

Micropossibilities: The Possibility of Building a Microresidence Network

24th December 2011 13:00-16:30 at Youkobo Art Space

Speakers:

Tatsuhiko Murata – Youkobo Art Space

Hirofumi Matsuzaki – Studio Kura (Fukuoka)

Shih Yeo – INSTINC (Singapore)

Linh Phuong Nguyen – Nha San Studio (Hanoi, Vietnam) (via skype)

Broadcast and recorded on Ustream:

<http://www.ustream.tv/channel/micronetwork>

Introduction

As a general introduction Youkobo intern and microresidence research assistant Emma Ota provided an overview of how research on microresidencies has been initiated and pursued, presenting the analysis of survey feedback from 22 microresidencies world wide and suggesting why a microresidence network is needed at this time.

The participating speakers then went on to present about their own residence programs:

Youkobo Art Space

Why did you found a residence program?

1. We wanted to create a space in which we could share the things we have learnt from our experiences and offer up new opportunities

1. By living daily life within another culture one is able to reassess one's "self" and reflect upon one's own cultural context, providing an important chance to look at the world in a new way

2. For 10 years the Murata's continued to provide a home stay for trainees. The personal experiences of studying abroad (Tatsuhiko, 1966) and joining international sculpture symposiums (Hiroko, 1990's) built up strong appreciation of the importance of such experience and want to provide such opportunity for others.

3. At the time of founding the residence program there was already a studio which

functioned as an art space. The space was formerly the surgery of Tatsuhiko's father and Hiroko used this as a space to create, collaborate and also hold art classes

Residence Organization

The organizational structure consists of two co-directors and 5 staff – made up of 1 accountant, 1 art management professional and 3 artists as well as a 1 current trainee. Its management also includes a wider group of advisers including university professors, critics and artists.

What is the importance of microresidencies?

- To bring greater appreciation of residencies
- Valuing the meaning of artist in residence
- To provide space for living, everyday life
- Providing support when in need
- Providing space and opportunity for artistic production while carrying out everyday life
- Principle of non-interference in artists activities
- Interpret as contribution to community activities

INSTINC

INSTINC has been running as an artist studio space and gallery since 2004, then in 2009 it initiated its own residence program, through the inspiration of meeting with Studio Kura's director Hirofumi Matsuzaki. The program accepts up to 12 artists each year from all over the world, with an open call system with two annual deadlines. This AIR is run by artist Shih Yeo Yun and one support assistant.

Why did you establish a residence program?

Shih Yeo Yun wanted to establish the program after her own unique experiences in other residencies, experiencing directly the benefit of undisturbed time to focus solely upon one's work in new surroundings which can provide new triggers and new inspirations.

The INSTINC residence program is based on a sustainable model for generating an income while also pursuing opportunities for collaboration, networking, mutual support and an opportunity to learn from each other.

Please explain about the background and motivation towards this

The INSTINC AIR program was started in 2009 after meeting Hirofumi in Lendava, Slovenia. This triggered the idea of starting a residency that could host 1 artist. Since initiating the program 15 artists have been hosted, the first two of which were artist friends of Shi Yeo Yun.

This program is motivated by a spirit of networking and collaboration with other likeminded Artists, a pursuit of cultural exchange and interaction and the wish to provide an artist-focused residency which supports art-making and experimentation. In INSTINC's case there is no proposal required upon application as it is hoped that the stay in Singapore itself

will inspire a new direction.

How is the residence organized and managed?

INSTINC makes an open call for applications to be submitted online, publicizing its program through various free websites like wooloo.org, and transartist, as well as being a member of Res Artis.

The director herself reviews all applications and manages most aspects of the daily running of INSTINC residences, workshops, exhibitions, talks & screenings.

What do you think is the importance of microresidencies?

Microresidencies fill an important gap where interesting young artists are currently being denied access to fully funded prestigious residency programs because of their lack of experience. Microresidencies are therefore an important stepping stone in their careers.

Due to their small scale microresidencies are more flexible, allowing them to cater to the needs of each artist. They do not function like a big corporation and so form lasting friendships with the artists-in-residence.

