



Under my skin

**Emil Goh
David Griggs
Pat Hoffie
Megan Keating
Louise Paramor**

Under my skin

An Asialink touring exhibition featuring
Australian artists Emil Goh, David Griggs,
Pat HOFFIE, Megan Keating and Louise Paramor.
Curators: Sarah Bond & Georgia Sedgwick

Foreword

On a balmy evening in Bangkok in 1990, wandering the streets after a day negotiating with galleries to place a touring exhibition, I bumped into Sydney artist Joan Grounds. In a city of many millions, how extraordinary was that. She told me her story – how she was the first artist from Australia to travel to an Asian city as part of this now well-known program of Artists in Residence in our region, devised by the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council.

I was a curator focused on the issues of my show coming to Bangkok, but Joan's story rang in my ears. We were both trying to understand as much as possible about this particular place, trying to make contact, create dialogue and make something come from what seemed very rich ground, but ground turned in a programmatic way by Australians such as us.

A little after this, in 1991, the Australia Council agreed to support more exhibitions travelling to Asia, but with the proviso that the fledgling Asialink took over the management and development of this residency program. And so, with Asialink CEO Jenny McGregor's agreement, we started with the grand target of finding hosts for four Australian visual artists each year in arts centres of South East Asia. Later, with then Chairman Carrillo Gantner's support, we gradually added performing arts, arts management and literature to the mix.

I had travelled to each of the main ASEAN capitals to negotiate that first show, and visited art schools as well as galleries, so I knew the physical circumstances that might be encountered. I had also met people, and, as is the case today, it was those early meetings – the beginnings of many good friendships – that enabled future negotiations to turn out so well. The spaces and practical issues are important, but, always, the people are the key to it all.

We were anxious in the beginning about each artist's experience. Would it work out well, would

they be happy, would they feel isolated, or homesick? Would the artist produce good work? It was, and is, always a great challenge for artists to come into new environments and be able quickly to not only find their feet but also create work that will be appraised without favour by the peer group in a different culture. It was the same for hosts in the early days: unsure how these foreign artists would behave, what they would want and how to make the best of each situation.

Now I don't worry at all. Our experience is that the residents have succeeded beyond our highest expectations. They produce wonderful work, they make great friends, their world expands to their delight, they seem to conquer all. The hosts too know what to expect. With early worries about cross-cultural misunderstanding gone, they are pleased to work with foreign artists and have access to their ideas.

Asialink now sends around 40 Australian arts practitioners, including 10 visual artists, to 18 countries of the region each year. The fact that our residents have achieved so much and laid down foundations of such good will has helped all who have followed, either from this country, or from elsewhere.

This exhibition shows the work of five Australian artists who have spent time in Asia, devoting a significant part of their lives to a particular place in the region. In all cases the experience has been meaningful: to their work, to their professional experience and to them as human beings. We are delighted to work with them as residents and now as contributors to a touring exhibition.

We hope visitors to this exhibition will enjoy the work, will see what a different place can provide to artists from abroad, and understand a little more of how the experience of difference affects creative people, and all of us.

Alison Carroll
Director, Asialink Arts

Under my skin

Asialink Arts' residency program has seen almost 500 artists embark on residencies¹ across the width and breadth of Asia, covering 20 countries and over 300 host organisations during its 17-year history. All together that's a lot of journeys taken, friendships made and lives changed. *Under my skin* celebrates these journeys by bringing together the work of five artists whose residency experience continues to resonate in their work long after their return.

Residencies allow an artist the rare luxury of time away from routine; the space for contemplation and reflection and the opportunity to explore new techniques and approaches to art-making. By delving into the unfamiliar, the diverse and the stimulating, artists absorb these encounters and relate them back to their already developed aesthetics. These encounters challenge their localised practices and enrich both their work and the lives of the communities within which they are immersed. By returning the work of these artists to the countries of their inspiration, *Under my skin*, hopes to engage local audiences in a dialogue about the ways in which these artists reconciled difference and displacement and thrived in the face of it.

Brisbane-based artist and academic, Pat Hoffie's initial residency experience in the Philippines in 1993 seamlessly traversed the professional and the personal. It bore a 10 year

artistic collaboration with Filipino artist Santiago Bose, an expanded visual and thematic vocabulary and a string of international residencies that included a second Asialink residency in Hanoi in 1998/99.

