this should be firmly established before any work in a project begins.

Replace “arts managers” with “curators” “assistants” “installers” “ushers” “suppliers” or any other cultural worker that helps make an art project possible, and I believe this should still hold true. I feel that much of the art exhibition horror stories are a result of a failure to understand the real value of the contributions of each actor in a given project, due to unchecked privilege or willful ignorance on how things really work. And if this is not clarified and corrected in the very beginning, and attempts to do so are met with resistance, everybody loses.

A point of reflection: If, on paper, your art project hits all its audience targets, rakes in positive reviews, and makes all the sponsors happy, but the people on the ground who worked on it were actually miserable (see 5. The *Tagasalo*), was it really successful?

A counterpoint reflection: I could honestly say that the art projects I absolutely loved working on and wouldn't mind doing again, were those that—despite having a small budget and tight deadline—had a working culture that intuitively practiced what Gita shared with me on that evening walk. Which again reinforces for me the importance of alignment of core values.

8. What is your occupation?

Whether my role in an art project is managerial, curatorial, creative, or otherwise,

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TPAM (Performing Arts Meeting in Yokohama) is a space where professionals from various places in the world explore the possibility of contemporary performing arts exchange through performance and meeting programs to gain information, inspiration and network for the creation, dissemination and vitalization of performing arts.

[2]

Kelola, set up in 1999, is Indonesia's sole non-governmental institution providing access to local and international learning opportunities, funding, and information; partnering with international organizations as well as local philanthropists to provide funds for the creation of performing arts, festivals, workshops, residencies, and empowering women artists, supporting over 3,000 choreographers, composers, directors, and art workers.

I personally prefer to identify under the umbrella term “cultural worker”—choosing to consciously ground the emphasis on the “work”—cognizant of and embracing the fact that the practice I am cultivating involves not just intellectual and emotional labor, but also a lot of physical and manual labor that don’t fall under the Western notions of “artist” or “curator.” It also serves as a personal reminder—to never forget that whatever form it takes, cultural labor *is* work—and in all my projects I owe it to myself and all the *partners* involved (see 7. Equals, Not Subordinates) to renegotiate and advocate for working conditions that are equitable to all of us.

9. Onward and Upward

Though late in the game, the moment I was able to identify my non-negotiables and experienced for myself that a better mode of working exists, I immediately came into my own power: the power to stick to my guns; the power to re/negotiate, and if necessary, refuse, practices that I don’t agree with.

To close, I share an excerpt from an assessment report I wrote for a recently concluded project:

During this time I was given free reign in how I wanted to approach my curatorial duties, which was incredibly validating, as it indicated that they had full trust in my capabilities, while also giving me ample assurance that they were always available to help if I needed it (and they were). Knowing somebody had my back and was supporting me while I supported others enabled me to operate from a place of security and courage, which I feel really enabled me to be fully effective and do my job well. Perhaps this is an ideal condition, but having experienced it, I now know for sure that it is this kind of mutually caring relationship that I want to cultivate (or even require!) when I lead and/or support collaborative projects in the future.

Moving forward, if you do catch me in the women’s restroom during an opening, here is a promise: there will be no tears involved, no hiding out: It will be me reapplying my lipstick, smiling at you, raring to go back out to the show we *all* worked so hard to produce.

Care to join me?

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Franchesca Casauay
Quezon City, October 2020

Franchesca Casauay is a cultural worker with an interdisciplinary research and arts practice, often oscillating between curatorial and creative roles. In various capacities, she has participated in a number of art projects and festivals in the Philippines and internationally: most recently as artistic collaborator in Eisa Jocson's performance work *The Filipino Superwoman Band*, premiered in 2019 at the Sharjah Biennial 14 in UAE and *Tanz* in Bern, Switzerland; and as guest curator for public programs at the 22nd Biennale of Sydney: *NIRIN* in March 2020. At present, Franchesca is doing her thinking and dreaming from Metro Manila.

My practice of Art Management: a way to make a joyful future

Sachiko Uchiyama

"Art management" is a term that is difficult to reach a common understanding of, as it is perceived differently across cultural and political contexts. As I graduated from an art university with a degree in printmaking, I did not study art management theoretically, thus my methods of management have been developed through my actual experiences of working on-site.

To give a brief overview of the contexts surrounding art in Japan, a construction boom of public cultural facilities started in the 1980s, and in the 1990s, under the initiative of local government authorities, facilities for artist-in-residence (AIR) programs began to be developed to promote local culture. The 1990s also saw the emergence and development of a genre called "art project" in which artists do not work in isolation and do not aim to exhibit their works at museums. Instead, they would collaborate with diverse participants through workshops and exhibit their works in public spaces with no intention of having their works be permanently displayed. In this genre, it is not only the final output that makes up the artwork but the creative process itself is considered an equally important part. Furthermore, the growth of volunteerism prompted by the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake led to the enactment of the Act on Promotion of Specified Non-profit Activities which consequently activated non-profit arts organizations across the country. It is my understanding that through these shifts in artistic practice, the role of art management became known and art managers began to be identified as professionals connecting the arts with society and the public.

The starting point for my art management practice was an art project called "kavcaap" which was held as a cultural program of the Seventh International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (7th ICAAP) in 2005. By that time, AIDS was no longer an acute fatal disease as long as medicines were taken. However, the AIDS hysteria of the 1990s was not only a medical concern as it revealed pressing issues that urged society to question the commonly accepted sexual ethics and norms. In response to the situation, wherein prejudice and discrimination affected the treatment of the disease, actions were initiated to challenge the ideological underpinnings of attitudes toward sexual minorities and sexuality. This effort continues to this day.

Here, "minority" is not defined by the number of people but to those who are put in vulnerable positions because of their attributes within the male-centric, heteronormative, ableist, and marriage-centric structure of modern society. I was in my mid-twenties at the time and had no experience or knowledge about AIDS; I participated because I was uncertain about how I could get involved in social matters. I felt this would be a chance for me to tstep out of my own shell. While listening and learning about the stories and actions of the people living with HIV and AIDS through the project, I began to realize that I was already an actor within the social structure that produces minorities and that I am complicit in it. I also learned about the activism led by artists during the AIDS scourge of the 1990s,

and became firmly convinced that art is a medium with the potential to greatly impact society. From these experiences, I developed my understanding of art management as a form of social action toward making the society where I/we live in a better—that is, safe, equitable, and peaceful—society that I/we hope for, and therefore, it is a practice that I need to build together with the people who receive art.

