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Ctrl+P

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In this second and the coming third issues of Ctrl+P, we focus on the practice of curatorship with regard to the production, circulation and reception of contemporary art. Based on the systems model of creativity, what is critically considered as Art results from the complex interrelations of the art system made up of three parts: the field (the gatekeepers – critics, theorists, curators, historians, art dealers, museum directors etc.), the domain (in this case the domain of contemporary art, its set of rules and procedures), and third, the individual artist. We focus on the practice of curators primarily because as gatekeepers, their authority, thus their power to necessarily intervene for and represent artists have become more and more critical today. In fact as agents of culture who have first pickings to circulate the next best artist, the next best art, compared to critics, they have become more crucial to the project of canon-formation; and in the process of inadvertently becoming value producers and tastemakers, have become handmaidens of the art market. More important, curators write and thus construct history. They engage in critical practices, thus rendering their work discursive.

Current practitioners are not necessarily trained formally within the domain of curatorship. Many arrive at the practice by being autodidacts and become self-appointed curators. Taking on the role of curating, they must be asked by what authority they legitimate one set of objects, one group of artists over another, one historical or theoretical line, and by what authority they claim to speak for the artist; or for that matter by what authority they can claim who is worthy of leaving a trace in the historico-cultural matrix. It is imperative that we continually put under scrutiny the means by which art is presented and represented in contemporary times. We need to ask: Do curatorial praxes meet the demands of contemporary art praxes?

Independent curator of sixteen years and recently appointed Curator of International Projects and Head of the New York Curatorial Office for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Beijing, Kóan Jeff Baysa gives us a glimpse of an integrated practice as healer and curator in his essay *The Commingled Careers of Curing and Curating*. Indeed, the word “curate” has been linked to other terms within the perspective of an ethics of curatorship, an ethics of caring: “one charged with the care of other selves, those imaginary citizens populating the mandates of public culture... cure...the critical intervention of a curator can function like those of healers...a surgeon acting on inert, (anaesthetised) bodies for various effects, a homeopath which provides

for awareness, a therapist through intersubjective encounters which might resemble a talking cure...securus... to render safe and secure...accurae, to be careful about...curiosity...curio...impelling interest”¹

Co-founder of Ctrl+P Flaudette May V. Datuin, writing on a fairly recent international curatorial project, narrates how she became a curator by accident through her research of ten years as a self-taught art historian on women artists of Asia. In *REMAP Asia: Curating Single Channel Video by Women Artists of Asia*, she points to some complex concerns and aspects of curation and its interrelationship with other disciplines related to art studies.

As to the future of young curators, we publish here Mizuki Endo’s winning exhibition proposal *Aesthetics/Dietetics* presented in the third *Premio Lorenzo Bonaldi per l’Arte - Enter Prize*, an international competition for young curators. Endo, nominated by Yuko Hasegawa, Chief Curator of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, won over four other young curators nominated by the likes of Joseph Kosuth. When asked how he became a curator, Endo wrote Ctrl+P, “I’ve never recognized myself as a curator until I was nominated for this prize. I was nominated for the curator’s prize, so I must be a curator. However, I think my work has a potential to be recognized as a curator’s job. My work is basically to initiate and organize different kinds of events that encourage cultural involvement amongst a local population. My interest is always directed towards creating and analyzing unique forms of culture and how they are linked to specific socio-political structures.”

The prize, the mounting of the winning exhibition at the Galleria d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo, supports the work of young curators under the age of 30, an award that recognizes the significance international curators play in the development of contemporary art. GAMEC claims “*Qui Enter Atlas – International Symposium of Young Curators* became the meeting point for an entire generation of international young curators...It is GAMEC’s intention that the competition is also a time for young curators to meet, get to know one another and take the bearings of the profession’s development.”²

Finally, in the absence of a curator or in cases where self-curation is itself the project, artists represent themselves quite competently. We hear from two artists, Yumi Roth Janairo in *Small Acts of Public Service* and Reg Yuson in *Site+Works* on their self-curated exhibitions. Both deeply interested in site-specific works, they took full control of curating their own works. Yuson’s essay is based on his notes on his exhibition.