Madame Illuminata's Crack's Pictorial Guide to the Universe (1998/99) while completed over five years after Hoffie's Filipino residency, clearly shows the influence of her time there. Inspired by an old set of tarot cards, the individual panels were painted by a local family in the Philippines and completed by Hoffie and Bose on the Hanoi residency. A symbolic element from each of the paintings was selected and then hand-embroidered onto silk by local craftsmen. Configured as a linear narrative and partnered with the boldly painted panels, the works combine to become a storybook of political allegory documenting the various stages of the colonisation process.

Post-colonial discourse informed much of the work of Hoffie's peers both in the Philippines and later in Hanoi. This interaction allowed Hoffie to deepen her own understanding of these theories and the ways in which they have manifested themselves creatively in their differing contexts. *The Committee* (2003-06) was created on a later residency in Barcelona and is a further study of power relations. Hoffie says, 'The two works included in this exhibition reflect the growing complexity of relationships and understanding

that were developed in those two, and subsequent residencies.'

The visually-arresting streetscapes of the Philippines were also a natural fit for the aesthetic style of Sydney artist David Griggs. Thematically, the seedy underbelly of local gang culture was compatible with the darker themes of exploitation, violence and death already explored in previous work. During his 2005 residency, Griggs created and exhibited photographic works (*Buko Police* 2006) documenting the menacing characters of Manila's street gangs. These encounters then became the source material for a number of subsequent exhibitions in Australia including the *Bleeding Hearts Club* (2006).

A later work, *Blood on the Streets* (2007) was filmed in the slums lining a disused Manila railway line and follows the mundane yet oddly surreal journey of a group of local children, adorned in horror-themed masks and being pushed along the tracks in a makeshift carriage. These carriages are operated by local gangs who, at each changing of the guard, collect money from passengers being transported along their allocated section of the line.

It is interesting to note that although Griggs and Hoffie encountered the Philippines in different decades, engaging with a different generation of Filipino artists, there is a commonality to their work post-residency: in particular, their bold use of bright, clashing colours, the pastiche of religious

and folk iconography and an obvious affinity with the Filipino tendency of juxtaposing the fantastic with the mundane. However, each remains true to their respective styles: where Hoffie employs the symbols as a narrative device, Griggs appropriates these symbols in a more ad-hoc and absurdist fashion, stripping them of their meaning and context.

Similarly fascinated with dynamic and densely populated cities is Sydney-trained artist Emil Goh, whose preoccupation with the nature of urban living found its natural home in South Korea's busy capital. In fact, so enthralled by the possibilities of this city was he, that Goh remains living and working in Seoul to this day. The first work created during his residency, *between (Seoul)* (2003), is a dual channel video taking in a 360 degree panoramic cityscape that penetrates the walls and windows of apartment-dwelling Seoulites, allowing the viewer intermittent access into their intimate micro-worlds.

An examination of Goh's most recent work reveals his curiosity about the urban condition has not waned; rather it has further focussed in on the minutiae of metropolitan living. In *Double Parking Pillows* (2008) Goh peeps through the windows of the city's taxis, uncovering the small and strange ways the city has evolved to cope with mounting pressures, both physical and psychological. Cars on the roads of the city centre now far outweigh

parking spaces and so taxis are forced to double-park, enraging drivers who have been 'locked in', sometimes to the point of violence. To avoid this potentially explosive situation, taxi drivers fasten cushions to their windscreens with their mobile phone numbers embroidered onto them so they can be contacted at any time to move – a uniquely Korean approach to solving a universally encountered problem.

It was India that lured Melbourne artist Louise Paramor back to its shores for an Asialink residency in 1995 after a first visit in the early 1990s. Its entrenched cultural traditions, vibrant palette and unforgettable aromas provided Paramor with the creative stimulus to expand her visual arts practice. Looking back, Paramor credits her time in Bhopal, central India as being highly influential on her practice. 'Post-residency, I produced a whole body of work that reflected the transience of the spectacle of celebration by employing ephemeral types of materials to make large decorative objects.'²

A decade later, Paramor embarked on her second Asialink residency, on the island nation of Singapore. *Jam Sessions* (2006/07) is the result of Paramor's journeys through Singapore's colourful and labyrinthine Chinatown, meditating on the excess and waste of plastic objects used for storage, serving and decoration. She remembers how Singapore gave her a 'deep appreciation for

the purity of (Chinese) design and use of colour, especially in simple utilitarian objects such as brooms, stools and containers. To me this aesthetic is more clearly seen with the use of contemporary materials such as plastic, and viewed en-masse is truly inspirational.'³