After that, I worked for an AIR program run by a public institution for five years, and since 2012, I have been working as a freelancer engaged in art projects initiated by NPOs and individual artists. The good thing about becoming a freelancer was that I could choose the projects I will work on. In recent years, I have been paying careful attention to make sure that the organizing team whom I would be working with has a basic understanding of the gender concepts. This is because I believe that gender inequality caused the problems that I struggled with in my previous work. As an increasing number of artists and art activities proactively engage with society, I also consider if the project team would allow a space for discussion whenever artistic, political and ethical norms interfere with each other. Currently, I work as a project coordinator for a public lecture series entitled "Art Practice and Human Rights—About Minorities, Fairness, and Agreement," organized by Kyoto Seika University. I also work for the office of the Cultural and Artistic Support Program, which has been set up at the Kyoto Art Center. The program is an initiative of Kyoto City in response to COVID-19, located within a sector called the Kyoto City Cultural and Artistic General Consultation Service. As a worker, I find it very rewarding to take part in these kinds of efforts to improve the system and its policies which support cultural and artistic activities. From here on, as much as possible, I'd like to concentrate on commissioned work which engages in the development of art and cultural environments, such as creating systems and fostering human resources, and I'd like to commit to managing only projects wherein I can reflect on my own values. This is why I launched my own initiative, the Goryo Art Project in 2017.

Goryo was the name of an area located along the eastern edge of Takatsuki City, Osaka's so-called "bedtown" in reference to the suburban residential area developed for people who work in the city center. After the old Goryo Village was placed within the jurisdiction of Takatsuki City, the autonomous functions of the village were relocated to the area around the Takatsuki City train station, which made the Goryo area more suburbanized than other areas of Takatsuki City. Sandwiched between the mountains in the north and the river in the south, the area has always been a thriving agricultural community. With the current population of about 13,000 people, the area is not considered underpopulated, however, the population is declining and aging just like other newly developed residential areas in Japan. I became interested in the Goryo area, which is located just across the river from my home. As I walked along the old road in the area, I noticed that, while the old landscape was retained, the old houses were being replaced with new residential complexes, starting from the plots near the train station. There was an imbalance of power between the people who continue to live a traditional lifestyle and the forces of area development which pursues the convenience of urban life. The area appeared to represent the inescapable challenges of modern society.

Moreover, I used to accept commissioned work that required me to travel to other places to manage art projects, but I had been wanting to change such a

way of working that follows the modern labor model. Most importantly, I've started wanting to apply my skills and experience in arts management to something that would affect the society in which I live. This is because it would also help me in the future. "I want to make my sunset years enjoyable." In the very beginning of the Goryo Art Project, this was what I would say when talking to the local residents who were curious to know why I was trying to initiate the project. I wanted the area within walking distance from where I live to be culturally rich even after 20 or 30 years.

As I started this project without any requests from anyone, it started simple and small. The people whom I had met in Goryo introduced me to places where I could organize workshops, and they also helped circulate information by word of mouth. Each year, I would invite one artist to spend about half a year researching the area and conducting workshops, and prepare the final presentation with the local residents who participated in the workshops. Since the project aims to work with a diverse group of community members, I had to look for artists who would be attentive to the power dynamics that will form in such a setup. As a result, I ended up inviting mid-career or established artists with a certain amount of experience. After three years of running the project, the guiding principles that I have somewhat developed can be summarized in the following three points: 1) Do something that people in the community have never done before but can continue on their own. I believe the participants should be the ones spreading the fun and joy of creative activities and discovering with others new values through art, which will eventually enrich the cultural activities of the area. 2) Make cultural activities that will remain with the community 20 or 30 years from now, rather than spend energy preserving artworks. This is to avoid using and monetizing the artists' work and activities in the area, which were intended for community development, and also to prevent the organizers from consuming them as leisurely events. 3) Don't set up an art center as a base. If I had a facility, I would have to spend energy to run it. Negotiating to use local community centers and vacant or underutilized facilities for each project is rewarding in itself, and it will bring new encounters and discoveries. As a result of setting up these guiding principles, I found that the Goryo Art Project functions in the area like it is a "local club activity to make and explore something new." Whenever there was no ongoing art project undertaken by artists, I would facilitate gatherings at the Goryo Community Center and invite the reed flute club and choral group to sing and play the music that they had made during the previous project. Through these activities, I hoped to demonstrate that culture is the foundation of society.

Another thing that I keep reminding myself when I engage in art projects is to treat the participants, including the artist and myself/the organizer, fairly. The community is made up of individuals of various social positions, ages, and sexualities. Since people wouldn't go out of their way to disclose their own attributes when participating in a project, I as an organizer presuppose the participation of diverse people, and throughout the process, I try to make sure that there are no discriminatory behaviors and expressions that may exclude certain groups of people. It is my hope that creating and sharing this kind of space, even though it's small, will contribute to making the society in which we live into the one that I/we all want, one that is safe, fair, and peaceful.

I always strive for the Goryo Art Project's operations to be sustainable by

utilizing the resources that I already have. In terms of funding, I have been fortunate enough to receive arts and cultural grants as well as aids from sponsors. I don't have any strategic plan to increase profits and expand the project. The ultimate goal is simply to accumulate content every year and preserve it for the future. As COVID-19 continues to spread, I am working on preparing a website for the archive. I can stop the project at any time, but I still continue because the Goryo Art Project enriches my life in my hometown, and I am able to balance it well with my practice as an art worker in the urban area. The project may seem inactive and ambitionless but I see it as a meaningful experiment wherein I could explore possible solutions to the issues of labor and ethics that I have encountered in various sites of art management. I do so by applying my learnings from the positive models that I have experienced previously. My challenge is to figure out how I could verify this experiment, including its failures, from an objective point of view, and make use of it in my future art management projects.