We end again by asking our readers who, thanks to the efficiency of email, have grown in numbers exponentially within the last two months to continue helping us circulate this journal by forwarding this PDF file to as many friends and e-groups as possible. And if you wish to contact us or be part of our mailing list, please email us at ctrl_p.artjournal@yahoo.com.

¹Fisher, Jennifer, Trick or treat: naming curatorial ethics. In Sunil Gupta (ed.), *Africus the 1st Johannesburg Biennale*, London: OVA, 1995, p. 13.

² http://www.e-flux.com/displayshow.php?file=message_1118155856.txt

Small Acts of Public Service

YUMI JANAIRO ROTH

*We now use the country itself, as its own map,
and I assure you it does nearly as well.*
Lewis Carroll in *Sylvie and Bruno*

In February of 2005 I traveled to Manila to work as an artist in residence at the Vargas Museum as the University of the Philippines-Diliman. Monday through Friday, I diligently commuted to the museum. Once there I wandered through the collection, riffled through the archives and sat in the basement ostensibly to “work”—on what, I didn’t have a clue. In reality, I often felt that I was just biding my time, providing myself with a schedule and routine so that I didn’t appear to be an aimless artist. Little did I realize that my work didn’t occur in the basement of that museum, but rather in my daily commute and the concentration that it required for me to learn a new transportation system. The museum ultimately functioned as a destination point while the daily commute turned into my project, *Small Acts of Public Service*.

When I first arrived to participate in the residency program at the Vargas Museum, I knew that getting to and from the university might present a challenge. In past visits to see my family, I was often shuttled around in cars that belonged to my cousins, aunts, and uncles. Unlike other cities where I had either lived or visited and relied on public transportation, I didn’t use the jeeps, buses or trains to travel between points in Metro Manila. As a passive visitor I luxuriated in air-conditioned cars, arriving sweat-free to malls, restaurants, and my relatives’ homes. This time would be different, as I would have to use public transportation like everyone else.

From my aunt’s house to the museum, I would need to take, at minimum, two jeeps. As any local can tell you, jeepneys were first introduced when the Americans left army jeeps behind after WWII. Modified by Filipinos, the jeepney is now the most common form of semi-public transportation throughout the Philippines. Unlike subway systems that have set stops along a route, passengers riding the jeeps can board and exit anywhere along a jeep’s route.

So that I wouldn’t get lost, my cousin took me on a dry run to and from the Diliman campus. We crossed the street from the house and waved down a jeep marked “Welcome - Project 2-3 – Anonas.” Although many jeeps with different routes traveled along Tomas Morato, a commercial street in Quezon City, only one would take me to my transfer point, “Capitol.” How would I know that we were near “Capitol?” There wasn’t a sign marking a conventional stop. Apparently I would look out the narrow windows of the jeep for small visual clues and markers that would help me identify a place where a movie theater named “Capitol” once stood but had since been demolished. From there we walked around the block to catch a jeep marked “UP Campus-Philcoa,” a direct line to the Vargas Museum. For people who have lived in the city for a long time or whose knowledge of navigating the city was gleaned through family and friends, the idea of navigating by

landmarks (and at times no-longer-existent landmarks) made sense. Without this history or intimacy with the place, I had to learn how to move through a city without the aid of a conventional map. This experience made me more aware of myself as a visitor, and how much I assumed that places would and should be spatially translated in particular ways.

After a few weeks of commuting to and from the museum as well as adding new destinations to my growing sense of space, I jokingly mentioned to my family that I wanted to map all of the jeep routes in Metro Manila. Seeing it as a daunting task, they understandably laughed. I started with the routes that I knew and paid closer attention to the most common stops. Although I once characterized the jeepney system as something akin to a taxicab with a route (the idea that one could get on and off along any point on the route), I realized that there seemed to be a pattern rather than random assortment of stops. Riding the “Pantranco-Philcoa-UP Campus” line, it was almost guaranteed that the driver would stop at HiTop, Hiway, Kalayaan, and Admin. In spite of the possibility of picking up and dropping off passengers every ten feet, the jeep seemed to move at a pretty fast clip as I arrived to the museum everyday in twenty to thirty minutes.

