

The Social Contract

A Constructed World

Spring Workshop

1 November -
15 December 2013

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A part of
Moderation(s)

A group seems most completely a group when the individuals in it share a maximal number of beliefs... On the other hand, there is less psychologically immediate account of groups that specifically minimizes the place of common belief.

Frances Ferguson

I will not see "The Social Contract" by the collaborative, A Constructed World. [REDACTED] maybe after December [REDACTED], [REDACTED] silence is lifted. [REDACTED] maybe there is nothing [REDACTED] missing.

[REDACTED] is actually the crux of the project. But of course, [REDACTED]. Though one thing is certain, in a so-called [REDACTED] the absence of information can become [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] see art that I [REDACTED] images on various websites, [REDACTED], or not missing, when I see images posted on facebook or instagram, a constant feed of art in places [REDACTED] there is too much information, [REDACTED] comprehend from a [REDACTED] photography isn't allowed in "The Social Contract." Resisting even rumor, [REDACTED] agree to the terms of the contract, you actually can't speak about what you [REDACTED] in the [REDACTED] you enter.

[REDACTED] most famous example being "The Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement" written and used by [REDACTED]. Often these agreements were conceptually tied to the works of the artists that used them, and outlined the presentation of [REDACTED] a contract with a collector, gallery nor institution, but an [REDACTED] and their audience members. [REDACTED] a good faith between the parties. [REDACTED] trust exists between visitors to an exhibition. [REDACTED] won't damage the work, and they trust [REDACTED] interesting environment for them to enter. There may be rules, [REDACTED] but these are expressed throughout the experience of [REDACTED]. They aren't usually part of the work itself.

Secrecy is definitely present in the making and organization of artworks and exhibitions, but quickly ends with [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] reaching as many people as possible, there are press releases, opening events, installation images, websites, and press coverage. [REDACTED] coy artists and institutions that resist the style of information deluges rely on some [REDACTED]. Contractual secrecy is usually in play only to lead [REDACTED]. The final product is a surprise.

For "The Social Contract," this process becomes [REDACTED] legally binding pact of secrecy terminates, [REDACTED]. A community of those "in the know" is formed, the viewer is implicated in the work, and the work depends on their honesty. [REDACTED] left unfulfilled. [REDACTED] You can't pretend to know, you don't have to fill in the blanks and contribute to the production [REDACTED] legally binding reason why you can't discuss it. [REDACTED] repeat the opinion of someone else, [REDACTED] game of telephone that comprises much [REDACTED]. "The Social Contract" presses pause on this [REDACTED].

What would it mean to write about an artwork you haven't seen or heard anything about? And furthermore, to write 'critically' about it? The basic frame of the critic's position is that, by virtue of your experience, your study or your privileged encounters with the artist, you have access to some conceptual material or meaning that lies beyond the surface of the work. Although much has been written rightly contesting this, we critics nonetheless are still dancing around the roles of revealer of meaning, announcer of profundity, janitor of mysteries.

The Social Contract is a work whose condition is this: prior to entering the exhibition room, you will sign a legal agreement stating that you will not discuss what you have seen. I have not seen any documentation of the room's content, though even if I had, I would still not be in a position to tell you anything.

A Constructed World remained appropriately coy in response to my questions, meta as they were: when the conceptual gesture is so strong, how important were the formal qualities of the work people saw? Would there be ways in which the content reflects the contract's conceptual gesture? Is it a McGuffin, or did they care what it looked and felt like? I did not get far with this sort of investigation, so I pulled my line of enquiry back to the matter of the agreement itself, which no doubt is the point.

So I have to come at the artwork another way. In a world of short deadlines and shady editorial practices, writings on unseen works happen all the time. The anecdotally-circulated artwork is often more interesting than the real thing, not because of any shortcoming of the work, but because of the accumulation of associations, contexts, embellishments, excitements of description that it acquires across retellings. Anecdotal artworks, as

a form of storytelling, circulate in the nicest settings, such as educational ones, moments of shared research, or ones in which the consumption of booze has blurred the memory yet loosened the tongue. Some of the best artworks I know are big helium balloon bunches of ideas tethered loosely to the anchor of an art object that is rumoured to have been made once. Taking *The Social Contract* at face value, we lose this expanded space; the work will only ever be what was seen and then privately remembered.