Sachiko Uchiyama is an art manager / director of Goryo Art Project, born in 1977. After working at the office of the kavcaap art project "HIV/AIDS—Future Monument" (2003-5, Kobe Art Village Center), and Akiyoshidai International Art Village (2006-10), she relocated to Mexico City where she researched on community-based art projects (2011-2). After returning to Japan, she started to work as a freelance art manager based in the Kansai Area. She has worked as the program director at Breaker Project (kioku hand-craft museum Tansu) (2012-5), staff at the office of NPO Art NPO Link (2012-4), head officer and art coordinator of the 2019 Nosedan Art Line project, and project coordinator of the "Art Practice and Humanrights—Minority, Fairness, and Agreement" at the Kyoto Seika University (2018-2021). In 2017, Sachiko initiated the Goryo Art Project. Under the COVID-19 pandemic, she assists Kyoto City's arts support programs.

<https://goryoartproject.com>

CHAPTER II



ROUNDTABLE

Roundtable Discussion

Recorded on October 31, 2020

Participants: Sayaka Ashidate, Franchesca Casauay, Iris Ferrer, Sachiko Uchiyama, Eunsoo Yi

Moderator: Mayumi Hirano

Interpreter: Akemi Nomoto

Guest: Morinobu Yoshida

Mayumi

I have had some opportunities to coordinate collaborative art projects between Japan and the Philippines, and each project made me think about what it means to collaborate. For example, when things do not progress as the initiators had planned, they start to worry. Rather than opening up their minds to recalibrate the idea, they want to stick to the original plan. This makes me question the meaning of international collaboration. During the WWII Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia, Japan demanded "collaboration" from the local governments and its people, and this historical event makes me also question the power relationship hidden in this word.

Iris

I was thinking about your question with regards to what it means to collaborate. The reality of it is that we are not always in the position to dictate the terms of collaboration, because there is always a structure in place. If the starting point is already not horizontal, how do we make sure that the collaboration is at the very least still humane? How do we make sure that it is a space where everyone present can at least be heard?

Franchesca

For any collaboration, whether we are the inviter or the invitee, we need to have it very openly. It's an invitation, so it means it's not set until we know each other well enough that we can agree to push forward. Most of the time, I think when we do projects we are automatically locked in as if there's no room to cancel or to negotiate because the invitation is expected to be accepted 100%. The project is expected to push through even if we fight over it. So maybe one way to rethink it is through the definition of invitation. You should be able to refuse it later on, like if you get to know each other after having a series of conversations

and, you realize that it's not a good fit. I would push that you still be paid for this consultation period, whether it pushes through or not, because it is still an exchange of energy, time, and ideas that they might possibly use, hopefully with your permission. Even if you're not the executor of the idea, you should get paid as a consultant. So any invitation should be an open invitation. I am imagining how I would want this, which would be with pay and enough of a time buffer. Enough time for us to devote ourselves to understanding each other and our contexts.

Mayumi

Many people are involved in exhibition-making, and the process itself should be considered a collaboration. Ensuring horizontal relationships among the agents involved in collaboration should be a part of curatorial work, even though curatorial research is generally focused on artworks and artistic ideas and does not involve checking the personality type and work ethic of those who take part in the exhibition-making. In preparation of an exhibition, do you research such information that is often excluded from scholarly texts? How can we ensure fair relationships with those we work with? Sayaka, will you share how you select artists for the projects of Arts Tropical, which is literally an extension of your home?

Sayaka

I started my career working at biennales and such platforms to present artists' works before working as a manager at an art office in Kyoto. During that time, I began thinking about an environment that would make everyone happier, and then I happened to meet an artist who would eventually become my husband. My life with my husband and our daughter has given me a chance to explore ways of living fruitfully despite the unstable situations that we are in. We were in such a phase of life, and we started Arts Tropical

all by ourselves without depending on grants.

In the past, I was often involved in projects organized with significant amounts of public funding. These projects were designed for the local communities and audiences whom I would never meet. We thought that we should first implement activities grounded in our current location, so we approached artists who were working in close proximity to us or had similar interests and awareness of issues. On the other hand, there were cases where we invited those who expressed their wish to exhibit with us. We valued organic relationships that began with chance encounters and small connections. For Arts Tropical, we never researched artists for the sake of making an exhibition.

Surely, we do have financial difficulties and other issues related to sustainability. I feel that there are many things that we wouldn't have achieved had we stoically considered our initial goal. However, there is of course no model answer to building a good family relationship, and we have to constantly engage in the process. We continue collaborating, and I believe it is the process of trial-and-error that enriches the relationships and generates projects.

Eunsoo

When I approach artists, it doesn't come organically at all. Actually, I think of my subject and I conduct intensive research on it, and then I research artists. I then approach them by emailing them my exhibition proposal, so things don't come naturally to me at all. But I think because I approach them, I am enthusiastic over their artworks, and I really love them. I think they understand what I want to show through their artworks so we usually click really well. I really enjoy the process of working with artists even though it didn't arise from friendships with them. They were purely working relationships but it would work well. And for the solo show that I curated recently, the artist contacted me. She read my text or something like that and she loved my ideas so she approached me. I didn't know her at all but when we started working together, we clicked really well and she would ask for my opinion on almost every aspect of her artwork, which was very unusual for me but it was very fulfilling because I think I was able to provide a lot of inspiration for her when she was making her artwork. In the process, I came to

understand her work much better. So even if we don't know each other before, as long as our interests and our thoughts align with each other, I think we have a great foundation on which we could build a good relationship with each other.

Mayumi

Speaking of curation, there are different styles which involve different relationships between the curator and the artists. Some exhibitions are generated through a mutual understanding of each other on a personal level, while other exhibitions are constructed solely on the interpretation of the artwork. The mutual trust between the curator and the artists is crucial in solving many problems that occur during installation, especially for large-scale exhibitions. Without trust, a small problem can easily be amplified, with the anger usually directed toward the managers who are running around the site. I have experienced this. There was one particular moment when people yelled at me, and I walked away from the gallery filled with outrage. I couldn't hold it anymore and I cried in another exhibition room. Artists, who just happened to be there, told me, "It's just an exhibition. Don't worry." It really made me think where the difference of understanding of, and attitudes toward, exhibition-making came from. Why do we make exhibitions?

