

MYANMAR 4 - 14 JANUARY 2013
SINGAPORE 16 - 20 JANUARY 2013

THEATREWORKS
Presents

FLYING CIRCUS PROJECT 2013: BURMESE DAYS



MESSAGE FROM THE CURATOR, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

ART, JOURNALISM, ACTIVISM... AN ENCHANTED WORLD OF MICRO-POLITICS

Myanmar? Burma? What name shall we call the country that the Flying Circus Project (FCP) is about to visit? This alone highlights the complexity of the landscape. Preparations for FCP 2013: Burmese Days began in earnest in February 2010. In the three long years, many changes have occurred, not least that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy have garnered 43 seats in the Myanmar Parliament. It is true that this is only a fraction of the total 664 seats but it is still a significant dent into the armoured tank that runs the land some have nicknamed 'the forgotten country'. Well it's no longer forgotten, for never a week passes without

some headline grabbing news now: from President Obama's historic visit, to the Rohingya issue and ethnic conflicts in the western state of Rakhine, to the violent security raids on monks and mine-workers during a recent protest in Monywa.

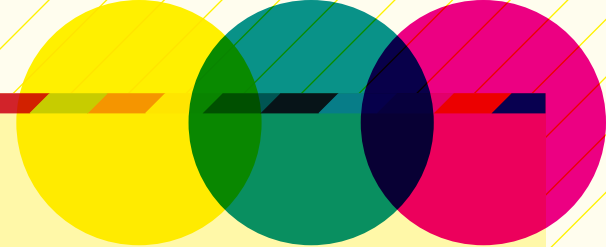
What is the FCP doing there? What is the FCP in the first place? The FCP is a gathering of invited artists, individuals, from different disciplines and different cities of the world. These artists do not form a collective, they may have never met and often do not know each other's work. They are not unlike a flash mob that comes together and travels through a city of Asia for two weeks. During their stay, there are multiple communications that are deepened by the FCP artists, based on personal interests. The artists experience the site and meet with curated individuals who are enabling change in the city - inspirations, key thinkers, political activists, emerging artists. These meetings take different formats but they are not intensive workshops on artistic techniques. All FCP artists who have been invited to the city **invest** in a session to share their work, their lives or their perspectives with local individuals. This **investment** is developed by each FCP artist personally.

In 2010, I visited the Theatre of the Disturbed in Myanmar (also known as Burma). I realized that it could be a possible collaborator for the FCP in Yangon (also known as Rangoon). From that visit, things started to develop albeit slowly even as Myanmar's politics took an abrupt turn. I met up with Gitameit, a music academy independently started by American pianist Kit Young and other music colleagues of Myanmar. Happily Gitameit will work together with FCP alumni Kaffe Matthews. Kaffe has willingly volunteered to spend some time at the school sharing her music process. Since 1998, I had been visiting Burma/Myanmar every few years, drawn to the tenacity of the diverse arts scene. I harnessed old friends from 2003, visual artists Tun Win Aung and Wah Nu. They proposed to explore "What is a museum?" with their peer community of artists. They were especially interested in a museum's relationship with the people who own, who play with, who visit, who chance upon, it. Along the way, I met the Wathann Film Festival, young film-makers who are trained in FAMU (Film and TV School Prague). I was introduced by Keiko Sei who had made a month-long Public Action Design Workshop in Myanmar for the Arts Network Asia. Four

years ago, I asked which country in South East Asia was ready for a tactical media workshop to develop citizen journalism, without hesitation she replied Burma. The last puzzle piece came in July this year when, as Prince Claus Awards Committee member, I met prize-winner Zarganar in Yangon. A comedian who is a household name, he has been actively involved in resisting the old military regime through humour. The regime retaliated by sending him to jail for 59 years. Today he helms the national Art of Freedom Film Festival which screens uncensored films and has Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as patron.

And so what is the FCP doing in Myanmar? Planetary consciousness perhaps. As Paul Gilroy has said, different peoples in the world are beginning to feel connected despite being separated by vast distances. A sign of the frailty of our times. I remember a call to the BBC during the Arab Spring. The caller was Burmese, she asked to be connected to the protesters in Tahrir Square for perhaps 'we' can learn something from them.

Ong Keng Sen
24 December 2012



FLYING CIRCUS PROJECT 2013

ABOUT

THE FOCAL POINTS ARE
INDIVIDUAL CREATIVE
ACTION, DIFFERENCE,
ENCOUNTERING AND
THE ART PRACTICE.



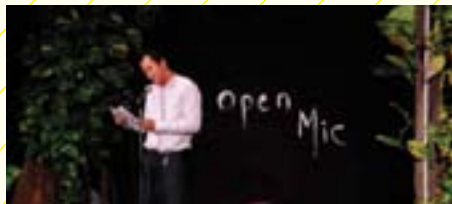
Thaidhhi Nargis – *When Time Stopped Breathing* 2010

2013 marks the 8th edition of the Flying Circus Project or FCP. Established in 1996, the FCP is a long-term programme exploring creative expression in Asia. This inter-disciplinary, research & development programme consists of performances, screenings, conversations, laboratories, workshops, talks and engagement by visiting artists in localized sites. The focal points are individual creative action, difference, encountering and the art practice. In 2004, the FCP began to intensely include artists from beyond Asia, including the Arab world, Europe, the USA and Africa.