Of course, the foremost aspect of 'the work' consists of the conceptual gesture of the legal agreement itself, which is available for me to view. However, by definition, legalities have no content beyond what is written. Consider this anecdotal artwork: in ancient China (I have been told, in a hurried meeting at Schiphol airport) rocks were chosen from the mountains and hills and placed on sympathetically-shaped platforms. They were chosen for their beauty, but most of all, they were chosen for their rock-like rockishness. They were examples of the most like-themselves things that could be found. They were perfect objects, sitting seamlessly within the idea of themselves. Cats do this, too. When my mother says of her cat (as she often does) "she's a good cat," it is not a statement on moral goodness but an affirmation that the cat is good at her cat-ness.

Such is a well-written contract: interpretation is its failure. While breaking a contract generally invokes a pre-agreed punishment, often there's no compelling force beyond the performative nature of the legal agreement itself. The very form is what commands respect. Pure legalities have no meanings, only effects. These effects are the production of particular subjectivities.

To characterise this subjectivity, Geoff Lowe, one half of A Constructed World, paraphrased Giorgio Agamben for me: “What the State cannot tolerate in any way is that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging, form a community without affirming an identity.” Here is a group of people with nothing in common except the fact that they saw an artwork and have agreed through legal means not to talk about it. It is a small platform of identification, based on a small aesthetic memory, which by definition cannot announce itself. It’s not an important mode of identification in and of itself; what makes it such is that it absents itself from any form of representation, even anecdotally.

So the work – which might then be this group of people – doubly escapes our view. I have another blank spot here, literally, in my imagination: why is this important? Am I supposed to be piqued as to what is special about this group of people? Isn’t that what forms of identification are meant to do? It seems like the banality of the group is itself significant, and the agreement to silence heightens it. A group that refuses to acknowledge itself, by this paradoxical means, become a group, and the severance between speech and subjectivity is made.

Modern and contemporary artists have made various proclamations to their audiences using codified written structures. During the interwar years, we saw a proliferation of manifestos by artist groups such as the Dada Manifesto (1918) and the Surrealist Manifestos (1924 and 1929). These texts were meant to synthesize for the public the main tenets of an art movement, to communicate a set of values, aesthetics and intentions. Even as late as the Fluxus Manifesto (1963) pronouncements were a common cause event, and one that distinguished one artist group's *raison d'être* from another. There were no clear mechanisms for the audience to participate in the creation of these texts, which were crafted by a close-knit cohort of artists.

Even now, these documents still serve as a shorthand communiqué, a fast way to grasp the semantic field of reference for an artistic practice. While not considered to be artworks themselves, their functions extrude a powerful aura. While *A Constructed World's The Social Contract* (2013) may seem to diverge from these sorts of pronouncements—the agreement is not conceived with grand schemes in mind, but as a term of engagement with individuals who would choose to enter the exhibition space—it does communicate a set of propositions. Like Superflex's *Ecological Burial Contract* where signees were committing to a climate friendly burial during the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in 2009¹, it is closer in form to the contracts one devises in a marriage agreement or business partnership—a declaration of roles and responsibilities with implied consequences engendered through a trust aid. These are invitations to audiences to participate in a social experiment.

While *The Social Contract* (2013) is a direct reference to Thomas Hobbes's 17th-century Enlightenment ideals of the right of

the individual and State sovereignty, one may also consider it in relationship with the 18th-century work of the same name by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He writes: "But the social order isn't to be understood in terms of force; it is a sacred right on which all other rights are based. But it doesn't come from nature, so it must be based on agreements. Before coming to that, though, I have to establish the truth of what I have been saying."² In other words, I must be earnest in my approach to this endeavor.