Eunsoo

I think what Mayumi just said made me realize it's not about how relations start, but how curators and artists build up their relationship toward the opening of an exhibition. The lack of conversations and communication with curators and the artists during the process really pushes them to the edge. So when curators first pick up the artists, I think they have the responsibility to make it a fulfilling experience for everyone involved in the exhibition-making, and it's not just about putting a great show in terms of theoretical viewpoints. I think those are equally important responsibilities for the curators.

Franchesca

Just to add to what Eunsoo said, I think the curator, director, or whoever initiated the collaboration of the project has a responsibility not only to the artist, and of getting to know the artist's work and practice really

well, but also to the staff, especially to the art manager who is going to execute the plan. I mean, if it's even possible, they should bring the art manager to the meetings with the artists. If there's a budget, they should bring the art manager to the research trip or record the conversation so that the art manager and the staff could follow the development of the conversation. Because when art managers do not know the context, what the whole project is about, or do not have a deep understanding of what the artwork is about, I think that's what will generate confusion and panic. It's hard to execute something that you don't understand. Even the backstories, which may not seem important, should be relayed to the art manager. I think we need to demand from the curators or directors that if we're going to be involved in a project, then they should make all the information available to us as well as the staff.

Iris

First, to answer your question, Mayumi, on why we do this. From reading your texts, it is clear that there is a great belief in the potential of culture and arts, and the communities and individuals that we work with. I think we need to keep those in mind in spite of whatever wounds we carry from these war zones to remind us why we're here in the first place. Then, to comment on what Eunsoo and Franchesca were saying, I was thinking of our local context in Manila where it consists of a very small group of people with whom you are also friends. So, instead of building these relations within the project, the stakes of friendship are already present. Navigating should ideally be easier, right? I can supposedly be more transparent because we're friends. But the reality of it is that it's more complicated because we are friends. It's the reverse; you don't go in cold and then build warmth, instead, you're already warm with the constant fear of getting cold. Relations and friendships can break because of projects as work and friendship become very intertwined. It's supposedly easy but it's not.

Sachiko

This may not directly respond to what has been discussed, but I was thrilled to read everyone's text, which shares your experiences and what you have learned dealing with problems. The texts take one step

further beyond sharing the "hardships." I was trying to think of how we could apply the discussions to actual practice, while listening to everyone's comments.

Eunsoo mentioned the significance of creating a good relationship, and I started to wonder what are the conditions needed to make a good relationship, and then hearing from Franchesca, I started to realize that such a situation needs to be set up in which the artist, curator, and art manager can engage equally in a conversation. For instance, the artist expresses his dissatisfaction to the art manager because he cannot say it to the curator. In order to allow the art manager to negotiate with the curator regarding the request of the artist, first and foremost, all three actors here should have a common understanding that coordinating the artist's request is the role of the art manager. I also believe that the art manager should be part of the substantial conversations pertaining to the artworks.

Additionally, everyone's text speaks frankly about real experiences from behind the scenes. From these texts, those who are planning to commission a work to an art manager can learn the roles of art managers during production. For art managers who receive a job offer, the texts provide tips acquired from experiences on how to check the credentials of the client. Is the client aware of the necessity of art management in improving the qualities of the project? Does the client have the will to be open to negotiations with art managers? I believe that unfortunate accidents could be prevented by recognizing the quality of the work environment, and choosing whether or not to take part in it. Therefore, I believe everyone's text should be widely shared as knowhow.

Mayumi

Through teaching a curatorial course at a university and facilitating workshops outside, I have had opportunities to interact with young generations of people who aim to become curators. I am certain that everyone's text be important references for them. I believe the conventional methodologies of curation can be reconsidered through the experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of art managers. As Iris mentioned earlier, I think we all have hope in art and culture, and that's why we continue the practice. I would like to hear what kinds of knowledge and

values you aim to produce through practice.

Sachiko

My own practice of art management focuses on enriching the experience of those who receive art, rather than accompanying artists and supporting their productions. As I became a freelancer and started to select job offers, I became more aware that this was actually my policy. It is about asking myself through the practice: what do I want to deliver through art projects? For whom? What kind of relationship do I want to nurture with whom? I use my labor to explore these questions.

Franchesca

For me, I kind of want to orient my practice toward thinking about how international collaborations could be made better. But this is just a jumping-off point to help develop concepts for local cultural policy, because currently, there's no really strong cultural policy in the Philippines. And usually, you would need to have some sort of international recognition first before local gatekeepers pay attention to you. It's kind of unfortunate that I'm going from international to local as opposed to the reverse. But since international productions are what I have access to, I'm kind of cultivating and refining it, and trying to lay down the best practices on how to do it, and then have it trickle down to the local team and back and forth, until I guess I have enough data to call the attention of whoever I need to call attention from to create stronger cultural policies.

Iris

I think it was in your essay, Mayumi, wherein you quoted Eileen Legaspi-Ramirez, asking why art history doesn't talk about all this peripheral labor that actually allows these exhibitions to happen in the first place (→P. 7). Hopefully, talking about it more openly will take effect on the bigger level of policy. Having been in the cultural scene for a decade, I really still don't understand why it feels like we're being punished for our passions, why it feels like we are sacrificing so much. And since it is our passion, we tell ourselves, "it's okay," even when, in essence, it is not.

Eunsoo

I really agree with what Iris just said. Working at the national museum, there are a lot of curators, but there is an even larger number of exhibition coordinators hired by the museum on minimum wage. They can stay at the institution for as long as they want, but they cannot stand that financial situation. They cannot survive that long period of time because they are paid such a small amount of money and there is a very strong atmosphere within the institution of curators assuming that these exhibition coordinators aim to be curators, but they couldn't. So I think, first, they need to be financially compensated, and second, they really need to be respected as specialists and professionals. They need to be considered as the people who can provide help in executing the exhibition. So I think we have to break away from such bad common notions of creating, at least here, so we can build up a new understanding about their profession.

Sayaka

Listening to everybody brought back some flashbacks and even the tears I've shed at certain points. It has been a fruitful time for me to be with everybody discussing such intense experiences. Currently, I am practicing within a very minimal, personal sphere, and the domestic issues can sometimes push me into the corner. So it has become crucial for us to expand our ties with society. Just as the work behind the exhibition-making is invisible, issues within the household are also not easily recognizable. Someone tries to bear with it and another person tries to suppress it. It is unhealthy to keep the issues within. The atmosphere will become stagnant. I want to share these experiences and insights with people of my generation who are in the same situation, like Mayumi, even if her circumstances may be a bit different.