Studio Kura

Studio Kura is a gallery, studio and residence space based in the rural location of Itoshima city, Fukuoka. The site utilizes two old rice storehouses for its facilities. To date they have hosted 14 artists from 10 different countries all over the world since its establishment in 2007. Studio Kura is run by Matsuzaki and two main assistants, along with a team of volunteers. It is financially supported through the facilitation of art workshops and a small art school for both children and adults. Matsuzaki himself studied in Germany and here built up a network of European artists who we wanted to continue dialogue and collaboration with. The residence therefore developed naturally through his desire to offer such artists an opportunity to stay and work in Japan while also offering local artists the opportunity to join cross-cultural creative experiences which can enrich the local art scene. He also intends to build closer links with the local farming community for example and extend the range of exchange possibilities through a site-specific project to be held in May this year which will involve collaboration of international artists, local artists and residents of the neighbourhood.

Matsuzaki outlined that his primary wish for a microresidence network is for the sharing of information and resources in particular in offering an exposure between interested parties of the various projects facilitated by microresidencies, as well as for example providing a database of artists who have participated in past residence programs which other residencies may be interested to contact.

Nha San Studio

Nha San Studio is an independent artist run space in the suburbs of Hanoi, the first alternative art space founded in Vietnam in 1998. It is a space with multiple functions and serves as a hub for the Hanoi art community. It is a space for artists to gather, create work and exhibit, and organizes various international events which allow for exchange between Vietnam artists and artists from abroad. Their structure is very informal and based on ties of friendship. The artists working here are first and foremost like family members, living together, eating together, creating together, this close bond is central to the function of Nha San Studio. Initially the project was entirely self funded, given the lack of cultural support in Vietnam, so through an arts and antiques sales business and other activities of various members such an initiative was established and sustained, and through their pioneering work they have gained international attention, now receiving support from international bodies such as the Japan Foundation, Goethe Insitut and British Council.

Nha San Studio does not have an official application or open call process for residencies but invites various artists through its network, as well as receiving many direct enquiries.

In Vietnam there are very different social and political conditions from Japan and Singapore which present some particular challenges too, especially the cultural censorship policies of the government which require all public art events to gain official permission for their events. Artists and independent spaces often try to work themselves around these restrictions, but recently Nha San Studio has gained the attention of the authorities and has now been forced to reduce its public program.

In response to the question what would you like to gain from a microresidence network, Linh outlined sharing of ideas and experiences as the most central concern in joining such a network.

Discussion

After each residence presented about their program and organization a general discussion was entered into which debated how a microresidence network should be formed and how it should function.

Here is a brief overview of this discussion:

The Importance of Microresidencies

Giving opportunity to young artists

Creating a space for experimentation

Providing a highly flexible program

Being able to closely accommodate the needs of the artist

Build long term relationships with the artists

Benefits of a Network

Cultural Exchange

Sharing information and resources

Advice

Collaboration

Framework of proposed organization

Central or distributed?

Distributed network is most suitable model

We don't have budget and youkobo can not take full responsibility

But need to have some direction at the start

How to create distributed network from now?

Identity of the network

The concept, objective and structure of the network need to be defined Logo and visual identity also needed

Shih Yun propose logo competition

Web page

Challenge of web site is who will pay for domain name and sever hosting?

Who will maintain management of the website?

Suggested that a blog style website like wordpress would be better

In this way each member may add their own information

Dialogue

Facebook - this requires daily updating and maintenance, facebook is filled with information so it can be very distracting – it may be best to start a dedicated discussion forum where people can focus more (Shih Yun's suggestion)

Ustream – this platform can be used for other members to facilitate and broadcast their own discussion sessions

October 2012 Res Artis GM

It is difficult to facilitate concrete collaboration within the network as a whole by October

The objective of the network is not to make something for the GM, but this could be a very good platform to gain visibility

We can not present concrete results at the GM but we can take it as an opportunity to publicly launch the network – for example launching a fully working website and publicizing research reports

It may also be opportunity to hold workshops and discussions

We must question what the purpose of participating in the GM is

The first is to raise the visibility of the presence of microresidencies and draw attention to their range of activities

Collaboration

Some possibilities suggested:

Touring exhibition

Artist exchange program

Selection Committee – for selection of artists who reply to open call – allow for more objective screening

Artist Recommendations – for participation in residence

Would it not be more pragmatic to try and collaborate first with other residencies on your doorstep – in case of youkobo other residencies in Tokyo?