In contemporary life, civil society and free will have shaped our relationship not only to the State but also to agreements among its citizens. It is structures such as these that keep lawyers employed, as implication is embedded in the words and phrases which aim for clarity yet cannot resist diverse interpretations. Curator Daniel McClean writes: "In many [artist contracts] there is a deconstructive moment, as they operate on the borders of legal intelligibility, playfully destabilizing the order and rationality of the contractual form whilst retaining its performative shell."³

For *A Constructed World's The Social Contract* there are a few turns that make their project less than straightforward. However forceful social contracts are, it is the function of trust that becomes salient when engaging audiences in an arrangement as a key component to a work of art. The artists make an interesting point in questioning how hyper-connectivity has been stretching our sociability to the breaking point. The artists' contract disallows the audience from speaking about their experience in the gallery (at least during the run of the exhibition), thereby obligating the audience to sign away their freedom of speech, a basic right in the U.S. Bill of Rights (a document derived directly from Enlightenment ideas). Yet in this case, silence is considered by the artists to be a

liberatory act, one that is hard for us to grant ourselves in an age of social media and blog posts. This is not the Zen meditation version of silence—the silence of sitting zazen that allows for a different, more intimate relationship with oneself; this one is a protection against norms.

While I can write about manifestos, contracts, expectations, silence and speech, I am unable to divulge that which I do not know: what takes place within the room. So I, too, am disarmed, useless in my speech. Pronouncements as the speech act of artists are documents of intention as well as recordable archives. In this case, the audience gets to choose whether to participate in what may lead to a form of freedom through an agreement based on constraint.

1
http://superflex.net/tools/ecological_burial_contract
(retrieved Oct. 21, 2013)

2
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 1,
<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/roussoci.pdf>
(retrieved Oct. 21, 2013)

3
Daniel McClean, "The Artist's Contract/ From the Contract of Aesthetics to the Aesthetics of the Contract," *Mousse Contemporary Art Magazine*, Milan, <http://moussomagazine.it/articolo.mm?id=607>
(retrieved Oct. 20, 2013)

Story 1
Venus Lau

There is a room in a small hostel with no more than six rooms in all. The two women next door rarely show up; I see their pale faces drift by the half-open door only once. The dim yellow light common to all hotels drowns the entirety of the space of the room, but strangely I do not see any lights on. I wonder if there is a sun struggling on its deathbed somewhere, vomiting a milky yellow daytime.

I am sure that I came with another person—who it was I cannot recall, but I am sure it was a woman. Of that I am sure. A person, not a dog or a reindeer. Of that I am sure. The space I am in is filled with breathing sounds and smelly breath, but I cannot see anyone. Or maybe I can, and I just forget the feeling of seeing. But I sense people, a lot of them, in this room.

I sneak into the room next door, not looking for anything particular, just loitering. I flip through their sharply folded old underwear, pick up a half-eaten apple on the floor, and stage a story in my head about how to defend myself when the women come back to the room: “Oh, I opened the wrong door.” “Oh, I left my bag here.” “Oh, I saw a thief break into your room.”

There are several bathtubs in their room. One of them is round, of normal size. There are eight smaller tubs, rectangles with rounded corners. They are as small as infants’ coffins. An indigo fluid fills the small tubs, as stagnant as any other tranquil, inorganic substance. I am sitting in one of the small tubs when I awaken, stretching my legs beyond its smooth edges. The fluid is neither cold nor hot nor even lukewarm. I find it hard to even sense the wetness of the fluid—it is nothing but a subtle flow. Seated in this tiny, trembling blue heart reminds me of the humid, slightly poisonous air of the south, which scratches the throat like the soft stems of so many plants, of the wet

ground where tricycles pass by, of heaps of toxic colorful fruits on the sidewalks. When I bite into those vibrant hues, they turn to tasteless ash.

The women are back, standing wordlessly next to me. Their eyebrows and the corners of their smiles tremble like ripples over the indigo fluid. I leave the room naked, wondering about the dryness of my skin.

I don’t know the bald man in my room, and I cannot do anything but smile. The man talks a lot, telling me about the past between us. I am overwhelmed by the sheer amount of detail, hearing everything without understanding, but I start to believe him no matter how the story goes. Anyway, we knew each other a long time ago—I should not and cannot question. The man has a big laugh, so it seems like even the oil on his face is smiling in its way. His eyes are black, translucent. I stare into his eyes and fall through onto a damp meadow where the grass grows up to my waist, succulent with dark green juice. The wind becomes bitter as it passes through the lustrous green.

The sun is bright, but when its beams touch my skin, it becomes cold. My limbs go numb on the grass.

