

In the Open or in Stealth

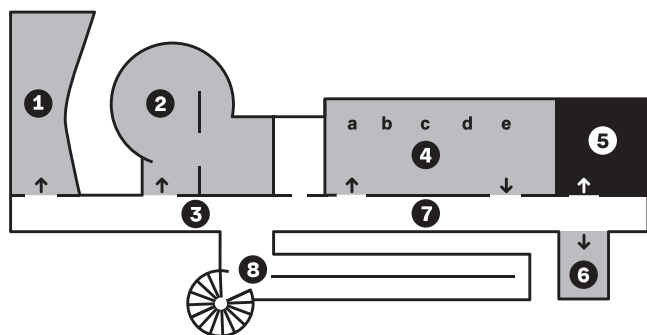
Curated by Raqs
Media Collective

Exhibition from 31 October 2018 to 17 March 2019



Muhammad Shono, *Displacement 33*, 2013

A realignment of resources, technologies, and energies is taking place. The intimation of this emergent ensemble, however, is faint and tangled. The exhibition is a fabricatory tracing indeterminate spaces and moving between tenses, all of which murmur at each other like distant lovers. We eavesdrop on this chatter.



- 1.** Hieronymus Bosch / John Gerrard / Huma Mulji
- 2.** Ge Ba Textiles / Rupali Gupte and Prasad Shetty / Kabelo Malatsie / Joe Nishizawa / Bhagwati Prasad
- 3.** Racter
- 4a.** Liao Fei / Tito Zungu / Mark Chung
- 4b.** Dillon Marsh / Geumhyung Jeong / Marzia Farhana / Cristina Lucas
- 4c.** Muhannad Shono / Mehreen Murtaza / Charles Lim
- 4d.** Nontsikelelo Mutiti / Hassan Khan / Bahar Noorizadeh / Abhishek Hazra
- 4e.** Lucy Parker / Santiago Ramon y Cajal / Rosa Barba / Jeamin Cha
- 5.** Ivana Fanke
- 6.** Lantian Xie
- 7.** Rohini Devasher
- 8.** Curatorial Marking by Raqs Media Collective

THE UNRULY PRESENCE OF AN INTIMATE FUTURE

The fishwife's dream finds her entangled in the tentacles of an octopus. The woman, a pearl diver, no longer knows of any separation between her orgasm and the creature's spasms. She exclaims, "Oh! Boundaries and borders gone! I've vanished!"

A seismic realignment of capital is taking place in the world right now. Productive forces (a nebulous ensemble of resources, technologies and energies), means of production (increasingly circumscribed into juridical and political structures that can no longer contain what they seek to govern) and production relations (as volatile as ever) are triangulating in ways that are breaking apart existing structures and rendering anew in unclear, faint and tangled lines.

The juggler spins a stick covered in tassels and braids with his mouth. The stick-spine breaks into a whirl of dance. He juggles brass balls, conjuring images of spires and flowers. Wherever he is—Andhra, Bengal or Mathura—he invokes the same reverence and wonder in his audience.

These intimations, these alignments, these trends, are difficult to describe in the familiar languages of concert and conflict, affinity and antagonism, individuality and collectivity. What are they, these new alignments? How can we disentangle them? What is it that comes upon us in stealth, and what fades away in the open?

Around goes the performer, and the unseen joint unscrews. He reaches the end; the bottom falls free and he is hanging by his extended arms. The dimensions of the cylinders are of corresponding size. This factor now comes to the performer's advantage, one through which he is going to effect yet another spectacular, magical escape.

Intermittent rebellions, sometimes accompanied by cybernetic suicide or sometimes by rogue algorithm raves, rise in tandem with attempts to exorcise the ghosts that haunt the machinery of capital. This is both commonplace, and it is the news.

The subtraction of the infinite disquiet of the multitude from the reverberation of the voice of authority by the accumulation of its own echoes, especially when those echoes are heard raised to an exponential power, is equal to anacoustic reason. The equation is necessarily fragile. It adds up to something that has the potential to change the rules of the game of who and what gets a hearing in the world.