Collaboration must start on a small scale – it is impossible between 22 groups but between 2 or 3 it is very feasible

Research

If the different members are able to research each others activities then this will build a stronger network of understanding

They could write report and publish on the website

Would also be good to publish as printed report

Some suggestions that printing is expensive and time costly and so easier to have downloadable version

However actual print has a physicality of which by holding your hand you can directly feel the presence of microresidencies

Membership

Should it be free or take a charge like res artis?

Surely it should be free, especially when so many microresidencies have such small budget

Sharing resources

Sharing information on artists – creating an artist database for example

Sharing project reports

Critical Discussion Studio Kura and Youkobo offer a critic session for artists so that staff and audience may share their opinions and ask questions of the artist. It may be interesting to have a participant from the network contribute to this even via skype

Critical writing – it is often the case that organizers of residence programs do not have such skills as curators or critical writers so it may be good to share the network of writers and curators between members

Budget

How to raise a budget for the further development of the network?

This area is still unclear

Next steps

As conclusion to this discussion we outlined a number of concrete steps to be taken in the development of the microresidence network.

Dialogue

Firstly a greater level of discussion must be formed between all interested members via facebook and ustream, the details of these discussions, along with information about the various activities of individual members will be included in a regular newsletter to be sent out to network members and interested parties. Dialogue is the most important step at this stage. We need to take a considerable period of time to get to know all those who wish to join the network, discover each others approach and direction and consider how we can work together. We need everyone's enthusiastic participation in order to get the ball moving, so we would very much appreciate everyone's positive contribution at this early but essential stage. From this dialogue we will be able to see which organizations are really interested to actively undertake a role in the microresidence network.

Website

We are considering to initiate a website in which all members are able to upload their own information, which we are now currently researching the format of and considering the best way in which to structure and manage the information, which will allow for a distributed network but maintain a clear identity. We are currently considering to build this website as a wordpress blog. This website could also include features such as an artist database with information on all artists participating in the programs of the network members, as well as information on the various projects which members are engaged in.

Research

We would like this network to also further pursue research into the conditions and activities of microresidencies, continuing the debate upon their role and significance. We would also like to suggest that this research is also undertaken in a distributed manner in which all members contribute to the investigations and share this information between the network. We would like to propose that residencies pair up and research each others activities and share a report with the network for this purpose. We would like to gauge members interest in such a process then set out some guidelines from which such research may be pursued.

Collaboration

We hope that members may be able to initiate their own small scale collaborations between two or three organizations. In terms of Youkobo's position it intends to pursue a collaborative exchange project with INSTINC, Singapore, the process and outputs of which we intend to share with the network.

Res Artis GM

The 2012 Res Artis General Meeting to be held in Tokyo in October will be the focus point for bringing the above suggested activities together and presenting them in a coherent format. While hoping to facilitate a discussion or workshop we would like to propose the possibility of creating a publication which collates research undertaken by the network and introduces the various members. This publication could then be distributed to the various delegates of the GM.

Examples of Microresidencies

Youkobo Art Space <http://youkobo.co.jp>



Youkobo Art Space manages an Artist-In-Residence Program (AIR) which provides accommodation and studio space to domestic and foreign artists for a given period of time, and a non-profit gallery for the presentation of new work in exhibitions, while also promoting community activities through art and culture. As a 'studio ('kobo') for 'you' ('you' in Youkobo meaning 'play' in Japanese), Youkobo aims to create a space which gives many people the opportunity to experience and become more familiar with art and culture by supporting the autonomous activities of artists. To date, 150 overseas artists from 20 countries have been welcomed to Youkobo, and exhibitions of over 100 Japan-based artists have been held in what has become a place for rich cultural exchange. It is our hope that ever more people will become familiar with our activities as we innovate our programs in the future.