In *Show Court 3* (2007), Paramor plays on the audience's familiarity with and the disposable nature of these everyday materials. Exhibited for one day only at Melbourne's sporting Rod Laver Arena, home to the Australian Open tennis tournament, Paramor installed a temporary 'mechano' set, placing the individual *Jam Session* sculptures across the expanse of a tennis court. Individually the objects making up the installation remain functional, but once deconstructed and then reconstructed all over again, they lose their inherent usefulness and are re-born as intriguing and playful sculptures.

Also working with materials regarded unconventional⁴ is Hobart artist and academic Megan Keating. Known for her painting, installation and paper-cutting works, she has also been granted two residencies with Asialink in Beijing (2000) and most recently in Taipei (2006/07). The first residency provided the opportunity to trace her familial history and the second to observe and compare the peculiarities of the 'island culture' of Taiwan with her home state of Tasmania.

Keating's paper-cutting skills and fascination with craft methods inform the installation-based work *Deep Water Dark Water* (2007). Having studied paper-cutting traditions during residencies in Beijing and Tokyo⁵, Keating's work seeks to push the boundaries assigned to this craft methodology. Deftly cut silk motifs depicting the universal symbols for male and female, boats and anchors, and torpedos and bombs are hung on the wall. These framed images are further demarcated by a complementary series of nautical cut-outs, this time using contrasting materials of rubber and canvas. Traditional and contemporary craft practices and motifs, as well as natural and industrial materials, are combined in this work to create a deliberate disharmony. According to Keating, 'they touch on the perceived tensions and awkward relationships' she observed in Taiwanese culture, 'alluding to but never trying to critique political states, economic change, and social interaction'⁶.

The residency experience, particularly in Taiwan, appears to have created a career conduit for Keating. Her ongoing engagement with the region began immediately post-residency, returning to Taiwan in late 2007 to work on collaborative projects seeded during her time there, leading into a 12-month artistic residency in 2008 at the Malaysian arts compound, Rimbun Dahan.

The themes explored by the artists in this

exhibition reveal a depth of understanding of the worlds in which they were immersed, worlds unknowable to the passing tourist or the casual observer. The opportunity to spend a sustained period of time in their host country allows for an intensive exchange of ideas. Artists have their work critiqued and tested in new cultural contexts and gain access to world-views that, once foreign and impenetrable, slowly unravel to offer new, insightful and enriching perspectives on their work. This is the beauty of a residency and the challenge of it. After all, what else motivates art-making more than the desire to know and represent the true nature of things? To understand and be understood. To get under the skin.

Sarah Bond & Georgia Sedgwick

April 2008

Footnotes

1. An arts residency or an 'Artist in Residence' are terms that refer to an artist who is living and practising their art for a length of time outside their usual circumstances supported by a host organisation.
2. Artist in email conversation with Georgia Sedgwick, February 08.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Keating utilises material such as rubber and astro turf alongside the more traditional materials of paper and canvas.
5. Funded by the Australia Council for the Arts 2003.
6. Artist in email conversation with Georgia Sedgwick, February 08.

Emil Goh

Host SSAMZIE Space, Seoul

Country Korea

Date 2003/04

Emil Goh is an Australian artist of Malaysian Chinese descent and he moved to Australia in 1985. Goh completed a Bachelor of Arts – Honours Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney (1997) and a Masters of Fine Art Goldsmiths College, University of London (1998). His family moved constantly and, as a result, his childhood was spent in various parts of the Malaysian peninsular and Singapore before completing his education in Australia and England. Since then, he has developed an interest in urban phenomena and is fascinated with people's relationships with technology, design and inhabiting highly dense cities. Goh has exhibited extensively in solo and group exhibitions since 1994. Solo projects have included *Introducing*, Factory, Seoul (2004); *Remake*, Artspace, Sydney (2003) and *Emil Goh 1996-2002*, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide (2002). Selected group exhibitions include *Above & Beyond*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (touring 1996/97); *Perspecta*, Museum of Sydney (1999); *Flow* National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (2000); *Busan Biennale*, South Korea (2004); *Jakarta Video Art Festival*, Ruangrupa, Jakarta (2005); *Slow Rushes*, Artspace, Auckland (2005) and *Public Moment*, SSAMZIE Space, Seoul (2006). Goh has received numerous awards and grants including NSW Ministry of the Arts studio residency, The Gunnery, Sydney (2000); Graduate House artist-in-residence, Hong Kong University (2003); Asialink Residency, Seoul (2003/04); VACB Skills & Arts Development Grant, Australia Council for the Arts (2005). Goh is presented in various private and public collections including Artbank, Australian Parliament House, Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery and Nokia (Australia). He is currently based in Seoul.

