The Next Normal:
더 넥스트 노멀:

Dialogue in Asia
다이얼로그 인 아시아

Pre-forum in Seoul
사전 포럼

The Next Normal

ARTS COUNCIL KOREA

PRODUCER GROUP DOT

The Next Normal:
더 넥스트 노멀

Dialogue in Asia
다이얼로그 인 아시아

Pre-forum in Seoul
사전 포럼

ARTS COUNCIL KOREA
PRODUCER GROUP DOT

Contents

1. Producer's Note 4

2. Overview 6

3. Forum 8

3-1. **Session 1 Presentation & Discussion** 10

Yuichiro Yoshida 12
Rahayu Harjanthi 16
Betsy Lan 22
Ihot Sinlay Cihek 26
Jahye Khoo 32

3-2. **Session 2 Roundtable** 48

TABLE A Bobo Lee 50
TABLE B E-Jan Tan 53
TABLE C Sasapin Siriwanij 61
TABLE D Tessa Leong 71

3-3. **Session 3 Presentation & Discussion** 80

Tatsuya Kawamura 82
Yoonhwan Jeon 85
Kei Saito 89
Sekar Handayani 92
Rosabel Tan 99
Simon Wellington 103

4. The Next Normal you are dreaming of 114



Producer's Note

Jisun Park, Creative Producer, Producer Group DOT

The concept of what is 'normal' may seem fixed, but it has actually been continually rewritten. In the 19th century, it was considered normal for only white men to have the right to vote; since then, those boundaries have continued to expand beyond gender, race, and physical ability, reaching into human and non-human realms. And now, we cannot help but ask once more: In this era where the climate crisis, deepening inequality, war, migration, and conflicts over civil liberties and sovereignty are simultaneously unfolding, who exactly has created the 'normal' we have taken for granted, and how? The certainty humanity once held in its natural right to exploit the Earth's resources freely has, paradoxically, turned into a shackle that endangers our survival and slows our adaptation to change. We are at a point where we must re-examine what is familiar and imagine a new form of normalcy from social, ecological, and ethical perspectives.

This is the question that The Next Normal (TNN) started from. This project was proposed by producers who have long researched Asia, following years of exchange and two years of discussion. It serves as the collective imagination and practice of artists seeking to rewrite the 'normal' of our current era. TNN is guided by three main directions. The first is to collectively question and imagine what the 'next normal' is, together with artists. The second is to build solidarity among artists and expand discourse through the residency format. Operating as an artist research lab, the residencies can connect not only artists with one another, but also artists with communities, linking local issues to broader regional interests. The third is to reconstruct and connect Asia by focusing on the diverse subjects and cultures that make up the region within historical, regional, and political contexts, rather than centering on nations. As a network and platform consisting of the residency-style 'Asian Artists Research Lab' and the discourse-sharing 'Dialogues in Asia', TNN addresses urgent contemporary issues like the climate crisis, equality, diversity, creative friction, diaspora, and post-humanism, aiming to create a venue that reconstructs the conditions of our time through artistic imagination.

The first forum, *The Next Normal: Dialogue in Asia*, held at the Artist House in Daehak-ro, Seoul, in February 2025, marked the beginning of this journey. Producers and artists from nine countries including Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Australia, and New Zealand, came together to explore multi-layered agendas toward the next normal, spanning topics from regional extinction and the logic of growth to climate justice, decolonization, indigenous wisdom, the boundaries of gender and normalcy, and new imaginations of residencies. Yuichiro Yoshida from Kinosaki International Arts Center (KIAC) proposed imagining a society that does not rely on the premise of growth, while Indonesia's Rahayu Harjanthi reframed the climate crisis through the language of climate justice. Betsy Lan from Taiwan presented indigenous wisdom as a guiding compass for decolonial practices, while artists shared their works that transcended the boundaries of normalcy through the aesthetics of friction. In the second session, producers from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, and Australia articulated and shared the anxieties that are encroaching on their respective cities. Self-censorship, a sense of belonging, isolation, and an era of categorization—though situated in different contexts, the very act of sharing these anxieties was a form of solidarity. In the third session, presenters from Toyooka, Ganghwa-do, Tottori, Yogyakarta, Aotearoa, and Melbourne explored new meanings of residency together. The consensus was that a residency must be redefined—not simply as a mechanism for mobility, but as a shared space to collectively rethink artistic practice, collaboration, and cultural citizenship in an era of global transition.

This publication archives the dialogues that unfolded during the forum. At the same time, it acts as the first map for the residency bases TNN will build across Asia, facilitating the mobility and connection of artists, and the resonance of their discourse. Led by producers across Asia, TNN envisions a multi-centered network in which questions emerging from Toyooka and Jakarta may resonate in Ganghwa Island, Sydney, and Bangkok through distinct residency sites shaped by local conditions.

What connects us is not a single answer, but one shared question: what is the 'next normal'? To create an ecosystem where artists across Asia can continue engaging with that question together through connection and collective imagination—that's the dream of TNN.



Overview

Date & Time	Mon, Feb 9, 2026 10:00 - 18:00
Venue	Artist House, Daehak-ro, Seoul
Hosted by	Arts Council Korea
Planned by	Producer Group DOT
In Collaboration with	Toyooka Theater Festival(TTF) (Japan) toyooka-theaterfestival.jp toyooka_tf Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting(BIPAM) (Thailand) bipam.org bipambkk Satellites (Aotearoa New Zealand) satellites.co.nz aksatellites Performosa Theatre 演摩莎劇團 (Taiwan) performosaen.wordpress.com performosa_theatre WestK Performing Arts (Hong Kong SAR, China) westk.hk/en/performing-arts westkperformingarts In Situ Arts Management Consultancy (Malaysia) insituartsmanagementconsultancy Chizu Community Theatre (Japan) Katalis Kolektif Koreografi(Katalis Collective) (Indonesia) kolektif.katalis Kinosaki International Arts Center(KIAC) (Japan) kiac.jp kiac_insta Performing Lines (Australia) performinglines.org.au performinglines Producer Group DOT (Korea) producergroupdot.kr producergroupdot Contemporary Asian Australian Performance(CAAP) (Australia) caap.org.au caaperformance

www.thenextnormalasia.com

Time Table

Registration	09:30	3F Reception
Introduction to The Next Normal	10:00	3F Auditorium
Session 1 Presentation & Discussion	10:15	3F Auditorium

The Next Normal in Asia: Outside the Normal, Rewriting the World

Moderator

Jisun Park Creative Producer, Producer Group DOT (Republic of Korea)

Presenters & Discussants

Yuichiro Yoshida Program Director, Kinosaki International Arts Center(KIAC) (Japan)

Regional Extinction and the Survival & Role of Arts

Rethinking the Role of Art Beyond Growth in an Age of Population Decline

Rahayu Harjanthi Anthropologist, Dala Institute (Indonesia)

Perspectives on the Climate Crisis and Ecology in Southeast Asia

Betsy Lan Creative Producer, Performosa Theatre (Taiwan)

Unlearning Colonial Norms: Indigenous Wisdom as a Compass for (Local) Art Practices

Ihot Sinlay Cihek Playwright, Director, and Performer (Taiwan)

The Aesthetics of Constant Friction: Practices and Exercises of Indigenous Feminism

Jahye Khoo Playwright and Director, theatre, definitely (Republic of Korea)

Theatre as Disturbance: Practicing Anti-/Bare-Stage through Gender & Sexuality Performance

Lunch & Networking	12:00	2F Lounge
Session 2 Roundtable	14:00	3F Seminar Room 2F Lounge

Asia Now: Anxiety, Friction, and Art Standing Facing It

TABLE A

Bobo Lee Senior Producer, WestK Performing Arts (Hong Kong SAR, China)

Expression under the Pressure of the Expanding Regulatory Boundaries

TABLE B

E-Jan Tan Creative Producer and Founder, In Situ Arts Management Consultancy (Malaysia)

Practicing Multiculturalism Through the Body, Not the Mind

TABLE C

Sasapin Siriwanij Artistic Director, Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting(BIPAM) (Thailand)

Finding Authentic Belonging in an Age of Judgement and Pigeonholing

TABLE D

Tessa Leong Artistic Director, Contemporary Asian Australian Performance(CAAP) (Australia)

Artists' Survival Amid Real-World Fears and Self-Censorship

Coffee Break	15:40	3F Lobby
Session 3 Presentation & Discussion	16:00	3F Auditorium

Cooperation & Connection in Asia: New Imagination and The Next Connection

Moderator

Sasapin Siriwanij Artistic Director, Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting(BIPAM) (Thailand)

Presenters & Discussants

Tatsuya Kawamura Producer, Toyooka Theater Festival (TTF) (Japan)

Reframing Relationships: Artist Residencies as Relational Practice with Communities

Yoonhwan Jeon Director, A.N.D Theatre (Republic of Korea)

Affirming the Time of Non-Productivity

Kei Saito Producer, Chizu Community Theatre (Japan)

Residency programme in Chizu, Tottori

Sekar Handayani Founder and Co-Director, Katalis Kolektif Koreografi(Katalis Collective) (Indonesia)

Contextual Reading of Artist Residencies in Indonesia within Historical, Cultural, and Relational Trajectories

Rosabel Tan Director, Satellites (Aotearoa New Zealand)

From Across Oceans

Simon Wellington Executive Producer, Performing Lines (Australia)

Residencies & the Art of Entanglement

Session 1 Presentation & Discussion

The Next Normal in Asia: Outside the Normal, Rewriting the World

Q. How can art reshape the boundaries of what is considered 'normal'?

Moderator Jisun Park

Speakers & Discussants

Yuichiro Yoshida
Regional Extinction and the Survival & Role of Arts
Rethinking the Role of Art Beyond Growth in an Age of Population Decline

Rahayu Harjanthi
Perspectives on the Climate Crisis and Ecology in Southeast Asia

Betsy Lan
Unlearning Colonial Norms: Indigenous Wisdom as a Compass for (Local) Art Practices

Ihot Sinlay Cihek
The Aesthetics of Constant Friction: Practices and Exercises of Indigenous Feminism

Jahye Khoo
Theatre as Disturbance: Practicing Anti-/Bare-Stage through Gender & Sexuality Performance

Yuichiro Yoshida

Program Director
Kinosaki International Arts Center(KIAC)

Japan

Regional Extinction and the Survival & Role of Arts Rethinking the Role of Art Beyond Growth in an Age of Population Decline

Good morning, everyone. My name is Yuichiro Yoshida. I am a program director of Kinosaki International Arts Center. It's called KIAC. Thank you very much for inviting me to this forum, and thank you to everyone who worked hard to make this gathering possible.

KIAC is an artist-in-residency center located in Toyooka City, a regional city away from urban areas. It is about two and a half hours from Osaka and Kyoto by train. It's not a big city. Like many regional cities in Japan, our city is facing rapid population decline. When the arts center was founded and I started work there in 2014, the population was about 82,000. Today, in 2026, it is around 73,000. And by 2050, it is expected to fall below 47,000. This is not limited to our city. It is happening across many parts of Japan. And perhaps similar things are happening in other East Asian countries as well. Standing in this situation, I sometimes feel that I am already living inside a future version of a society.

Yet, when I think about the next normal, one question keeps coming back to me. Is population decline really a problem? Today, I would like to think about this question together with you. So first, what does population decline bring to our society? There is a shortage of labor. There are fewer workers in many fields. It becomes difficult to maintain public infrastructure, such as health care and education. Tax revenue decreases. The social security system becomes unstable. And of course, cultural activities are often reduced. The market shrinks. The economy slows down. Is there anything else? For me, it's enough. The Japanese yen, which used to be very strong, is now quite weak. Many Japanese people cannot easily travel abroad anymore. On the other hand, Japan is now full of international tourists. KIAC, our center, is located in a famous hot spring town. Depending on the season, there are sometimes more foreign tourists than Japanese. From the perspective of the government and human society, these are clearly serious issues that require urgent solutions. But as an art practitioner, I find myself returning to this same question. Is the population decline really a problem?

In Japan today, one response to this situation is a policy called cultural tourism, led by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. The idea is very simple: to connect art and culture with tourism. Art and culture attract visitors. Visitors bring economic benefits to the region. And the money earned is then reinvested into the culture, to create a cycle. In a society with a declining population and weakening regions, this is a very rational approach. And I don't deny that this perspective is important for increasing the social visibility and survival of art and culture today. However, at the same time, I feel a certain discomfort. There is a risk that the value of art is measured only by its economic impact. And sometimes, art began to feel like a tool used for another purpose. Cultural tourism should be one option among many cultural policies, not the only measure of the value.

During COVID lockdown, I remember seeing the news report. As human activity slowed down, consumption decreased, energy use decreased, CO2 emissions were temporarily reduced, traffic congestion eased. They remind us of something uncomfortable. Human society has damaged the environment, not only for ourselves, but also for other living beings. So I sometimes wonder, if the human population decreases, could the global environment improve? From a larger perspective, population decline may not be entirely negative. At the same time, there are things that are clearly being lost, traditional cultures are one of them. In my region, especially in the mountain areas, the aging population means that local rituals and traditional performing arts are disappearing. COVID accelerated this process. Sooner or later, urban areas may face similar situations, similar declines. What may be lost is not only culture, but also the accumulated knowledge and technique for living. In this sense, population decline is not something that can be easily judged as good or bad.

Facing this situation, I believe that we as art practitioners need to rethink and redefine the role and the value of art in society. And this process itself may give us clues for thinking about the next normal. So what is the value of art in the first place? Art allows us to look at our society and our everyday life from a different position and perspective. In a world that prioritizes efficiency and productivity, art can help us recover something we may have already lost or are about to lose, something human or beyond human. At the same time, art is often treated as a tool. A tool for education, for tourism, for social problem solving. But art should also exist outside of the function and purpose. Art should be something that exists beyond the usefulness. Or perhaps I should say, it used to exist, unfortunately. To secure a place for something that does not immediately function, does not

immediately produce a result, may be essential in today's society. A society that tends to prioritize efficiency over humanity.

Now, I would like to share two small practices from my work as a producer. This is a first example, the KIAC Community Program from 2022 to 2024. We worked with three artists over a period of three years. In this program, artists researched local culture and nature and created works through the encounter with the local people. One artist focused on the ritual and ceremony held during Obon, a traditional Japanese period for honoring the ancestors. We visited different communities and documented this practice on video. These videos are now available online as an archive. Many of these rituals are slowly disappearing due to population decline. This project may not directly revitalize the region, but the question for us was not how to preserve the culture. In fact, I don't think culture can be preserved simply by recording to protect it. Culture only exists within living relationships in practice. However, by uncovering less visible culture practices and local resources, artists can help us learn something about how to live today, not by giving answers but by opening the question.

The second example is a project called *Sensible Activities*. This was a collaboration between sound artists from the UK and Japan. The project focused on the body experience and sensory perception. Instead of passive listening, participants followed instructions and exercises that encouraged active engagement. The aim was to transform perception and re-experience the place we are already in. The project took place in a coastal area called Takeno in the northern part of our city. It is located inside a national park. It used to be a port town. There are sounds of the sea, mountains, and rivers overlapped with everyday human life. Participants moved through different locations with a map and encountered a landscape/soundscape that appeared only at the moment. This was not a strong political message. It was simply an attempt to experience here and now again. These two practices may not significantly contribute to tourism or economic growth, but perhaps they offer small opportunities to rethink our relationship with the environment and with the world.

So, after all this, what is the next normal? To be honest, I don't have a clear vision, but I would like to share one thought. The word art comes from the Latin word *ars*, which means technique or skill. Not special talent, but a fundamental human technique. A way of listening to the environment, a way of sensing through the body, a way of reconnecting with others and with the world. By using art as a form of technique, we may be able to re-examine what we call normal and to imagine the next normal together. Art may not offer clear solutions to problems, but art can help us look at problems differently and create new relationships. Instead of constant growth and expansion, we may need to pause. Sometimes we need to take a step back. We may need the courage to accept non-productivity. For me, working in a shrinking local city, I sometimes feel that refusing to be immediately useful, refusing growth, efficiency and speed is itself a necessary artistic methodology. From a perspective outside the usual timelines and values of human society, art can help us imagine forms of society that don't assume growth as a default. Perhaps the next normal is not something we define once. Perhaps continuing to think together may be itself The Next Normal (TNN). I would like to think about it through this new project. This is my presentation. Thank you very much for listening.





1. KIAC Community Program 2022-2024 ©bozzo
2. Neil Luck + Masamitsu Araki "Sensible Activities" TAKENO (2025) ©bozzo

Rahayu Harjanthi

Anthropologist
Dala Institute

Indonesia

Perspectives on the Climate Crisis and Ecology in Southeast Asia

Authors: The Guardians Under Pressure, Dala Institute Indonesia Team
(Rahayu Harjanthi, Giovanni Austriningrum, Naufal Indriansyah and Vilona Stevanny)

How Art Reshapes the Boundaries of 'Normal': From Climate Crisis to Climate Justice

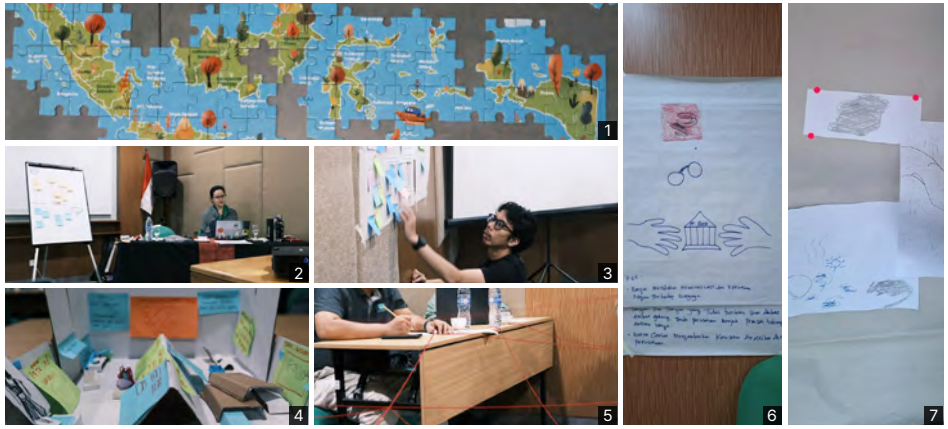
Good morning, everyone. My name is Rahayu Harjanthi, and I'm an anthropologist working with Dala Institute in Indonesia. I will be talking about using art as a tool, so Yoshida, feel free to scold me after the session. For the past two years, I have been involved in a research project called the Guardians Under Pressure, where we work alongside environmental defenders across Southeast Asia who are resisting what we describe as false climate solutions. Today, I will try to respond to the guiding question of this session, how can art reshape the boundaries of what we consider normal?

My response focuses on one specific shift: how we might move from accepting false climate solutions as normal toward demanding climate justice as our next normal. We have grown accustomed to a particular kind of climate response, one where urgency is framed through dominant economic logics and solutions are measured in capital flows rather than lived impacts. In this version of the normal, climate action can end up reinforcing existing inequalities instead of challenging them.

The next normal we are trying to imagine is climate justice, where communities are no longer treated as objects of intervention, but as holders of knowledge and power. Art becomes our bridge, not as decoration, but as an instrument that reshapes who gets to produce knowledge about climate and ecology, and how that knowledge is shared, heard, and valued.

Now, what do false climate solutions look like in practice? Across Southeast Asia, the language of climate action is increasingly attached to projects that promise sustainability, yet frequently results in displacement, land loss, and the quiet dismantling of customary rights, and the breakdown of social-environmental relations. So, when environmental defenders resist, their actions are often reframed as obstruction. They are dismissed as being anti-development. They are criminalized. They face intense pressure and violence on a daily basis. And they are sometimes even murdered.

So, the research project Guardians Under Pressure emerged from this context. Working through feminist participatory action research, Dala Institute and our partners across Southeast Asia collaborate with environmental defenders to trace how civic spaces are shrinking, particularly for communities resisting extraction and development projects presented as climate action. What makes this research distinctive is its method. Those most affected become the researchers themselves, environmental defenders tracing their own lived experiences, their wounds, their insights, and the forms of resistance that they continue to practice. Rather than directing the research, we work alongside peer researchers, supporting the journey from questions to interpretation. So for the Indonesian case studies, our output was an art exhibition. The exhibition was held at the Jakarta Literature Library foyer in November last year. I will be discussing this event as an example of how art can reshape boundaries, noting that we are a group of social researchers, not artists. So the decision to make an exhibition is something that is out of the ordinary for us.



"Guardians Under Pressure" project

1. The workshop opens with an Indonesia map puzzle, highlighting collaboration across regions. ©Giovanni Dessy Austriningrum, Dala Institute (2025)
2. Facilitator Rahayu Harjanthi opens the session, capturing participants' expectations. ©Giovanni Dessy Austriningrum, Dala Institute (2025)
3. Mapping the narrative flow of the Mosega diorama using a flipchart. ©Vilona Stevanny, Dala Institute (2025)
4. Diorama presenting Wawonii research data for the national workshop. ©Vilona Stevanny, Dala Institute (2025)
5. Participants hold a red thread, symbolizing connection and solidarity. ©Vilona Stevanny, Dala Institute (2025)
6. Wawonii participants translate their case into drawings as a creative exercise. ©Naufal Rofi Indriansyah, Dala Institute (2025)
7. Poco Leok participants create drawings to develop the diorama design. ©Naufal Rofi Indriansyah, Dala Institute (2025)

So before doing that, I want to introduce the six communities we are working with across Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. We are documenting how communities resist projects presented as climate solutions. In northern Thailand, communities are resisting restrictions on Indigenous land practices imposed through carbon credit schemes and rigid forest conservation policies. In the south, communities are opposing a different kind of intervention, the Chana Industrial Project, a mega-development that would radically transform the coastal landscape through deep seaports, power plants, and petrochemical facilities. Although both are framed as part of Thailand's transition toward a green economy and a low-carbon future, they threaten to unravel biodiverse ecosystems, cultural identities, and long-standing livelihoods.

In the Philippines, communities are also confronting large-scale development framed as green. In the north, in Kalinga, a wind power project proposes the installation of 41 wind turbines, alongside 19 approved hydropower projects and multiple mining operations for copper and gold—placing intense pressure on Indigenous lands and livelihoods. In the south, in Bukidnon, communities are resisting the expansion of banana plantations linked to carbon credit schemes, where access to green financing coincides with deepening local harm.

In Poco Leok, also in Indonesia, communities are opposing geothermal development promoted as "clean" renewable energy, yet carried out through land dispossession, environmental risk, and the silencing of local consent. On Wawonii Island in Indonesia, communities are resisting nickel mining for electric vehicle batteries—mining that is destroying ecosystems while being branded as "green."

I want to pause here a little bit with an unexpected connection between the communities we've been talking about and this forum in Seoul. On Wawonii Island, some residents speak Cia-Cia—a language that, in 2009, adopted Korean Hangul as its writing system. Hangul was chosen because it captures Cia-Cia phonetics more accurately than other scripts. As a result, in parts of Southeast Sulawesi today, you can find street signs and school materials written in Korean script. It's a quiet, beautiful reminder that the places we are learning from are already connected to this one.

So, going back to the case studies, what connects these six sites is a shared pattern: projects described as climate solutions that instead displace communities, damage ecosystems, and criminalize those who seek to protect them. So, why did we choose exhibition and why art? This was a deliberate and, as I said before, not an ordinary methodological choice. Conventional research formats, such as journal articles, policy briefs, have real limits. They often require linear arguments and singular conclusions, leaving little room for ambiguity, contradiction, or complexity. But the realities we are documenting are fragmented and polyphonic. An exhibition allows multiple voices to coexist without forcing them to resolve into a single narrative. We use multiple modalities, visual materials, audio, video, different forms of writing, archives, and found everyday objects. Each format captures different aspects of these realities that text alone may not be able to convey. An exhibition lets us work with objects, images, space, and affective encounters, not only text and data. It opens up meaning-making itself. Rather than delivering conclusions to a passive audience, we invite visitors to construct understanding with us. Knowledge is not simply transmitted; it is produced together.