What Lies Beneath –
Some Deliberations on
Exhibitions and Contracts *

Alana Kushnir

Imagine another world in which you would always be required to sign a written contract before being allowed to view an artwork. Each time you approached the exhibition space – in a museum, a gallery or other location in which an artwork is presented – you would be greeted by an attendant who would casually ask you to sign a document placed in front of you. This document would include terms requiring you to do or refrain from doing certain things, in exchange for being allowed into the exhibition space to view the artwork. How does this procedure differ from what you actually experience when approaching exhibition spaces? Do you encounter contracts? Or do contracts simply not exist in these environments?

A contract is an agreement which is enforceable in a court of law. In order to be enforceable, one party to the contract must promise to do something in exchange for a benefit from the other party to the contract. Although it is helpful to have a written document to prove that a contract exists and what its terms are, in principle the law does not require that the contract be expressed in writing or be signed by the parties in order to be legally binding. In practice, what this means is that we are actually making contracts every day, without even noticing it.

Here is one such scenario: you're hungry and you feel like eating an apple. You enter a grocery store, choose an apple you like, pay 50 cents for it at the cash register, and walk out of the store. You now own the apple and can eat it. In this scenario, a contract has been formed because the grocery store has given you an apple in exchange for your 50 cents. You may not have signed a document, but because of your conduct and the conduct of the grocery store, a legally-binding agreement has been formed between you and the store.

This scenario is just one illustration of how frequently contracts appear in everyday life, whether they are expressly stated or merely implied through the conduct of the parties. Indeed, contracts are far more prevalent than many of us may care to admit. As philosopher Virginia Held has stated, “contemporary Western society is in the grip of contractual thinking” (*Feminist Morality*, 1993, p. 193). Indeed, contracts can take a myriad of forms and contain endlessly variable benefits. They can be trivial or serious. They are a mechanism that we have become accustomed to, perhaps even overly so, and this is why they can exist unnoticed.

If we consider that contracts can arise out of implied conduct, and that they can exist unnoticed, then is it reasonable to suggest that contracts are present in the spaces of exhibitions? After all, it could be argued that as a member of the public, you are granted access to an exhibition space and allowed to consider an artwork, and perhaps even be enlightened by it. In return, the artist and the gallery benefit from your reception of the artwork. In other words, you gain the experience of an exhibition in return for their gain of an audience. In addition to these benefits, there are also several implied obligations within an exhibition setting which regulate social conduct and point to the presence of a contract. You may feel required to read wall texts or labels, to walk around

** Disclaimer: This piece of writing should not be understood or interpreted as a disclosure of any information provided by A Constructed World to the author in connection with their exhibition entitled The Social Contract, held at Spring, Hong Kong in November 2013. At the request of A Constructed World, the author has signed a Confidentiality Undertaking to keep this information secret from the 27th of August 2013 until the 15th of December 2013. As such, this piece of writing cannot discuss or otherwise refer to any content of A Constructed World's exhibition The Social Contract which may have been provided to the author by A Constructed World.*

Alana Kushnir

the space in a particular direction and to speak quietly and only when necessary, so as not to affect the experiences of others. You may also feel obliged to not touch the artworks or lean against the walls.

This is precisely the type of conduct which social and cultural theorist Tony Bennett proposed to be a signifier of the operation of 'the exhibitionary complex', a "self-monitoring system of looks in which the subject and object positions can be exchanged, in which the crowd comes to commune with and regulate itself through interiorizing the ideal and ordered view of itself as seen from the controlling vision of power." (*The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, 1995, p. 69). Bennett pointed out the ability of the exhibition space, via its architectural layout and other functional aspects, to create lines of sight in which the viewer is able to observe, whilst simultaneously being observed. He explained that self-regulation is produced through this process of self-observation. This system enables "a society to watch over itself" (Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, 1995, p. 69), and it employs implied obligations in order to do so.

In utilising these implied obligations as a means of governance, it is interesting to point out that Bennett's exhibitionary complex bears some resemblance to certain principles of social contract theory. Therefore, even though any reason as to why A Constructed World have named their exhibition *The Social Contract* cannot be discussed here (see the initial disclaimer), social contract theory is still relevant to this piece of writing. The concept behind this theory has its origins in Plato's short dialogue *Crito*, where Socrates assumes the voice of "the Laws" and declares:

We further proclaim and give the right to every Athenian, that if he does not like us when he has come of age and has seen the ways of the city, and made our acquaintance, he may go where he pleases and take his goods with him; and none of us laws will forbid him or interfere with him. Any of you who does not like us and the city, and who wants to go to a colony or to any other city, may go where he likes, and take his goods with him. But he who has experience of the manner in which we order justice and administer the State, and still remains, has entered into an implied contract that he will do as we command him.