When I was young, there were problems that I couldn't do anything about because I lacked experience. But now, I have had the chance to learn both good and bad things from working with others on different projects, so the problems have become clearer to me. Like Mayumi, it is important to have access to educational platforms to teach or share our experiences and knowledge with the next generations. I hope to share my experience, including many of the personal ones with people who would be interested in listening.

Mayumi

Lastly, I would like to hear from everyone. My question is related to what we have been discussing today. The art industry has uncountable problems but we continue to stay in the field because we believe or have hope in art. I want to know what art means in your practice. This is a rather abstract question, so feel free to respond in any way. Please share your thoughts on the distinction between the terms “management” and “curation” if you have any.

Iris

I was once talking to this Turkish curator for an interview. She initially studied political science, and then went on to culture. I asked her, “Why culture?” What did she find in culture that political science or journalism could not deliver? She said it's where we can dream of a future together. The space that art allows is where we are able to experiment, play, and dream together. A space to imagine something more, a space for society, for our community, and for ourselves. It's not just about gathering and analyzing facts, which is the primary focus of journalism or political science. Not to say that facts are not important, of course, but the added openness that art affords us to create something more from this data is what draws me to it.

Mayumi

Sachiko, you use the word “culture,” instead of “art” in the last part of your text (→P. 29). I would like to hear your thoughts behind the selection of these terms.

Sachiko

Goryo Art Project's mission is to nurture culture in the neighborhood through different activities. First, this is to reflect my intention of positioning the project away from the notion of “art” as it is defined academically. It is because I do not base projects on the theoretical discourse that shaping “curatorial” practices, which I also did not learn institutionally. The other thing is that Goryo Art Project is for the residents or amateurs to the arts. What I try to achieve with the people in the neighborhood is not to follow the academically defined value, but rather to create culturally enriching change to the small social unit called “community.” I always feel that I am borrow-

ing artistic techniques in the process of creating a culture.

Despite all these, I still locate the origin of my activities within “art” because I like the way art expands our perception of the world and I trust it. In the field of art, I also often feel inequality from various perspectives, such as gender hierarchy. However, the site of artistic production affords us a space for us to express our questions with confidence, which might not be imaginable in other fields. I believe this is why I have been able to continue my practice of art management despite the troubles.

Francesca

It was very insightful to read Sachiko's text, where she talks about the term “art project” and how in the 1990s, there was a shift from the exhibition as solely the artist's purview, toward the art project which is more collaborative and involves more players (→P. 27). I guess I start with that because, like Sachiko, I didn't study curation. I didn't go to art school. I studied sociology and I am actually from the social sciences and humanities field. So my whole entry point into the arts and culture scene was a series of happy accidents, I would say. And when I got into it, art projects had already become the mode of production. And I guess that's also why I work in the contemporary arts, where there's a lot more interdisciplinary interactions involved, as opposed to more traditional art forms like painting or traditional folk dance. I work mostly with hybrid forms of artmaking and practices, which I guess I could connect to where I come from, as a sociology major, which is mostly interdisciplinary.

I think there has been research on what constitutes creative or artistic thinking and most of it points to the ability to connect disparate concepts, making connections where you wouldn't have made them otherwise. Being able to provide support for this kind of knowledge generation is very fulfilling, personally. I don't need to be the star. Maybe it's a personality thing, but I'm totally happy with just staying behind the scenes and providing support. I guess in any project, you need those who give support and those that would take the center stage as part of the division of labor. So I continue because I believe in the power of hybrid forms of thinking and knowledge creation to actually create new ways of looking at the world,

which is more powerful when the entry point is emotional as opposed to intellectual. If it's subtle and there's a lot of poetry behind it, I feel that it would have more impact, just as what the best artworks do for me. It enters indirectly and in surprising ways.

Sayaka

I really agree with what Sachiko said. Through various projects and artistic expressions, I was able to learn the richness and potential of the blurred area between black and white. This provided me with substantial thoughts, so it has become a norm for me to continue my practice to support art and artists. On the one hand, there were many difficulties that made me cry. On the other hand, great artworks also brought me to tears. Experience with art has given me opportunities to think about my own sensory experiences, to recognize my own potential and open up new ways of thinking. This is what I want to communicate to various people, and I believe that this is what lets me continue my work.

Eunsoo

For me, the reason why I am in the art industry is from a very personal experience. When I see art, I feel something. I feel I understand something not just with my mind but also with my emotions. It's very different from reading theoretical articles or studying. So, creating that kind of experience for other people makes me feel that I am very privileged and I think this is why I am in art.

Iris

Mayumi, why are you in the arts? I also want to know your answer to the question.

Mayumi

I am haunted by the ghost (→P. 9). Just kidding. My answer is similar to what everyone said. It is because art allows me to share a space with others even if I'm in a foreign place. We may have different ideas about art, but it's the difference that keeps me questioning and going. It's also because I get to meet wonderful people like you guys.

Francesca

I actually had similar conversations with an Indonesian art manager. So maybe we can do a second

version and include colleagues from Southeast Asia and expand the conversation.

Sachiko

I am glad to learn that the labor issues surrounding art managers can be shared globally. When we have conversations like this among close friends in Japan, there are moments when we could only talk behind closed doors in order to not cause friction. But once we discuss the issues together beyond borders, just like this gathering, it elucidates for me that the problems do not exist within a particular relationship, but are inscribed in the structure of the art industry.

an abridged glossary of encounters: in search of ghosts in exhibition-making

By Iris Ferrer

acknowledgments and immense gratitude to: MH

A collection of terms and quotes randomly compiled from the encounters organized by Mayumi Hirano: an online gathering with art managers (31st of October 2020), and its accompanying texts. These arbitrary definitions claim no categorical truths, but instead mirror specific realities of said cultural practitioners.

*This is the second iteration of this project.