The exhibition for the Indonesia case studies is titled Those Who Sustain, *Those Who Are Wounded: An Anthology of Guardians Amid the Climate Crisis.* We structured the exhibition as a research paper brought into space. Visitors enter through Chapter One—introduction, problem statement, and methodology—where they are introduced to our peer researchers and how the research was carried out. They then move into the context: how false climate solutions operate in the two sites, Wawonii and Poco Leok—what is promised, and what is actually unfolding on the ground. The heart of the exhibition is the findings. Here, visitors encounter artifacts of resistance—field objects, photographs, and testimonies. Excerpts from interviews conducted by peer researchers with their own communities of defenders are presented. They selected which excerpts to exhibit and provided the captions. Visitors encounter physical artifacts—objects used by environmental defenders in protest. A banner that the Wawonii people use in their demonstration, and the signage used in Poco Leok are among the artifacts. They use a gunny sack that is usually used to bag agricultural produce as their poster to signify that they are farmers. Beneath the poster are timeline texts that highlight significant moments of the resistance. These are accompanied by photographs that allude to specific events, giving visitors a clearer visual sense of what was happening on the ground.

We also exhibit some agricultural produce that they have that reflects how they continue to sustain the land. From Wawonii they brought cashews, coconut oil, nutmegs, and cloves. While from Poco Leok there are vanilla, coffee, cacao, and sopi, as well as a dirt sample taken from their customary land. One notable detail from Poco Leok is sopi, which is one of the community's traditional sources of livelihood, as well as an instrumental object in their customary rituals. Sopi is a distilled alcoholic beverage made from fermented sap of the lontar palm. However, due to the impacts of the geothermal development, its production potentially significantly declined. By presenting these agricultural products, we invite visitors to engage more deeply with these two places and to consider what is at stake and what may be lost should developments of these false climate solutions continue. Throughout the exhibition, interview excerpts from the research process appear. There is a quote from an 11-year-old child whose mother was criminalized. She has to run to hide in the forest, and they have to be

separated for months. There are images showing land once green and later stripped bare by nickel mining, accompanied by the landowner's narration of continued resistance. There are pictures of adat rituals in Poco Leok, with quotes describing land as a living body—often spoken of as a woman's body—cared for through customary practice. There are handwritten notes that the peer researchers made during the interviews that they did. A video documents the facilitation process itself, making the research visible as a collective practice.

Beyond the exhibition space, we invite visitors into deeper engagement through a series of public conversations—a national workshop, a fishbowl discussion on social conflict in mining, and a geothermal film screening. In workshop spaces, dialogues are facilitated where environmental defenders share their analysis directly. There were also discussions about social conflicts happening within the communities themselves, between the people who are pro-mining and those who are against mining. It also discussed how a mining company's arrival in the community fractured the social cohesion that had existed for decades. We also screened a documentary film made by the communities in Poco Leok about their struggles against the geothermal development in their area. We invited resource persons that can stimulate discussion, such as a conflict resolution expert, academicians and researchers from national CSOs.

Finally, there was an interactive wall that invites visitors to write a conclusion together with us: messages to environmental defenders, reflections, questions, recommendations, and expressions of solidarity. Visitors wrote on the walls, read what others had written, and engaged in conversations with the researchers. In this way, visitors are involved. The research does not end here—it continues, carried forward by everyone who engages with it.

So, what are we learning from this process? One thing is clear: the exhibition is not just a way to communicate research—it is a methodology in its own right. Translating findings into spatial, visual, and material forms opens up insights that would never surface through writing alone. We are also learning that collaborative knowledge production can genuinely challenge power. When environmental defenders become peer researchers—and curators of their own narratives—it reshapes who holds authority in climate discourse. We are learning that fragmentation is not a weakness, but a form of honesty. Climate injustice is messy and contradictory, and holding that complexity through art makes intersectionality visible in ways linear reports cannot do. By intersectionality, we mean how climate issues overlap with other struggles, economic inequality and capitalism, ethno-racial injustice, gender discrimination, and colonial histories. These aren't separate problems, they're interconnected, and art can show these connections. We are learning that affective engagement creates different relationships to climate justice, ensuring that climate action is fair, centers affected communities, and addresses root causes of inequality. When visitors encounter objects, move through space, and read testimonies on walls, understanding becomes embodied. And finally, we are learning that research does not have to conclude to matter. Work that remains open, inviting continued participation and response, can be more impactful than research that claims to have all the answers.

Now let me return to our opening question. How can art reshape the boundaries of what we consider normal? Art creates space for those excluded voices... Through Guardians Under Pressure, we suggest that art does this by transforming who gets to produce knowledge—and how justice itself is imagined. False climate solutions operate by excluding certain voices and ways of knowing. Art creates space for those excluded voices to speak with authority. It legitimizes knowledge that does not fit conventional formats. It makes intersectionality visible. When environmental defenders become peer researchers and co-curators, and when visitors write conclusions alongside communities, this is not simply representing climate justice—it is practicing it. Climate justice cannot be written into existence through reports alone. It must be enacted, lived, and shared. Art is one of our most powerful ways of doing that. Thank you for listening.

Betsy Lan

Creative Producer
Performosa Theatre

Unlearning Colonial Norms: Indigenous Wisdom as a Compass for (Local) Art Practices

Today, I'm going to talk about unlearning colonial norms. Indigenous wisdom as a compass for "(local)" art practices. I put parentheses around "local" because the cases I share today are local art practices, but I think one day they can also not be local.

Truku shaman once said, "...to know nothing of the land, to feel nothing for history, this is the deepest form of colonization." When I moved to Taitung City three years ago, I was first very liberated by the natural landscape and its energy. I discovered the indigenous ways of living, the knowledge of land and the ocean, and the rituals with ancestry. At the same time, I also had to confront my own positions and multifaceted realities. First, I would like to talk about the demographics of Taitung City. Taitung has the largest percentage of indigenous population in Taiwan, which means one out of three people you meet in Taitung is indigenous. The indigenous population represents seven major tribes. Compared to the national average, it's only 2.6% of the total population. My artist colleague, Ihot Sinlay Cihek, who is here with us today, is from Hualien, Taiwan. Hualien is a city north of Taitung that has the largest number of indigenous population. Taitung, however, has the largest percentage of indigenous population.

Many studies show that Taiwan was the origin of the Austronesian people. Now the word Austronesian comes from Latin, meaning southern islands, and it refers to a group of people sharing common knowledge, a common language family. Around 5,000 years ago, ancestors migrated from Taiwan as far as to the south, New Zealand; to the west, that is Madagascar in Africa; to the east, to Easter Island, and to the north, to Hawaii. That is the definition that we have for the expansion of Austronesian culture. The National Museum of Prehistory in Taiwan reframes the Austronesian world through local stories, legends, and an oceanic philosophy, asserting the idea that myth is no less substantial than history. In other words, science is no more authoritative than storytelling. It shows the power of storytelling, compared to the conventional or rational way of history.

Identifying through decolonization movements that build a cultural sense of self culminates in the realization that no one is an outsider, and the collective reflection on history is needed for our common future. The agency of indigenous renaissance stems from the fact that, since the colonial rule of the Japanese in Taiwan, and then the nationalist government, the indigenous tribes have lost their native language and oral traditions, and adapted to modernization and the introduction of Christianity. Many indigenous people were forced to relocate to urban areas in search of employment and education. Assimilation into the dominant society created a crisis for the survival of Indigenous cultures. However, the Indigenous movement since the 1980s has developed an increasing agency for conserving and reviving Indigenous culture through contemporary practices. With the youth and Indigenous population returning to the tribes, embracing the tribal cultures and ways of living, the teachings of the Indigenous worldview have created this wave of revival, an exciting time of the indigenous renaissance.

Next, I'm going to speak about three examples of art practices. Taitung, regarded as the capital of the Austronesian world, is not only rich in diverse Indigenous cultures, but has recently become a center for land and ocean based artistic performances and spiritual practices. The three examples I will speak about are the Taiwan Outrigger Canoe Club, Amis Music Festival, and Taitung Fringe Festival. They embrace different aspects of indigenous wisdom to make spaces for the next normal.

First is the Taiwan Outrigger Canoe Club. I became interested in canoeing when I first moved to Taitung. I work at a local experimental school in charge of the arts curriculum there. When I first tried canoeing, I was doing it with my students. I soon realized that behind the sport, there is much Indigenous wisdom about the ocean culture and the knowledge of navigation involved. We used to do our daily practice on a lake. On the lake that we canoe on, we acknowledge the traditional land of the Malan tribe. We talked about the history of the Malan people in Taitung. It's one of the major tribes in downtown Taitung. The arts activities that we practice include making the Hawaiian lei, with local plants signifying respect and honor. Last year, The Canoe Club invited wood carvers from New Zealand to make Pou, meaning the post of journeying as part of a bigger star compass. The star compass is a Māori cultural landmark symbolizing navigation, heritage, and the connection between people and the land. Supposedly, after a post is made, it will be erected on the land facing another distant ocean family. For instance, from the North Island in New Zealand, facing out the post into the ocean, it points towards Hawaii. The founder of the Canoe Club

wants to introduce this ancient art practice to build relationships with those who come from New Zealand. The ceremonial offering to the Taitung City Government captures a moment in which elders of the local Malan tribe and woodcarving artisans exchange blessings with one another. The Canoe Club demonstrates a kind of arts practice that is grassroots in canoe sport and the ocean culture, promoting community.

©Taiwan Outrigger Canoe Club





Next is the Amis Music Festival. The festival was founded by Suming, a renowned Amis musician in Dulan. That is a tribe living by the ocean. He asked his elders in his tribe if he could use the traditional territory, which is normally forbidden to the public, to hold the music festival. The festival is putting contemporary Indigenous music center stage. For example, an Indigenous pop music performance is also featured, and the musicians sing both in Mandarin Chinese and the tribal languages. There is an increasing number of artists singing not just for the Mandarin pop market, but also creating full albums in their native tribal tongue. Another thing I would like to mention is the alternative music performance. The indigenous DJ from Indonesia, Asep Nayak, blended music from his own tribe with EDM in his performance. Smaller stages like this showcase new and experimental music. Indonesian migrant workers who play punk rock music also participated. It's very important for a stage like this in a bigger music festival that it also brings attention to this very marginal but very important music from the community.

©Amis Music Festival



Of course, for the Amis Music Festival, you have a main cultural stage where all the neighboring tribes come to share songs and dances of their tribe. They're dressed in their different traditional clothing and different ornaments. Children, women and men, they all perform on this main, very big cultural stage for two days straight. It's a festival of two days on the weekends. Besides these stages, you also have the market fairs and a stage for short talks and film screening for contemporary Indigenous topics. At the market fair of the festival, you can find various arts and cultural activities going on in the community. The Tattoo Wave Festival is an event organized by the Prehistory Museum, which also hosts a tattoo festival around the same time, inviting tribal tattoo artists from Austronesian countries to gather and exchange ideas. This is very popular because people fight for the slots to get tattooed by these Austronesian artists. Indigenous gender activism groups also take part in the event. For example, organizations such as the Taiwan Indigenous LGBTQ Alliance set up booths at the market as well. In this way, the Amis Music Festival is not simply a music festival, but a space where many different contemporary practices come together. Suming, the founder of the festival says, "Resilience is the root of culture. Let the land be our teacher and music be our language. Upon our soil, we can truly be ourselves and bloom into our own unique flowers."

©Taitung Fringe Festival



Next is a case that may be a bit more familiar to you: the Taitung Fringe Festival. Organized by the city government, the festival can also be seen as a site-specific, environmental theatre platform operated by the Taitung City Government. Since Taitung doesn't have many theater houses, this festival's idea really fits the reality, but also offers a different vision. I want to share some of the different site-specific works presented at the festival. Some took place in a very old swimming pool that no longer exists, inside spaces within city hotels, and in old buildings from the Japanese colonial period that have now been turned into art spaces. There were also works presented in the local traditional market. One took place on an old bridge, while another was staged in an area with volcanic landscape features. Honoring the land by presenting it centerstage is a clear and strong artistic strategy.

Ihot Sinlay Cihek

Playwright, Director, and Performer

Taiwan

The Aesthetics of Constant Friction: Practices and Exercises of Indigenous Feminism

Hello, "*Nga'ay ho*" in my language, which is Pangcah language, means "hello," but to translate it is actually, "are you good yet?" "*Ho*" means "yet," it's like expecting that you'll be good or be better, so it's very pushy.

And I come from a tribe, Pangcah tribe from Tafalong and Sanasay, from eastern Taiwan, and we have a matriarchal tradition. But of course, thanks to the colonizers, we embrace patriarchy, patriarchal norms, but we're still known for our big female energy. My topic is the Aesthetics of Constant Friction, Practices and Exercises of Indigenous Feminism. What a big topic; I kind of regret it. But anyway, let me come to the conclusion, which is to resist, to fight and battle in a caring way. Almost like a toxic relationship, but your enemies are real people. My colonizer, my settlers, colonizers, they are real people. We share the same country, we share the same island, we have to live together. They're real individuals. That is the friction that I'm facing every day as an Indigenous woman.

Let me start with a short video. The person in the video is my grandfather. What I want to speak about is friction—a movement that is both very ancient and deeply scientific. He's rubbing the dry rice straw into ropes. Without friction, the fibers would remain straight, brittle, and separate. But it is the act of twisting, rubbing, and grasping that allows them to become a rope. In physics, friction is resistance, but it is also traction. It is the evidence that two subjects have truly touched. So without friction, we cannot walk, we only slip. Like for me, as an Indigenous woman, friction could be my performative praxis. I'm going to get into that later. It is the authentic contact that generates the heat necessary for social discourse, to me.

타팔룽 조상 기원지이자
조상 맞이 장소(Saksakay)의 전경
©Ihot Sinlay Cihek



This photo shows the first day of our annual *Ilisin* ceremony. On the first day, all the men in the tribe gather to welcome our ancestor spirit. You can see they're like my brothers in the tribe, all of them, waiting and welcoming this very respectful ritual. Indigenous peoples in Taiwan actually make up only 2.7%, 2.7% of the total population of Taiwan. I am one out of the 620,000. 620,000 is around the population of Songpa-Gu. Or Ansan-si has around the same population. And even within that fraction, we are divided into over a dozen ethnicities, each with its own distinct language and culture.

And as an absolute cultural minority, my daily existence is defined by countless points of friction towards Han Chinese, and towards other ethnicities as well. And we often talk about external friction, the resistance against colonial assimilation. But for me, as a contemporary Indigenous person, I'm here, I'm living here in modern times; there is a more nuanced internal friction that I must confront inside the tribe as well.

Going back to the photo of the sacred ritual, I love my tribe. Also, it is a hate-love relationship. Everybody has this hate-love relationship towards their home. Because the tribe, for me, it's home. You know how you're feeling towards home. It's not all romantic and beautiful. It's home; it's complicated. And this *Ilisin* is something that I always have mixed feelings about. On the first day, all the males—cute kids, my brothers—by age hierarchy, welcome our ancestors' spirits to come. It is so important. I wanted to participate. I was a teenager. I was a teenage girl and desperately wanting to join this ritual, but I was blocked by the brothers. I was blocked by the brothers and the tribe. They told me that women were not allowed into the ceremony, and when I asked if they really meant it, the answer I received was that I truly could not enter.

Of course I was not surprised, but surprisingly furious. Why? Because then my anger turned into a very sharp cultural abrasion because I saw two male outsiders, maybe tourists, I don't know. They were not from the tribe. They were not my neighbors or my family or anyone who belonged here. And they just walked in. These complete strangers walked right into the sacred

space simply because they were men. It felt illogical. I belong here. This is my home. I've been living here all my life. But they got to be there. I couldn't because I'm a woman. It felt like my identity was being erased by the very tradition that I loved. So I went to my grandmother. I was like, 'how could they do this?' But my grandma was simply confused. She looked at me and asked, "Why are you angry?" "That was never meant for us women. No. We have our own responsibilities. Mind you, we have a matriarchal tradition." "We have our own women's responsibilities. That's a men's thing. Let them do their job. Our own power is in the places where men cannot go."

This is weird, because I was so "polluted" by Simone de Beauvoir and all the feminists. There was a friction between me and my grandma and my tribe, and between my modern logic and her living presence. If one is not suffering, does feminism still apply? That's my thought.

My grandmother, as my kin, as a woman, and as a subject in her own right, opened a new space for understanding through our one-on-one, grandma-grandkid fighting dialogue with love. It stretched the gap between my rigid impression of tribal women and her lived reality. I was still angry, but in that new space, my anger began to rub and entangle with my love and understanding for her and for my tribe. It transformed into a different kind of emotion, open anger. It means that I know why I'm angry. I totally know and understand and I have reached a place where I am willing to accept that I might be wrong sometimes and I have to live with it and it's okay for now. And therefore, I have the energy to keep going and to fight with love. It seems like a conclusion but not yet.

"Absence" in my tribe is also a vow of belonging, which is very weird. This is where the decolonial praxis begins for my work. It's not just about fighting the outsider. It's about navigating the heterogeneity within our own tribes. I began to understand that in our culture absence is also a vow of belonging. When I follow a taboo, I am not being submissive. I am choosing to be part of a collective texture. My grandmother is stronger than any theory I have read. She's there. She's a living being. Somehow, she's stronger and more real than Simone de Beauvoir or Judith Butler, of course. And her existence was a radical presence to me in that moment—and that just didn't need to shout to be felt.

Then, I think about theater. Theater is the threshold where absence becomes witness, in a way. It made me think about that. I make theater just for fun, actually. I am never optimistic about revolutionary change, but I'm open to it. In the theater, the audience is present, yet absent. In a theater, the audience is a witness sometimes. They don't live within the story. They witness it from the edge. And this absence is where their power lies, the power of the witness. A witness, an Indigenous woman on the stage. Sometimes standing on the outside is one of the most powerful ways to see what is real, maybe.



Production still of *The Knife* (2023) ©Chien-yu Liu



Production still of *The Knife 2.0* (2024) ©Aaron Liao

I translated my cultural friction into a performance called *The Knife*, a one-woman show. It's basically me talking, talking, which is weird because in Taiwan, Indigenous arts is about dancing and singing. In this work, I tried not to put any symbols or totems or traditional elements. So you don't see any traditional clothes. I don't sing traditional music. I don't dance. But what I'm talking about is all Indigenous. The story follows Sawmah, not a stereotypical maiden, but a STEM-educated software engineer who's going to have an interview with Google. She brings her grandfather's hunting knife into her city apartment in Taipei. And she's haunted by the gender taboo, because if a woman touches the blade, the hunting knife, bad luck follows, it might cause trouble, or her family might die. Now, that's a real taboo. The knife becomes a literal blockage in her doorway in the story. She has a job interview the next day with Google. She's a scientist, but she just can't get out the door. She's also an Indigenous woman.

If you are a modern STEM-educated woman, do you believe in those taboos? Do you? Do you have to? And if you're not, what if something really happened to your family? That's what I'm dealing with every day. She's caught in that internal friction. And using black humor, Sawmah tries to solve the problem by inviting men from the dating app Tinder because they have dicks. Because she thinks that, as men, they would be able to move the knife. If she calls some men over, they can move the knife for her, she can go to her interview, and then she can simply send them away afterward. Not for romance, but just to move the knife. This spoken-word comedy allows the audience to witness the absurdity of reality. I am not singing and dancing. I am a living, breathing software engineer struggling with haunting spirits. When this work was staged in the Grand Theater, the audience all thought it was a really interesting story.

In 2024, I collaborated with the Prologue Center for New Plays to distribute it. We moved to a smaller, intimate, atypical space. It's a cafe for stage readings—something closer, even closer to spoken word. And surprisingly, this informal setting made the audience more willing to encounter the raw colonial truth. It was because the audience was sitting so

close to us. Since the Han Chinese audience was part of the majority, many of them didn't really know much about Indigenous people. But in that space, people actually started realizing, "Oh, I'm the colonizer." Some even said, "I didn't know I was a colonizer." But they were in that position, and one way or another, they ended up confronting the truth from that position of being the colonizer. Of course, because the work was fictional, the audience could enjoy it while still feeling safe. But there I was, a living, breathing Indigenous woman standing right before their eyes, speaking in the first person. I wasn't there to sing or dance or to satisfy tourists. I was there to weave a new image, an Indigenous woman who is a Google engineer. Well, how is that possible? An atypical, yet entirely real, human being living in Taipei just like all of you in Seoul.

All of this took place in such close proximity. I leaned, to some extent, into their colonial gaze, but that very gaze forced them to see a person instead of a caricature. In that moment, my Pangcah culture was no longer just a collection of static images; it had become a living pause. The friction became real and the truth was seen. We rubbed against each other. It was uncomfortable because we had some discussion during the Q&A time. They posed some very naive, uncomfortable questions, but very genuine ones. And I was okay. I wasn't offended because I know this is a safe space in theater—and that's only possible in theater. It was uncomfortable, it was hard, but that thermal energy is where the next normal is born.

The Knife is a collision between contemporary Indigenous animism and modern rationality. It traces a unique path for Indigenous feminism to me—a path where formal gender equality might not be the ultimate destination. Maybe it's not about focusing on equality anymore. Instead, the focus is now on how we—after facing the compromises and setbacks, imposed by our gender—can still preserve the energy to move forward, to change and to keep asking the difficult questions. We simply cannot stop. We are forced to move and we have to get used to that.

So this is the point. This is about authentic contact like the two rice stems rubbing together. Authentic contact is person-to-person. We should not see labels first; We should see individuals first in order to understand. And my tribe has no written language. We are a people of the voice and the presence. And we value authentic contact—meaning person-to-person—very much, so we only talk about important stuff when you are in front of me. We don't send emails or messages. Even sometimes I tried to message my grandpa "hello," or "how are you doing?" "Have you had the vaccine yet?" He called back and said, "We'll discuss this when you're back in the village." Just tell me about your vaccine, okay? But that's how important it is. Important conversations only happen in person.

For me, theater is the only place capable of converting this friction into kinetic energy. By showing up, by refusing to be smoothed over, we force an authentic contact. We don't need harmony. We need the traction that only friction can provide to propel us into a future where we can finally truly see one another. And there's a whole unique universe in each of us. If only we can see each other as individuals—as a real human being—not just as an ethnicity or as a blurry image. And our hearts are bigger than the universe. So, be present. Thank you.

Jahye Khoo

Republic of Korea

Playwright and Director
theatre, definitely

Theatre as Disturbance: Practicing Anti-/Bare-Stage through Gender & Sexuality Performance

Hello. My name is Jahye Khoo. Through a performance that is a historiography of a 70-year-old queer/trans actor, titled *"You Can't Make a Life Out of Not Getting Slapped in the Face"*, I'd like to talk about how art can reshape the boundaries of "normality."

There is one main protagonist in this piece, and the person's name is Saekja and the reason I describe Saekja as a "queer trans actor" is that, strategically, depending on where she goes, she introduces herself with different identities: "Hello, I'm a 70-year-old queer actor," and in other places: "Hello, I'm a 70-year-old transgender female actor," and elsewhere: "Hello, I'm a 70-year-old trans actor." Repeatedly exposing, out in the world, words that are considered "not normal." That has meaning as a form of activism.

The title of my talk is: "Theatre as Disturbance: Practicing Anti-/Bare-Stage through Gender & Sexuality Performance" I boldly, and daringly used the phrase "ethical sustainability." Every time I make theater, I do have the desire to succeed. But at the same time: the stage materials that will be thrown away; the act of producing a stage; making actors suffer onstage; controlling them; leaving the audience in the dark and objectifying them—then I end up asking: is this really right? Because I have this ethical anguish. In an era of climate crisis, population decline and aging, and the repeated recurrence of genocide and violence, what is it that theater must sustain? This question can no longer remain at the level of declaring the meaning or value of art. Today, the ethics of theater must be rethought not in terms of what it represents, but as a material and structural question of what kinds of bodies it presupposes, how it is made, and what it leaves behind.

I said that Saekja refuses to be fixed into a single identity. Saekja is transgender, but says that whether she is a woman or a man is not important. People call it a transgender performance, but in fact it's impossible to make a performance only with identity or sexuality. The politics of identity are very important, but it's difficult to make theater only through the politics of identity. This is a performance that asks about the ethics of community, relationship, responsibility, and mourning.

I'm going to divide it into four questions, and because I'll explain as I go, I'll move on. First: How can theater create points of contact with its audience and form a relationship? There are trigger warnings. Because it's a "warning," the convention is to give it in advance. Doing a trigger warning during the performance is very inefficient. Because you do it in the middle, and an audience member might say, "This is a warning, a trigger is happening right now, so I want to leave." But I do trigger warnings during the performance. I think of this as a practical act—as a way of building trust with the audience. So when I do trigger warnings in queer performances, I tried naming it "Pride Trigger Warning" or "Pride Notice." I'll read it.

Hunnies, I'm going to talk to you today about transgenders, gays, lezberries, ("Lezberry" is a compound word of "lesbian" and "raspberry," and it's been translated as "lezberry.")