It is said that we know more about faraway galaxies than we do about the bottom of the oceans on Earth. One could say something similar about our relationship to the future. The distant future can seem more familiar than the deep present. We know it will come, regardless of whether or not we are around to witness it. A line, as we know from mathematics, does not necessarily have to end. It is the future advancing upon us, or the past receding. Seen differently, a line can become a still point and the junction for an infinity of other lines, other possibilities. A line can become a wave. A wave can become an ocean. Beachcombing the seafloor in submarine darkness is art's calling.

A classical musician who played the sitar was once asked about the 'extent' of a Raga (a musical mode). He replied, "It is bigger than you can imagine." The questioner persisted, and the musician continued, "It is bigger than your teacher could have imagined, bigger than all that all the teachers have hitherto imagined, and all that the teachers of the future can ever imagine." "Still, it must have a limit, a boundary," the questioner asked.

The musician thought for a while and said, "The end of a raga is located precisely at the point where the beginning of the next raga can be found." Every infinity is bounded by the one that lies next to it. Infinity is as contiguous as it is contagious.

In the Open or in Stealth, the exhibition, can be seen as a fabricatory tracing indeterminate spaces. We are working with a repertoire of 'sources' from different histories and geographies as a way to initiate a multiverse of conversations.

*These collisions are ever-time.
Ha ha, overtime vs. ever-time?
True. An incremental circling of a coming storm, an unpredictable, unbounded, shifting force.
The question then is, how to face this with radiance and confidence.
Your words are elegant.*

A few days back a robot hit a worker on his head. Not only did he end up with a one inch deep gash, he also lost his job. This factory has about 100 robots. We tire out. We need rest. We ask questions of values. We argue over explanations. They keep working.

So you're saying we come with hassles and robots, with none.

We too are attracted to them, but this allure has not found a description between us.

Yes, it is being said that we are in an interval of a rapid disappearance of work.

And what you are saying is that in this interval it is of immense significance what radiant thoughts, actions and questions will emerge.

Over the last many years this radiance emerges and shines, then hibernates in subterranean flows.

Virality, contagion and exchange between eros, labour, energy, knowledge and power mark the frontiers of everyday life. Intimacies are integrated, distributed and dissolved. An emergent geometry of a peer-to-peer network battles the geographies of an internet of debt and rent. Communiqués are being issued to unknown addressees. Incommensurable solidarities are at work across continental shelves of territory, time and taxonomy. The work of art is to be augury and argument at the same time. Can tomorrow's blur be a provisionally high-resolution image for here, for now?

All robots are set to go, but no one can be sure where. A Knightscope K5, employed as a security robot, scanned 360 degrees, hearing with its sensitive microphones, checking the air quality with its sensors, reviewing the thermal images it had gathered, and then walked into the fountain and died.

Different tenses, the present continuous and the future imperfect, are stammering at each other like long-distance lovers at two ends of a jagged chat line. Can we eavesdrop on this conversation?

The Laws of Love require us to give time to time, to be patient when the tenses turn conjugal. This is not a matter of waiting, or hesitation, or deferral—it is a question of re-ordering what can take primacy. It is to insist on the sorority of dreams, whimsy, desires. That not every time, or every thing, must have to align itself to all that is constituted or constrained by what is momentarily manifest.

Notes on the Exhibition:

The curatorial marking of a stretch of fabric cutting through space inside the building enacts a threshold and a crossing. There is a shift in space and luminosity—in the awareness of perception itself. The alteration in the quality of light and the filtration of air generates a particular condition of walking, listening, resting, of encountering works, and each other.

The curatorial sources are a constellation of protagonists drawn from an erotic print, a turn in a magician's repertoire, a juggler's joyous dexterity, a sequence of tones in music, a mathematical equation, among other things. They create a somatic and cognitive force field. They configure a spell and become an envelope, which we are drawn towards but also transform.