The building where Youkobo Art Space is carrying out its non-profit activities in the Suginami area of Tokyo was, until the 1970s, a sanatorium for tuberculosis patients. Serving first as a creative studio and space for art education with the title 'Studio Youkobo', Youkobo first started its trial as a metropolitan Artist-In- Residence (AIR) in 1989 when it hosted overseas artists and architects who were supported by the Matsumae Foundation. In 2001, the facility housing two art studios, a gallery space, two long-term residency spaces, and a community lounge and office was reformed and re-opened as 'Youkobo Art Space', a place providing opportunities for young motivated domestic and overseas artists to create and exhibit new work, and for dialogue and exchange through art.

While working positively to develop art activities based in the local community, we also provide a place that promotes cross-cultural understanding and a broad range of international exchange. Making serious efforts to develop as an art space, Youkobo became a member of Res Artis, a worldwide network of art residencies based in Holland, and began to proactively organize exchange activities with a wide spectrum of overseas artists and AIR centers. The organizational structure of Youkobo consists of two co-directors, a team of supporters (five advisors, one full-time staff, four part-time staff, and one intern from

overseas), and an accounting auditor. It is this small-scale organization that is earnestly developing its activities.

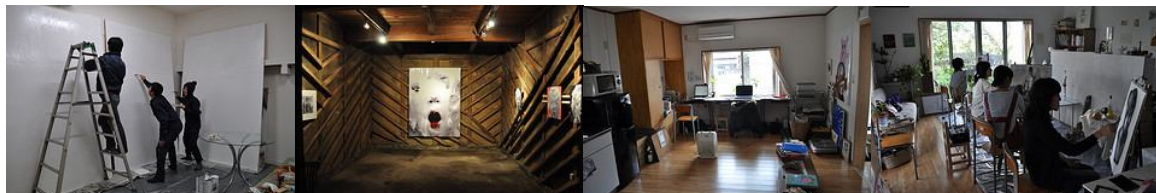
Studio Kura <http://www.studiokura.info>



Artist in Residence Studio Kura is located in the city of Itoshima, a prefecture of Fukuoka. Set against a backdrop of mountains and rice fields in the countryside, the studio itself is housed in a former rice warehouse. Located on a compound amid traditional Japanese homes and gardens, the studio is ideal for artists looking for a peaceful place to make work and engage with Japanese culture. By train and car, the studio is 40 minutes to Fukuoka, which is the main city in the Island of Kyushu. Artists will be supplied with their own apartment and studio. Available studio space is 20 meters square with newly furnished workshop and living space measuring at approximately 40m square. Food is provided.

The residency program is by invitation-only but artists are welcome to contact Studio Kura with details on how to apply with a portfolio. Programs are approximately one month long and culminate in a resident's solo exhibition in central Fukuoka in the artist-run space, IAF. Advertisements for the exhibition will be provided.

International exchange is encouraged. There are opportunities for cultural dialogue with the public, local artists and curators. The residency is envisioned as an open studio wherein visitors have the opportunity to speak with the artists and experience their works firsthand.



INSTINC <http://www.instinc.com/>



Established in 2004, **INSTINC** is an artist-run institution that promotes a new language of art. Following the tradition of painting, **INSTINC** has pushed the paradigm to realize a wide array of art forms, including but not limited to installation, performance and video art. One of **INSTINC's** key mission is to encourage collaboration, cultural exchange and sharing of ideas in contemporary art with local as well as international artists. Therefore in 2009, **INSTINC's** international artist residency program is launched. Through exhibitions, art workshops, artists' talks & collaborations, **INSTINC** aims to establish an exciting platform where artists and public can engage with contemporary art and critical discourses. To further promote the contemporary art scene in Singapore, in 2011, **INSTINC** spearheads its inaugural “Squares Invasion” Painting Competition in search of artists in the forefront of contemporary painting.

History - Having been housed in Chinatown, Emerald Hill and an old shop house along Mohamed Sultan Road, **INSTINC** has manifested itself in different ways since 2004. In 2009, **INSTINC** is situated in first-of-its-kind SOHO units above the Clarke Quay MRT station. Because of its central location in a striking and lively ambiance, a stone's throw from MICA, The Arts House, Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore Art Museum & SAM 8Q, it offers **INSTINC** an exquisite place for resuming its program in full swing in a brand new loft space. From 2011, **INSTINC** has expanded to its second studio space in the West area of Singapore, resulting in **INSTINC SOHO & INSTINC STUDIOS**.