Liquor, cigarettes, motel rooms... sex, homos, perversions, the red light district, prostitution, dregs, and death, as usual. I heard that here at the theater, you have to tell people you're going to talk about these things before you talk about them. But we've decided to meet here, whoever we are, without all that fuss. If you want to leave in the middle of the performance, you can. Just raise your hand or give us a signal, and we'll guide you to the exit.

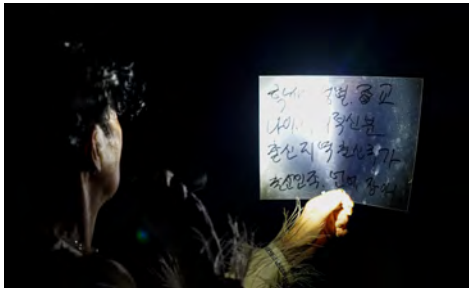
I mostly make queer performances, and in queer performances, I don't think these things can be triggers, because they are the person's body itself—the person themself. That's why I use this kind of wording as a contact surface for meeting the audience. And by calling it Pride Trigger Warning or Pride Notice, I'm overturning the convention that you must warn in advance to the performance.

Next: In an era of population decline and aging, whose bodies has theater presupposed? Population decline inevitably leads to aging, but it feels like the theater world isn't being affected much. Generational turnover in theater happens faster than you'd think, and the generations that are most actively working are mainly people in their 30s and 40s. Then where did the presence of those in their 50s, 60s, and 70s go? Those who used to be called seniors. I'm not saying we have to bring them in because they're seniors and therefore we owe them. I'm saying: bodies in their 50s, 60s, 70s carry histories. And yet, as we move into an era of population decline and aging, theater is still largely driven by practitioners in their 30s and 40s. I think

Saekja's appearance in this performance is extremely meaningful. It's not only about the fact that she is a transgender person, and thus about authenticity or representation. It makes us fundamentally re-question the standard of normality that theater has presupposed. For example, right now at Hyehwa Station Exit 4, there is a struggle around disability mobility rights, and the thesis there is anti-ableism.



©Hyejeong



©Lee ji soo

This performance also continuously asks about anti-ableism. For instance, because Saekja is 70, her speaking speed inevitably becomes very slow, and that inevitably produces a kind of boredom. And of course, memorizing lines is hard, so she did not memorize lines. Here, I focused on the idea that "theatrical languages appropriate to their bodies are scarcely in place." I thought about what kind of theatrical languages could destroy the normality tailored to other bodies.

In 2024, surprisingly, there was a movement in South Korea to abolish the Student Human Rights Ordinance. There are also attempts to enact an Anti-Discrimination Act, but there are huge numbers of opposing voices, signatures, and petitions. In 2023, the Student Human Rights Ordinance was about to be abolished. And Saekja, because she ran away from home in middle school, and because her generation was not one that had the Student Human Rights Ordinance, doesn't know it at all. Even though memorization is extremely hard, she memorized the Student Human Rights Ordinance on stage. But naturally, she can't help but get it wrong. In this way, she broke the myth of complete representation and mastery, while also revealing a sense of solidarity that crosses generations.

In theater, naturalness is considered so important. Memorizing well and delivering it naturally is treated as the norm. But Saekja… There's a scene right now where she is lying down and raising a hand—and that is not choreography. It's an extremely elegant gesture that means: "I forgot my line, so prompt the line." When she made that elegant gesture, I prompted the line.

All of this is possible because Saekja's body is a body without authority. So Saekja says: "Oh, hun. All I have is coquetry." Because she never changed the back digit of her resident registration number, it still begins with a 1, which means she is registered as male. She can produce a male voice at any time, and in some places she is even "passed" as a man. And in South Korea, a 70-year-old man, especially a very tall one like her, carries a certain authority that is felt even without saying anything. But Saekja is not a body of that authority. She is a body without authority, a body with coquetry. I think that is why all of this became possible.

I was the prompter. But there are scenes that can't be solved even with a prompter. In those cases, Saekja adopted the method of simply reading from the script. It might look efficient, but it's extremely inefficient because even if a 70-year-old person looks at the script, there are cases where she can't read it. In this situation where everything becomes inefficient, creating a grammar/language that fits her, dismantling normality, and making a grammar fitted to someone's particular body, I believe that is what it means for theater to dismantle normality and to oppose ableism.

I think theater is a system of appropriation. It appropriates other people's pain, objectifies the audience, objectifies the people onstage, and controls all the elements onstage. I make theater, but I believe theater is profoundly violent. If we do not constantly remain conscious of appropriation, objectification, and control, we inevitably fall into self-satisfying art. So when we made a performance dismantling normality together with Saekja, we kept talking throughout the process about whose pain we were appropriating, what we were objectifying, and what we were trying to control. But Saekja was, first of all, a person who could not be controlled. Because she does things her own way. I was lucky to meet an actor who cannot be controlled. She shook, at the very center, the myth that an actor must memorize lines well and act naturally. Saekja tried to memorize, but failed, and sometimes failed intentionally. And when necessary, she received help from the prompter, which was me.

Normally, theater has a hierarchy between director and actor, and of course the director has more authority. But in the middle of the performance, she kept throwing lines at me like, "dirty pimp, you have no sense." Although I'm speaking today about dismantling normality, I can't fully reproduce the profanity, but she would say things like, "dirty pimp," "bitch," and she kept giving me little verbal jabs. I don't think this worked simply as a joke. I think it was a device that kept calling me, a person passing as a cisgender woman, in different ways, constantly scrambling my identity, and giving me a sense of liberation as well.

Moving on, there was also a scene where she received tips from the audience. Under the Performance Act, not every theater is the same, but commercial transactions during a performance are generally prohibited, like receiving money or giving food. So we reached an agreement with the theater and with ARKO and resolved it. But she performed in a state of

significant bodily exposure and actually received tips. The audience, in that moment, is the audience of a show that enjoys objectifying a transgender person doing a strip show. But through a way of objectifying the audience even further, Saekja showed the possibility of theater as an active play where everyone is complicit in the play of objectification. She performed, received tips, and tucked the tips into her chest. And then there was a semi-trigger warning here. A semi-pride notice:

Hunnies. Now is the time. Time to get your tips ready. Cash is great, but if you don't have any, you can get my account number from the director. Director, please take down the names and numbers of everyone who sends me a tip. So, I can thank them, you know, give them the full package later. You all have heard, right? That's the hottest spot in Itaewon and Gwangalli. This isn't just strong language. It's language that makes sex work visible.

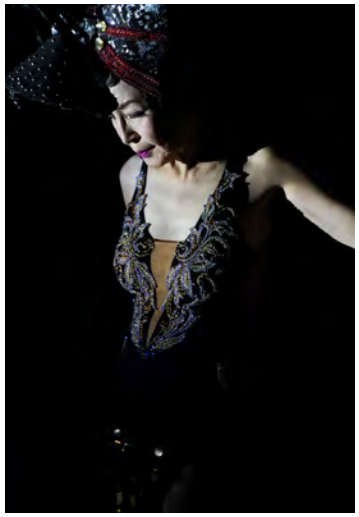
Then: *The master of oral. I can give it once.* This isn't something that just makes the audience blush and ends there. It's used as a way to make visible sex work. Sex work that may be in the shadows, but clearly exists.

There are transgender women in their 60s and 70s who do street-based sex work. Compared to that, Saekja works at a transgender bar with a roof. Working at a transgender bar is relatively safer. Even when they are young, it is already difficult for transgender people to find jobs, but as they age, survival becomes almost impossible, I'm told. Saekja recognizes herself as a deeply privileged person because she can perform onstage. In society she is a minority, but she recognizes herself as privileged, and by continually summoning those who are even more excluded among the excluded, she evokes a sense of solidarity. This is like how she memorized the Student Human Rights Ordinance, calling up solidarity across generations, including solidarity with older generations than her. That is why she feels very uncomfortable with the phrase "first-generation transgender," because calling herself first-generation denies the generations before her. Although she can be visible onstage, receive tips, and receive a fee, she also keeps calling the names of senior transgender people who cannot be visible onstage, who are still doing sex work in dangerous environments. By calling their names, and by repeatedly invoking those who, in the past, had no choice but to die, she creates a space of mourning.

As the earlier speakers said, I believe what matters in the end is a space of mourning and relationship, and that this is the fundamental principle for dismantling normality. There was an interesting anecdote at the end. On stage Saekja asks: "Hunnies. Want me to show you? Or not? You know—taking everything off." Nobody answers. But one day someone in the audience says, "Take it off." And Saekja says, "I'll take it off—then pay up." By recognizing that she is not a sacred being but someone willingly objectified by the audience, and by objectifying the audience in return, she broke the boundary between subject and object and created a scene that asks questions about normality. Through this, I learned how many theatrical conventions are inevitably broken simply by one person, a person considered abnormal, entering the theater.

The last thing I want to say is this: The strategy of this work is not to produce meaning by performing gender and sexuality. Instead of proclaiming identity or complying with required representation, it understands and disrupts the meaning of performance. A body that refuses to be fixed, that refuses to be fixed from beginning to end as transgender survival, functions as a historicized body that asks about relationships, responsibility, community, and an ethics of mourning.

In the era of climate crisis, I don't believe there is a single solution to reduce carbon footprints. Likewise, I don't believe the sustainability of theater can be resolved through one form or one aesthetic. We need diverse ways of living, diverse genders and sexualities, and bodies of diverse ages. The emergence of diverse beings helps us imagine diverse ways of survival and diverse ways of solidarity on this planet. Therefore the theater must ask not about the meaning of the stage, but about non-utility. Saekja speaks slowly, keeps forgetting lines, keeps leaving the stage, and sometimes simply exits the stage for about five minutes to change clothes, leaving it empty. I think we need to ask about this non-utility. Asking not what is represented, but what becomes possible and what is left behind, is the work of art that questions the boundaries of normality. I'll stop here.



©Lee ji soo

Open Discussion

Jisun Park To start the conversation, what I ultimately want to talk about first is art. We say art pursues non-utility, but then, conversely, what is the utility of art? What, exactly, can we call usefulness in art? Earlier, we also talked about how Yuichiro continues working on things that are not socially visible. Such works don't fit the kinds of visibility that tourism or policy often demands. It seems you are doing work that runs counter to that. And yet, because we cannot do nothing, we are living in an era where speed and growth keep producing and deepening crises. In such a time, perhaps what we have been calling uselessness and non-utility may be even more necessary. At the same time, how should we understand a different kind of usefulness/utility of art? You've already touched on this, but I'd like to hear a bit more. Yuichiro, since you presented first, if you have thoughts on this point, could you share them?

Yuichiro Yoshida Thank you. About uselessness, I don't think art is simply useless. Rather, its value is very hard to just measure. Artworks are in our inner world, so its effects are often invisible, of course. And sometimes they appear only much later in unexpected ways. Because of this, art can slowly reshape social norms and common sense from within, inside our society.

Jisun Park Thank you. I'd also like to hear from Rahayu. In a way, you spoke earlier about instrumentalizing art. Not in a negative sense, but as using it, collaborating with it, working with artists to expose so-called false climate solutions, and to find, through artistic language, ways to help us collectively face the climate crisis in new terms. Because time was short, I'd love to hear a bit more. As a researcher, how is collaborating with artists different from doing research on your own? When you encounter many communities, in what ways do artistic methodologies operate differently? And what do you see as the possibilities or power that art can have, from your position as a researcher?

Rahayu Harjanthi I think my whole project, not only the exhibition part, is challenging in terms of collaboration, because in this project we have to release our control over what is going to be presented, or even about what is being questioned. We started releasing control even from the beginning when we started forming the research questions. We facilitated our peer researchers to come up with their own research questions, and then even selected the methods that they wanted to use. In fact, the one time that we felt we were a bit instructive was saying that, let's do this exhibition, so it is kind of counterintuitive that way. So it is quite difficult for us social scientists who are kind of used to having our own thing and direct things and having control over the methods, over the data and everything. It is a new experience for us for sure.

Jisun Park Thank you. Before we open it up to everyone, I want to ask one more question. I'd like to ask Betsy and Ihot about friction. You spoke about friction earlier as well. That we should create friction, and that not only external friction, but also internal friction is necessary. Recognizing it, and using it as a force of transformation, a driving energy. But exposing discomfort isn't an easy skill. It's a very difficult one. In your work or in your lives, what methods, or what kind of methodology, do you have for revealing discomfort, and for generating new momentum through that friction? Could you explain more concretely? Either Betsy or Ihot, whoever would like to begin.

Betsy Lan For me, the friction that I feel is, before I moved to Taitung, I lived in the city. I was working in Taipei. You know, I was like a very proud feminist or queer artist. You know, very cutting edge, but when I moved to Taitung, I realized I'm just a colonizer. So the position really changed. And it feels very real. Like I feel like for the first time in my life, I have Indigenous colleagues working side by side with me. I think, the Indigenous artists in the city, they're usually not so out like Ihot. It's a very different feeling living there. The sense of body, like the layers of your body changes. And I feel like that's what motivates me to observe, to learn. It feels like I'm feeling like a student again. I'm learning something new. I'm wanting to work on something new. So, I guess that's for me personally, the position changes and that's the friction that I work from.

Ihot Sinlay Cihek For me, the friction actually comes from my daily life. Even just last night when I checked into the hotel there, because in Taiwan, I regained my traditional name, which is Ihot Sinlay Cihek, but I have a legal government name (Jhuo Jia-an) and they have different spellings. So in the hotel, I had to prove I am Ihot Sinlay Cihek and also Jhuo Jia-an, because in the identity documents and the ID card, they don't have both. That's a friction. And for me, it's out of curiosity. It's not about—of course, as an Indigenous person—I always want to tell the world, like even most Taiwanese people, that this is how we are living. And this is a stereotype; that is not a stereotype; this is what we need. We have rights to our land, we have rights to our culture, but they don't want to be educated. Most of the people don't want to be educated. So most of my work is out of my own curiosity. And, in this friction, this is what I've learned. The other play that I made is actually about some outsider coming to the tribe, trying to help revive the tribal culture, which is very romantic, very naive, and the setbacks that she faces and how the village people are very mean to her, which is weird because I am talking about my own people, like I show the nasty side of them. But they're okay with it because, sometimes we are mean to outsiders. And we're kind of into that. It's a protest. It's a protesting gesture. And that's kind of fun. That's why most of my plays are also black humor, and maybe a comedy in a way. I think that keeps a space for friction. And the friction can be hurtful; It can cause trouble, but it is also a grasp.

I think the balance of friction is that you hurt and you generate the energy, but you also don't forget to grasp—or bring the audience along in the conversation or the discourse. Whatever that is, you must always be open because when you're open, the energy comes and then it weaves into the rope like in the video. And I think that's how friction can be meaningful. And it's always out of your own curiosity and how you observe the world; and your discomfort is justified. But you share your discomfort and kindly open the space to imagine—maybe there's some other kind of discomfort, maybe it can be discussed together—and it opens a new imagination, maybe. And for me, that's how art can be beyond reality. Sometimes I think if my work can just open up a little bit more of a new question—make someone think about, "oh, I never thought about that." I think that's enough for me. For me, that's how art can work, and maybe that's where the magic lies.

Jisun Park

Jahye, in a way, the work you described earlier, especially the work you made with Saekja, could be uncomfortable, even unfamiliar, for some audiences. But you explained how you work with discomfort and unfamiliarity by dismantling theatrical language itself. Still, putting discomfort and unfamiliarity on stage without avoiding it is not easy. Yet when you actually watch the work, it feels clear that something inside it is generating momentum for change. I imagine it didn't feel easy from the beginning. I'm curious: as a director, what was your methodology or perhaps a more personal approach or set of concerns in staging discomfort and strangeness? Could you share that?

Jahye Khoo

Yes, if it came down to a strict choice between the actor and the audience, I would probably choose the actor, even if there is no audience. The moment an actor steps onto the stage, she inevitably becomes objectified. And in a performance by a person speaking from her own lived reality, the performer is, in a sense, putting everything on the line to speak about her life. So yes, there were many audience members who said they felt uncomfortable. Some said, "If you receive tips from the audience, are you seeing me as a customer of a transgender venue? As a man, I feel extremely uncomfortable." And Saekja, because she does a transgender show, has to change costumes a lot. That's simply the physiology of the performance. But costume changes aren't a quick change. You have to put the wig back on, change all the undergarments. It takes a process. So onstage, sometimes it can be about five minutes, if fast; and if slow, it can exceed five minutes. We simply left that time empty. And then audience members complained: "I paid money to come here. If you leave the stage empty for five minutes, for ten minutes, isn't that irresponsible as a director?"

But every time, the criterion for my choice was not the audience; it was the actor. Because if the actor exits to change and I 'fill' the stage directorially, I might be able to "kill time," but the focus shifts from the actor to the director. So I left it empty. The rehearsal process was extremely inefficient, and the performance itself is inefficient. But when it came to the actor's safety, and to protecting what the actor has protected her whole life, my choices were very efficient. When the actor said she couldn't memorize lines…at first, she said she could. But after about three weeks, she said she couldn't, that it was unbearably stressful. And honestly, theater isn't something so grand that we need to impose stress on a person for it. So I told her, right then, not to memorize. So yes, I hear complaints about discomfort. But I don't really agonize over it. I simply do what the actor wants.

Jisun Park

Thank you. If anyone from the auditorium has a question, or if you want to share personal thoughts and experiences related to the next normal, the floor is yours

Audience

I believe there are phenomena that only become meaningful once they are "captured" by an artist. That made me wonder: are phenomena that are not captured—because they were not selected—destined to vanish? In the examples you showed, it felt like many traditional cultures or heritages were given new meaning and a kind of survival precisely because they were selected by the presenters here. In the past, the distinction between "important" and "unimportant" art was deliberately made by power and institutions. Today, however, what is valued seems to be captured by artists, and the people on stage here. But since we cannot record everything, the act of selection itself also seems to create a kind of power. Also, those who stand on the stage are, in a sense, selected as cases, selected as examples. So I'm curious: what about the things that were not selected? What thoughts do you have about what remains unchosen? Thank you.

Jisun Park

In a way, the reason we are talking about the next normal is connected to what Jahye said about diversity. About those currently excluded, those excluded beings. How do we bring excluded existences into the next normal? What is excluded right now? And how do we bring those excluded things into this space? I think your question meets that concern directly. Is there anyone who can respond?

Ihot Sinlay Cihek

I don't know if I understand the question right, but is it about being chosen or not being chosen as art? I have some examples from my tribal stories. There were some very beautiful ritual songs. I'm not allowed to sing them; only certain people are allowed to sing those sacred songs. And they're elders; they're dying. So of course, anthropologists, or younger kids, are panicking because they are disappearing. And we were like, "Can we record them? Can we record this beautiful ritual song that is so sacred and so important to our tribe." And those elders, they said, "Why? Why record? It's supposed to be heard with your own ears, not from technology or equipment." They don't care about disappearing, because disappearing is part of living. It's not disappearing. It's just going somewhere else. I don't know where. Maybe the songs go with them to some other world with the elders. And same as that, the cultural heritage of Indigenous culture, like how they want to preserve a very important wood-carved art that resembles our ancestor. It's outdoors

under the sun, under the typhoon, earthquakes, and the whole thing has become so damaged. And some anthropologists and artists say "We have to preserve it because it is so important", "It is human culture; it is the treasure." But in our tribe, it's supposed to be like that. It's supposed to be in the air. It's supposed to be in nature. It's supposed to die out- because it's part of the process, whether or not it's art. Art is not in their consideration because art is a concept that may be newly invented. But for us, in my language, there's not even something called art; it's untranslatable. In my language, there's only *fangcalay*. It means something that makes you happy or represents pleasure. And usually, it means neat and that everything's organized, so you know how my tribe is.

For us, maybe it's not about being picked or being chosen as art; maybe it is the existence itself. If you're willing, it's art. It doesn't matter if there's an audience to appreciate it. It doesn't matter if there's anyone who appreciated it. It lives with some human being once, or maybe twice, and then dies out. Can we say that is art? I'd say maybe it could be art. It doesn't matter if art is going to last or not. Maybe for the meaning, at least in my tribe, it was there. There's some function sometimes, and it was there bringing some meaning to someone's life. And in my culture, that's important enough; it's still valued whether or not it's art.

Jisun Park Is there another person who would like to answer this question?

Yuichiro Yoshida Thank you for the important question. I can't really say that I have a good answer either, but even in the projects I work on, when we document rituals or traditional ceremonies, we naturally end up choosing certain rituals to present together with the artists. We have to recognize that we are in a privileged position to make the selection. I think we need to create space and opportunity to share our ideas and our work, and visit the other communities. In our region, even the neighboring towns don't know each other's traditional rituals. If artists share the video screening in the small communities, the other community members come to know the different areas' rituals. I think it is important we create this kind of space and also find common languages.

Jisun Park Thank you. Rahayu, since you work in a way where the researcher is not centered, but rather you collaborate with environmental defenders and communities so that they become the center, when it comes to climate justice work and activism, it feels increasingly necessary to reveal those who are being erased within inequality, those who are disappearing. In that sense, which existences need to be revealed more? What methods are needed to reveal them? And how might artists meet them? What role should artists play? Could you share your thoughts?

Rahayu Harjanthi I also want to say that my answer resonates with Ihot's answer. Anthropologists sometimes say that culture only remains or sustains when it has functions. For us, not all anthropologists think everything has to be preserved. Sometimes things just disappear and it's okay that I resonate with that. Also on what Yuichiro said about privilege and that we are privileged to select things that we can display, I think that is also what our team feels. When we were working on this project, we were very privileged people who had access to funding. We also have access to methodology and ability to write reports in English, etc. How we use that privilege to help others or to know which one to display is important. So we relinquish that control from our hands and actually ask the community what it is that you wanted to say or what it is that you wanted to display. You need to let go of your ego and engage in active listening. Before we even decide or make assumptions, we need to actively listen to other people and what they need.

And maybe something that I also did not touch on in my presentation is, we are also discussing how civic space is shrinking in Southeast Asia. There is more control over what is being communicated in the civic spaces, more oppressions. You see these environmental defenders being murdered and receiving violence as well. There's one idea I came across that I really love: that civic spaces are not actually shrinking. It's just looking for other places to be. And I think art could be like one of the ways people are communicating things that aren't usually able to communicate in conventional spaces. So that is also something that we are working on. Thank you.

Audience I work as a creator in performing arts. As I listened to these precious presentations, the point that kept emerging for me was this: whenever we propose certain questions or standards, I always feel, in the back of my mind, that they carry a kind of double-sidedness. From there, a kind of skepticism emerges again. Could what I propose also become a boundary that prevents something else from entering? I feel you must have encountered this point earlier as well. So my question is: even so, what brings you to the point where you decide, "I will still propose this; I will still ask; I will still speak"? What anchor helps you arrive at that decision?

Jisun Park We disrupt boundaries, and then we make boundaries again because that's what we're always doing. That's why I think it's important not to become fixed, but to keep moving and shifting continuously. As creators, what is it like? Director Jahye, or Ihot, could you speak to that?

Jahye Khoo In the end, I think we do it because of the power of relationship. And that relationship isn't necessarily a personal friendship between me and Saekja. For example, in Saekja's performance, a teenage audience member heard Saekja at age seventy reciting the Student Human Rights Ordinance on stage, and that teenager went back to school with the strength to fight. So even without a direct personal relationship, there are relationships that are formed through performance. That becomes the propulsion that keeps us going. And even if excluded or marginalized beings appear on stage and, in that moment, become visible and perhaps even "privileged," I don't think

that privilege or visibility lasts. Saekja stood onstage, gained attention, and received tips. But once the show ends, she returns to her original life. So rather than believing blindly in the immense power of performance, I think it's important to pay attention to the kinds of power that can, right now, become power for someone as a relationship that occurs in the moment.

Ihot Sinlay Cihek I'm not sure if I get the question right. We're talking about what to bring on the stage, is that it? Or the effects of boundaries, what's excluded, is that it? But anyway, for my practice, what to bring on the stage and what not to, for me, it's a very difficult question. Because sometimes when I make something about Indigenous people, people might think that I'm just repeating some stereotype; and how am I going to manage that is one of the most difficult problems. And who should I bring on the stage? Can I ask my family to be on the stage? Because it can certainly become a form of radical presence. But in the end, I want to make the whole theater or art into a fictional space, but that doesn't mean that I can escape from the aesthetic standards or realms.