What were your reasons for choosing to undertake your residency in your host country?

While I was studying in London, I had met several Korean people all in a very short space of time, exposing me to small samples of their popular culture, films, music videos, food etc. This intrigued me but there was very little about Seoul in English. Having moved around quite a lot as a child, I developed a fascination for urban culture and the mystery of Seoul had a magnetic attraction for me.

In what ways did your host country get under your skin?

After a few weeks in Seoul, it suddenly struck me that it was my first time ever living in a monoculture, hence locals had certain ways of doing things, much more than compared to where I had lived previously – for example in Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and England – cities that have quite a mix of cultures. It was exactly these local practices that completely fascinated me and sparked off a series of long-term research projects, trying to document them all and trace back their origins.

How did this experience challenge your approach to art making?

A few years before I went to Korea, I had started working in a much more documentary style with my videos and photography. Once I landed in Seoul and realised how intriguing it was, my documentary approach intensified. I guess you could say the residency happened for me in the perfect spot and at the ideal time in my career.

What opportunities do you see for yourself, and Australian artists more generally, in the Asian region?

For me, the experience has been way beyond my expectations and it has certainly helped me develop my own art practice in different directions. The time I've spent here has allowed me to learn so much about Korean culture at a close distance and also enabled me to create works that I might not have been able to elsewhere. Certainly living in unfamiliar surroundings will help with developing one's thought processes which will no doubt affect one's art practice in some way.



between (Seoul) 2003, video, 7 mins





Emil Goh in residence, Korea 2003





Double Parking Pillows 2008,
digital photographs from Nokia N93i,
171 x 830 cm
all works courtesy the artist

David Griggs

Host Ateneo de Manila University, Manila

Country Philippines

Date 2005

David Griggs was born in a Lockheed Hercules – an American military transport aircraft – on the north coast of Australia. He completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Painting), Honours (first class), Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney (1999). In 1996, while travelling in China, he had a near-death experience and has since devoted his art practice to producing paintings that explore the darker sides of humanity. Griggs has exhibited extensively since 1998. Selected solo exhibitions include: *The Buko Police*, Green Papaya Art Projects, Manila (2005); *The Bleeding Hearts Club*, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney (2006); *Exchanging Culture for Flesh*, Level 2 Contemporary Project Space, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2006) and *Destination Disaster*, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne (2005). Selected group exhibitions include *OBJECTION*, The Physics Room (curated by Tim Silver and Russell Storer), New Zealand (2001); *Balance of Power*, Raid Projects, Los Angeles (2003); *Primavera*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2006); *Strange Cargo*, Newcastle Regional Art Gallery, Newcastle (2006). Griggs is the recipient of numerous awards including Sir William Dobell Scholarship, Sydney College of the Arts (1997); Freedman Foundation Travelling Art Scholarship for emerging artists (2003) and Asialink Residency, Manila (2005). Griggs is represented in various collections including Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Newcastle Regional Gallery and Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. He lives and works in Sydney.

What were your reasons for choosing to undertake your residency in your host country?

I had travelled around Asia before and loved it. Then I met Filipino artist Jose Legaspi in Australia and he convinced me that the Philippines was the best place in the world and that the art scene was exciting. He was right.

In what ways did your host country get under your skin?

I spent the first 10 days of my residency in Manila in Medical City after getting very sick in the north of Thailand. So from my first days in Manila I was getting blood tests and heart scans. Then, after I became well, the city was so intense for me and exciting, dirty, wrong, corrupt and just perfect. The artists here are inspiring and the country is very beautiful. I have worked on many projects here over the last two years and this place, mainly Manila, it's my second home now. So I guess without even knowing it, it's already under my skin.