Social contract theory was then developed further during the Enlightenment by thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Each of these figures used the concept of the social contract as a means of arguing for divergent forms of legitimate government. In the 20th century it was then revised as a premise for further developments in moral and political philosophy, most notably by John Rawls in his influential book, *A Theory of Justice* (1972). Although it would be misleading to suggest that each of these protagonists employed a common interpretation of the concept of the social contract, each of their commentaries relies on the hypothetical presumption that there exists an implied agreement among all individuals in a society, and that these individuals give up certain liberties by adhering to certain rules of conduct, in exchange for the benefit of being protected by that society. This implied agreement – the social contract – is used as a means to justify society's right to govern. Therefore, while social contract theory and Bennett's exhibitionary complex share the centrality of rules of social conduct, the theories differ in regards to the benefit received by individuals who adhere to those rules.

For the exhibitionary complex, that benefit is to self govern. For the social contract, that benefit is to be governed by others. In the spaces of exhibitions, the social contract's benefit of *being* governed by others can also be gained, in addition to the benefit of self-government which is offered by the exhibitionary complex. Aside from the more obvious kinds of social conduct such as walking around the space in a particular direction, speaking quietly and not touching the artworks - those used by Bennett to justify the exhibitionary complex - there are more subtle kinds of social conduct which exist in, and are encouraged by exhibitions.

One such kind of conduct is touched upon in the press material for A Constructed World's work *The Social Contract*: the generally implied obligation to discuss what one has seen in an exhibition. This obligation does not apply to anyone who enters an exhibition space. Rather, it applies to those visitors who consciously or subconsciously play the role of the interested and knowledgeable art viewer. Visitors who play this role are expected to be able to understand what it is they have seen and to impart their understanding to others. They play this role successfully if there are others to whom they can impart their understanding of the artwork. This requirement of the presence of others - of an audience - is what makes this subtle kind of social conduct relevant to social contract theory. If the visitor's discussion of what he or she has seen does not live up to the expectations of the audience, then the visitor loses their confidence and approval. The visitor is left without the protection of the audience, a consequence which according to social contract theory means that the visitor is left without the benefit of being governed by those around them. In doing so the visitor effectively waives the benefit of the social contract.

The press material for A Constructed World's *The Social Contract* also explains that visitors must agree to not disclose the contents of what they see in the exhibition by signing a Participation and Confidentiality Agreement. Given that the press material mentions that this Agreement needs to be signed, it can be implied that the contract will be expressed in writing and signed by the parties. In this set up, the written and signed document will act as a tool by which visitors will be able to waive any social contract which they may have implicitly agreed to. In other words, the implied social contract (which is not legally binding) will be replaced with an expressly written contract (which *is* legally binding). When this new contract is signed, the social contract which lies beneath the surface of exhibitions will be revealed.

A Constructed World work with actions and methodologies that bring attention to diverse modes of artistic practice. They are well known for their lengthy performances which include up to twenty performers presenting speech, conversation, philosophical texts, music and singing, incorporating high levels of specialisation and not-knowing as a shared space. In their ongoing project, *Explaining contemporary art to live eels*, they invite art specialists to speak to live eels that are later released back into the water.

Based in Paris, A Constructed World is the collaborative project of Australian artists Geoff Lowe and Jacqueline Riva. They have presented major survey exhibitions at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne (2012), Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (2007) and Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (1996). They have also had solo exhibitions at National Centre for Editioned Art and Image (Cneai), Chatou (2007) and CAPC Museum of Contemporary Art, Bordeaux (2008), where they made a year-long project of four exhibitions and performances. Their next expansive exhibition will be at Museum Villa Croce, Genova (2014).