Agency

An individual's capacity for choice, particularly in terms of the extent and conditions of the project and its responsibilities. See *negotiate, project, responsibility*

Anxious

A deep existential feeling of not being able to deliver, especially the day or night before the opening. See *opening, deadline*

Art(world)

An indefinite space where people can play and imagine together despite differences. Usually built for raising voices in a capitalistic world; for building knowledge and exploring forgotten narratives; and for fostering new ways of looking at the world and its in-betweens through more emotional, sensorial and poetic senses. See *creative thinking*

Art Manager

An individual that bridges the gaps among the curator/s, the artist/s, the staff and the public. The main organizer and executor of the plan that gives shape or material to the ideas of the project. Should be seen as partners and as professionals, rather than enemies or slaves. Usually invisible. See *curator, artist, staff, public, enemy*

Artist

A self-employed entrepreneur who needs one's support, love and enthusiasm. Collaboration can begin through research or more organically/naturally through various encounters. May end up being one's friend, lover or enemy, depending on how difficulties during the project were dealt with. See *enemy, support, friend, collaboration*

Behind-the-scenes

The domain of the art manager. Where all the work happens before the project's public output. See *work, public*

Belief

What sustains people who stay in art, despite the stress. See *art, stress*

Biennale

A historically problematic platform in art that is susceptible to inhumane

working conditions. See *inhumane*

Collaboration

Seeing oneself as being part of a larger system. Where power (im)balances become apparent. Requires constant examination, negotiation and review.

See *power; negotiate*

Communication

The number one necessity for collaboration. See *collaboration*

COVID-19

A virus that defined everyone's 2020, which forced everyone to be stuck in one space. A difficult time of pauses, postponements, derailments and ends, but also of opportunities for critical thinking and release—including this conversation.

Crazy

An overarching term that defines projects while being in its the midst.

See *work*

Creative Thinking

Making connections that is not usually seen in daily life. What is required of and at the same time supported by art managers. See *art manager*

Cry

A manner of release that is conquered when one realizes that they are not alone in the struggle. Usually done in the toilet, or any other secret spaces.

See *toilet*

Curator

A powerful, specialized and visible position that selects, frames and puts ideas, objects and narratives for present display and/or future conservation.

Usually seen as more creative than the art manager. May be violent.

See *future, power, art manager*

Deadline

A direct indication of survival. See *anxious*

D-I-Y

Approach for projects, especially when money is not available. See *money*

Enemy

A person who disputes another. Levels of hatred and opposition are dependent on what has been experienced, which may or may not be surmounted through constant exercises of kindness. See *kindness*

Exhibition

A kind of project that demands looking. Has potential for worldmaking.

See *project, worldmaking*

Experience

Usually the price of work when one is still young. See *young*

Family

Can be based on blood or forged relations. Formed through exchanges beyond the transactional. May be one's lifeline in dire situations. See *lifeline*

Friend

Wonderful, kind people that you create relations with. Can be based on having the same experiences and/or ghosts. See *family, kindness, relation*

Future

Where hope resides.

Ghosts

Ingrained and hidden traumas from the (art)world, which may be in terms of times, spaces, people or things. What one can turn into when giving too much of oneself for the project. See *project, inhumane*

Hierarchy

A system where one is above or below the other.

Horizontality

Sense of mutual respect, regardless of one's position in a hierarchy. A semblance of having everyone's voices heard. A dream. See *hierarchy*

Infrastructure

Defines capacity for quality in projects. See *project*

Inhumane

To be treated less than human. See *stress*

Institution

Platforms that provide support, which are usually monetary but can also be through space and resources. Carries its own power.

See *money, power, resources*

International

High pressure spaces, where cultural differences are huge factors.

See *pressure*

Invisibility

The act of not being seen, which may not be by choice.

Kindness

Small words or acts that allow for collaborations and friendships to happen.

See *collaboration, friend*

Lessons

Things that one believes one has learned or surpassed from having done one's previous projects—though is usually not the case and is reasoned to be for the sake of art/friends/belief. Can be a type of ghost.

See *art, project, ghost, friend, belief*

Lifeline

Kept intact by family and friends, through their willingness to share.

See *family, share*

Money

Also known as funds, fee, or budget. Used for exchanges, but are not enough to accommodate all desires.

Multi-tasking

The ultimate talent of an art manager. See *art manger*

Negotiate

The attempt to discuss and reach compromises. Requires transparency to be effective. See *transparency*

Normal

Accepted methods of existing, does not necessarily mean correct or ethical.

Organization

The attempt to make it easier for everyone involved in the project.

Off-days

Defined by the project. A fringe benefit.

Opening

Most stressful day for the timeline of the project.

Power

The capacity to do something. May be given or taken away in a blink. Can be too loud and strong that it drowns others. Requires a lot of communication for proper use. See *communication*

Practice

Steps towards worldmaking. See *worldmaking*

Pressure

Can be internally or externally inflicted depending on one's desire to make project happen

Project

The best and the worst of times. Simultaneous with one's survival. Collaborative at its core. Normally means of not having enough days off, pay, or sleep. See *off-days, sleep, money, normal*

Public

Civilians who receive art. Proposition to stand from this perspective when making exhibitions, rather from than artists.

Relation

Connection with another human being. That which can be made or broken through projects.

Relax

What is not achieved during a project.

Resources

What one has. Can be human or material. See *money, lifeline*

Responsibility

The ingrained sense of ensuring that things properly happen at the right time.

Share

To give without asking for a return.

Sleep

Uncommon during work. Claimed wherever and whenever possible.

See *work*

Staff

One's support system throughout the exhibition. Can be the best, if relations are created. See *support, exhibition, relation*

Stress

Can be external or internal; psychological or emotional or physical.

See *inhumane*

Support

What friends and family give you.

Time

Needed to understand another's context in order to create proper terms of collaboration. See *collaboration*

Toilet

Where you cry. See *cry*

Transparency

Openness in one's expectations. Needed in negotiation. See *negotiate*

Work

Can either be a warzone and/or ground for building good relations.

World-making

Proof of concept for eventual local implementation and policy. What is ideally explored in international platforms, such as biennales.