The minimum is: why is this piece that I'm making important? One is to entertain myself, and then how is it meaningful? And, who is it meaningful to? Who is my target audience? Who do I want to show this piece to? Maybe those are some of the priority questions that I make. And then I decide to make the piece. I have a billion ideas. I want to work with Indigenous laborers. I want to work with immigrant workers from Indonesia, and I want to work with all kinds of different groups, but I always feel this guilt that I'm exploiting them if I don't really understand their real-life stories. And if I say, "hey, I want to make a piece of your story, and then I want to get to know you," it feels like it's too purposeful. It also feels wrong. So there are a billion ideas I've chosen not to do. I think that the most difficult part is, sometimes, just not doing things.

Sometimes, not doing something is more important. When we are faced with issues that we cannot fully explain or articulate, it is okay to feel angry because of that. Maybe the point is to create enough space where everyone can speak. Not a perfect space—it can never really be perfect—but a space that is enough. And if we cannot do that, then sometimes it may be better not to do it at all. Art is not that important. Art is not more important than your real life; art should be better than that. It's not to help people live better. It's not to, I don't know, make this world change. Sometimes it's just being there and waiting for someone to appreciate it. And maybe a spark happens. But if it doesn't make the meaning, or if it hurts someone, maybe it's not worth making. Sometimes art is just not that important, I have to admit, to me. So, I don't know if I answered your question. That's my very weak response.

Jisun Park Thank you. Perhaps we can continue these conversations later over lunch and talk more. We will take just one more question before we wrap up. Is there anyone who really wants to ask something or share a thought?

Audience I'm wondering if I can ask a question specifically to Ihot? I really enjoyed your presentation. I want to hear more about your exploration of hate. I found it resonating with my experience as a Korean woman growing up in Korea and learning about Japanese occupation. I would imagine if we are still under Japanese occupation, I would have maybe the same daily stress as you described your having. And I realized that later in my life, I also am not good at hating people, and I don't want to hate, I don't want to hate Japanese people, but I still want to remember what happened during that historical era, because not Japanese/Korean, but it is a by human brutality against other human beings.

And one other thing I found interesting about your exploration is because you're an Indigenous person, but because you're a woman, you felt the discrimination coming from your own culture. And I want to comment on that, because I'm happy that I learned about Korean history under Japanese occupation. I think we all need to learn that. But I'm not happy about the way I was introduced to that, because it was a little bit shocking to me, and I was introduced from a very early age. So I would have wanted to wait until I'm old enough to understand human violence. I feel that switched to double-edged violence, that I have resentment against that human brutality perpetuated by the Japanese army, but also the Korean authorities in Korean education who didn't take much care in how Korean girls and boys would actually experience that too. So I want to hear your understanding on that.

Ihot Sinlay Cihek Thank you for this question. And as Taiwanese, we were colonized by the Japanese. For me, the weirdest thing is that my grandparents love Japan. Because it was the end of the war, and it was a large-scale scheme where it was so good to be a Japanese. They grew up at that time, and they were so proud that they were able to speak Japanese, and they loved to be Japanese subjects which is weird for us right now in hindsight. But for them, it's just a happy childhood. Everyone was poor. Everyone labored, but there was a certain fascist scheme behind it that made them feel happy, and there was a euphoria of being a certain ethnicity. When I was back in the tribe, I was trying to do a musical with the elders and I was like, "Oh, let's do some sacred ritual songs." And they said, " No, that's very sacred. We don't sing that for entertainment." I said, "what do you want to sing?" And they said, "I want to sing Misora Hibari (美空ひばり). She's a very old, famous Japanese singer, and they sang some very old, traditional Japanese songs. So, my musical ended up having a lot of Japanese traditional tunes in it. And, of course, from an outsider's perspective, it would be seen like, "are you really, seriously-like, you're bringing back the old colonial memories?" But for my elders, it's something they recognize as a very important truth. And also, when there was this discussion, we opened this space, and we sang this song, and they started talking about something unpleasant. They said that they were happy, BUT... My uncle got sent to Indonesia and was killed as a soldier. And there

was still some trauma that was being spoken of after these happy memories. So it's there. It's not that they love the Japanese government. It's always a mixed feeling.

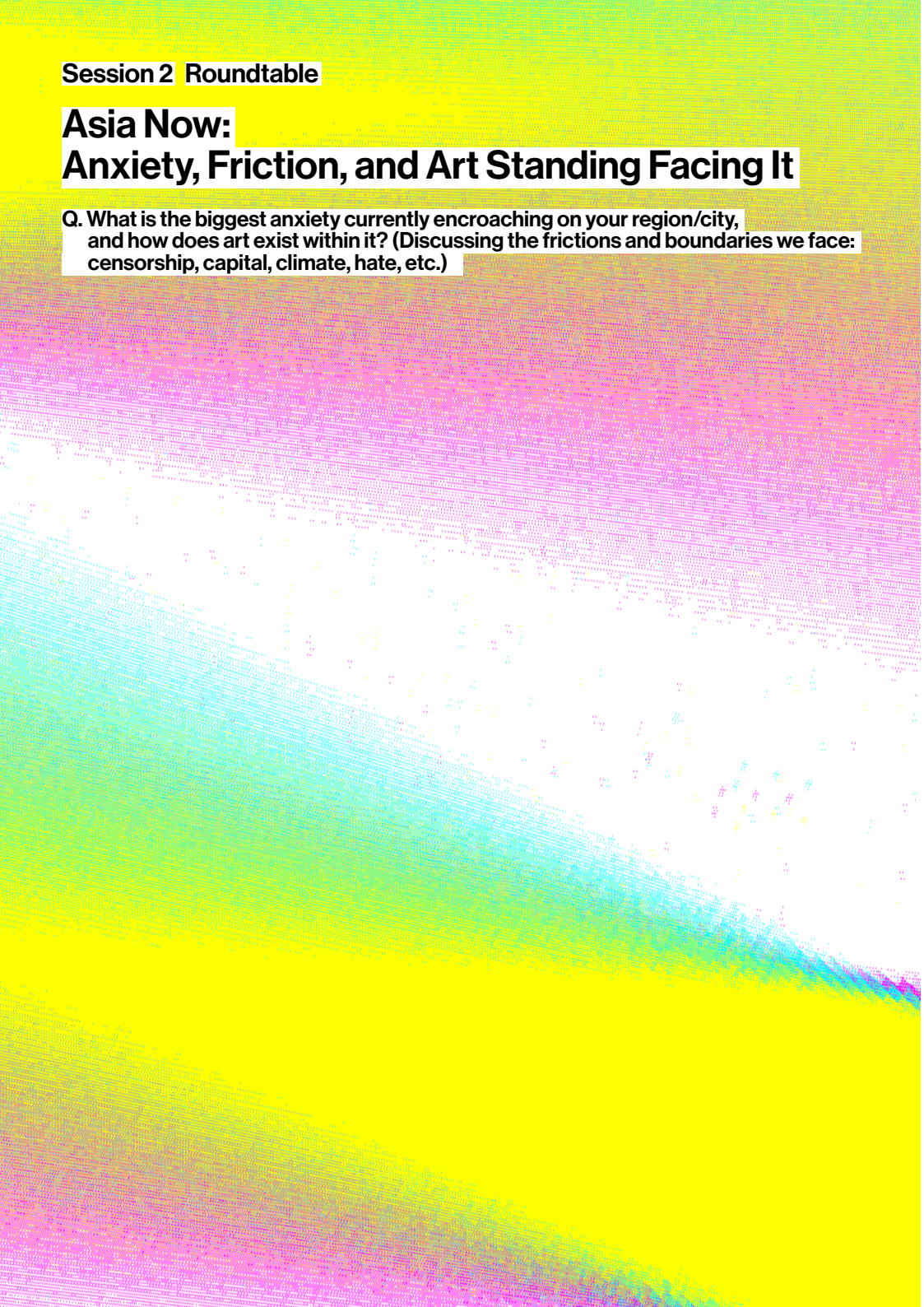
For me as an Indigenous woman, I was in the tribe. Of course, it's again a love-hate relationship. And it's always about continuing to tell how you feel and how they feel. And telling them why you're not feeling comfortable. I don't want this because there's always a reason. Even if you don't find a reason, you try to talk, try to chat, try to communicate through it. That's the only way. Even if it's a nasty fight with your mom, which is inevitable. She's trying to ask, "When are you getting married? You're 30-something." In the tribe, everyone is having kids right now. And this time I was like, "oh, maybe I'm different. I'm an artist, so I'm different."

But then there's another layer, because at this time we have so many things to talk about, which I want to talk about with Rahayu, because the civic space is shrinking. I don't know where we're going, actually. We have to talk about that. Where are people going for the civic space? I want to go there, too. And there's another very, very important issue for Taiwan, because China has not been good to us for a long time, and in Taiwan, it is a looming threat. And it is weird, because I have Chinese friends who are artists. They are suppressed by the Chinese government, but we are not able to really openly talk about it. I feel that this kind of political climate is really shrinking our space for talking about sensitive questions and sensitive discussions or discourse. And I think it's very crucial to be hurt by the truth and be okay with it.

I think we are not powerful enough to take the ugly truth and be willing to talk about things, because TikTok and Instagram are just too comfortable. I scroll through dog videos all the time, and then I can forget about China, or how they are trying to take us, or all the wars happening in the world. So yes, we have to be present and go to these specific places. Like all of you here, we are here in the same room, having a real conversation, sharing our experiences and traumas, and we're okay with that. Maybe this is what should be happening more, or maybe, I don't know, something better could happen; let's have that open imagination. I think that would be good.

Jisun Park

Today, our question was, how can art reshape the boundaries of what is considered normal? I hope this question becomes a question for all of us. We talk about the next normal, but the next normal is not fixed. It must remain fluid. Constantly updated, shifting, changing. And in that process, the friction and discomfort we discussed can become the driving force that enables us to create the next normal. I feel art must play that kind of role.



Session 2 Roundtable

Asia Now:
Anxiety, Friction, and Art Standing Facing It

Q. What is the biggest anxiety currently encroaching on your region/city, and how does art exist within it? (Discussing the frictions and boundaries we face: censorship, capital, climate, hate, etc.)

TABLE A	**Bobo Lee**	Expression under the Pressure of the Expanding Regulatory Boundaries
TABLE B	**E-Jan Tan**	Practicing Multiculturalism Through the Body, Not the Mind
TABLE C	**Sasapin Siriwanij**	Finding Authentic Belonging in an Age of Judgement and Pigeonholing
TABLE D	**Tessa Leong**	Artists' Survival Amid Real-World Fears and Self-Censorship

TABLE A

Bobo Lee

Hong Kong SAR, China

Senior Producer
WestK Performing Arts

Expression under the Pressure of the Expanding Regulatory Boundaries

#pressure #self-censorship #value of expression

This roundtable served as a forum for Asian artists to share their concerns and experiences regarding the defense of artistic freedom within authoritarian political environments. One participant opened the discussion by referencing the current situation in Hong Kong. As many regions in Asia remain sensitive to the topic of censorship, we have summarized the roundtable's content briefly for sharing.

The Reality of Censorship and the Internalization of Self-Censorship

Since the enactment of the National Security Law in 2020, Hong Kong's cultural and arts sector has undergone drastic changes. As bureaucratically minded management took over major arts institutions that had previously operated independently, various forms of censorship emerged, including the cancellation of performance bookings, demands to cut scenes from films, and tacit pressure on performers and related service providers. In particular, there has been a surge in cases where a single prop appearing in a film or performance, or a single past social media post containing criticism of the government's extradition law, has served as a pretext for canceling performances.

What is even more serious is that a new concept called "soft resistance" has emerged, but the relevant officials have not provide a clear definition for it. As a result, artists have fallen into a state of self-censorship, curtailing their own expression without knowing where the line of what is permissible lies. One participant described this as "a situation where the red line is not a single line, but rather a web of threads entangled in all directions." The fear of losing everything—from grants and performance venues to ticketing services and collaborators—has taken root throughout the arts community.

Those Who Stayed, Those Who Left, and New Connections

While many artists have left Hong Kong, some have remained. Among those who left, some are preserving the records and memories of the 2019 movement abroad, exploring new ways to engage—such as organizing film festivals in cities like Taipei and London or participating in major European performance events at their own expense. But this type of activity or performance repeats a similar theme and content, and is less focused on artistic development. Artists who are still in Hong Kong have been moving behind the scenes, trying not to over-censor themselves or become overly self-censored, maintaining spaces for expression rationally through diverse themes and approaches. One Hong Kong singer, unable to find a performance venue domestically, embarked on a world tour to reach not only Hong Kong expatriates scattered across the globe, but also to engage new audiences. While solidarity movements within the Hong Kong art scene have become less common and less widespread due to funding issues, some events like award ceremonies that have lost government supports become running independently through crowdfunding and hosting the event at private venues.

Shared Concerns across Different Contexts in Asia

Participants from South Korea shared their individual experiences. One participant noted that during the blacklist era, their arts organization had continued operations even by taking on debt, though it remains unclear whether that was the right choice. They also described how they later regained independence by generating revenue through external projects and paying off debts.

A participant affiliated with a foundation spoke of the difficulty of maintaining a balance amid conflicting pressures—not only censorship from above but also instances where citizens directly request censorship, such as public complaints against feminist theater.

Another participant cited an instance wherein a performance addressing Taiwan's national identity caused diplomatic friction and explained the process used to resolve the issue. He stated that while protecting the core creative vision the artist sought to uphold, unnecessary external factors were managed during the publicity and marketing stages, and a phased response system was established to address safety concerns. All three performances sold out without incident. He said, "It was most important to distinguish between direct risks, risks arising from the process itself, and risks stemming

from political pressure, and to ensure that the producer genuinely believed in the values the work and the artist sought to convey."

A young participant frankly mentioned South Korea's complex historical context, where victims of blacklisting were also perpetrators of sexual violence, and noted that this had served as an obstacle to deeply reflecting on issues of censorship. Meanwhile, some argued that it is crucial to recognize that the target of censorship was not specific individuals, but rather the "content" itself—such as the Sewol Ferry disaster or political statements—that the state sought to conceal. A participant running the Seoul Peripheral Theater Festival explained that, guided by the principle that "art reveals what is hidden through discomfort," they have harnessed that discomfort itself as the driving force of the festival.

The Legacy of Resistance and Artistic Possibilities

Questions were also raised about the artistic legacy left by the protests in 2014 and 2019. One participant in the discussion noted that the 2019 protests had evolved in terms of tactics and organizational methods based on previous experiences, achieving far greater scale and depth; in this process, artists also shifted toward independently funding their own work—rather than relying on grants—to create freely and advance onto the global stage. They cited this spirit of self-reliance and solidarity as a significant legacy of this era.

One striking example of sustaining artistic expression under self-censorship was the presentation of a performance by a transgender artist from Brazil. The presence of an artist who brings their story to the stage, even in an environment where survival itself is threatened, gives great courage to other artists who might otherwise hesitate to express themselves. At this event, participants collectively affirmed the possibility of continuing to use art to give visibility to diverse members of society, such as sexual minorities, immigrants, and workers and to address topics that were previously overlooked, even amidst a challenging political climate.

While addressing the weighty topics of censorship and freedom of expression, the session concluded with a practical and open dialogue exploring ways to maintain artistic integrity and foster solidarity within each individual's unique circumstances.

TABLE B

E-Jan Tan

Malaysia

Creative Producer and Founder
In Situ Arts Management Consultancy

Practicing Multiculturalism Through the Body, Not the Mind

#multiculturalism-navigating multiculturalism as an unfolding performance rather than a fixed idea

Introduction & Overview

E-Jan Tan Welcome everyone, thank you for being here. Thank you for being willing to do something different today. I am E-Jan from Malaysia, creative producer and founder of In Situ Arts Management Consultancy.

The session is not about solving a problem, or not about reaching an agreement, or producing an outcome. The purpose of this round table is the process itself, and it's about presence, it's about inclusion and listening.

I've been to many discussion tables and with different topics, and I realized there's always only a few very outspoken voices being heard. So when it comes to talking about multiculturalism, we definitely want to practice inclusion and embrace diversity. So the value of the session is the experience of hearing from every voice in the room on equal footing.

The Malaysian Context and a Proposal for Multiculturalism

E-Jan Tan A little bit of background and introduction of Malaysia where I was born and raised. So Malaysia is a multicultural, multi-ethnicity, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-everything country. We have a population of about 34 million people, 60% being Malay, 23% Chinese, 7% Indian, and about 10% is indigenous people from about 40 different tribes.

There are many different types of education systems that shape our thinking and behavior. There are various religions that shape our beliefs and daily living habits. And the most important part is glorious options of food according to our descendant origin. I can go on and on listing all the multicultural realities that I lived in. I still constantly find multiculturalism exciting and fascinating. This is why I'm always interested in exploring this topic, continuously listening, learning, and sharing with people around the world.

Now I would like to invite 13 people in this room to be volunteers. If you think you can read loud and clear in English, please volunteer yourself.

You can just pass it around and pick your favorite. There is a number on the top left. So, we go around according to the number. From 1 to 13, okay? Now, can we have number 1?

> *Enter this round table as a body in motion, not a position to defend. Multiculturalism here is not a fixed idea, but an unfolding performance shaped by global flows and local groundings.*
> *In Malaysia, culture is lived through the body—through language-switching, food rituals, religious rhythms, inherited gestures—already entangled with histories of trade, colonialism, migration, and media circulation.*
> *Write and speak from sensation before theory. How does globalization arrive in your body—through training methods, aesthetics, technologies, or expectations? Where do you feel its pressure, speed, or seduction?*
> *At the same time, notice glocalization: the way global forms are bent, resisted, and re-authored through local contexts. What happens when international vocabularies meet local customs, beliefs, and bodies?*
> *Allow friction to surface. Multiculturalism is not seamless coexistence, but an ongoing negotiation of proximity, power, and care. Track how you adapt, translate, or refuse in real time.*
> *Treat this conversation as choreography—responsive, situated, unfinished. We are not defining multiculturalism; we are performing it, here and now.*

Keyword Sharing Session (Responding to Prompts)

E-Jan Tan Thank you very much for our 13 very kind and brave souls. Now I'm going to have a little explanation on how this next session will work. Because we are using shared translation and meeting as a large group, we will follow a simple structured process.

> In a moment, I will offer a single reflective prompt. You will have a few minutes to think quietly and write a keyword. Or you can draw a picture if you like. After that, we will go around the room one person at a time. So each person will have up to one minute to share your keyword or the picture. But you can also, good news, you can also say pass if you don't feel like sharing. Passing is a complete and respected contribution. So silence is part of this process.
>
> During this go-around process, there will be no responses to each other, no discussion, and no follow-up questions. This is intentional, and our job is not to react or debate, but to listen. I will help keep time and the pace so everyone has an equal opportunity. I may gently interrupt if needed and I appreciate your support with that. So there's no right thing to say today. Speak from your own experience in your own words and choose or you can choose not to speak.
>
> *The prompt here for today, so what feels most important for you to say at this moment?*

Participant You mentioned equality earlier, and as I listened, I started thinking, "Can we talk about equality without any experience of discrimination?" So I wrote "peace." I also wrote one more, something like space or a gap. People say Korea has entered a five percent multicultural society, but we were not born into a multicultural society from the beginning. We are in a transitional phase, and we could say we are preparing for the present and the future. If so, we need to keep creating gaps for the next generation, and we need to do that work now. So in that sense, my keyword is "space."

Participant I thought about it, and since the prompt is about saying what is important, I came to the conclusion that I have nothing important to say, so I wrote "nothing." To add a bit, I realized that when I speak, it's because I want to speak. I don't think I've ever spoken because it was important.

Participant I painted flowers simply because I randomly thought of spring buds. In the end, I think everything just exists, being fundamentally the same and yet distinct at the exact same time.

Participant I just drew a circle. The word "frontier," rather than expressing the boundary as a word, I expressed it like this.

Participant I came here with expectations. Multiculturalism is often understood solely as families formed by Korean men and foreign women, while diversity is seen merely as gender differences. I expected the term diversity to lead to discussions about entirely different topics, but at this point, I am unsure and simply wish to listen.

Participant As a dance major, I recalled memories of becoming one through dancing instead of talking, along with the memories of touch. When we made physical contact, everyone simply felt like a human being. I was

reminded of those past experiences and memories.

Participant Looking at the morning session and what we heard at the beginning today, the important phrase that came to mind was "an ongoing process of negotiation." So the idea that rather than producing an answer, we ask questions and examine the process stayed with me. And in that sense, performance itself feels practical in that it keeps carrying that process forward.

Participant My keyword is "Contemporary Tradition." It's something I want to resolve in my current work.

Participant LIVE, LOVE, AND PEACE TOGETHER. AND I WON'T HURT YOU.
With that theme, I thought about how we as artists, people working in the arts, should share in this diverse era.

Participant My keyword is co-existence with the others. We may not call Japanese society so-called multi-cultural society. But recently, I feel many differences, sometimes when visiting others, colleagues, neighbors, even family members. Now, I'd like to find a way to be comfortable with each other.

Participant As we keep throwing out words like diversity and multiculturalism, it feels like we end up defining things as different, different. But maybe it is just existence. I wondered if saying "so diverse, so different" might actually create boundaries instead.

Participant I came to this session because I was curious about diversity. Does diversity really embrace every difference, everything? Then are there things that cannot be embraced in the name of diversity? That question came up for me.

Participant After hearing the prompt, I looked around. Some people are familiar, some unfamiliar. Since very different people are gathered here, I thought it might be good to talk about differences. At the same time, I also want to talk about what it means for different people, or different things, to be together.

Participant My keyword is the "experience of listening." In this groundbreaking agreement where we listen without answering or asking questions, there are words that keep circulating inside those who are only listening. Also, the experiences happening inside us right now, what is unfolding inside us. And I hope we can talk about the spectrum and methods of listening.

Participant I thought of two things. About emphasizing and crossing boundaries and differences. And about welcoming the other as a different being.

Participant I meet some unusual friends, and as that kind of person and friend, I drew it. If you rotate the M in "Me," it becomes like this, "We." If differences are woven together, that is diversity, and maybe it ultimately becomes my diversity. That is what I'm thinking right now.

Participant (*blank*) of gathering, as fill in the blank. And "together" or "to gather." I'll just leave it at that.

Participant I thought of two things: outside and hospitality. As everyone knows, Marronnier Park has a very large disability organization, and around lunchtime many elderly people come and eat free lunch. In spring, there are many children's picnics. And these days, there are also many foreigners. I experience every day that such ordinary and peaceful days are actually filled with diversity. I deliberately did the act of going outside a lot. And when I did, what was most important for them was being welcomed, being welcomed outside. I wanted to share that.

Participant I'm a producer in the Korean traditional music field. And because of my career, I always think of that inheritance. Burdened by the need to find the right answer between inheritance and creation, I am exploring how to dissolve the discrimination in our society into our traditions to forge a tradition for the future.

Participant I wrote "tracing." There are invisible traces, and if we follow those traces, maybe there are points where we meet. That is what I'm curious about.

Participant I wrote two keywords: feeling and watching.

In-Depth Discussion and Q&A

E-Jan Tan All right. So, it seems like we have a little bit more time, which is great because then we can just move on and do something else with whatever we have said. I can also share my keywords. There are two, I always have it with me. The first keyword is respect. That is on an internal level. On an external level, the keyword is navigation, meaning how you navigate, how you build this map in you and then how you navigate it through different cultures. Does anyone in the room have a burning question to any of the presentation, or do you feel like you haven't explained enough and you want to extend?

Participant This is Korean culture.

E-Jan Tan What do you think is the key contribution factor to this diversity in the same culture?

Participant While listening, I felt that each person seems to think differently

about the scope of the term "multiculturalism." Multiculturalism, in a way, is like how even within each household culture can be different. But because we frame it within national boundaries, we sometimes interpret "difference" as "wrongness".

Participant

When we say multiculturalism in Korean society, there is actually a hierarchy embedded in the term. It is often used to describe families formed by migrant women from Asia through marriage. So when we hear "multicultural," we tend to imagine Asian families, but we don't usually apply the term in the same way to families formed by white people.
In such a situation where things are not made visible, I believe we must constantly bring that discrimination and those issues to the surface and talk about them. Furthermore, we need to be aware that the attitude of emphasizing Koreanization while denying the differences between us can act as a form of violence.

Participant

When you said navigation, is that like the individual navigating within the society? or is it more like having a system that we can navigate to the what you meant for navigation? And the other question is about inheritance. Can we choose what we inherit? I'm from Turkey, but I've been living in Korea for six years now. I felt that the more I try to define and label things, the further away they slip, so I chose together as the keyword.