A Constructed World have made performances for art centres including Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers (2013), Cneai, Chatou (2012), FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims (2012); Academy of Fine Arts, Stockholm (2011) and Paola Pivi's GRRR JAMMING SQUEEK, Sculpture International Rotterdam (2011). Their work has been included in group exhibitions in museums and organisations including National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2013), Museum of Objects, Blois (2011), Villa Arson Centre for Contemporary Art, Nice (2010), Gertrude Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne (2009), NUS Museum, Singapore (2008), Foundation Sandretto

Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2007) and Arte all'Arte, San Gimignano (2000) and biennale such as Belleville, Paris (2010), Tirana (2003), Saõ Paolo (1998) and Gwangju (1995). They have been the recipients of artist-in-residence grants from Villa Arson, Nice (2010), Couvent des Récollets, Paris (2007), Australia Council for the Arts, Cité, Paris (2005) and Serpentine Gallery, London (2002).

Heman Chong is an artist, curator and writer whose conceptually-charged investigations into how individuals and communities imagine the future generates a multiplicity of objects, images, installations, situations and texts.

In 2006, he produced a writing workshop with Leif Magne Tangen at Project Arts Center in Dublin where they co-authored *PHILIP*, a science fiction novel, with Mark Aerial Waller, Cosmin Costinas, Rosemary Heather, Francis McKee, David Reinfurt and Steve Rushton.

The artist has developed solo exhibitions at The Reading Room (Bangkok), Future Perfect (Singapore), Wilkinson (London), Rossi & Rossi (London / Hong Kong), SOTA Gallery (Singapore), NUS Museum (Singapore), Kunstverein Milano (Milan), Motive Gallery (Amsterdam), Hermes Third Floor (Singapore), Vitamin Creative Space (Guangzhou), Art In General (New York), Project Arts Centre (Dublin), Ellen de Bruijne Projects (Amsterdam), The Substation (Singapore), Kuenstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin), Sparwasser HQ (Berlin).

He has participated in international biennales including Asia Pacific Triennale 7 (2012), Performa 11 (2011), Momentum 6 (2011), Manifesta 8 (2010), 2nd Singapore Biennale (2008), SCAPE Christchurch Biennale (2006), Busan Biennale (2004), 10th India Triennale (2000) and represented Singapore in the 50th Venice Biennale (2003).

Betti-Sue Hertz has been the director of visual arts at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) since 2009. Trained as an artist and art historian her curatorial and scholarly projects are fueled by the intersection of visual aesthetics and socially relevant ideas, where emotional content is filtered through intellectual machinations. She understands exhibitions to be a site for the creation of relational structures and comparative propositions to expand opportunities for new perspectives on a wide range of topics.

Exhibitions at YBCA include *Migrating Identities*, 2013; *Audience as Subject* (2010 and 2012); *Song Dong: Dad and Mom, Don't Worry About Us, We Are All Well* (2011); *The Matter Within: New Contemporary Art of India* (2011); and *Nayland Blake: Free!Love!Too!!Box!* (2012), which received the 2013 2nd Place Award for a Non Profit/ Alternative Gallery from the International Art Critics Association-USA. As curator of contemporary art at the San Diego Museum of Art from 2000-2008, exhibition highlights include *Animated Painting* (2007); *Transmission: The Art of Matta and Gordon Matta-Clark* (2006); *Past in Reverse: Contemporary Art of East Asia* (2004), for which she received the Emily Hall Tremaine Exhibition Award; and *Axis Mexico: Common Objects and Cosmopolitan Actions* (2002). *Dissident Futures* opens in Fall 2013.

Mia Jankowicz is a writer and independent curator based in Cairo and London. Between 2009-2013 she was Artistic Director of Contemporary Image Collective in Cairo, Egypt.

Under her leadership CIC saw major expansions including relocation, and the CIC PhotoSchool, as well as curatorial initiatives such as The Alternative News Agency and PhotoCairo 5. She studied Visual Cultures MA at Goldsmiths College and worked as Residencies Curator at

Gasworks, London, before participating in de Appel Curatorial Programme. She currently writes around Egyptian cultural contexts and internationally, contributing pieces to numerous catalogues and magazines.

Ruba Katrib is Curator at SculptureCenter in Long Island City, New York, and was previously Associate Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami (2007 - 2012). Her recent exhibitions include *A Disagreeable Object* (2012), on the legacy of surrealism, and *Better Homes* (2013), which addressed domesticity in contemporary art, as well as the first comprehensive solo museum exhibitions of Cory Arcangel (2010) and Claire Fontaine (2010).