With the help of family and friends, I worked to determine the most common stops along three jeepney routes, “Pantranco-Philcoa-UP Campus,” “Welcome-Project 2-3-Anonas,” and “Cubao-Diamond-Roces.” I created a series of two-color laminated route maps that could be mounted on either the jeep’s ceiling or wall. Additionally, I provided a pocket full of take-away maps with the same information. Before installing any of the maps, however, I, with the help of my cousin, always spoke with the jeepney driver. I wanted to make sure that the maps were mostly accurate to the usual route and also determine where they might be best installed (sometimes on the ceiling, sometimes behind the driver’s seat, sometimes on one of the interior metal poles). All of the drivers seemed to welcome the addition of maps and I was pleasantly surprised to find maps still hanging in jeeps days after the initial installation.

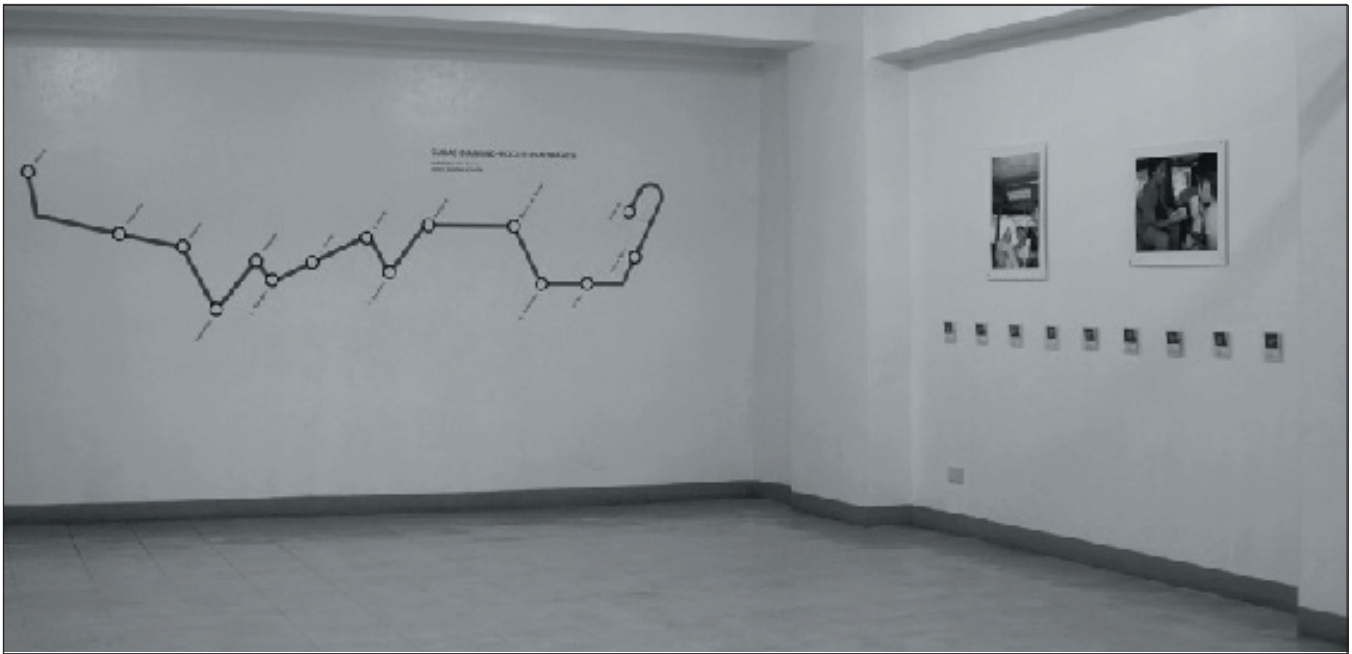


What was most interesting to me was the level of social interaction and reliance that passengers must practice to ride the jeep. From calling out a stop (from what sometimes seemed like a predetermined list of names), to establishing proper fare, to following the appropriate etiquette for passing fare forward and change back, to actually getting the jeep to stop at one's desired point (do I say "para," or merely tap on the roof?), to moving over just a little bit to make room for the sixteenth passenger, riding the jeep was a remarkably social experience. Learning the system required a high degree of socialization and practice, one that I learned my cousin had also undergone. When I rode with my cousin, she coached me at every juncture, showing me how to properly carry money on the jeep (small amounts that were easily retrieved from a coin purse), where to sit (preferably near the exit, but if the jeep was crowded, scooting in the direction of the door as people exited the jeep), the proper way to pass my money as well as others' money to the jeep driver, and how to ask the jeep driver to stop (women say "para" and men tap on the roof, although depending on where I was sitting I would use either method).