E-Jan Tan

About navigation, maybe I expand a little bit on the background in Malaysia and its context. The direction of primary education is mother tongue education. So, it depends on the ethnicity. Since I am of Chinese descent, I went to a Chinese primary school, attended a Malay secondary school, and went to an English-speaking university. Because we learn certain vocabulary in Mandarin and others in English, each of our cultural maps is shaped differently. Particularly in Malaysia, since you do not know the background of the person you are interacting with, a subtle self-censorship acts as a crucial navigational tool.

Participant

(Regarding inheritance) As a working artist, I think making such choices is simply unavoidable. While tradition can be closed off, I think a producer's role is to explore how to dissolve the age, disability, and gender discrimination present in our society today into tradition to create the traditions of tomorrow.

Participant

I wondered why the ethnic Chinese communities in Malaysia and Singapore are so closed off?

E-Jan Tan

We always go around telling people, we are a multicultural country, we are multi-blah-blah, but actually, if you live long enough in the country, you will realize each of these cultures or different ethnic groups. Religions restrict intermarriage between the ethnic Chinese and Malay populations. For example, one must convert to Islam in order to marry a Malay person.

Participant

When a multicultural family is formed in Yeongdeok, they teach the migrant mother and the children Yeongdeok traditional dance. It's almost forced, framed as the way to settle there. It feels like this one-sided imposition is simply a glimpse into the multicultural reality we are currently dealing with.

Government Policy and Artists' Survival Models

Participant

In Malaysia, does the government, for example a ministry-level body like the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, run funding programs or support projects specifically related to multiculturalism? I'm asking because Korea has a little of that. And in Canada, for instance, there's extensive support for multicultural initiatives, since so many different groups live together. What I found enviable when looking at Canadian policy is that they have clear multicultural policies, and schools and public institutions are expected to incorporate multicultural elements. So I'm wondering: in a country like Malaysia where multiple ethnic groups live together, are there national-level policies or support systems like that?

E-Jan Tan

I'm jealous to see Canada too. Okay, first of all, we don't have a ministry of "art". It's the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture. So arts and culture falls into serving tourism.

In the policy, the government does acknowledge there are different cultures and there are different ethnic groups. But what government structure or programs do usually is about preserving traditions of different cultures. And only within the government system and structure, so they hire their own government servants, as dancers and performers to perform the traditional kind of art of different cultures. So, independence remains independent. Not under government structure. And contemporary independent. Because there is no encouragement of new contemporary works creation.

So there is a very interesting survival model of contemporary independent artists. And usually, interesting art is created under this kind of suppression. But I do hope to see, like, there is improvement in the governmental structure and policy.

Participant

I completely understand what you're saying about the amount of pressure artists face in Malaysia. But when I look at people like Mark Teh, or groups like Five Arts Centre, it seems there are artist collectives doing contemporary work that can be critical rather than government-aligned. So I'm curious. How are those groups able to speak out? And

is there any kind of base or ecosystem that supports them?

E-Jan Tan Well, most of the members in the Five Arts Center have a day job. So it's more like a collective and then they come together and they create the work when there's need, but this is not like the main.

I hope today's session left you with more questions and curiosity rather than fixed answers. Thank you very much for your participation.

TABLE C

Sasapin Siriwanij

Thailand

Artistic Director
Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting (BIPAM)

Finding Authentic Belonging in an Age of Judgement and Pigeonholing

#pigeonholing #isolation #loneliness

Introduction & Overview

Sasapin Siriwanij First of all, thank you very much for your interest in joining the conversation that I would like to propose today. My name is Sasapin Siriwanij. I'm from Bangkok, Thailand. I think my title is not as important as the fact that I am very deeply engaged with the performing arts community in Thailand, especially in Bangkok, and that's where I will be speaking from today. I think it might take time to get to know everyone, so I would not do a round where everyone talks about themselves, but if you are speaking at any point, it might be nice to just talk a bit of your name, who you are, and then we would just get to know each other in this way, kind of more casually.

So, the prompt for this conversation that I responded to was the word anxiety. And Jisun, most of all, asked us, the roundtable leaders, what is the anxiety in our community at the moment? The process for me in responding to this, I found quite interesting, because at first it wasn't so clear what the anxiety is in where I'm from, which is Bangkok and the performing arts community there. And then I realized that, ah, it wasn't so clear, because what I feel there is anxiety about it's something that's not, that doesn't look like anxiety, but it's much quieter than that.

And I will confess to you that I'm not very organized in my thoughts. It's still quite scattered. I also told the interpreter, excuse me for this confusion, but maybe hopefully, we can be confused together. So, I would like to start by

throwing around some keywords to start with.

Exploring the Images and Meanings of "Pigeonhole"

Sasapin Siriwanij What I would like to invite us to talk about would be around, firstly, pigeonholing, we can talk about what it means to you. It might be different for everyone.
Second, isolation. Third, loneliness. Fourth, us and them. And then label, and judgment. So, I think what I'm coming with, is the interconnection between these ideas. Let's talk first about the image of the pigeonhole. Is everyone able to imagine what it's like? Could you give some short description of what a pigeonhole is for you? There can be many things.

Participant In my neighborhood, there are a lot of utility poles. Quite often, you can see birds' nests attached to them, and especially since it's winter now, that image comes to mind. They probably built their nests there because they had no other choice. So rather than feeling like humans and nature are living together, it feels more like something done out of necessity. Those nests on top of the utility poles are always at risk of catching fire, which is dangerous for us, and for them it means losing their homes. That makes me feel anxious. I've actually seen a fire happen before, and I've even reported it to the fire station. It feels like a very uncomfortable and precarious relationship for both sides.

Participant When you go to the Han River, there used to be pigeon houses built into the streetlights, with lots of holes stacked like apartment buildings, but they were all removed because they became too dirty.

Sasapin Siriwanij Great. Thank you. I would share my pigeonhole. But of course, this is not to say that it's correct, just this is so we see where everyone is coming from, and maybe if we find a common ground or not, that's okay too. Pigeonhole for me, it is true that I'm not really referring to the realities of the pigeons in my city, but I'm thinking of the concept of apartments, like the little holes that only the head of the bird could poke out. This kind of separated and isolated accommodation, homes for the birds, and they are single, one by one, but it's also interesting that there's a contrast between one single bird in this one hole, but usually there are many, many other birds that are singled out in the same area. And once it becomes that form, the uniqueness or the individuality of each bird seems to disappear and be forgotten. And maybe we can even imagine that if you're just the one bird living in one hole, more and more, you cannot connect or interact with your neighbor birds, and your little hole becomes your own entire universe. With other images or definitions of pigeons that we have now in the room, I think it's interesting, because it seems like pigeons are something that are unwanted or forced to find space for themselves, and no one really cares about their well-being.

3. Small-Group Discussion and Experience Sharing on "Pigeonhole"

Sasapin Siriwanij To make this conversation multi directional, I would like to invite you to maybe get into small groups, maybe three, four people to talk about, whether you yourself or someone that you know in your artistic community has ever felt like a pigeon in these situations that we are discussing. Shall we try 10 minutes, and then, if it's so lively, we can extend, no worries, and then we'll come back and hear from everybody.

(Small-Group Discussion)

Participant Our group had three perspectives. First, pigeonholing varies depending on whether it's an urban or rural environment. Second, as artists, when applying for support programs, they have to pigeonhole their own work, and ultimately, their work ends up becoming what the system wants. Third, we discussed what happens when something isn't pigeonholed—when it's not a pigeonhole, but the person becomes "all" themselves. In that sense, the discussion turned to how one creates their own community.

Participant Our group combined the perspectives of three members—a practicing artist, an arts manager, and a cultural administrator working at a foundation—so our experiences were a bit different. First, for the artists, especially those working on queer projects, they initially rejected the stereotypical notions people hold. But over time, by framing the pigeonhole itself as something to look at in that way, it actually became an entry point. Once people engaged with it, it turned into an opportunity to explain their work with more specificity. From the perspective of someone working at a foundation, there are women of a certain age who moved from working in Seoul to the provinces. In that process, they felt the tension between how the local community—the indigenous residents—views them as fitting a certain stereotype, and whether they conform to or diverge from that expectation, experiencing a sense of awareness while navigating that boundary.
From the perspective of locals, newcomers from Seoul may be welcomed, but at the same time, there's a tendency to set boundaries and distinguish themselves. Also, speaking from my experience as an arts manager, genre aside, my background is in classical music, and there are many overt forms of pigeonholing applied to people in classical music. As someone working as an arts mediator, even though within our community we deal with art in complex and diverse ways, society often looks at art as if it fits into a single pigeonhole. So I've been thinking about how to deconstruct that and create opportunities for people to encounter each other in different ways.

Participant We had roughly four main points in our discussion. First, we talked a little about the advantages and disadvantages of personality

categorization tests like MBTI. The disadvantage is that people are pigeonholed into types, while the advantage is that previously hidden traits or personalities can emerge. The conversation then expanded to how relationships are formed within local communities and how these become stronger or more distinguished depending on the region, touching on lineage and hierarchy within the arts community. Second, we discussed how even the language people use within the arts world creates its own kind of pigeonholing. Third, although artists and their professions are very diverse, we noticed that an individual artist can be overshadowed by their most typical profession. This naturally led to discussions about artistic genres. Artists themselves sometimes find it difficult to categorize their own work, and in Korea, there are limits when trying to step outside these genre boundaries.

Participant

There were many similarities with other groups. In our discussion, one recurring theme was incomplete or imperfect structures. Our members included those in traditional arts, theater and drama writers, and visual arts. For example, in traditional arts, you have to follow senior masters and go through a process of succession—this is a kind of pigeonholing. For drama writers, their work might need to be adjusted depending on directing, production, or budgets. In Korea, many rely heavily on government funding, which also imposes certain forms of pigeonholing. Additionally, there is the centralization around Seoul.

Participant

We talked about the sense of isolation felt in each person's position within their respective genres. In that context, we discussed overlaps such as support programs or pigeonholing felt by region. Then we reflected on the idea of the pigeonhole becoming one's own world. In that sense, we discussed how pigeonholing can itself be a form of isolation.

In-Depth Conversation and Discussion on "Pigeonhole"

Sasapin Siriwanij

Thank you. It's a very nice surprise for me that I think I came with something that feels so personal to me and to my community back in Bangkok, but here I am learning a lot about what's happening now in Korea. So really grateful.
It looks to me like we are thinking about a box of some kind, when we think about
pigeonhole or as we talk about pigeonhole. And I think it's very nice to feel that within all of your thoughts, the hole is many times disempowering, but there are people who also talked about how you can reverse it and make it empowering. And this box or frame has different origins. Sometimes you put yourself inside because there's a necessity from somewhere else. Sometimes you start from inside the box and you don't even realize that other people are creating it for you. And then it's very hard to get out of it. Sometimes when you try to come out to go somewhere else, you don't realize this box follows you too. But there are also cases where somebody else's box helps you to understand that better.

I will share the context from which I bring this topic to you. Although I already see that it's taking on its own meaning, and it's much wider than what I originally thought, which is really wonderful. In Bangkok, there are many people who are making performing arts, but they know of each other's existence, but only through social media. And I feel like the social media identity becomes that box for a lot of groups in Bangkok, especially young people. So that becomes a situation like, if you go to a performance, an event, and you think that this person belongs to that Facebook page that I saw the other day, you will already come up with a certain set of interactions that you think you will use or have with them. And also, you would then not really let them have a chance to be a part of your group, because each group tries to have their own, you know, identity, characters, practices that are unique, but by setting them up as something, you are also communicating that you're different from other groups. I think the differences are great, and actually are the basis of the arts that we're making. But somehow, what I noticed in Thailand is that that difference discourages interactions rather than otherwise.

And of course, this phenomenon didn't just happen recently. All this kind of categorization, this boxing, happens all the time, and we have many generations here in the room, so we know that this has always existed. But I think the problem with contemporary society is that the speed is really exponential at this point. The community in Thailand is small, and is actually really small compared to Korea, I think. And when I started in the community, it used to be a really healthy environment of peer learning. Peer Learning doesn't just mean that you have friends close to you, but it also means that you are learning and having constructive criticism organically, rather than forcing it to happen. Today, when you're creating in isolation, especially younger artists, I'm talking about younger artists because they're just beginning, and I think the environment is very harsh for someone to make work for the first time, and you don't know everything about what you're doing, but you don't also don't know who to reach out to, talk to, to consult, and the only thing you think you can do is to put out a production already. And what you get is you're putting yourself out there in a very open, public and vulnerable space.

When you don't know each other, it's also easy for the people who come to see it to just give criticism like I don't know you, so I can give you anything I want, and then I go home, and I don't have to care about how you're feeling after I leave. That means it's very hard to have a learning environment where you feel like you can support each other in the community. But rather, if you're quite young, you're doing work for the first time, it's either a hit or a miss, and then you go on or you give up. And I think for us working in the arts, we know that the best way to grow is to interact with people who are different from us

and not stay in our own echo chamber or that box there. And I think some of you might feel that this is a problem for everybody in society, and not just us in the performing arts.

I think that it's very important and urgent that this happens in the space that we're working in, because performing arts is supposed to be the space where we get people to come together and be together and share space, thinking, feelings. But right now, the environment is not really supporting that to happen. A lot of times when we have connections actually like this now that we're in this room, it's organized in this way, so it takes a lot of effort for connections to happen. It's very hard to have organic connections where you are sitting side by side, you watch each other's work, because you're kind of, you know, around each other, and you see what happens. In Thailand, that's happening less and less. But every time you need a connection, you need a very formal occasion. If you want to see somebody else's work and learn from other people's perspective, you have to invite specific people to come see. And I think even though I don't have solutions to this, I feel like the organic nature of this is making us lose something that's really important for someone to grow. I feel like I'm coming to a point where it could be debatable for a lot of you, which means you may have a different experience, a different opinion about what I'm talking about. So, I will open this space a bit for you to bounce back with me or with each other on what we're on.

I also feel like it's quite personal to me, like in the feelings, it might not be clear—everything I said. So, if you feel like you would like me to clarify something, or if you have a situation in your community or your experience to share, to argue, to agree, to differ, I really welcome that.

Participant

I have a question. You mentioned that opportunities for people to meet and interact with one another are decreasing in Thailand. But from my perspective, Southeast Asia is often seen as having a strong DIY culture and a strong sense of community or collectivity. That's actually one of the reasons I've been paying close attention to the region—I felt there was a lot we could learn from it. So, I'm curious: what do you think has led to this shift? Could you share more context about why this phenomenon is happening?

And to add to that, I'd like to hear more specifically about what the core issue is. For instance, if echo chambers are forming, and if that means connections aren't being made, and lack of opportunities for peer learning, what kinds of concrete problems does that lead to in the end?

Sasapin Siriwanij

I think the problem shouldn't be that we will totally get rid of an echo chamber, or we will totally get rid of the hole or the box, because I think that's not realistic. Either in some way or another, this kind of box or labeling will always happen. It's really great that it might not be a problem for some people, but coming from my context, I feel that it's a problem. Because when you're thinking about younger artists, I come from the time when the community is quite connected, and I always knew where to go to if I need help, and I feel like that's happening less and less, and it's making the young theater makers feel like it's very, very difficult to push through to make something and to just be welcomed in the community. When somebody really wants to make, to keep making work, and they have a lot of potential to make the work, but they make their first one or two works, and they're already slashed by people. And I feel like there are a lot of young artists right now back home who just don't understand what is happening, and they really don't have tools to move forward, and they feel like they're just incapable.

Coming back to the comment about Southeast Asia being community oriented or community based, I think that's really true, although that is maybe the traditional cultures, and the modern society, or the contemporary society is, in some parts, moving away from that, urban cultures. When you identify yourself with a group, it's not only depending on the group for resources or help or support, but it also means you're willingly or not, it's setting yourself apart from the others, and kind of diminish the opportunity to interact with people who identify differently from you, but maybe are, in essence, not that different from you. But putting yourself in a label in a group, and you're attached to the idea of the group, there's a space in between with another person, another human being whom you can make connections with. But when you have the preconceptions in front of you, you cut yourself from the opportunity to actually interacting with this human being in real life.

A concrete example might be, again, I'm talking a lot about young artists, because I feel like I have people that I can identify as my community, but a lot of the younger generation right now do not have that or a very limited group. So if a young person from this group, this collective, and a young person from this collective, they have something that, if they exchange, they could share and learn a lot from each other, but because they already belong to this group, or this person already follows this mentor, they just don't talk to each other, just because they feel like they couldn't, because we're different. But actually, they never talked in person.

Participant

Of course relationships and interactions within a group matter. But ultimately, I believe an artist must have something like a diamond—an unbreakable originality that belongs only to them. A kind of artistic originality that cannot be shattered. You mentioned pigeonholes earlier, but I don't think an artist should enter a hole or a box created by the world. Rather, the artist should become everything themselves—something only they can be. In the end, what remains is the artist's own choice. Perhaps that is what we call originality.

Participant

I find myself thinking along similar lines to Sasapin when it comes to younger artists in Korea. Of course, an artist may want to protect their originality. But in my generation, we were able to try perhaps ten

different things before arriving at a realization—"Among these, there's something I can truly do. This is where my originality might emerge." We had the space to experiment broadly before making that decision. However, I feel that many young artists today try maybe three things, and then conclude quite quickly, "This isn't my path," and leave. I think part of what we're really talking about is the imbalance of resources from the outset. That's how I've been understanding this issue.

Sasapin Siriwanij Thank you for pointing that out. Thank you for that response. And coming back to the idea of the box, the frame I am now relating with originality as an artist or art maker or practitioners, I don't think I'm asking to drop individuality or uniqueness, but I think I'm looking for the space in between, and how we can retain our originality or individuality without making that a barrier for us to interact with other human beings, as human beings, and not as what they represent.

Actually, going back to the story of, from the queer community by using the label itself that used to suppress, reclaiming it as the space for interaction, I think that's a very admirable movement. And we see that this is taking a long time. It's a lot of effort, and it's unfolding beautifully, but it's a really long process. So maybe we can also learn from that. I am a friend to the queer community, but not always in with everybody. So, looking as a friend, as a neighbor, this is a long process unfolding, and I think that's really inspiring to feel like the box is not a restriction, but actually another layer of space that we can open instead of closing.

Small-Group Discussion on Community Experiences

Sasapin Siriwanij I think I would like to give this out back to you again. We're not looking for solutions, but then maybe for me, for us to take home, I would love to hear what feels like community. When do you feel the feeling of community? What happened in the moment when you felt like you found your community? Maybe it's good to share that and hear that so that we can think of solutions on our own terms. And no one in this room can give anyone solutions, but I think I would love to hear, when did you feel the sense of community? What happened? Shall we regroup? Or you can also change to a different group, but I would like to invite you to be in small groups again for this last discussion.

(Small-Group Discussion)

Participant In our group, we talked more about the issue of the arts ecosystem. One of the points that came up was the limitation of taking action as a collective. Rather than belonging to a specific genre or discipline, we felt that a collective becomes much more powerful when it is grounded in shared values. However, we also reflected on the sense of emptiness that can remain afterward—especially when the outcomes of collective work end up being credited to just one individual.

Participant In our group, we discussed the question about a sense of belonging. Some people emphasized the importance of long-term belonging—for example, being part of a company. In those cases, titles and formal affiliations are important when introducing yourself, and it can also feel comfortable and secure. However, for others of us, including myself, a temporary or situational sense of belonging felt more important. For instance, just coming to this roundtable with people who share the same interests gives me a strong feeling of belonging. Overall, I think the emotion of belonging is very important in life. But we also reflected on those who don't experience physical or emotional resonance with a group—those who can't feel that bodily or emotional connection. We wondered how such people can receive empathy or cultivate a sense of belonging, and what methods or approaches might help in those situations.

Participant In our group, we returned to the earlier example from the queer theater field and talked about the idea of a loose network. One person described that network as an open group chat platform—a kind of "puddle," as they put it. Because there are people who create and hold these puddles, you can enter them at any time without needing a formal invitation. That in itself creates a certain sense of belonging. In my case, I started a network with concerns similar to Sasapin's, and it's still ongoing. At the beginning, I was leading it, but now the younger generation has taken over. What's interesting is that while I initially hoped the network wouldn't become too dependent on government funding schemes, the younger members feel a stronger need for it to connect to practical job opportunities. So, in order to sustain it, they chose to apply for funding. That shift reflects different generational needs, and it shapes the kind of belonging people feel within the network.

I'm also part of another network of artists, but we don't gather to make art together. We meet to read books, to travel, or simply to spend time doing things unrelated to art. Paradoxically, I feel a much stronger sense of belonging there. In that space, my identity feels more open to being defined, questioned, and inspired. Especially in our field, where many of us work independently, I think we need more networks like that. At the same time, maintaining a network raises many questions. Another group mentioned the idea that, in the end, only one name remains. In many cases, that one person becomes the face of the network because they invested themselves completely in it. It's not something that can simply be divided equally among members. So, we found ourselves asking: how can we ensure the sustainability of a network?

Participant In our group, we shared moments when we truly felt a sense of community. One person said that when living in the city, they hardly ever felt any sense of community. But after moving to the countryside, there was a heavy snowfall, and everyone had to come out and help clear the snow piled up in front of each other's houses. In that moment, they felt a strong sense of community. Another example came from an artist residency. When residents cooked together in a shared kitchen and shared meals, that created a feeling of belonging. And in another residency that brought together artists from different disciplines, they met once a month to talk about their work and their lives. Simply having a space where they could speak openly and listen to one another comfortably—that was when they felt community.

Participant In our case, we discussed both situations where we feel a sense of community and situations where we don't. First, we talked about festivals or international exchange programs. When artists from abroad come and create work together, going through challenges, building friendships, and sharing struggles and contexts beyond national differences, that process can foster a real sense of community and meaningful relationships.
On the other hand, as creators, we also discussed how forming a community can sometimes feel difficult. There's a concern that becoming part of a community might make everyone too similar, or that it might threaten one's livelihood—whether by competing for the same opportunities or narrowing one's professional space. Because of those fears, it can be hard to build or sustain a community in the first place.

Sasapin Siriwanij Thank you. Nothing to conclude. I think it's best to not conclude everything. But everything that you've heard, I'm taking away some things, a lot of things. I'm sure some of us take some things, and not everything is relevant to what, to where we're from. So, I would just close by thanking you very much for being here, for sharing your thoughts.

TABLE D

Tessa Leong

Australia

Artistic Director
Contemporary Asian Australian Performance(CAAP)

Artists' Survival Amid Real-World Fears and Self-Censorship

#risk_aversion #self-censorship #artist_survival

Introduction & Overview

Tessa Leong Hello, I'm Tessa and I am here to host a conversation. Reminding you that it's not just me talking. I would love to hear your thoughts and converse with you about what you are thinking about and are thinking about. I'll set a little context at the top of the conversation. I run a company based in Sydney, Australia, Contemporary Asian Australian Performance. We are a company that makes work led by Asian Australian artists: artists that have Asian cultural heritage, either they have migrated themselves or they have Asian cultural heritage in their family line. We also run pathway programs and gatherings for Asian Australian artists and the wider arts sector. I would love to discuss with you today about being averse to risk or feeling like it's difficult to take a risk and why.

Sharing Thoughts on Risk

Tessa Leong I'm going to set a first challenge for all of us. I'd love it if we could go around the table and say a word or a sentence that is about how you feel about risk. I can go first if you'd like. Let me be the first one. I think most of the time I wish I loved risk more than I do now.

Participant If you want to lead a life as an artist, risk is something you must assume. That being said, rather than taking risks blindly as I used to, I find

myself considering how to navigate risks with a better understanding of who I am.

Participant I think risk is something that goes with your life in parallel if you want to live a life as an artist. And I think now I want to consider risk as a part of my life these days.

Participant I think there's so many types of risk and in artistic space or a creative space, I agree that you can't control it necessarily but I'm excited by it, I love it and I think my job is about how to help artists manage it and understand it.

Participant I think risk is something natural. For example, it's like a wave. If you stay in the ocean, you have to accept the waves that keep coming as they come and go naturally and that's something that you don't control or you don't build a wall to control them. I think that is why it's time to learn how to ride on the waves. If you try to overcome or to stay at the same place for a long time while waves come to you, that will lead to a bigger risk.

Participant I think risk is something that you feel during the process of navigating or paving the way that doesn't exist yet. I think that's the process of creating your work. That's why, these days I try to find the way I can feel safe or to survive under those risks.

Participant To me, risk is just like a pattern in life. Although I believe you shouldn't go out of your way to suffer needlessly, I also don't think it's necessary to completely shield yourself from hardship. Just as the waves always roll in, life has repeating patterns, and I believe life is about learning how to respond and adapt to them properly.