Her writing has appeared in several periodicals including Artforum, Kaleidoscope, and Mousse Magazine. Recent publications include *New Methods* (MOCA, 2013), on independent artist initiatives throughout Latin America, and *Inquiries Into Contemporary Sculpture - Where is Production?* (co-editor) forthcoming from Black Dog Press.

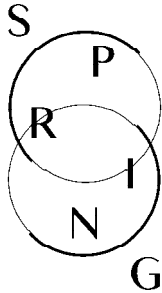
Alana Kushnir recently completed an MFA in Curating at Goldsmiths, London. Prior to this, she worked as a lawyer at King & Wood Mallesons in Melbourne, Australia. Her curatorial practice and research explores the intersections of the law, curating and contemporary art.

Recent curated exhibitions include *Open Curator Studio* at Artspace, Sydney and online (2013), *Fourth Plinth: Contemporary Monument* at the ICA, London (2012 - 2013), *Paraproductio*n at Boetzelaer|Nispen Gallery, Amsterdam (2012), *TV Dinners* at BUS Projects, Melbourne (2012), *Acoustic Mirrors* (co-curator) at the Zabłudowicz Collection, London (2012).

In 2014, Kushnir will be curating an exhibition at the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation in Sydney. She has presented her research and writing in a wide range of online and printed publications and academic journals, including the *Journal of Curatorial Studies* and *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*.

Venus Lau is a curator and art writer based in Hong Kong. After working in Beijing as an art writer and project curator, she now works actively in various cultural spheres across greater China, pursuing multidisciplinary experimentation with potential and emergent cultural productions in the region, while initiating discourses between Chinese art and the cultural structures in other countries.

Beyond contemporary art, she also engages in criticism on local cinematic and literary work and produces literary texts. She is currently researching topics including the Pearl River Delta as cultural rhetoric, subalterns and implosion in representation of triads in Hong Kong cinema and their relationship to the mythical monster Lu Ting, scrambled eggs as an object of desire in Hong Kong cinematic language, and empire and *jianghu* in the cultural geographies of Chinese contemporary art. She is also actively exploring the linkage between philosophical turn of object-oriented ontology and the ever-changing concept of objecthood in the realm of art, with an output of a publication (as an awarded project of CCAA Critic Prize) while currently working on her master thesis on hauntology and the paradox of appearance in media art. She is chairman of the curatorial office Society for Experimental Cultural Production.



Spring is a non-profit arts space committed to an international cross-disciplinary program of artist and curatorial residencies, exhibitions, music, film and talks. Anchored in the Wong Chuk Hang industrial neighborhood of Hong Kong, it opened in August 2012. Spring serves as a platform and laboratory for exchange between the vibrant artists and organizations of Hong Kong's rich cultural landscape and their international counterparts who seek to engage in far-reaching dialogue.



Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art is an international public institution with Rotterdam as its home base. Established in 1990, Witte de With explores developments in contemporary art worldwide and presents this through exhibitions, theoretical and educational programs, public events and publications.

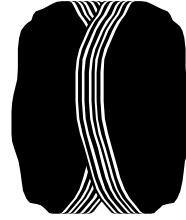


Fig.1
Moderation(s)

Moderation(s) brings together an international group of artists, curators, and writers including A Constructed World, Nadim Abbas, Lee Ambrozy, Oscar van den Boogaard, Michael Lee, Gabriel Lester, Christina Li, Bik van der Pol, Eszter Salamon, and Koki Tanaka, who will participate in a program of contemporary discourse and production lasting for more than year and taking place between initiators Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art and Spring Workshop in Hong Kong. Within this framework, Witte de With invited Heman Chong, a Singaporean artist, curator, and writer, to steer the program which will involve more than fifty artists and engender a conference, three exhibitions, three residencies, and a book of short stories.

In speaking about this project, moderator Heman Chong proposes to 'make soft' the practices of both artist and curator, so that one becomes easily soluble in the other, while retaining their unique forms and patterns of working. The participants will be encouraged to indulge in the pleasures of exchanging knowledge and tools without any pressure to collaborate.

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