Blood on the Streets 2007
17:40 minutes (production still) DVD, edition 6
courtesy the artist, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

How did this experience challenge your approach to art making?

Artists here truly believe in what they are doing. They have hardly any funding from anywhere and do it for real. Out of their own pockets and with the help of friends. I found this community exchange to be important in many ways. For dialogue and practical needs. What is the role of art? I'm not sure. But I do know that it is the only form of communication to have with oneself, or the public as witness, that can try to understand the beauty and horror of our environment.

David Griggs in residence, Manila 2005
Photograph courtesy the artist



What opportunities do you see for yourself, and Australian artists more generally, in the Asian region?

Like anything it is up to the individual. There are a lot of good artists and galleries in Asia and I think we in Australia forget how close we are to this region. International curators seem to be taking notice now of the Philippines. With such a promising future ahead for the country and its artists, I feel that Australian galleries and artists should be taking more interest in our neighbouring countries. Opportunities can only happen if there is a mutual exchange of ideas for better or worse. Opportunities will only emerge if people are in contact personally.



From the publication *David Griggs: The Buko Police* 2005

David Griggs 17.



Bleeding Hearts Club no.8 2006
acrylic on canvas, 320 x 400 cm
courtesy the artist, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney

Louise Paramor

Host Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal

Country India

Date 1995

Host La Salle-SIA College of the Arts

Country Singapore

Date 2003

Louise Paramor was born in Sydney. She received a Bachelor of Fine Art in Painting from the West Australian Institute for Technology (WAIT), Perth (1985). In 1988 she completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Sculpture at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. Since 1988 Paramor has actively exhibited in Australia and overseas. She has held over forty solo exhibitions including: *Lustgarten*, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin and Schloss Pillnitz, Dresden (2000); *A Bunch of Flowers*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (2006). Her work was included in various group exhibitions including: *Primavera*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (1998); *Oblique Shadows*, Sculpture Square, Singapore (2000); *Satellit* (2000); Berliner Pavilion, Berlin (2000); *National Sculpture Prize & Exhibition*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (2001); *Helen Lempriere National Sculpture Award Exhibition*, Werribee, Victoria (2007 and 2008). Paramor has been awarded several grants and residencies including an Asialink Residency Bhopal, India (1995); Australia Council Fellowship, Berlin (1999/00); Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2001); Asialink Residency, Singapore (2003); Guest Residency at Stichting Duende Aktiviteiten, Rotterdam (2005) and artist-in-residence, Canberra School of Art, Australian National University, Canberra (2006). She lives and works in Melbourne.

What were your reasons for choosing to undertake your residency in your host countries?

I was attracted to the Indian residency after having visited India as a tourist three years previously. This initial visit inspired me on many levels and I was keen to return, but in a working capacity, and so applied to Asialink, which was then in its formative years.

The residency in Singapore (2003) came about in a different way. I had been contacted a couple of years earlier by Aleksandar Obradovic, then Program Officer at the Esplanade Arts Complex, who was interested to showcase some of my honey-comb paper sculptures. He suggested I contact La Salle-SIA College of Fine Art in order to seek a place to stay and work, enabling me to make a site-specific work. I did this and was invited to join the La Salle-SIA residency program which then led me to apply for funding from Asialink for living and material costs.

In what ways did your host countries get under your skin?

Every time I visit a city, whether it is in Europe, America or Asia, I always find myself exploring its Chinatown, so of course Singapore offered many fantastic Chinese markets and shops to contemplate. Back in Australia, the plastic assemblage work evolved organically. In a casual way I began collecting small, colourful plastic bits and pieces for no particular reason other than the pleasure of looking at them. Over some months in my studio, an ensemble began to grow and this inspired me to start working with larger, human-scale plastic objects and components in a more serious way.



Show Court 3 (detail) April 2007
Curator: Jane O'Neill Photograph: John Brash

How did this experience challenge your approach to art making?

The time in India was both challenging and fantastic. I met great people, made new work and learnt a lot about the complexities of day-to-day life for contemporary Indian artists.

Singapore was an intense time of producing new work, spending time with students and meeting other artists. I worked around the clock making two bodies of work, one being a large hanging honey-comb sculpture for the Esplanade concourse area and the other, a series of large collages depicting clichéd images of girls and of couples, which I showed at the end of my stay at Studio 106. The opportunity to make a work for the Esplanade was challenging. The concourse area is busy with architectural features, and there were limitations with regard to proximity to the public, meaning the work was to be entirely out of reach and the floor not to be utilised at all, which completely thwarted my usual approach.