Notes on sources in this text

(in order of appearance):

"The Hybrid" is from Amia Srinivasan's "The Sucker, the Sucker!", published by *London Review of Books* 39, 17 (2017): 23-25 on *Tako to ama* [The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife] by Hokusai, drawn in the year 1814.

"The Juggler of Andhra" is from the unpublished manuscript of Rajiv Sethi, part of the exhibition *Hangar for the Passerby* (Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, NOIDA, 2017-18).

"The Magician" is from Walter B. Gibson's *Houdini's Escapes and Magic* (Blue Ribbon Books, New York, 1930).

"The Equation, The Mathematics of Anacoustic Reason" is from Raqs Media Collective (2006).

"The Musician" is from Deepak S. Raja's public lecture "Perspectives on Raga-ness" notes (Raza Foundation, Delhi, July 2017).

"A Conversation" is from "A Fear of Radiance", published at *Faridabad Majdoor Samachar* (no. 346, April 2017).

"A Suicide" is from "The Young Turks", broadcasted on July 18, 2017.

"The Law" is from Peter Goodrich's *The Laws of Love: A Brief Historical and Practical Manual* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007).

21 Personae in Barcelona extends the curatorial pulse of the exhibition *In the Open or in Stealth* to activate modes of sensing—of the shifting grounds, dispositional sediments and potent scenarios of life—out into the city. A group of curatorial practitioners associated with MACBA's educational program have crafted a specific Barcelona—expressed on the streets, in the squares, with public spaces and among public secrets.

A range of personae—roles, places, positions, practices, persons, ports and monuments—are invoked. We encounter permanent inhabitants, transients, travellers, beings who come alive at dawn, midnight, at siesta time or at twilight. They traverse fluid constellations across actual spaces, desired inhabitations and imagined cities. Together, they concert an activation analogous to an “entourage effect” (a debated concept in therapeutic pharmacology around cannabis), which argues that components act much better in a relational field of interaction and in combination with others than in isolation. In nature, nothing acts in a pure state.

Raqs Media Collective was formed in 1992 by Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula and Shuddhabrata Sengupta. The word ‘raqs’ in several languages denotes an intensification of awareness and presence attained by whirling, turning, being in a state of revolution. Raqs Media Collective takes this sense of ‘kinetic contemplation’ and a restless and energetic entanglement with the world and with time. Raqs practices across several forms and media: it makes art, produces performances, writes, curates exhibitions, and occupies a unique position at the intersection of contemporary art, philosophical speculation and historical enquiry. The members of Raqs Media Collective live and work in New Delhi, India.

Exhibition organised and produced by MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona

Curators:
Raqs Media Collective

Curatorial Collegiate:
Sabih Ahmed (Asia Art Archive)
Hiuwai Chu (MACBA)

Opening conversation

Raqs Media Collective in conversation with Hiuwai Chu
Tuesday 30 May, 7 pm
Free admission

Guided and accessible visits

Included in Museum admission. See times and languages at macba.cat.

Friends of MACBA

Exclusive guided visit with Hiuwai Chu

Thursday 22 November, 6 pm

Let's talk about...

In the Open or in Stealth

With Hiuwai Chu
Saturday 10 November, 6 pm
With Josep Perelló
Saturday 15 December, 6 pm
Free admission

Encounters

21 Personae

A series of encounters with people, places and groups of Barcelona, who seek to transform the meaning and intensity of our experience in the city. Project management: **Raqs Media Collective**, with the collaboration of **Aimar Arriola**. Organising Committee (PEI - 2017-2018 Independent Study Program). A weekly meeting from November 2018 to March 2019. Registration at macba.cat

l'internationale



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Opening times

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 11 am to 7.30 pm (from 25 June to 24 September, from 11 am to 8 pm)
Tuesday closed
Saturday, 10 am to 8 pm
Sunday and public holidays, 10 am to 3 pm

The Museum entry ticket is valid for a month. Activate it at the ticket desk and visit us as often as you like. Every Saturday, from 4 to 8 pm, entrance to the Museum is free.

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