See *biennale, international*

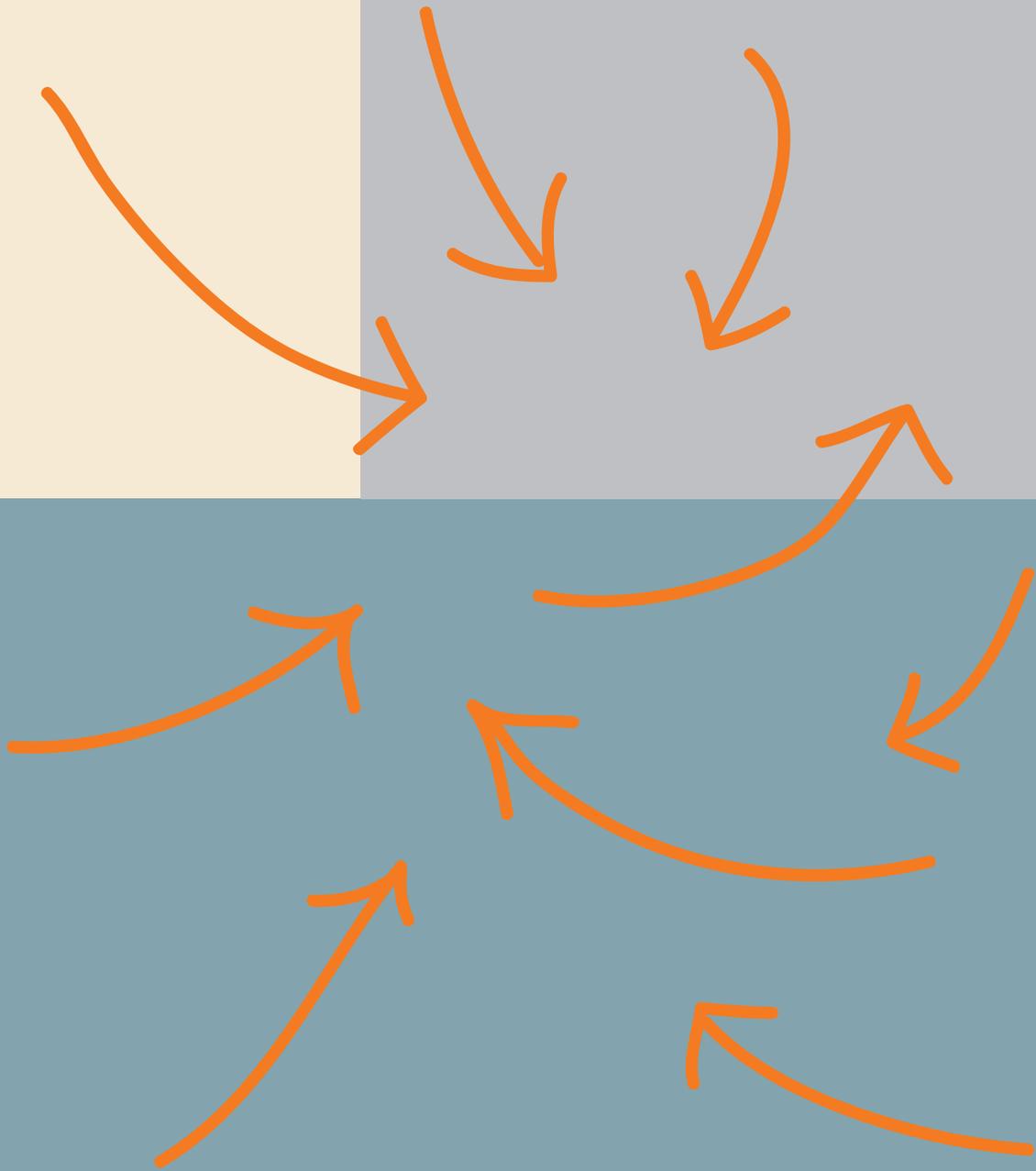
Young

A time when one felt one can go on working without sleep. Does not necessarily refer to age. See *sleep*

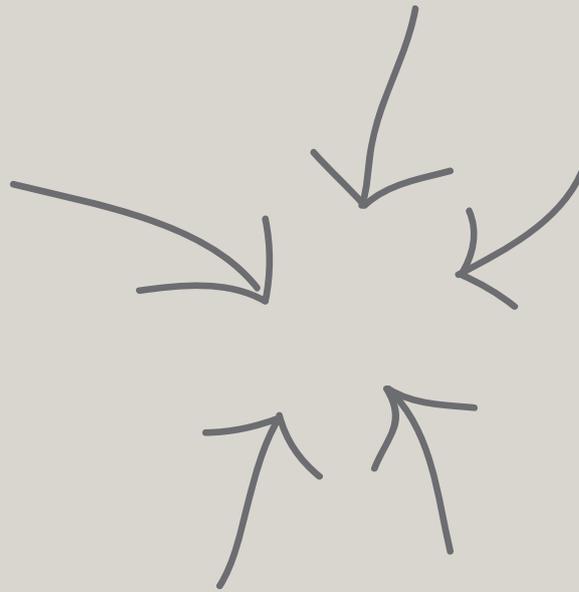


SUPPLEMENT

Group Sharing Activity



The activity aims to create a space (online or in person) for supportive-expressive interaction among participants, exploring life concerns through activities that promote constructive social engagement.



The Moderator

The moderator acts as main catalyst for the group. As the leader, the moderator aims to help participants feel comfortable in expressing themselves and keeps everyone on check during the entire activity. The moderator acts as a “mirror,” helping the participants to reflect on their thoughts and feelings during interaction.



The Participants

The participants are the main driving force of the activity. They are encouraged to express themselves freely and exercise empathic listening together with other participants. A successful breakthrough of one participant is the success of everyone within the social circle.



Duration

The activity may take less than two hours depending on the number of participants and the dynamics during the activity. If time isn't enough, the activity may be done in consecutive sessions as long as all participants are willing to do so until the entire activity has been completed.

Activity Proper

1

Introduction

Each is given the time to introduce oneself with the following information: name, hometown, occupation, and interests.

Warm-up activity

Objective: The activity aims to explore the current state of self through creative means and free association.

Duration: 20 mins

Instructions: Each participant is asked to choose an everyday item that best represents their experience during the past months.

Presentation and Insight: Each person will talk about the item they chose among the group. They are encouraged to express their process and what the item represents to them.