Tessa Leong Thank you so much for all of that. Already I feel like there's several different paths we could take about waves, and aging and risk and hesitancy and how being an artist is a risk in itself, perhaps. But I thought maybe I'll give you a bit of a context of why this was interesting to me and some of the things that are happening currently for our art scene in Australia.
So I can tell you straight away what the session is supposed to be about and we'll see if it sticks to that or not, which is fine. So, I wrote to Jisun who asked me what the encroaching anxieties of your current context is and how it is that artists can face these. And the very specific context for me is in Australia, so I'm not supposing it is also true here in Seoul or in other places but there could be overlaps. This is something that I have come to from messaging a lot of people or putting it on Instagram seeing what people said back and being in conversations with others so I tried for it not to just be my own sole view but I tried to get a sense of what it was that was going on around me. So, I wrote, small but incremental changes to our ecological, social and political environments have profound impacts on the way we behave, engage with each other and make art. With an increase in natural disasters and political involvement in artistic funding decisions, as well as a rising cost of living, we are seeing a scarcity mindset take hold along with a diminishing of ambitious ideas.

How do we recognize the impact of our surrounding environment and find new paths together in times of uncertainty or shifting paradigms? Are artists equipped to navigate the challenges that we face or are radical interventions required for us to support and advocate for each other in these times?

Sharing Cases from Australia

Tessa Leong I'll give a couple of small examples of how this is happening in Australia. They may be resonant here or with your experience, maybe not, but why was I interested in this sense of risk aversion or the idea of self-censorship and also the very real sort of how do artists survive?

For me, I live in a big city, in Sydney. So how do they survive when actually there's a potentially shrinking appetite for ambitious, bold, arts and how do they sustain themselves in the city?
So one of the examples about the increasing interaction between government and the executives or funding body CEOs in Australia is when Khaled Sabsabi, who was going to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale, was disinvited by Creative Australia. It happened actually only after a few questions were asked by a conservative opposition party in our federal parliament. From that, the CEO of Creative Australia, which is our federal funding body, decided to rescind the offer to this artist who had already been awarded the very prestigious invitation to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale. The question that was asked in federal parliament was about a former work of this artist from 2007, which depicted the former and now deceased Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. There was not much defense of either the work, the artist or the invitation that was spoken by the federal government. Nor was there a meaningful discourse around the purpose of creative freedom and the very tenets that Creative Australia is supposedly based upon. So the artist was disinvited as well as the curator alongside the artist in February of last year, 2025. There was then an external review of the decision and the artist and the curator were reinstated by July 2025. And in October 2025, Creative Australia awarded Khaled Sabsabi a grant and an award for $100,000. By December, new questions were being raised in our federal parliament about Sabsabi and the travel bill that was associated with the Venice Biennale.

So I'm obviously boiling this very complicated thing down to a very small amount of what I'm hoping are the facts of what happened. But this is one example of one could say it's not political interference, it's someone asking a question in federal parliament and someone else being asked to answer it.

But there is a repercussion or a ripple, or wave as mentioned by one of the participants today, there is some sort of resonance or effect that comes from these questions. And I think the interesting kind of consequences can be that the questions that are asked already potentially sway something that is feeling fragile or uncertain in its DNA. Therefore, it doesn't take very much to dislodge or to break something that is in process.

So another reason for incremental change is looking at how artists are surviving and I'll take the example of being in a city because that's where I live because there is a rising cost of living in the city. More and more artists are required to have more and more jobs to survive which impedes on their ability to practice, their ability to experiment and their ability to be in community with others. Those who are freelance or working from job to job are really feeling the pressure of less programming or less experimental programming and also just the very real costs of their rental, the food and all of their bills. Another consequence of the rising cost of living is that less people are going to see work. So there are fewer people buying tickets for theater shows, dance shows, concerts, and going to exhibitions. So, this means that a lot of the major subsidized companies and art galleries are becoming more conservative in their programming. They're thinking through what could be commercially successful rather than what it is that the artists in their local area really want to express and what it is that is at the forefront of their minds. So, this also means that because they're selling less tickets, sometimes they put the price of the tickets up. Which also means that the sense of community around the people who are in the audience, the artists who gather to see the work, is diminishing. And this means that all of this kind of knock-on effect is quite a lot with all different spaces.

And the last thing that I will put inside this is that there are big changes in our climate and the consistency of our seasons. So, we have very recently had the Sydney Festival. It happens in January every year. And one weekend in the Sydney Festival there was 42-degree weather and so they had to change the times of the outdoor activities. And the next weekend there was torrential rain and they were not able to do their outdoor performances at all. So this is not only the Sydney Festival that is affected but all music festivals and outdoor activities have a different level of risk insurance, you know, planning required for them. I also think the idea of site specific or outdoor work has been seen sometimes as a more affordable option for experimental artists depending on what sort of agreement they could have with local council or the local authorities but now that becomes extremely difficult because of other weather events and insurances required.

This is just a very small snapshot of some things happening at the moment in Sydney and I think for me looking at all of these changes, they have a really big impact on how we live even in a big city. About how artists are in conversation with each other, with audiences and the amount of time they have to engage with things that are not work or money making or paying rent.

And I think this has started me asking a lot of questions about how it is that we recognize change and when we recognize change, what actions and tools do we have to face those things? So that's what I thought might be a good conversation to have. I thought probably we could spend three days talking about all of the incremental changes that maybe didn't feel great to us, but maybe that wouldn't help us go away with anything new. So I thought we could try and think through some of these things that we do to recognize maybe it's the frequency in which something is happening or it might be the magnitude in which it's happening or the feelings we have, like this thing has always happened but now it makes me feel deeply uncomfortable that it's happening. And then, I guess the actions and the tools that we have to do something if we have recognized a change.

Sharing Thoughts on Risk and the Unknown

Tessa Leong So, before we talk about how we recognize these things. I brought paper because I just thought it's nice to express something not too in your brain. I thought just take a second to think about or scribble your thoughts or feelings about risk. Risk or the unknown. So, it can be words, it can be a drawing, it can just be scribble. Is there anyone who wants to show or express what they have written?

Participant I drew a circle with a center in the middle that gradually expands. As the circle grows larger, the number of holes increases. It occurred to me that as the scale of my work enlarges, there are more openings for risks to slip in, alongside more space for me to navigate within. Also, listening to the stories made me think that I could try enjoying the risks a little, so I drew a smiley face at the bottom of the drawing.

Participant I drew a mountain. And on the other side of the paper, I wrote down the sentence, "Because beauty and fear are just a sheet of paper apart." I felt that this single sheet of paper was like a double-edged sword or a two-sided coin. It is the very emotion I felt personally when I was trekking up a mountain in Patagonia in the past. I believe that in order to achieve something beautiful, one must necessarily go through a certain process. That is also very similar to life itself. I mentioned earlier that avoiding or taking risks is like breaking a vessel, and I believe that once you break your current vessel, you can move on to a larger one. In order to put this mindset into practice, I think we need to adopt a different perspective, just like looking at the flip side of this paper.

Participant These days, as winter approaches, I think everyone asks themselves at some point whether we can go on living like we have been. My colleagues and I are the organizers of the Seoul Fringe Festival. And the festival's message and the working process of the Fringe demand a great deal of time and relationship building. In today's efficiency-driven

environment, I worried that this approach to artistic work and festival production might eventually fall behind the times or even disappear. However, since the beginning of this year, I have come to adopt a slightly more optimistic outlook. There are an overwhelming number of issues in the world, and it appears people are too preoccupied to tackle them all. Thus, ironically, I believe that lifestyles that don't require money, like connecting directly with friends or preparing one's own food, are going to become more and more vital. I think if we master these life skills, even in the face of war, climate disasters, or AI-driven changes, or even if political support for the arts is completely cut off, we might just be able to take shelter somewhere and survive.

Perceptions of and Responses to Change

Tessa Leong I like that hiding in a cave is optimistic. It's great. So this is a great transition actually, I thought. I'd love to hear from you. You can maybe chat to your neighbor if you want to first, or we can have a group chat. But, I guess I'm interested in how we recognize change, you know, to take the metaphor from earlier, like how do we notice that the waves are getting bigger or that a very large set is coming in. Or, I wondered if you have any examples of when you've been able to recognize a change or what it is that allows you to see that.

Participant

I recently entered my 40s and I felt terrible entering in the 40s because of my age, I kind of feel I cannot no longer apply for youth-oriented funding programs. So it is very hard for me to raise funds to do my practice. Looking back, I thought I didn't have a decent career, like performing at a decent theater company. And such things came to me as a threat. However, I thought that the important thing is to find a colleague. That's why I'm looking for one. With the intention of starting small, I have been trying out things like neighborhood workshops. On a personal level, I care about the environment; however, because I cannot act as a full-time activist or speak on massive systemic issues just yet, I am engaging in minor practical actions, like going up the local hill to collect garbage and recording what I do. I believe these kinds of small behaviors are the very changes I can bring about directly by myself.

Tessa Leong That's wonderful. Does that lead anyone else to think through change or how you recognize change? I guess because for me, given the context of Australia, I know there are places in the region that are actually under a lot more political pressure, environmental pressure, and cost of living as well. But what I think I'm trying to understand is how these changes happen and at what point you go "hey, we have to do something, let's do it now!" because actually it's easy to start normalizing the changes and go, oh, maybe that's just what's happening everywhere or maybe it's because I'm older and I just have seen a lot of things. Are there changes that you feel? What does it take for you to recognize that? And recognize it as a change?

Participant

I felt it wasn't just one moment, but rather an accumulation of powerlessness building up inside me. When I first entered the theater scene, the patriarchal culture within theater companies was strong, and that was the force that pushed me to wander the fringes. Following that, factors such as the lack of social appreciation for the arts and financial struggles began to accumulate little by little. I didn't think they had a huge impact at first, but at a certain point, I realized they were making my steps feel heavy. Recently, I came to accept the fact that I might never be able to make a living doing this work. I was sad about it at first, but after accepting it, my perspective shifted a bit. I figured that I can earn money through other means, but to keep doing this work, I need a much more concrete question to guide me. In the past, grand causes like feminism or minority rights were what motivated me, but nowadays, I feel I need more concrete questions than that. I haven't found the answer yet, but I believe I am currently in a transitional state in between.

Tessa Leong So it's quite hard to recognize change. I like this idea that it's not necessarily one moment. It's actually an accumulation. When you accumulate something individually, for example, if I do something weekly, if I do something daily or if I do something yearly, my brain and my body are recognizing and comparing things without me having to put in much effort. I go to a river by my house which is very polluted, but I walk near there all the time. And so I can notice the changes in the river because I go there frequently enough to notice this. It's like if you have a family group or a group of friends, when you meet regularly, you clock the changes between how the friendship group is feeling or the family is feeling from time to time and you don't necessarily have to put in effort to do that. You are recognizing it and responding without having to make a concerted mission about it.
But I have another question which is what actions do we take or what tools do we have at our disposal? And I think that is also tools and actions that maybe artists are good at or have inherently in them. What is it that we actually can do or feel like once we've recognized there's a change, maybe there's something we're going to do. I want to do something about the environment, but that is so big. But you have started yourself picking up rubbish or doing certain things in an immediate way. So I wondered what actions people take or would like to take? What tools do you feel like you have at your disposal?

Participant

First of all, I really recently graduated from the university and started my career. As I navigate my professional life, I have come to feel a deep admiration for my senior coworkers who maintain a passion for their jobs and stick with them for many years. Also, I think that in order to continue one's work, one needs to be realistic about money to some degree.
However, I think the world is changing too fast. Sometimes people were using ChatGPT but now they're using Gemini and everything is changing so fast. Therefore, rather than focusing on the branding

seen by the public, I believe it is more important to focus on internal branding—making it clear to myself how I will define and sustain the work I do. That is why, rather than focusing on a single area at this moment, I intend to experiment with various different things.

Tessa Leong I realize we already had multiple examples. One was living in a cave with friends and growing our own food. And then also I thought if we stay in the metaphor, we also need surfboards or ways to read the water.

Participant

When working in a company setting, it is much easier to record or track changes. It is because one can more easily notice what time is being spent on. During that process, I gained a much clearer awareness of the frequency of risks and crises, and the standard of risk management on an organizational scale. However, I also realized that simply recognizing it by oneself is not enough. Documenting things is important, but there needs to be a process of having conversations with colleagues or the community. That is because we need to verify if a particular problem or shift is resonating throughout the entire community. To me, this serves as the genuine indicator that we should take action. These conversations are also connected to considering collective action, or to the ways we collectively check and utilize skills related to risk management. By engaging with the community, we are able to discuss situations, reflect on them, and occasionally discover solutions. That is why community, questioning, and communication are extremely important to me.

Participant

I would like to share a somewhat different experience. I had been constantly engaged in creative work for the past half year before taking a week off recently. Over that week, I experienced time without any form of expression for the very first time. As a pianist and a producer, I had been interacting with people so much that I felt I lacked the experience of delving into my own inner self. Therefore, as a first step, I chose not to express anything even to myself, and it turned out to be a truly meaningful experience. Throughout the week, I kept asking myself what it is I truly want. There are so many changes in the world, and it became clear to me that I cannot keep up with all of them. So I thought I should focus on what I can control, and that meant establishing my own values rather than just reacting to change.

Tessa Leong I think our time is almost up. I want to thank all of you so much. It is a real privilege for me to be able to have a conversation with all of you. Thank you.



Session 3 Presentation & Discussion

Cooperation & Connection in Asia: New Imagination and The Next Connection

Q. What is the new residency model for sustainable creation and solidarity? What are the values and scalability of residencies?

Moderator Sasapin Siriwanij

Speakers & Discussants

Tatsuya Kawamura
Reframing Relationships: Artist Residencies as Relational Practice with Communities

Yoonhwan Jeon
Affirming the Time of Non-Productivity

Kei Saito
Residency programme in Chizu, Tottori

Sekar Handayani
Contextual Reading of Artist Residencies in Indonesia within Historical, Cultural, and Relational Trajectories

Rosabel Tan
From Across Oceans

Simon Wellington
Residencies & the Art of Entanglement

Tatsuya Kawamura

Japan

Producer
Toyooka Theater Festival(TTF)

Reframing Relationships: Artist Residencies as Relational Practice with Communities

Hello everyone. My name is Tatsuya Kawamura. I am the Executive Producer of the Toyooka Theater Festival, which is held in Toyooka city, Japan.

As you know, Japan is a front-runner in a super-aged society. However, believing that we must rebuild society from the countryside for the next generation, I moved from Tokyo to Toyooka City in 2019, before the COVID-19. Now, in many parts of Asia, performing arts existed long before they were introduced as modern art forms from the West. They were embedded in everyday life, belief systems, and relationships with nature and community. Each region has its own historical, religious, and social context. However, I believe there is a question that can be shared across regions: If a form of performance was necessary for a community, why was it necessary? Why was it created in the first place?

My perspective as an artist has changed significantly over the past twenty years. During the 2000s and the mid-2010s, I was deeply committed to creating works that contained critical questions about society and presenting them internationally. My work with the theater company Seinendan (青年団), where I stayed until 2022, represents this period very clearly. At that time, originality of form and international touring felt like proof of artistic value. However, as years passed, I began to feel a growing sense of emptiness toward this definition of value. I started asking myself: *What does it really mean to be evaluated within a European framework?*

Of course, being presented at major European theaters and festivals remains an honor. But at the same time, there is often an expectation to be Japanese, to perform a certain kind of identity. While this comes with respect, I gradually began to feel a strong sense of discomfort. When I was younger, I could not clearly articulate why. Today, I can. And I believe this discomfort overlaps with the questions posed by The Next Normal (TNN), which is why I am here today.

Gradually, my interest shifted from the sharpness of the work itself to the narrative surrounding it. Not only what the work is, but who presents it, why it is presented in that specific place, and what kinds of relationships make that presentation or representation possible. This shift is closely connected to my relocation from an urban center to a rural region. As my life became rooted in a specific place and its stories, the foundation of my social questions moved away from abstract and universal concerns toward everyday life, local relationships, and grounded realities. This sensibility became a key inspiration for founding the Toyooka Theater Festival, an international performing arts festival in a regional city in Japan.

What we ask of participating artists is very simple: respect and affection for the region. We do not require grand ideals or “correct” answers. In fact, such positions can sometimes become harmful. What we value instead is an attitude that resists quick judgment and is willing to engage openly with the region, embracing its contradictions and complexities. Let me say this clearly: not ideals, not correctness. This relational attitude is central to what residency demands from artists.

Interestingly, this insight was also shaped by my experience in Europe. In the 2010s, I was invited as a Japanese actor to a nationally supported theater in Gap, a town in southern France, where I performed entirely in French. The region is known for livestock farming, and many shepherds live there. However, the theater faced a major problem: local people did not come to the theater. So the theater decided to leave the building and stage a performance in the mountains where the shepherds lived. The title of the work was simply *Mountain*. The stage was a plateau at 1,300 meters above sea level. There were no seats. I complained to the producer, asking, “Who would come to a place like this?” But the project was a great success. People



Mountain ©Philippe Ariagno

who had never come to the theater before—children, elderly residents—arrived with chairs and sleeping bags. After the performance, we gathered around a fire and shared a small celebration that felt just like a village festival. I felt the true essence of the performing arts in the events in the French countryside and the new relationships that were born there.

Here, I would like to reflect on the difference between modern performing arts and performances rooted in local communities. Modern performing arts refined aesthetics and critical rigor through the relationship between who sees and who is seen. In contrast, community-based performances historically functioned as festivals, religious acts, or entertainment—activities necessary for the continuity of the community itself. If so, what we are attempting under The Next Normal (TNN) is not the invention of new forms, but a return to this foundational position. In process-oriented creation, it is natural that purpose and audience become unclear; value lies not in results, but in relationships, I think.

One example is *Tanto Sai Sai*, a kagura-based project long produced by the Toyooka Theater Festival. And Tanto is one of the most rural areas in Toyooka, facing severe depopulation and aging. While kagura is now widely known through popular culture such as anime, *Demon Slayer*, this project does not aim to reproduce tradition. Instead, within a mountain village declining under market-driven systems, it uses traditional forms to shape unspoken questions: what sustains a community, what everyday life means, and who we are. The work is performed annually by local children at a shrine stage. We witness not only the story, but also the children's growth, and their future as they eventually leave the town.

Tanto Sai Sai ©bozzo



Finally, I see residency as the cultivation of soil. Local residents are the soil. Artists are the wind, bringing unfamiliar energy from outside. Because of this difference, artists may sometimes appear like aliens. But that is natural. The role of organizers is to create conditions that allow relationships to ferment—to add microorganisms, to mix, to water, and to wait. Over time, heat emerges and fermentation begins. For me, residency is not a system for producing outcomes, but a medium for cultivating living questions through relationships. Like farming, we begin by preparing the field. When the soil is alive, meaningful fruits will grow naturally. Thank you.

Yoonhwan Jeon

Republic of Korea

Director
A.N.D Theatre

Affirming the Time of Non-Productivity

Hello, I'm Yoonhwan Jeon, a director working with A.N.D Theatre. Earlier today, we held a roundtable under the theme about friction and anxiety. As I listened and reflected, a question stayed with me: how can we remain present within friction and anxiety? One possible approach I'd like to propose is this—to affirm non-productive time. Ganghwa Island, where AND Theatre is based, is an island located at the western edge of the Korean Peninsula. It faces North Korea across the sea and sits along the coastal passage that leads toward Seoul. Because of these geographical conditions, Ganghwa Island has long carried layered meanings. For some, it has been a gateway of entry; for others, a defensive frontline; and for still others, the point of departure for occupation and expansion.

The images you are about to see—maps, drawings, and photographs produced by French and American forces during their incursions into Ganghwa Island—are more than simple records of military events. They are traces of a particular way of seeing: documents that reveal how the Korean peninsula was observed, interpreted, and approached from the outside. Ganghwa Island was far more than a peripheral outpost. In the modern era, it was the first point toward which imperial powers directed their advance into the Korean peninsula, a strategic threshold they sought to secure in order to command the route to Seoul. This was a place that opened first and collided first—a space where the tensions preceding colonization arrived ahead of the formal process itself.

That condition has not entirely disappeared. Even today, Ganghwa Island remains one of the closest points of confrontation between South and North Korea, their coastlines facing one another across a narrow stretch of sea. The distance—approximately 1.8 kilometers—makes visible the fact that its border condition is not merely historical. It is ongoing. I believe that these historical and geographical conditions of Ganghwa Island are not merely a backdrop but an important starting point for artistic practices taking place here. We walk through the Civilian Control Zone together with the artists and audiences who come to Ganghwa. Through the act of walking, we attune ourselves to the island's layered past and its ongoing present. This is not simply a tour, but a bodily practice—an attempt to register, through physical experience, a reality that undeniably exists yet remains beyond our ordinary perception.

At times we listen to elderly displaced women whose hometowns lie in North Korea. At other moments we encounter soldiers standing guard, rifles in hand, and the barbed-wire fences. The land beyond the fence is North Korea. Behind the audience, the graves of displaced families face northward. Here, the border reveals itself not as a distant historical memory, but as a present and lived condition. In this context, Ganghwa Island has become a site where local issues naturally intersect with external history, politics, and the broader flows of Asia and the world. What takes place here has always had to be understood in relation to forces arriving from elsewhere. It is a site where differing positions and temporalities have long coexisted. It allows us to experience 'movement,' 'boundaries,' and 'boundlessness' within the most concrete realities.

Ganghwa Island today, too, finds itself at the center of yet another phase of transformation. Ganghwa Island is often classified as an area at risk of disappearing due to accelerating population decline and aging, with rising sea levels linked to climate change expected to cause significant flooding. In other words, this is no longer a site defined solely by the military tensions of the past; it has become a place where social and environmental transformations are compressed and unfolding simultaneously. It is within this context that we operate Void Theatre in Ganghwa Island. Void Theatre seeks to reposition the island not as an endpoint of disappearing but as a site where contemporary questions first surface and intersect. In other words, it seeks to transform Ganghwa Island into a fertile ground where contemporary discourses centered on ecology, peace, and the climate crisis can take root and flourish. Void Theatre's approach did not emerge overnight but is the result of accumulated reflection and experimentation over time.

At the starting point of Void Theatre is Space And. Space And began with the vision of offering artists and emerging creators a time and space to step away from environments focused on production and creation, and to find an opportunity to contemplate anew through rest. At the time, I had a critical awareness that while there were quite a few creation-focused residency spaces in Korea, spaces dedicated to rest—an element indispensable to the creative process itself—were almost non-existent. In fact, Space And began as a small experiment in which I shared a single room of my own home with artists, free of charge. Later when the pandemic began, this experiment unintentionally brought the fundamental questions surrounding life and creation, as well as distancing and sharing, into much sharper focus. This was more than just offering a place to stay. It was a profound question of to what extent and in what manner one can share a segment of one's private life with others. It was an exploration of relationships built through the sharing of time and daily rhythms, rather than through programs or outcomes. These experiences and questions later developed into the Momentary Island Festival and took on a more concrete shape as the Void Theatre Residency.

Void Theatre was founded in search of a language that art might claim in the age of climate crisis, and as an effort to restore communal narratives. What is it that undeniably exists, yet remains absent from our senses? What questions have yet to arrive? At Void Theatre, we turn toward these absences. Void Theatre residency offers artists the opportunity to stay and work in Ganghwa, providing space and time for creation. By living in close proximity to the natural environment, we hope to cultivate an embodied awareness of the interdependence between human and non-human beings.

Neither the Momentary Island Festival nor the Void Theatre Residency sets predefined directions or results. They are built on a shared structure that affirms the value of staying, moving, and non-productive time. Invited creators from across Asia, both domestic and international, stay in Ganghwa Island for periods of one to two weeks. During their time here, artists share their works with one another, engage in conversation, walk through the village, and simply inhabit the space together—even without producing anything tangible. Audiences are then invited to join, to dwell within the same moments that the artists have already traversed and shared. Connections with the local community are not structured as part of a program or measured as an outcome; instead, they emerge loosely, through the experience of movement and presence, in which both artists and audiences participate as visitors. Performances are not confined to a single theater—they move through Ganghwa Island, taking place in village libraries, bookstores, cafes, neighborhoods, mudflats, rice paddies, and mountains.

The physical presence of performing artists does not assert control over the locale or demand transformation; rather, it manifests through walking, moving, and temporarily inhabiting spaces. Performances do not rush to define or occupy a place. In this way, the artists share with audiences the simple experience of being in a place for a short while, without objectifying it. This process-oriented residency prioritizes shared experience and movement over the production of outcomes.

