

**Resource Architecture –
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Plenum 4: Space and Identity

An Event City, A Pandora's Box

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Hou Hanru

Gwangju Biennale has been one of the most important global art events taking place in Asia-Pacific region since it's creation in 1995. The 2002 edition (the 4th one) is entitled "Pause" is open on 29 March 2002 and opened till 29 June 2002. I have been invited to co-curate the main exhibition "Project 1" with Charles Esche and Sung Wan-Kyung. This project, instead of repeating most of international biennales' aim to present the most fashionable tendency and art stars, is conceived of being a context specific event evoking new ways of critical reflections on the question of global art and it's relation with the reality of global-local negotiation. To articulate this engagement, we have also decided to turn the exhibition spaces into a kind of laboratory for new urban-architectural intervention in order to provide a specific context – questioning the issue of urbanisation as a new context for artistic activity today – for the event. On the other hand, such a process also, certainly, bring art and architecture activities to confront and collaborate together. The merge of different disciplines are today inevitable; we are facing the challenge of reinventing new identities for different practices, including art and architecture-urbanism. It's through this new negotiation that we can start imagine and define new territories and strategies to cope with the tension between the globally increasing urbanisation and necessity of local interests. Our ultimate intension is to create a biennale which functions a kind of on-going laboratory of reinvention of urban conditions and new context for art practice.

1. From the beginning, the biennale has been encouraging the understanding of the general theme "Pause" as a rupture from established modes of biennale, which limits art creation into "correct" presentation of products. To start with a new direction: emphasize creativity, productivity instead of products. To open up space for "slow" works which are resisting voices against the highly utilitarian evaluation system dictated by the cultural logic of globalising, late Capitalism. To the opposite of the culture of the spectacle, projects which deal with slowness, emptiness and openness are conceived to provide such spaces of critique. Pause, is therefore a dynamic and critical process of reflection and differentiation.
2. Logically, the roles of the artist and the art work are deeply challenged: the subjectivity of the artist has to be opened to the dialogue of the other

while an active and interactive relationship between the artist and the public is established through the realisation process of the works which are open, flexible, evolving in time and physically inviting the participation of the audience. Together, they create magic moments in which both the artist and the public can critically contemplate and reflect on the issues of art and society, globalisation and locality, etc. Therefore, the biennale has been directly consistently connected to the interests of the local public. This relationship is unique and irreplaceable.

3. Exploring further the question of “global” biennale and locality, one should naturally question the established forms of institutional structure and discourses. Striving against the white cube, the commonly taken for granted space for contemporary art presentation, or “typical” form of biennale structure, we have encouraged projects and actions which go beyond such a confinement. However, more fundamentally, we have understood the truly innovative aspect of the negotiation between artistic innovation and institutional framework happens in the efforts of self-organisation on the part of the artists, who not only endeavour in creating differences in the art language but also struggle to open independent spaces to provide new freedom for their creation. This is particularly significant in the Asia Pacific region where Western style of infrastructure has not yet existed. Many artists, to make their radically experimental work possible, have organised their own alternative spaces out of everyday life contexts. They live and work in highly diverse and different cultural realities. The forms of their organisations are accordingly different and therefore strongly enriching. In the meantime, they have also started dialogues across the region and an important trans-regional network of self-organisations and alternative spaces have been built up and provided the most important conditions for artistic creation. This proves to be one of the most innovative efforts in Asia Pacific region’s contribution to the making of a new global art scene. They have shown examples of the necessity of decentralisation of power and resistance to the homogenisation caused by the accelerated globalisation of communication and cultural “exchange”. Instead of simply denying the necessity of globalisation, or global circulation and hybridisation of different cultures, they have creatively proposed constructive solutions to make sure our future can remain rich and diverse while opening to the other is an inevitable central task. Certainly, this kind of initiative has not been limited in Asia Pacific region. As a matter of fact, in Europe, Latin America and other parts of the world, similar self-organisational structures are becoming increasingly important. In the biennale project, we have attempted to bring those organisations to Asia so they can meet up with their colleagues on the other side of the globe. A first step towards a global network of independent, self-organisational and resistant structures for creation is hence made in the realisation of the biennale. The biennale itself is an ongoing event of such encounters and dialogues. It is not a

once-for-all event, instead, it's like Pandora's box. Once it's opened, it can never be closed. On the contrary, it will be continued, developed, multiplied and spread in infinite time and space. Also, it can also be seen as an echo to the current movements of critique and resistance of economic globalisation and its geopolitical consequences. Once again, it proves that significant artistic activities are always engaged in reality; it's ultimately political.

4. The biennale, with a great number of site specific installations, and especially the adapted versions of "reproductions" of the alternative spaces, is by no means a simple presentation of objects. It's a permanent workshop, a lively urban space with real life events happening all the time. It's dynamic, complex and mutating system of creation and exchange. It's an event city. To put forward this point, a certain urban organisational intervention becomes inevitable. We have invited Chang Yung Ho and Kim Young-Joon to act as the exhibition architects. What is remarkable is that Yung Ho Chang (principle of Atelier Fei Chang Jian Zhu, Beijing) was the space designer of "Cities On the Move 1 – 4" (1997 – 1999). He has been closely collaborating the visual art world since then. In fact, exhibition design has become a significant part of his activities, a condensed terrain for his urbanist experiments. Obviously, the roles of the architects in the Gwangju Biennale project, like in Cities On The Move, are far beyond designing formal structures to hold the works. Their main achievement is actually an ingenious urban planning project which, in spite of the lack of resource and time, has successfully injected powerful energy and complexity to the biennale. Their extremely intelligent and intense organisation of the spaces between installations/pavilions and alternative spaces, between density and emptiness, between congestion and fluidity, between interior and exterior, etc. have brought a veritable new life necessary to the complex system of the project itself. This result recalls clearly the urban reality of Asian cities driven by the explosive urban expansion, density and dynamic economic, cultural and political modernisation. Visual art practices are now re-contextualised in a completely new environment. Organically binding together, art and architecture are now generating a new knowledge and practice category.