The use of colour was also an issue. For instance, red should only occur during Chinese New Year period and white represents death.

What opportunities do you see for yourself, and Australian artists more generally, in the Asian region?

The residency in India led me to curate an exhibition of works on paper by young Indian artists. The show, *Bilkool*, was exhibited at RMIT Project Space, Melbourne, and Perth Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA) in 1998.



installation view
Lustgarten,
Schloss Pillnitz, Dresden,
Germany, 2001, paper

Pat HOFFIE

Host Australia Centre, Manila

Country Philippines

Date 1993

Host Hanoi Fine Art College, Hanoi

Country Vietnam

Date 2000

Pat HOFFIE was born in Edinburgh and arrived in Australia in 1957. HOFFIE completed a Master of Arts, University of Wollongong (1986) and a Doctor of Philosophy (Art History), University of New South Wales (1999). She has exhibited extensively since 1979 including various curatorial projects. Solo exhibitions include *Home & Away*, Institute of Modern Art (IMA), Brisbane (1990); *Gimme Fiction* Australia Centre, Manila (1993); *Fully Exploited Labour Drift*, IMA Brisbane (2004); *Maribyrnong: No Place to Weep*, *Interesting Times*, MCA, Sydney (2005); *Fully Exploited Labour* survey exhibition, University of Queensland Art Museum (2006). Group exhibitions include *Australian Painters of the Seventies* Queensland Art Gallery (1986); *Material Witness 15th Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennale* (touring Australia) (2002); *queue*, Canberra Contemporary Art Space (2002); *Art and Human Rights, the Limits of Tolerance*, Australian National University, Canberra (2007). Curatorial projects include Philippines curator *The Second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, Queensland Art Gallery (1996); *we think therefore we art*, IMA Brisbane (1997); *Future Tense, Art and Human Rights*, OCA Gallery, Brisbane (2005). HOFFIE is the recipient of numerous awards and grants including Asialink Residency, Manila (1993); Asialink Residency, Hanoi (2000); Australia Council residency, Barcelona (2002); Australia-China Council residency, Beijing (2006). She has actively participated in various Australian arts organisations including as a VAB Board Member, Australia Council for the Arts (1993/97); Board Member, Viscopy Australia (2002/03); President, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (1993/96) and presented numerous papers at national and international conferences since 1988. HOFFIE lives and works in Brisbane.

What were your reasons for choosing to undertake your residency in your host countries?

When I applied to Asialink the first time I had another country in mind, but the wisdom of the selection panel thought that my work and ideas might be better suited to the Philippines. And Asialink Arts Director, Alison Carroll, had been there and met Santiago (Santi) Bose and Roberto Villanueva and a bunch of other artists and felt sure that I would thrive there. And I did.

I was immediately attracted to the place and the people. I loved all the contradictions - the iconoclasm that pressed cheek by jowl with the religiosity; the chaos and craziness; the political stunts that ran like soapie plots and the press stories about apparitions of the Madonna that sit right up against descriptions of the antics of politicians, and on a closer level, the passion of the artists and their commitment to getting across art in ways and forms that matter.

When I embarked on the Hanoi residency, Santiago Bose and our daughter Visaya came too, and the work we made there was influenced by the rich history of the country as well as more contemporary developments.

In what ways did your host countries get under your skin?

There is an irreverence mixed with a deep piety in the Philippines that I find absolutely compelling. The resilience of the people, their energy and their courtesy and grace are a heady mix. People are committed to the art of hanging out. They spend time with each other. They talk to each other. Stories get told and re-told and every time that happens the inflection changes slightly. The membrane between the fantastic and the everyday is a porous one. Miracles are reported daily in the newspapers. There's no place like it.

Hanoi's streets were no less seductive; three series of photos we collected there were of red star icons in a range of locations and presentations, yellow chrysanthemums used to decorate, pay homage to, and sometimes just cast aside, and fragile bamboo bird cages in an unclassifiable range of shapes. It was a great adventure, with more than its share of memorable moments.

Manila streetscene, 1993
Photograph courtesy the artist



How did this experience challenge your approach to art making?