2

Main Activity

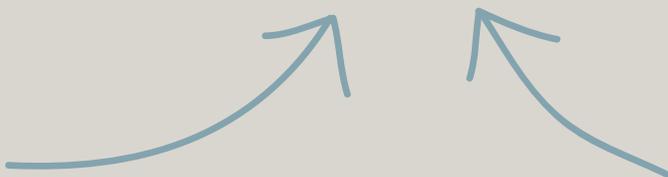
Title: Open Statements

Objectives: The activity aims to connect our current situation and emotional response to our recent history, recognize the elements and effects of change at the present, and the possibilities in the near future.

Duration: 1 hour

Materials: Pen and Paper

Instructions: The participants are asked to fill in the blanks and given time to reflect.



Fill in the blanks. Read each of the following open statement and write your response. You'll be given 10 mins to answer them.

Before the pandemic, I _____

Lately, I _____

My family _____

Lately, the community _____

What I miss the most _____

After the pandemic, I _____

*If the participant choose to leave a statement blank, they may do so. The moderator can still encourage them during sharing if something comes to mind at least at the moment.

Presentation and Insight:

Each person will be given time to share their response. The moderator will facilitate the roundtable discussion and move on to the next statement after everyone shared their response.

3

Summary and Final Thoughts

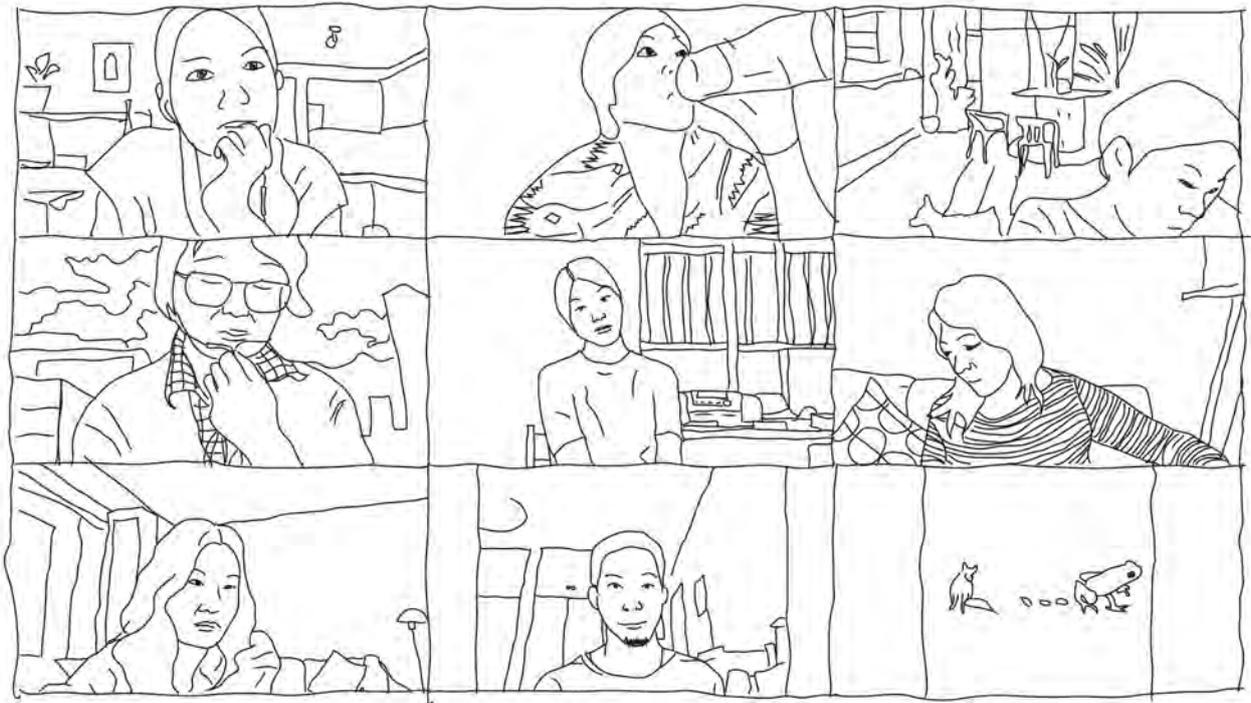
The participants are encouraged to verbalize a brief summary of their experience during the entire activity, if they felt they discovered or learned something new about themselves, their point of view on the situation, and if the relevance on connecting and listening to other people.

The moderator will give some final thoughts regarding the activity, encompassing the highlights and breakthroughs that have happened, or reconcile any miscommunication that may had transpire, ending on a positive note.

(Written by Denver Garza)

Denver Garza (1987) is an artist with an academic background in Psychology. Before becoming an artist, Denver worked as a mental health worker at a private psychiatric facility to pursue Clinical Psychology. He received his undergraduate degree at Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Manila (University of Manila) in 2008 and entered post graduate studies in MA in Clinical Psychology. His interest in art initiated by his brother introduced him both in the art-making process and various exhibitions around Metro Manila. His volition to further his artistic practice grew further alongside his clinical practice, and in 2015 he decided to focus towards an artistic career.

Anchoring from his clinical experience, his process of mapping and constructing concepts of identity, coping mechanism and belief system translates in the structure, physicality and complexity of his works. Interwoven around the process of finding meaning and comfort in uncertainty, allowing play as means to be cognizant in pursuit of transformation. He presented solo exhibitions that tackle various topics such as societal expectations on developmental stages ("Birthday Beliefs," 2017), awareness as catalyst to change ("Keys to Eclipse," 2019), familial dynamics ("Default Paradise," 2019), and exploration of defenses and vulnerability through personal encounters ("Arena," 2019; "Ghost and Host," Art Fair Philippines 2020). Aside from exhibitions, he also creates zines that serve as micro exhibitions, mostly collections of drawings, paintings, photos, and poetry. He is currently based in Bacoor, Cavite, Philippines.



Please... Use Other Door: Another Look at Exhibition Making

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Load na Dito is an art initiative that explores alternative approaches to research and exhibition-making. Load na Dito's projects address the questions of collaboration, context and structure in relation to practice and forms of producing and presenting contemporary art. Their projects try to forge an understanding of contemporary art by creating a social sphere that is process-oriented and open-ended.

<https://loadnaditoprojects.cargo.site/>