In conventional art environments, results too easily become the criteria for evaluation. However, the question posed by The Next Normal (TNN) is not

1. Momentary Island Festival (2025) ©Shin-joong Kim
2. Momentary Island Festival (2025) ©Shin-joong Kim
3. Momentary Island Festival (2025) ©Shin-joong Kim
4. Ganghwa Island Walks: Peace Document ©Minkwan Kim



so much about what we should make, but about what kind of relationships we will have as we spend time together. The non-production I speak of is not about stopping, but about allowing time to hang around without rushing toward results. And I believe that new connections begin within relationships that naturally form in such time. By affirming non-productive time, we believe it is possible to transform time and disappearance from abstract numbers or concepts into tangible, lived sensations. Through the residency and residency-style festival, we aim to continually share the experience of simply dwelling for a while—the awareness that, in that temporary presence, we are all interconnected.

Kei Saito

Japan

Producer
Chizu Community Theatre

Residency program in Chizu, Tottori

Hello. My name is Kei and I am speaking from my home in Chizu, Tottori in Japan. The town of Chizu is surrounded by mountains and 93% of its land is forest. It has long been known for its forestry. However, like many other rural parts of Japan, it faces a continuing decrease in population and aging: once there were almost 15,000 people, now the population is just less than 6,000. The rate of aging, of those above the age 65, is 46%. It was the old post town, where the samurai lord of Tottori stopped and stayed when traveling to Edo, Tokyo. There is a historical part of the town which still conveys the atmosphere of old days. And in recent years, there have

View of Chizu Town from a mountaintop



been attempts to utilize the natural resources for different purposes such as forest therapy and forest kindergarten. Tottori is located in the western part of Japan and is one of 47 prefectures, with the least population. And Chizu is in the east-south part of Tottori.

Let me introduce myself a little bit. I am a performing arts producer, originally from Tokyo. I moved to Tottori in 2006 and started living in Chizu around 2010. I moved to Tottori because I was taking part in starting BIRD Theatre Company, which has been running a theater space, converted from an old school, in another small town in Tottori. I left BIRD Theatre Company in 2016 and worked as a freelance producer, then at ROHM Theatre Kyoto, before coming back to Chizu in April 2023.

After living again in Chizu, I realized that, as the population decreases, there are more things that people cannot do or have no opportunity to do in the town, which include opportunities to experience cultural and artistic activities. This is particularly evident among children and young people. I have also come to know that very few people from Chizu have visited BIRD Theatre, which is a one-hour drive and which I used to travel to every day. This made me think that there needs to be places and chances to experience theater in the town, somewhere close to the living environment.

I started organizing some theater programs in Chizu. These include a small theater festival, which will be held for the third time in July 2026, performance at the nursery for pre-school children, a series of art workshops, and the residency program. These are aimed at providing opportunities in the town to see performance, to experience doing theater and other arts forms through workshops, and to create a place for making theater, making works.

Chizu Community Theatre was started in 2024 to be the hosting organization for those different programs. Our aim is to provide opportunities in this town to experience theater in its all-possible aspects. Unlike BIRD Theatre, there are no professional theater artists being active or resident in Chizu and our residency program is to welcome the presence of artists which in turn can enrich the experience of local residents, in particular, for younger generations.

Chizu and Tottori present many local issues which are unique to the region but also may be shared among many other rural parts of Japan and possibly can be related to other parts of Asia. I believe it is important, not just to expand or generalize what is local, but to connect or relate with other localities. By joining the network of residency in Asia, we are also keen to connect ourselves with our neighboring areas in Japan, especially with Kinosaki/Toyooka, through the exchange of artist residency.

For example, in Chizu, the visiting artists can witness unique cases on how people have lived with/in nature and how that has actually shaped

Post-performance discussion in Theatre Festival in the Town and the Mountains of Chizu



the landscape, as well as how that kind of balance among human life and nature has changed over the years. Such individual cases are certainly not unrelated to so-called global environmental issues, but to think about the problems on a global scale, we need to look at the local level because that is where the problems are experienced. I believe that the “new normal” is not about creating another set of unified norms but critically examining the facts that such norms can only exist upon erasing unique differences.

The reason why I was initially attracted by this new scheme lies in my re-encounter last year with my friends in Korea who are involved with the artist-led space Arts Farm Tutbat in Hwacheon province. When I was at BIRD Theatre Company, we had exchanges with the theater company there, known as Tuida then. Coming back to Tutbat for the first time in almost 10 years, I was moved by their unchanged passion and I am strongly eager to re-connect with them professionally from where I am based now, and to find other such inter-local connections beyond in Asia. Thank you very much.

Sekar Handayani

Indonesia

Founder and Co-Director
Katalis Kolektif Koreografi (Katalis Collective)

Contextual Reading of Artist Residencies in Indonesia within Historical, Cultural, and Relational Trajectories

My name is Sekar Handayani, from Katalis Collective, from Indonesia. Thank you to Jisun and The Next Normal (TNN) team, as well as Arts Council Korea, for inviting Katalis to be here today.

Let me briefly introduce Katalis Collective. We are three people: myself, Sekar Handayani, together with Linda Mayasari and Wilis Rengganiasih. We work as a collective of producers and dramaturgs, focusing on our role as catalysts and facilitators in the development of performing arts practices—ranging from artistic accompaniment and production strategies, to distribution mapping and engagement with public contexts.

Today, I would like to share Katalis' way of thinking about residencies—particularly performing arts residencies in Indonesia—and how we imagine possible forms of collaboration through The Next Normal (TNN). In our reading, a residency is not understood merely as a program to produce artworks, but rather as a mode of working. Residency is practiced as a form of temporary inhabitation—in one's own city, another city, another island, or across national borders—that opens space for artists to conduct research, build relationships, and experience contexts directly.

In Indonesia, the term "residency" first became popular in the field of visual arts. However, when we look more closely, residencies do not always lead to the production of finished works. In many cases, residencies function instead as spaces for knowledge exchange, encounters with different cultures, experimentation with working methods, and the formation of new perspectives on artistic practice itself. With this understanding, residency places experience, relationships, and encounters at the core of the work—while artworks, if they emerge, appear as consequences of the process rather than as a single, mandatory end goal.

Specifically in the field of performing arts in Indonesia, structured programs explicitly labeled as residencies are still relatively rare. However, from Katalis' observations, many activities lead to the concept of residency, even though the terms are not the same. In Yogyakarta and Surakarta, there are several similar examples of residencies. One example is Padepokan Seni Bagong Kussudiardja in Yogyakarta, which is widely known as an open space for artists to undertake research and experimentation by drawing on its facilities, networks, and performing arts archives.

Another example is Garasi Performance Institute in Yogyakarta, which since 2004 has provided studio spaces and networks as residency and internship facilities for performing arts practitioners—most of whom independently arrange their own residency resources. In Surakarta, there is Studio Plesungan, an artist-run space founded by Melati Suryodarmo, which opens its residency program to artists from various countries, with a focus on performing arts practices and explorations of body and space. Beyond these institutions, Katalis itself has also hosted artists-in-residence within the context of shared research and production processes. So, the main issue is not the absence of residency practices, but rather that these forms of temporary inhabitation often appear sporadically, operate through relationships, and are not always named or formalized as residencies.

Long before the term residency was widely used, similar practices existed, particularly in the context of traditional arts. In Javanese culture, this practice is known as *nyantrik*—a learning model that emphasizes a close relationship between student and teacher through shared life experiences. In *nyantrik*, a student—called a *cantrik* for male and *mentrik* for female—learns from a *pamong* or teacher not only through mastery of technical skills, but also through values, ethics, ways of life, and the development of artistic sensitivity. The process is dynamic, shaped by the needs of the relationship and the development of the practice, with no rigid time limits.

One important example is the Padepokan Seni Bagong Kussudiardja or PSBK. Between 1978 and 2002, PSBK developed the *cantrik-mentrik* program: a non-formal arts education format based on living and learning together. Participants came from Indonesia and even Southeast Asia, lived at the Padepokan for approximately six months, and studied a variety of disciplines—from dance, theater, *wayang*, and *gamelan*, to visual arts and arts management. After Bagong Kussudiardja passed away in 2004, and the institution was managed by a foundation in 2006, the *cantrik-mentrik* mechanism ceased in its original form. However, his

values and learning approach underpin the Padepokan's activities. PSBK subsequently transformed into an arts center. Until today, PSBK has also organized institutional residency programs through collaborations with arts organizations and funding bodies—for both Indonesian and international artists.

This shift from *cantrik-mentrik* residencies to institutional residencies shows that residencies in Indonesia did not emerge suddenly, but rather evolved from a long tradition of living, learning, and working together in artistic practice.

To understand how institutionalized residencies began to take shape in Indonesia, Katalis refers to a study conducted by Linda Mayasari, my co-director in Katalis. In 2017, she served as Director of Cemeti – Institute for Art and Society in Yogyakarta. This research examined one of the earliest internationally institutionalized residency programs in Indonesia, titled Bursaries for Artists, Residency with the Cemeti Art Foundation, which ran from 1999 to 2003. The program was organized by Yayasan Seni Cemeti (YSC)—which later transformed into the Indonesian Visual Art Archive (IVAA) in 2007 and remains active today as a visual arts archive institution. YSC collaborated with UNESCO–International Fund for the Promotion of Culture (IFPC), the Ford Foundation, and Yayasan Kelola. Over five years, the program was held five times with a relatively consistent format. Each residency period involved only one selected international artist, whose country of origin was determined through the UNESCO–IFPC scheme, without including Indonesian artists as residency participants. The selected artist stayed in Yogyakarta for about two months, accompanied by a local assistant from the circle of young Indonesian artists.

In this configuration, Indonesia—particularly Yogyakarta—was positioned primarily as context, location, and site of encounter within an international arts mobility framework. From a governance perspective, this residency showed a high level of institutionalization. The selection process was multi-layered: YSC shortlisted candidates, while final decisions were made by an international UNESCO–IFPC panel in Paris. During the residency, artists' activities were embedded within public programs, local facilitation, and strict administrative reporting obligations to funding bodies. Thus, the residency functioned not only as a space for artistic research, but also as an arena for the distribution of symbolic capital, institutional reputation, and international cultural governance. Through a critical reading, this residency is understood as part of a global cosmopolitanism project. In this framework, cross-border artist mobility is imagined as a means of cultivating cosmopolitan citizenship—bringing together cultural differences, geographical locations, and social backgrounds through the lived experience of working and residing together. Yogyakarta, with its symbolic capital as a cultural city, was projected as an extended studio and a node within the international visual arts network. However, the research also shows that this cosmopolitan imagery was not neutral.

Residencies operated through unequal power relations, where directions of mobility, selection criteria, length of stay, and modes of exchange were shaped by funding structures and international institutions. Transnational connectivity often benefited the distribution of symbolic capital at the global level, while local contexts—including Indonesian artists—tended to function as background, facilitators, or sources of experience. Heavy administrative burdens, inter-institutional coordination, and donor accountability requirements reveal the workings of managerialism in residency practice, and this was one of the key reasons the Bursaries for Artists program ended in 2003.

For Katalis, this research functions as a critical reading tool. Residencies are understood not only as spaces of possibility for cross-cultural exchange and learning, but also as structures shaped by power relations, capital distribution, and governance logics. This perspective becomes an important foundation for Katalis in developing residency models within the performing arts—so that residencies do not simply reproduce global cosmopolitan imaginaries, but instead open spaces for reflection, negotiation, and more equitable forms of transnational connection.

The three platforms discussed—Cemeti – Institute for Art and Society, Studio Plesungan, and Katalis Collective—are not meant to replace one another or form a hierarchy. Instead, they show how residencies in Indonesia operate across a spectrum of models, shaped by artistic fields, practice orientations, and different funding and institutional relations.

Cemeti's residency model represents a well-established institutional residency. From 2006 to 2023, residencies were designed as long-term post-studio programs (three months), with systematic and accountable governance. These residencies do not always start from predefined themes or socio-political issues; instead, they allow artists to develop their practices through research, medium exploration, and contextual encounters according to individual needs. Supported by international funding bodies—many affiliated with nation-states—Cemeti's residency also functions as a formal space of cultural exchange and soft diplomacy. Here, residency becomes a node connecting individual artistic practices to global arts networks through well-organized institutional mechanisms.

In contrast, Studio Plesungan operates as an artist-run residency rooted in performing arts practice and the personal relationships of its founder, Melati Suryodarmo. The model is more fluid, contextual, and flexible, with shorter durations—from one week (Artist in Transit) to a maximum of one month (Artist in Residence). Residencies at Plesungan are generally self-funded, with facilities negotiated personally. Here, residency is not a fixed program, but a contemporary living-learning space.

Katalis sees a strong resonance with contemporary *nyantrik*: residency as transmission of experience rather than mere production facilitation. Plesungan sits at the intersection of visual art and performing arts, work space and living space. Katalis develops residency not as a single fixed program, but as a collaborative working mode. Two main schemes—Residency Sintesis and Residency Interface—demonstrate how residencies are designed according to practice needs, project contexts, and relational dynamics. Sintesis is a collaboration framework based on research, dramaturgy, and production. Katalis is usually not only a host but also a project partner, with core funding from collaborators or grantors.

An example is The Indonesian Dialogues (2023–2024), a transnational research residency integrated with production and touring, where Katalis acted as local interlocutor, dramaturg, and producer.

Since 2025, Katalis has also been developing Residency Interface. Interface understands "interface" as a meeting line between phases or stages—a dynamic transitional space. Based in Yogyakarta and Solo, this residency provides space for artists to transit and mark shifts in their practice: recalibrating orientations, testing artistic and production strategies, and building equal dialogue with local ecologies. Interface operates through two approaches:

1. a thematic approach, where the topic is framed from the beginning;
2. a non-thematic approach, where focus is shaped by the artist's needs and practice.

Interface does not require a finished work; processes are shared through public programs. It is closely aligned with post-studio practice, where the city becomes an extended studio—a site of wandering, encounters, and relationship-building. Across these models, differences are shaped by artistic fields, practice needs, funding structures, and power relations. On one hand, residencies function as spaces for research and knowledge exchange; on the other hand, they also operate as mechanisms for symbolic capital distribution, cultural diplomacy, or governance of global arts mobility.

Yet a common thread connects them all: residencies are always about mobility, temporary inhabitation, and relationship-building. Whether through formal institutional structures or fluid practice-based approaches, residencies offer artists spaces to negotiate positions, reread contexts, and test ways of practicing. For Katalis, reading this spectrum is crucial to positioning residency not merely as a program, but as a reflective and contextual working tool—one that can be redesigned according to ecosystem needs and respond to the social, political, and cultural shifts shaping the next normal.

Now I will move to the final point: how Katalis responds to the next normal. For Katalis, "normal" is not a stable or ideal condition. It refers to patterns of life that are repeated and normalized—even when they contain inequality, crisis, and vulnerability. In this sense, the next normal is not imagined as a utopian promise, but as a transitional phase—a situation in which new orders are not yet settled, and people are forced to continually adapt, reread relationships, and rearticulate ways of living together. This understanding resonates with The Next Normal (TNN) framework, which sees today's world as an in-between space—neither a return to the old normal nor the arrival of a new one.

In Indonesia, the next normal is experienced as daily life: natural disasters, ecological destruction caused by extractivism, prolonged socio-economic uncertainty, and tensions in public governance that often shift rapidly and lack meaningful public participation. Social media has become a new space of power—a space of solidarity and policy pressure, but also of polarization and information overload. Uncertainty is no longer an exception; it has become a mode of living. These conditions directly affect the performing arts.

In today's heightened mobility of artistic practice, travel is no longer merely a transition toward a performance site. Mobility itself becomes a place that is inhabited. Many artists live by moving from project to project, city to city, country to country. Travel becomes a workspace, a relational space, and a space of experience. This shift transforms how we understand residency. Residency is no longer just a time-bound program, but a space of inhabitation—a space to build relationships, read situations, and test ways of living and practicing.

In Solo and Yogyakarta, where Katalis is based, we imagine The Next Normal (TNN) residency as a post-studio practice, where the city functions as an extended studio—a site of wandering, encounters, and negotiation of everyday life. Within this framework, what is created together is not first and foremost an artwork, but a space of solidarity—a space to share experiences, read situations across contexts, and build a shared language. From this space, new artistic practices may emerge—fluid, adaptive, and responsive—opening possibilities for living together amid the next normal. Thank you.

1. Research process of the Indonesian Dialogues project at Sitras Anjilin House, Magelang. ©Kolektif Katalis (2023–2024)
2. Interview with Katrin Bandel at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta. ©Kolektif Katalis (2023–2024)
3. Research activities at Taring Padi basecamp, Yogyakarta. ©Kolektif Katalis (2023–2024)
4. Research activities at Taring Padi basecamp, Yogyakarta. ©Kolektif Katalis (2023–2024)
5. Visiting a sugar factory in Yogyakarta during a research trip. ©Kolektif Katalis (2023–2024)
6. Visit to Geger Fortress, exploring local history in Yogyakarta. ©Kolektif Katalis (2023–2024)



Rosabel Tan

Aotearoa New Zealand

Director
Satellites

From Across Oceans

Kia ora koutou katoa. Hi everyone. My name is Rosabel, and I'm from Aotearoa, New Zealand. Something that you might not know about the country is that we have quite a large Asian community. A lot of that migration took place in the late 1980s after changes to migration laws. And a lot of that migration has been to Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland, which is the city that I live in. In Tāmaki Makaurau, Asian communities make up 31% of the city, so nearly a third of the city. And that provides you with a little bit of context for the organization I run, Satellites.

Satellites is an artist-led initiative focused on connecting the past, present and future of Aotearoa Asian art. Our mission is to support the development of unique Aotearoa Asian voices within our cultural landscape, and we do that by expanding imaginative possibilities, by enhancing access to cultural knowledge, and by embedding this knowledge into the sector.

In practical terms, we do that through the building of an online archive of Asian artists and their work; an online magazine publishing conversations and essays; and an Asian Artists' Fund that offers project grants, residencies and fellowships. We also host a Visiting Artist Program, which is what I wanted to focus my sharing on today, because I think it comes closest to the topic of today's panel.

This Visiting Artist Program emerged out of our desire to be connected with other Asian diaspora artists working internationally and

who were already quite fluent in this idea of taking ancestral knowledges but not replicating them directly in their new context, and so exploring this complicated notion of identity often away from their motherland. And it was also a rejection of the more transactional mode of operating that festivals have historically fallen into, as well as the more isolated process that residencies can inadvertently, although sometimes necessarily, slip into. Our Visiting Artist Program is centered on relationship-building, knowledge sharing and creative exploration, which I think are outcomes we should always create space for, and I think are certainly outcomes that we have for The Next Normal.

The way our program works is that we have a curatorial panel of senior practitioners across a range of disciplines, and we work together to identify artists that they are both interested in and excited about meeting and working alongside, but also artists that they feel are making work that will have a profound impact on practitioners here. This was a really important first step for us. We felt it was important that the artists that we invited would have direct relevance to artists here, and also because we wanted every step of the way to be artist-led.

And the second important element: We always work in partnership with a major institution. Part of that is due to resource, but a really big part of it is because it collides different communities, different ecosystems where the artist becomes the nucleus to this temporary new ecology, and our hope really is that their sharing of different ways of doing, different ways of knowing, different ways of making becomes a bit more embedded into the institutions themselves. And these institutions then have better cultural capability in supporting artists, both visiting and here.

Our artists usually visit for a minimum of two weeks, sometimes as long as three months. We actually design every visit around the artists themselves, so every visit is bespoke but it always includes three elements:

The first is that they'll always present their work in some way, whether it's a performance, an exhibition or even something a bit more low-key like a talk. They'll also do workshops with practitioners where the artist will share some elements of their knowledge and their skills. Then we always try to create time for creative experimentation and exploration for the visiting artists themselves. It's important to us that these visits are mutually nourishing and that we ground each visitor in our local context. And so with that in mind, we always do a number of things, including starting with a session with our in-house educator, where the visiting artists will be introduced to the history of the land and learn some simple concepts within te ao Māori, the Māori world.

They'll also have a simple language lesson. We open with a mihi whakatau, which is a welcome ceremony. Then we'll often try to take them up to Maungawhau or Mount Eden. It's the tallest dormant volcano on the Auckland isthmus, and it allows you to have such a clear view of the city and is a really grounding experience. So we always try to do that.

Before they arrive, we ask who they might be interested in meeting or what their creative interests are and set up visits with artists and institutions that align with their own interests to hopefully allow some inspiration to spark as well.

The impact of creating exchanges like these has been profound. One example is Krishna Istha, who visited in 2024 with their show *First Trimester*, and met a novelist in New Zealand called Saraid de Silva at a workshop that he ran, "Creating Autobiographical Performance Work." As a result of their meeting and their developing creative conversations and friendship, Saraid is now flying to the UK next month as dramaturg on *Second Trimester* at Battersea Arts Centre, which is the follow-up to *First Trimester*. Choreographer Xin Ji's experience in the same workshop directly inspired his debut solo work *Body Story*, which was recently invited to Toronto.

Another example is Roan Ching-Yueh, who spent a number of months on a hybrid visiting artist program and residency. He finished his novel while he was here and ended up having scenes set in Aotearoa, including our protest against the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill. While he was here, he also met an artist who he then invited to be part of an exhibition he was curating at the New Taipei City Art Museum focused on the architecture of fear and cure.

So I guess what I'm really saying is that these ongoing connections and collaborations are what the intention and hope for the program is. And it's always really exciting when you hear these stories bubble up to the surface.

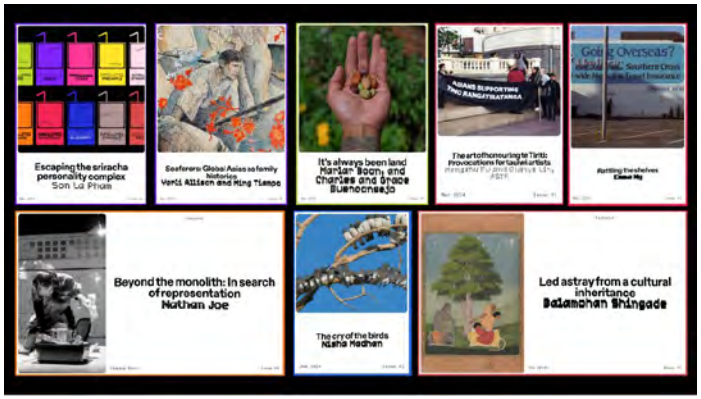
We are about to host New Delhi-based artist Pallavi Paul, who's currently showing at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale and most recently was awarded the Sharjah Biennial Prize. She's coming for a month-long research trip. By the time you're hearing this, she'll just be arriving. But I wanted to talk about her visit because it's quite different from other visits that we've designed, and I think it's closer to what I'd like to be creating with the program and closer, I think, to what The Next Normal (TNN) is aspiring to be. So she's coming for a month-long research trip, and she'll be meeting artists, exploring collections and learning from different communities and knowledge holders here. And then that in turn is going to inform her work, which she'll make and present later in the year as part of a solo show at Te Tuhi.

But I think this idea of multiple visits is something that is actually really valuable—to have that opportunity to process and to return and to see what effect that can have. And because it's our first time, I don't know what will

happen, but it feels like the right direction for a program like this. I'm also really interested in the work that she'll make. She's really interested in rituals of remembrance and death, and I'm interested in the conversations she'll be able to share as she learns from different communities about the different ways of processing such a fundamental and universal life experience.

It is these ongoing ripples and the ongoing friendships and collaborations which exemplify what these types of exchanges and residencies should be and what I think The Next Normal (TNN) as we develop it and refine it hopes to be as well, which is a source of emotional, intellectual, and creative nourishment, allowing experimentation and development in creative practice but doing that through a deep connection with the new city, with new communities and forging those communities across oceans. Thank you.

Source:
Satellites magazine
(satellites.co.nz)



Simon Wellington

Australia

Executive Producer
Performing Lines

Residencies & the Art of Entanglement

Today, I'd like to speak about what residency models might look like in the moment during which we're considering the next normal, which is a moment shaped by high mobility, low stability and the need for deeper forms of cooperation and understanding across our region, if not the world. In doing so, I'd like to consider three provocations, drawing on the questions that were given to us: How can residencies create deep entanglement between artists and the local context? What kind of ripples can process-driven residencies create socially, culturally, politically? And how might residencies connect local issues to broader regional, even Asian, conversations? And these are questions that sit at the heart of the work many of us are already doing, as you've heard. But they also ask us to imagine new models and new responsibilities and new possibilities for solidarity.