The funny thing is that the Philippines residency in so many ways seemed like a coming home to me. I'd been interested in some of the ideas of postcolonial writing for some time, but in the Philippines the writing [back to the centres] had been manifesting in practical outcomes for some time. Santi Bose used to talk about the cultural expressions that grew from beneath, that wouldn't stay cowed no matter what kind of imperialism was in power, and discussions about such matters brought together thinkers from across disciplines. The Baguio Arts Festivals brought together writers and musicians, actors and dancers as well as visual artists. There was also a sophistication there that is fairly rare as so many of the artists travelled regularly, or had spent long terms abroad, and were at ease with taking risks and trialing things that might not be an immediate fit. And the sense of ratbaggery was well in place, perhaps especially because of Santi, who seemed to encourage the spirit of insurrection at all costs.

What opportunities do you see for yourself, and Australian artists more generally, in the Asian region?

There is an art community that sprawls well beyond the shorelines of Australia. There are so many Australian artists who have developed long-term relationships in the region that there is (thanks largely to Asialink) now a network of personal connections as well as institutional connections. The sad thing is that, on the whole, Australian institutions – and I include the funding institutions right through to the teaching institutions – still have a blind spot when it comes to the region. The bulk of the funding money still goes to ye olde Euramerican connections. I guess it's a prevailing conservatism that's pretty deeply entrenched here but there are so many possibilities in the region for re-imagining cultural practices. And it could be a lot of fun.



The Committee 2003-06

fabric, stitching, papier mache, pods, fur, cardboard boxes and paint





Madame Illuminata Crack's Pictorial Guide to the Universe (detail) 1999
10 double panels, silk stitching on silk, oil and acrylic on canvas, 114 x 120 cm each
all works courtesy the artist

Megan Keating

Host Beijing Art Academy, Beijing

Country China

Date 2000

Host Taipei Artists Village, Taipei

Country Taiwan

Date 2006/07

Megan Keating was born in Sydney, where she worked in a design studio before attending the National Art School, Sydney. She moved to Tasmania in 1996 and completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts – Honours (first class), Tasmanian School of Art (1997) and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Fine Art (2002). Keating has exhibited extensively since 1995. Selected solo exhibitions include *Different Reds*, Gallery 4a, Asia-Australia Arts Centre, Sydney (2001); *Zhong Guo Jewel*, Casula Powerhouse, Sydney (2001); *In Dream Begin Responsibilities*, Taipei 2-28 Memorial Museum, Taiwan (2006); *Hard Love*, Devonport Regional Gallery, Devonport (2006/08) and *Deep Water Dark Water*, Criterion Gallery, Hobart (2007). Selected group exhibitions include: *Papercuts*, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne (2003); *Love Letters to China*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney (2003); *Freize*, Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland (2005); *Tokyo: A Floating World*, Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania, Hobart (2007) and *Paper Cuts*, 24 Hr Art, Darwin (2008). Keating is the recipient of numerous awards including Asialink Residency, Beijing (2000); Australia Council Residency, Tokyo (2003); Australia Council New Work Established Grant (2005) and Asialink Residency, Taipei (2006) and Rimbun Dahan, Malaysia (2008). Her work is represented in various collections including Artbank, BHP Billiton, Australian Embassy, Beijing, Taipei Artists Village, Taiwan and the University of Sydney. She lives and works in Hobart.

What are some of the reasons for choosing the residency in your host countries?

The first time I went on an Asialink residency, I went to Beijing PRC to explore personal identity through a search of Asian heritage. Mainland China held great interest but in Australia I live and work on a small island and I was fascinated by the intricacies and workings of other island cultures, so Taiwan held a more immediate personal relevance.

Taiwan, like Tasmania, is a place of extremes. It too has a deep sense of identity and community, although this is always seen in the shadow of the mainland. In its recent history and in its current circumstances Taiwan has maintained these ideals under immense pressure. The pressure to become something else or change due to external forces is a pressure that most of us encounter to lesser or greater degrees.

The aim or goal of this residency was to try and come to terms with the influences of living within an island-based culture by exploring how other cultures function. I was interested in how Taiwan fared within the larger globalised community and its relationship with its own natural environment. In particular I was intrigued by the idea of isolation, and how this contributed to or affected a densely populated place.

In what ways did the host countries get under your skin?