While I was still in the Philippines, I installed *Small Acts of Public Service* in two types of locations, the jeepneys and the Vargas Museum. While in the jeeps, I hoped that the maps might blend in with the other signage found inside (posters, fare sheets, and other instructions) and that passengers might regard them as yet another piece of information that they could use or ignore. To the everyday passenger, the maps' status as art was irrelevant.



In the museum, I installed oversized vinyl maps of the different routes, take-away maps, and photo documentation of jeep passengers interacting with the maps. I used the museum space to suggest the vestibule in a subway station where oversized maps help would-be passengers locate their destinations. Visitors to the museum often initially mistook the maps as subway routes, probably wondering why they were installed in an art space. Upon closer inspection they were surprised to realize that the maps charted jeepney routes.



Although *Small Acts of Public Service* was initially conceived for the jeepneys, by also installing the project in the Vargas Museum, I hoped to create a dialogue between two types of spaces, one art and one non-art space. Where jeep passengers might only quickly consider the implications of finding a map where none had previously existed, the museum created a more contemplative situation where visitors could reflect back on their expectations of maps, functionality, public transportation as well as art. By placing the maps as well as the documentation of the project in the museum, some viewers might start to question the boundaries of art, what constitutes art, and where it might exist.

Small Acts of Public Service isn't so much an attempt to create an accurate map of jeepney routes as to raise questions about what it means to have or lack such a map, or to want or dismiss this method of orientation. By installing maps in the jeeps, I hoped to point to a contrasting system whereby other modes of knowledge and learning are prioritized, modes which seem to prefer intimate connection with a place, flexibility in getting to and from a destination, and reliance on a broad and diverse social network to learn the intricacies of a complex public transportation system. By installing maps in the jeeps I seek to pose many questions: What does a map connote? Whom does the map serve, and how? How do maps change our perception of a place, a route or a destination? What does a map enable or destroy? And, if there is a map, will someone actually use it?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Kóan Jeff Baysa curated his first independent exhibition in 1989 and is a 1998 Whitney Independent Study Program Curatorial alumnus. A contributing writer for New York Arts Magazine and the online publication Flavorpill, he has written for Art Asia Pacific and is the Pacific editor for dART INTERNATIONAL. He has curated shows for the London Biennale, the LA International Biennial, and has organized art events in Beijing, Dublin, London, Hong Kong, Manila and for the United Nations. He is on the boards of The Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School University, Art Omi International Artist Colony, the Asian American Art Centre, The Center for Photography at Woodstock, The CoCo Institute, and the Media Forum for Global Health. He was recently appointed Head of the New York Curatorial Office and the Director and Curator of International Projects for MoCA Beijing. Dr. Baysa is based in New York and Los Angeles.

Mizuki Endo earned his MA degree in Social and Cultural Studies from Kyushu University. In 2005 he co-founded Future Prospects Art Space in Quezon City, Philippines. He is Director of Art Space Tetra (<http://www.as-tetra.info>) located in Fukuoka, Japan and Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Fukuoka-based independent art magazine *Rhythm* (<http://www.mhtyhr.com>). He curated his first exhibition in 2001 entitled *Book of Love* held in Hojo-Shorin, Fukuoka.

Reg Yuson is the recipient of the 2003 Cultural Center of the Philippines Thirteen Artists Award, an award given to young artists who show potential in contributing to the development of Philippine visual arts. Although primarily a sculptor now doing a lot of functional and commissioned public art, Yuson also draws, a discipline he considers fundamental to his art production. As a cultural worker, he served with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts Committee on Visual Arts from 1995 to 2001 and with the Society of Philippine Sculptors from 1993 to 2000 to help revitalize the local community of sculptors. He lives and works in Manila.