So, who am I? I'm from Performing Lines. For those of you who don't know us, we're a producer-led, artist-centered organization. And we work nationally across Australia with offices in Sydney, Perth, Melbourne and Hobart. And we produce new work and run capacity-building programs for the sector, building skills networks and more sustainability, hopefully, within the sector. And residencies are a core part of that.

Residencies are a core part of creating time, space and community around the artistic practices of our artists and especially for artists who are isolated geographically, culturally, or professionally in a lot of cases. And they're powerful ways to bridge the local context with wider networks

across the region as well. At their best I think artist residencies are places of entanglement. Not just a studio and a bed, not a blank slate, but a web of people, histories, environments, questions, perspectives that the artists step into. An entanglement means that creativity doesn't happen in isolation. It's shaped by the land beneath our feet, by the people who hold knowledge of that place, by the communities who carry stories there, and by the systems and tensions already present. In that sense, residencies are not neutral. Every residency is already charged with values, with power, with history. And in Australia, wherever we are, we make work on stolen land. And acknowledging that isn't necessarily a burden, it's an opportunity because it clarifies the responsibility that we hold when we're designing programs, whether it's residencies and creating structures that are ethical, context-driven and genuinely transformative.

In Australia, and as we have seen and know, there are a lot of residencies everywhere. They're short, long, paid, unpaid, outcome driven, open ended, you name it, there's a residency for it. And sometimes it feels like artists are on a treadmill, on a residency treadmill, moving from one opportunity to the next, just trying to keep their practice alive and trying to keep their work and lives sustainable. But underneath that, residencies still matter because they offer two things artists consistently hunger for - connection and inspiration. And when those two things are thoughtfully held, the ripple effects can be quite extraordinary.

One of the residency models that I'd like to share is the Regional Artist Residency which was created by Annette Downs, a former senior producer for Performing Lines in Tasmania, my home state, which is the island to the south of the continent of Australia. Tasmania is a small island state and it's a relatively small performing arts community, one that's often geographically and professionally quite isolated. And Annette's idea was simple. Bring about a dozen artists together in a remote location for three days. Create a shared living, thinking and making environment. Place the residency within that remote location, disconnected from outside distractions. Invite senior artists from across the country and sometimes internationally as mentors. And bring in observers, so peers from art centers and other companies who can witness the process and add their advice. There's no pressure to produce anything. There's no final showing, just time, conversation and a shared sense of care and encouragement. And the results have been new collaborations, new works, stronger sense of connection and artists who suddenly had access to network skills and resources far beyond what they previously had access to in Tasmania. So this is entanglement in action, going back to that theme. It's a residency model that creates relationships, not products.

Another example I just briefly wanted to touch on is one that I was involved in many years ago. It was a residency in Newcastle in the United Kingdom. But instead of a group of artists coming together, it involved me as a producer and my artistic director colleague working in and liaising with a community. It explored urban regeneration and community displacement, themes that were felt very deeply in that city and obviously across the world. And over several weeks we met with residents, town planners, architects, academics, social workers and community leaders. So it wasn't the length of the residency that mattered in this case, it was the depth of it. And it was the immersion in local knowledge and the willingness of the hosts to let a creative team step inside real, often uncomfortable questions and conversations. It was the powerful alchemy of putting different kinds of expertise in the room. So these experiences taught me that a residency becomes meaningful when it dissolves that boundary between artists and context. And talking about those people that we consulted with, kind of led to this one thing I wanted to talk about, which is the community of experts. And when I talk about a community of experts, I'm describing a model that expands the idea of expertise itself. It recognizes elders, residents, planners, scientists, youth leaders, historians, and anthropologists and activists equally as essential knowledge holders. And when these voices enter the residency, not as research subjects but as collaborators, the artist gains a richer, more layered understanding of that place and it dissolves the hierarchy between artist and community and creates a space of multi-directional learning, accountability and shared insight.

What does that mean for The Next Normal (TNN)? As The Next Normal (TNN) imagines new forms of Asian cooperation, I think there's an exciting opportunity to create residencies that function as bridges. Bridges between local concerns and regional conversations, individual practice and collective learning, place-based knowledge and cross-border exchange. Imagine a model where questions raised in Toyooka resonate with communities in Sydney or Seoul, or where an idea tested in Jakarta, or Yogyakarta, is expanded on in Hobart in Tasmania. Where artists carry insights across borders, not as representatives of their culture, but as participants in a shared regional future. And this is the scalability that we've been talking about and can aspire to through our unique partnership.



Creative residency by Jumaadi with Michael Toisuta, exploring a new work *Sampai, Tak Sampai*
©Lucy Parakhina / Performing Lines (2025)



Under Fluoros, led by Libby Klysz, supports artists in developing technical and staging ideas
©Performing Lines (2025)

Networks of learning, not just networks of presentation.

As we look towards The Next Normal (TNN), there's a few principles that feel quite essential. It's about process over product, equality between participants and hosts, courage and risk-taking, and a borderless sense of community. These aren't just nice sounding values, I think they would allow residences to be safe enough for vulnerability and brave enough for experimentation. And risk is important. Because across our sector, if you were at one of the conversations earlier that Tessa held, we've been talking about risk becoming harder and more regular - financially, politically, and culturally. But without risk, nothing shifts. No new forms, no new stories, no new ways of imagining futures together. So, residents at their best hold that risk with care. So what does a residency for The Next Normal (TNN) look like?

I believe it's a place where artists and communities imagine futures together. That local issues become catalysts for regional conversations, expertise is shared freely, and cultural differences are bridged through practice. And entanglement - that real, deep, meaningful entanglement becomes the foundation for connection across Asia. So a residency for The Next Normal (TNN) isn't about retreat, it's about entering the world more deeply. If we design them with courage and with generosity and with a commitment to that true entanglement, then the ideas explored in those spaces and places won't just ripple outward, they will reshape the way that our region imagines itself. Thank you.

Open Discussion

Sasapin Siriwanij We would now expand the conversations back to the floor with you. Maybe I can start by returning to the four key ideas that we started the session with, which are sustainability, solidarity, values, and scalability. Some of the things are constantly touched upon and some things have new and expanded meanings. And I know that it's not always easy to just start the floor. So we will be diving into the first musings after hearing your presentations.

We've heard a lot about some kind of rejection against outcomes, productions and productivity. And there are multiple mentions of relationships, connection, enrichment, nourishment, and encounters. When we want to make these visions take shape and become reality, we are definitely relying on other partners and structures, and of course funding is one of the maybe major contributions to making this happen. I would like to ask our panelists today, what do you think are some ways we can assert the agenda of non-productivity, as we've mentioned, in the face of the existing emphasis on deliverables and KPIs, which is the language that we, a lot of us here are really familiar with.

But to assert these new ideas completely, we usually face strong challenges from society in general, not just in the arts. What has productivity and inflexibility killed that we don't want to happen anymore? And if you could give some concrete examples, that would be really great. Let's start with that. How do we convince ourselves that we can move forward with these new perspectives of residencies?

Simon Wellington Often when we're talking to our governments and our funders we're having to explain and validate the art. And increasingly we're doing that against arguments around cultural tourism and them giving money to festivals for bed nights. The KPIs that governments are using for funding for culture are shifting and they're becoming more corporate. I think in some cases there's often a resistance for the arts to do that, to talk that language. But in some cases, the reality is that we need to, and it's not a big shift because I think when we talk about residencies we're talking about research and development, and corporate organizations invest billions of dollars in research and development and experimentation. I think that, often, we're not getting to those nuanced conversations in society. Everything is so binary, but I think there needs to be a more nuanced conversation about the value of experimentation, research and development and that's just as valid in the spectrum of art-making as it is in any other sector or industry.

Sasapin Siriwanij Thank you. I think that's really a clear shift of language that we can try to embark on if we haven't been doing that already.

Sekar Handayani I'd like to share about a fund source from the government in Indonesia. We now have a new president, for about a year. In the previous regime, there was the Ministry of Education and Culture which committed an endowment fund program for arts and culture promotion activities which is protected by law. So, it was common for the arts and cultural events or programs to be funded under the public program of that ministry. As well as the idea of the residency, several residency programs funded by the government at that time as part of another big cultural program, and have intersecting to the education ideas. Now in the new government era, the Ministry of the Education and also Culture separated. It means that we need to think of a new approach to the government, to keep doing this kind of residency model. So, of course, we try to return to our practice. Do really want to create something not oriented on the product means that more on the art and activism practice. So, from that basic thinking, we try to do a kind of mapping to the funding bodies who can, who're able to support that kind of model of residency. So, I understand that, I especially also do that producing work and doing the residency, which orientation on the product. And we expect, before, I expect that the work can be staged on the conventional stage, or festival, that kind of thing. But now I try to change the direction that perform on the festival, it's just a kind of medium to amplify the issue on the project itself. So, my question, my answer, my response is about back to the principle, back to the things, what kind of things that we want to reach about the residency, and then doing the mapping to the funding body that can support our model of residency.

Sasapin Siriwanij So it's looking a little bit from, from looking outward, now? I think Simon suggested a kind of hacking within the language, but Sekar is coming with looking outward to keep ground and firm on your mission and then looking for the right partner or the collaborator.

Yoonhwan Jeon At our residency-style festival, Momentary Island Festival, the very notion of "just staying for a moment" can be perceived by funding institutions as producing little to no tangible outcome. The name itself can carry a sense of resistance or opposition. However, when we try to approach the residency from a results-oriented perspective, we are confronted with a fundamental question: how can we produce a result when we only have two weeks to a month in a region and barely enough time to attune to it?

This led us to consider: how can we share with the audience the process of input—the ways in which the environment, the residency, or the local context has fed into us—rather than only showing the logic of our own work? Sometimes, it is not our own art that feels most significant, but what we discover through the residency—the environment, a small alley, the setting sun—that makes us feel artistic in a deeper sense. The question becomes: how can we share these discoveries with the audience? In this approach, artists bring to the audience a newly found perspective, outside the theater, outside conventional performance spaces, sharing moments that felt dramatic or artistic to them. This creates subtle shifts, micro-transformations, which we can consider art itself. Furthermore, this process becomes a way to communicate with and even persuade funding institutions. This is the approach we are currently pursuing.

Sasapin Siriwanij Thank you. I think that's really wonderful. This is a redefinition of what a product or production can look like. Instead of coming to a residency, designing a program with an end goal that there will be a production, it's more that you are talking about discovering within the process what can be the product. So, in the end, the perspective that the artists are bringing in, the product is how to share that with the audience and the local residents instead of aiming for a piece of work. But we are discovering whatever emerges in the time. And then the product is the way to share it back with the people, maybe not even the audience because sometimes you're just walking together. So, I think that's really quite an innovative way to think about what a product can be.

Tatsuya Kawamura Actually, it depends on the role. I don't think certain kinds of results, or KPI, outcomes are unnecessary. Of course, the results are important, especially for us as producers. We are always required to demonstrate outcomes. But I think the problem is that we still lack appropriate criteria to measure our relationship and attitude that are a long-term social effect that emerges throughout residency processes. At my university—I'm also a university teacher—and within our festival framework, we are currently working with faculty members to develop what we call a social impact assessment. It means we are creating a new measure, and we might change the rules.

Sasapin Siriwanij Actually, I think that connects back to what Simon has started, to shift and to hack the language from residency non-productive time, into an R&D kind of framework. It will be really strongly supported if we have a tool coming out from researchers from academic institutions. What are the ways to measure or assess the relationships or social effects that residencies can give to, not just the artists, but also the community. I think we see that the four answers of all our panelists are woven together. And it's not just one way of rethinking residencies, but actually it's all these different perspectives coming together. And this is probably what we're trying to start with The Next Normal (TNN) network, which is to think differently, but together. And then we can put in different pieces of the puzzle because one answer probably cannot be able to push forward alone and we're kind of tagging along and piggybacking on everyone's ideas and resources. That was my first question, but I would like now to open the floor if you have questions for the panelists.

Audience I'm a performing arts creator. First of all, I want to thank you for letting

us hear about your research over such a long period, and the many journeys, time, and care that have gone into it. It has given me a lot to think about. My question might be a little abstract. Listening to all the discussions about residencies and the process of residency-making, I noticed that many of these approaches seem to start away from goal-oriented thinking. And I felt that this is being realized very well. So rather than moving toward a goal, as you mentioned, it feels more like a process where a question shows the next path and how to walk it. From here, I was curious what is the driving force that sustains this? Does it come from a love of life, or a love of humans, or perhaps from hope for how the world can change? Where does it start?

Sasapin Siriwanij What is driving you? In the sea of impossibilities.

Tatsuya Kawamura When I moved to Toyooka City, my daughter was 3 years old. We went to the park with my daughter. Then no one was in the park. My daughter asked me, "Where are the children?" This is real. But, this is my motivation. To the next generation. So, they have to live somehow in this area until they are adults. Sorry, this is my motivation, living in the regional town.

Sasapin Siriwanij Reviving the livelihood of where you live and also looking forward to the future of your children.

Sekar Handayani For me and my collective, because we are not only interested in art but we are also interested in how to advocate some of the issues around us. But we are not artists. We are also not activists, so we tried to build this kind of program through the residency in art, how to combine between those, to drive ourselves in creating the program, and how to work with artists and also the society. Because also, we are the artworker, and also the artist, also part of the society, and then we try not to separate between it. So, we try to create the program on how we turn into the basics, that we need to be connected to each other. And then we share the knowledge and everything about it. So, that's what motivates me. And through the connection, I think the dynamic into the changes can be, can be seen.

Sasapin Siriwanij Finding a place of where you are and it's kind of like not to stay in isolation, how to connect back to the very place that you're living through the tools and the community that you're living with.

Yoonhwan Jeon When you live on Ganghwa Island, it can feel quite lonely. So, I began to wonder how I could invite artists to come, how we could spend time together—simply play, talk, and be together. I think that was how it started: by opening just one room. That small beginning gradually developed into a festival. Then we had this slightly playful idea—what if we could pull busy creators out of Seoul, especially during the busiest season, in September or October, and bring them to Ganghwa Island? Ganghwa Island is such a beautiful place. I kept thinking: what might happen if we gathered here and allowed ourselves to spend time together? What kinds of conversations would emerge? In Daehakro, there are so many creators, but there is hardly any time to talk. Everyone is working on their own projects, setting up in different theaters, going back and forth to rehearsal studios. It is almost impossible to truly meet. I think what I wanted was something like a camp. A space where we could openly talk about where we find ourselves now, what challenges we are facing, what questions we are struggling with. As things unfolded, the project expanded into an international event. Artists from across Asia began to join. What had once been distant news—other people's suffering, other countries' struggles—gradually became the stories of friends. Experiencing that shift made me want to continue, to stay connected with them more deeply. Through residency programs and festival-based residencies like Momentary Island Festival, I began to feel a strong sense of connection being formed. It felt like an act of restoring a communal narrative. Theater, by its very nature, cannot be created alone. It requires others. And I see this work as something that continually sustains that essential quality of theater by giving it a lasting and meaningful form.

Simon Wellington I was thinking a couple of things. One is personally, when I started working in the arts, I've always worked with wonderful artistic directors who taught me that my job is to look after them. And that my job is to create the environment for artists to flourish and to do what they do best. And then I've been lucky enough in the last few years to join an organization whose core values are placing the artist at the center of what we do. That residency that I talked about in Tasmania was created for that purpose to connect artists who felt disconnected, to provide a space for them that was free of a whole lot of things, although a non-neutral space. But I think that's just one example. It's always creating the environment. It doesn't necessarily always mean that it's a blank slate. There won't always necessarily be a space where there's no outcome, and indeed before I did this job at Performing Lines, I ran a theater in Hobart in Tasmania. And when I arrived back, because it was my hometown, I spoke to Annette, who'd developed the residency, and I said, "Look, our theater hasn't been doing any sector support for artists in Hobart and Tasmania. I want to have a conversation with you about what we can do." And she said, "Great, just don't replicate anything that's already happening because that's not what's required at the moment." So then we developed the next thing, which was actually the outcome-driven piece of work, which was a residency in our theater space. So artists who were coming through other residencies, then formalizing their ideas, and needing the pathways to then take them through had a new space to go. So I think it's always about responding to what's needed in that place and that time for who's there.

Sasapin Siriwanij Thank you. I find it interesting that both Yoonhwan and Simon talk about reaching into the gap, and the gap for you is different. For Yoonhwan, it's a personal one, and for Simon, you already see the gap in the community, and then the residency is a tool for you to find ways to fill those gaps, which in turn, is meaningful for yourself and your

livelihood. Thank you for that. Do we have more questions from the floor?

Audience

I was really struck by the idea that residencies gain artistic inspiration through encounters or sometimes friction with new communities or regions. But residencies can also be a kind of privilege. Having the resources to immerse yourself in art and live in a new space for several months. So I was thinking, for those who don't have such opportunities, is it possible to turn the space they already inhabit into a residency? That made Director Yoonhwan's words particularly impressive to me. Another thing I noticed from today's discussion about residencies was the close work with communities. But I think most artists don't necessarily have strong connections with the communities where they actually live. Even in my own work, I've tried to activate local communities at my workplace, yet I haven't really connected much with my own district, Mapo-gu.

So one inspiration I took from today's discussion is that even without someone giving you an opportunity, you could treat your own home, maybe offering a room, or staying in someone else's room, as a kind of residency in your local area. If you focus, I think a lot of new things can emerge this way. So my question to the panel is, you've all done a lot of work creating residency environments and shared a lot today. For artists who want to turn their own home or local space into a residency, that is, to become the owner of their own residency, what advice would you give? What would be helpful or necessary for them?

Yoonhwan Jeon

Yes, I created this space, but then COVID broke out, and many people were not able to come. Still, some emerging artists—people I had never met before and had no prior connection with—did visit. There were also creators from completely different disciplines with whom I had no previous overlap. For me, the biggest issue was safety—my own safety. Since I was inviting strangers into my home, I had to seriously consider how to secure that safety. So, I paid attention to things like what kind of work they were doing, what they wanted to do, whether they had a clear presence or history through social media, and so on. Another very practical issue was heating. On Ganghwa Island, we use an oil boiler, and the heating cost is quite high. The question of who controls the temperature became surprisingly significant. Originally, the boiler control was in my room. But eventually, I switched rooms with the guest, so the guest could control the heating. Instead, I created very detailed rules and manuals about how to use it responsibly. We also share this space not only with people but with cats. We installed a cat door, so outdoor cats can freely move between the fields and the house. That meant we needed clear agreements—not only between myself and guests, but also regarding how we coexist with the cats. I created quite detailed safety agreements, and only those who consented to them could stay. Some people decided not to come because of the cats; others felt the agreements were too strict and chose other places. I think what is important is establishing a way that feels safe for everyone involved, and being honest about how much I can offer. Setting clear rules—up to the point where I feel I can give without later regrets—is essential.

Sekar Handayani

In Solo, especially in Surakarta where I live, artists, especially choreographers are usually served by management. So sometimes, there are artists in Solo who open their studios for other artists or anyone who wants to have a residency and connect with their company. Even though he is an artist, he also thinks about the rule on how the space and the program itself serve the other artists in his place, and also set up the goal, the purpose, why the studio also opened for the other artists. I think that's also important. So, for me, the awareness of being served and management of the program itself as the basic things to open the studio to receive the residency of artists.

Tatsuya Kawamura

It's very simple. Sharing the meal together. Right? It's a very simple way. And so, I really like the Korean *uri* culture. It's a sharing culture, right? That's it.

Sasapin Siriwanij

So for you, if you don't know where to start, you can start with sharing a meal. I really like how we're coming to the real practicalities of it. It's like, what do you do as a host, actually? And what are there to be concerned about all these little details? And I think in a way, it's creating grounds together. And back to what you said, Simon, I think that residency is never neutral. It's never a blank space. And to make sure that everyone is benefiting in the way that everyone can agree within these frames, we make sure that as we host people, we create these grounds that are commonly agreed and understood. And if they cannot deal with the oil lamps in Ganghwa, maybe they should look for residency somewhere else. I think that's very, very practical and realistic. Thank you for the question. It's very inspiring. We come to the very last minute now of the session. Thank you for staying with us until the end.

The Next Normal You Are Dreaming Of

What's on the map of The Next Normal you are dreaming of?

The Next Normal:
Dialogue in Asia
Pre-forum in Seoul
— Highlight Video

Sasapin Siriwanij Thailand · Bangkok

ความสัมพันธ์ที่กลับไปสู่ธรรมชาติ
และออกมาจากธรรมชาติ

Connections that return to
nature and emerge from nature

Jisun Park Republic of Korea · Seoul

평등한 연결

Equal connections

Yuichiro Yoshida Japan · Toyooka

すぐに役に立つものではないものに対して、
余白や寛容性のある社会が
実現できると良いなと思います

The society that allows for the things
that are not immediately useful

Betsy Lan Taiwan · Taitung

身心靈平衡和所有物種之間的平等

The balance between mind and body and
spirit and the balance between all beings

Tatsuya Kawamura Japan · Toyooka

平和な未来

Peaceful Future

Yoonhwan Jeon Republic of Korea · Ganghwa

콤마. 잠시 멈추고 지금의 시간을 돌아보는 것,
그리고 소멸의 시간을 감각하는 것

Comma. To pause briefly, to take a look at
the present moment, and to sense the
temporality of disappearing

Jahye Khoo Republic of Korea · Seoul

다양한 젠더와 섹슈얼리티

Diverse genders and sexualities

Ihot Shinlay Cihek Taiwan · Taipei

Pawidang

Indigenous Taiwanese concept:
authentic solidarity grounded in spiritual
connection among all beings

Sekar Handayani Indonesia · Surakarta, Yogyakarta

Ngopi, yuk

(Let's have coffee) - a good chance to have coffee while talking about
something common in our daily life, but also about something serious, deeper,
but in a casual way, in an openness and also closeness between kind of friends

Rosabel Tan Aotearoa New Zealand · Tāmaki Makaurau

New ways of thinking about time, possibility,
and our relationships to one another

Rahayu Harjanthi Indonesia · Denpasar Selatan

Saya bermimpi tentang dunia yang lebih adil, dunia yang
lebih inklusif dan setara untuk semuanya dimana tidak ada
yang ditinggalkan atau dikorbankan untuk pembangunan

A more just world, more justice in the world, more
equal, more inclusive, and where no one is being left

Bobo Lee China · Hong Kong SAR

做啱嘅事情, 而唔係做啱一件事

Do the right thing, instead of
doing the thing right

Tessa Leong Australia · Sydney

More time to spend
to make true connections

Simon Wellington Australia · Sydney

The resonance of conversation or
ideas in different places

E-Jan Tan Malaysia · Penang

Ruang untuk imaginasi

Imagination Space

1 Republic of Korea | Seoul, Ganghwa
2 Japan | Toyooka, Chizu
3 Taiwan | Taipei, Taitung
4 China | Hong Kong SAR
5 Thailand | Bangkok
6 Malaysia | Penang
7 Indonesia | Surakarta, Yogyakarta
8 Indonesia | Denpasar Selatan
9 Australia | Sydney
10 Aotearoa New Zealand | Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

Photographs







Session 1 Presentation & Discussion
The Next Normal in Asia: Outside the Normal, Rewriting the World









Session 2 Roundtable
Asia Now: Anxiety, Friction, and Art Standing Facing It









Session 3 Presentation & Discussion
Cooperation & Connection in Asia: New Imagination and The Next Connection






Lunch Networking and Coffee Break






Dinner Meeting with Regional Cultural Foundations








The Next Normal (TNN) Planning Meeting

The Next Normal: Dialogue in Asia Pre-forum in Seoul

Published on	October 2026
Publishing	Arts Council Korea (ARKO)
Published by	Bumhun Lee
Hosted by	Byungeun Yoo, Hyunhee Jun, International Relations&Partnership Team, Arts Council Korea
Planned by	Jisun Park, Bongmin Choi, Misun Song, Producer Group DOT
Operated by	Junghee Kim, Youngji Lee, Push To Enter
Translated by	Hyung Joon Park
Printed by	Vine Extra Color

ISBN 978-89-6583-668-1

© 2026 Arts Council Korea

The copyright of this publication, 'The Next Normal: Dialogue in Asia Pre-Forum in Seoul,' belongs to Arts Council Korea and may be used under the following conditions.

- In accordance with the Korea Open Government License (KOGL) Type 2 (Attribution-NonCommercial) terms, the source of the work must be clearly indicated, and the work shall be used only for non-profit purposes.
- When citing the contents of this publication, the source must be clearly indicated.

Artist House, Seoul
예술가의집

2026. 2. 9.Mon



비매품/무료
93680
9 788965 836681
ISBN 978-89-6583-668-1