This is a difficult question to pinpoint. Many things got under my skin and I don't think any one thing in isolation causes a place to affect you. I found the people of Taiwan to be incredibly open and generous of spirit. But I also found that Taiwan had an awkward relationship with the rest of the world and an awkward sense of self. That is, how and where they actually belong or stand, not only in relationship to the mainland but to the rest of the world. This, in turn, manifests itself in many ways – in their relationships with foreigners, with each other, with their indigenous communities and also within their own history.

This appeared largely on the surface as an urgency to grow, perform and demonstrate their own capabilities, an earnest desire to measure up to everyone else. It appeared as an odd but tensely balanced equation of tradition, industry, commerce, environment and nationhood. This somehow struck a strange cord within my own experience. I really liked the underlining tension perceived within all of this, although the pressure never seemed at breaking point. Somehow this was just a part of the everyday and part of the Taiwanese experience. Always having to work that little bit harder or try that little bit more to stay abreast of everyone else.

How did this experience challenge your approach to art making?

I really tried hard to explore these tensions within the work I made there. Treading a fine line between tradition and contemporary practice and including heavier and industrial-based materials within something far more serene and softer. Like Taiwan, one extreme cannot exist without the other.

I also felt compelled by the motion, pace and enthusiasm of the culture to participate in activities that I did not foresee as possibilities within my own practice such as collaborative performance work and outdoor site-specific installation. Because Taiwan maintained a culture of inclusion rather than exclusion there appeared to be fewer boundaries in cross-disciplinary approaches and they welcomed contributions from all arts sectors not only visual arts.

What opportunities do you see for yourself and other Australian artists more generally in the Asian region?

I am not sure that I can speak on behalf of other artists but I believe that there are many sensibilities and nuances shared between Australian and Asian artists. It is these sensibilities that link arts practices together. My practice has always used traditional and craft-based techniques and this has always appealed to Asian-based audiences. There is a certain materiality and

tactility that really seems to strike a cord on a very simple level. This I find very appealing. It opens many opportunities not only to exhibit my work within Asia but also to learn and communicate with an audience in a way that is very different from other Western audiences. It also offers a passage through to other collaborative cross-disciplinary arts practices and hopefully this is an avenue that will continue to grow. I do believe that there is a desire to collaborate, learn and exchange with others.

installation view: *Air Pressure*, 228 Memorial Museum, Taipei, 2007



Deep Water, Dark Water (detail) 2007
rubber, paper, silk



left: *Silk Cut 12* right: *Silk Cut 1*
from the series *Deep Water, Dark Water* 2007
rubber, paper, silk
all work courtesy the artist and Criterion Gallery, Hobart



List of Works

Emil Goh

between (Seoul) 2003
video, 7 mins

Double Parking Pillows 2008
digital photographs from Nokia N93i
171 x 830 cm
all works courtesy the artist

David Griggs

Bleeding Hearts Club no.8 2006
acrylic on canvas
320 x 400 cm
courtesy the artist, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney

Blood on the Streets 2007
17:40 minutes (production still) DVD, edition 6
courtesy the artist, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

Pat Hoffie

*Madame Illuminata Crack's Pictorial
Guide to the Universe* 1999
10 double panels, silk stitching on silk,
oil and acrylic on canvas
114 x 120 cm each

The Committee 2003-06
fabric, stitching, papier mache, pods, fur,
cardboard boxes, acrylic paint.
dimensions variable
all works courtesy the artist

Megan Keating

Deep Water, Dark Water 2007
rubber, paper, silk
dimensions variable
all works courtesy the artist Criterion Gallery, Hobart

Louise Paramor

Jam Session #6 2006/07
found plastics
dimensions variable

Jam Session #8 2006/07
found plastics
dimensions variable

Jam Session #10 2006/07
found plastics
dimensions variable

Jam Session #13 2006/07
found plastics
dimensions variable

Jam Session #28 2006/07
found plastics
dimensions variable

Jam Session #35 2006/07
found plastics
dimensions variable

Jam Session #74 2006/07
found plastics
dimensions variable

Show Court 3 2007
18:42 minutes
Videographer: Anne Wilson
Curator: Jane O'Neill.
Photographs: John Brash
all works courtesy the artist and Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne.

Under my skin

An Asialink touring exhibition featuring
Australian artists Emil Goh, David Griggs,
Pat Hoffie, Megan Keating and Louise Paramor.

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