Yumi Roth Janairo is a Filipino-American artist who lives in the US and teaches sculpture at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Two of her major exhibitions were *Detoured* held at the Lawndale Art Center, Houston in 2005, a solo exhibition featuring work that recontextualized how we view and interact with objects associated with authority, namely traffic barriers, cones, and concrete barricades. All of the objects created for the show were also temporarily installed throughout Houston; and *RG ReSolution Presents: thinking small* held at the Map Room, Portland in 2005. Collaborating with Adriane Herman, she created a problem-resolving clinic for visitors. Her work as well as the project *Small Acts of Public Service* can be viewed at www.yumijroth.com

ABOUT CTRLR+P'S PUBLISHERS/EDITORIAL BOARD

Flaudette May V. Datuin is an Associate Professor of the Department of Art Studies, University of the Philippines. She is the author of *Home Body Memory: Filipina Artists in the Visual Arts, 19th Century to the Present* (University of the Philippines Press, 2002). The book is based on her dissertation for her PhD in Philippines Studies degree.

Datuin is the recipient of the Asian Scholarship Foundation and Asian Public Intellectual Fellowships, which enabled her to conduct research on contemporary women artists of China and Korea in 2002-2003, and Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Japan in 2004-2005. On her way back from Japan, she curated the Asian section of a video exhibition at EWHA University, Seoul, which she writes about in this issue. She is currently curating and organizing an international and interdisciplinary exhibit-conference-workshop called *trauma, interrupted* to be held in multiple venues in 2007: the Metropolitan Museum of the Philippines, Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), National Museum of the Philippines and Liongoren Gallery. The first major exhibition she curated in 1999 at the CCP *Women Imaging Women* featured women artists from Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines a result of her initial research in these countries from 1994-1997. Before she left for her Nippon Fellowship in 2004, she curated *balaybay@kasibulan.net* held at the CCP to celebrate the 15th anniversary of KASIBULAN, a group of Filipina artists in the visual arts.

Datuin currently teaches graduate and undergraduate courses on the contemporary arts of Asia, art theory and aesthetics, gender issues in the arts, and special topics on hyper-media and art, among others.

Judy Freya Sibayan a performance and conceptual artist, received her Master of Fine Arts from the Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Design. She is the recipient of the Cultural Center of the Philippines 1976 Thirteen Artists Award and is former director of the erstwhile Contemporary Art Museum of the Philippines. The City of Manila where she lives and works, recently awarded her the *Patnubay ng Sining at Kalinagnan sa Bagong Pamamaraan Award*.

She performed and curated *Scapular Gallery Nomad*, (http://a-r-c.gold.ac.uk/a-r-c_Three/texts/3_judy01.html) a gallery she wore daily for five years and is currently curator and the *Museum of Mental Objects* (MoMO), a work proposing that her body be the museum itself. Although Sibayan's major body of work is a materialist and institutional critique of art, she has also exhibited and performed in museums, galleries and performance venues such as the The Tramway, Glasgow; the Vienna Secession; the Hayward Gallery, London; PS 1 Institute of Contemporary Art, New York; The Farm, San Francisco; Sternersensemuseet, Oslo; The Photographers' Gallery, London; Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney; The Kiasma Contemporary Art Center, Helsinki; The Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm; Nikolaj Contemporary Art Center, Copenhagen; X-Ray Art Center, Beijing; Fukuoka Art Museum; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen; Hong Kong Art Centre; and at the capcMusée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux. She has participated in two international art biennales, the 1986 3rd *Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh* and the 2002 *Gwangju Biennale* in South Korea.

Also an independent curator, she conceived and was lead-curator of *xs→ XL Expanding Art* held at Sculpture Square, Singapore in 2002 and *600 Images/60 Artists/6 Curators/6 Cities: Bangkok/Berlin/London/Los Angeles/Manila/Saigon* (curated entirely through the internet and held in all 6 cities in 2005). Both projects investigated the possibilities of developing large scale international exhibitions mounted with very modest resources. She currently teaches as an Assistant Professor of the Department of Communication, De La Salle University (www.dlsu.edu.ph) where she has taught for twenty years.