Since 2007, Flying Circus artists have been travelling together to two different sites, interacting with the cities. The emphasis is to introduce the tenacity of local sites with their artists, activists and public intellectuals. Hence the Flying Circus artists are linked with the notion of world creating. How do we form micro-worlds which are responsible, articulated and ethically engaged? At the same time, the FCP rejects the instrumentalization of art. Instead it activates other methodologies allowing for participation and reflection in highly individualized ways. This includes the Alter U programme, a shared micro-space/time made by artists for world-citizens to contemplate action. In 2007, the FCP visited Ho Chi Minh City/Singapore and in 2010, the FCP explored Phnom Penh/Singapore.

THOUGHTS FROM THEATRE OF THE DISTURBED

FCP 2013 MYANMAR ARTISTIC COLLABORATOR



Theatre of the Disturbed, UI#25 International Festival of Contemporary Theatre & Performance 2012

The core idea of the works of Theatre of the Disturbed is to create “thinking spaces and interactive situations” to reflect upon the socio-political reality around us. Socio-political issues are interwoven within different forms and structures of performance narrative, and can be discovered as subtext. Therefore these issues are not addressed bluntly in a direct or didactic manner but the audience is always invoked to participate actively and raise questions. Most importantly, in many of our performance works, the complex socio-political issues of Myanmar are approached not merely as subjects of representation but as investigative procedures.

Currently, Theatre of the Disturbed is working on a performance trilogy titled *Hotel Reverie - Room No.64*. The aim is to explore collective memory, trauma, conflict, violence and transition from the post-colonial period in Burma through artistic and intellectual means. The title of the project is a reference to the past 64 years [from 1948, which marks the beginning of the post-colonial era in Myanmar]. How is this immediate past conditioning our present?

Lin Htet and Lorène Tamain, Theatre of the Disturbed



Nge Lay *The Relevancy of Restricted Things* 2010



May Phue Thet *Be Happy Be Happy* 2012



PROGRAMME IN MYANMAR

THE FLYING CIRCUS PROJECT
INVITES AUDIENCES TO JOIN US
IN YANGON AND MANDALAY FOR
THE MYANMAR LEG OF FCP 2013.

Over 12 days, FCP 2013 will move from Yangon to Mandalay, engaging with local communities of artists, activists, cultural workers, starting with the Art of Freedom Film Festival. Into its second year, the festival aims to broaden the essence and concept of freedom among the peoples of Myanmar through film as a medium. The FCP artists will also engage in two days of keynote addresses by Myanmar public intellectuals on issues of environment, education, feminism, digital media and the new Myanmar. During their stay in Yangon and Mandalay, the FCP artists will encounter many independent artists including Theatre of the Disturbed, the Wathann Film Festival, the Art & Museum Project: Mington Museum Of Contemporary Art, and Gitameit.



Wu Wenguang *China Village Self-Governance Film Project* 2007



Wen Hui *Listening To Third Grandmother's Stories* 2011



Rachael Swain *Burning Daylight* 2006



PROGRAMME IN SINGAPORE

THE FLYING CIRCUS PROJECT
INVITES SINGAPORE AUDIENCES
TO JOIN US FOR SUPERINTENSE
OVER 5 DAYS AT 72-13.

SUPERINTENSE is a marathon of personal strategies of creativity in the urban context, and is a hallmark of the FCP. All the FCP artists will have one hour each to present their work to a public audience. A projector, a microphone, an audience – the same conditions are given to each artist. They are invited to share their practice, past work, present work, future work. It can take the form of a conversation, a demonstration, a lecture-performance, a film, a DJ session, a workshop. The artists articulate their practice, communicating an insight to the myriad ways of inhabiting, dissolving, thinking, making, living, destroying, rejuvenating. An actor, an audience, a shared space. Take a cigarette pause on the run!



Sanathanan Thamothersampillai *The Incomplete Thombu* 2011

Opening – Keynote and presentations
16 January 2013
Wednesday, 7.30pm
72-13

The Flying Circus Project 2013 opens in Singapore with the context of a new Myanmar from Zarganar, comedian turned politician. This is followed with presentations by Sanathanan Thamothersampillai and Anomaa Rajakaruna about memory, trauma, conflict, violence and transition in the context of Sri Lanka.

17 & 18 January 2013
Thursday & Friday. 7.30pm
72-13

19 January & 20 January 2013
Saturday & Sunday. From noon till late
(Admission at any time, preferably on the hour.
Stay as long as you wish)

72-13



Anomaa Rajakaruna *July: Life After 25 Years* 2008

Look out for the Myanmar (Burma) films on Jan 20 in 72-13. These have yet to be screened outside of Myanmar: shorts from the 2013 Art of Freedom Film Festival, a selection of new films from the Wathann Film Festival as well as the classic *Katipar Phanutsi Shwe Hti Saung (Wearing Velvet Slippers, Holding a Golden Umbrella)*. The last is by master filmmaker Maung Wanna, it won the Academy Award in 1971 for best directing in Myanmar (Burma). He is survived by his son Okkar, another film maker whose film *Next Drop of Rain* will also be screened on Jan 20, and his daughter Wah Nu. Wah Nu, a visual artist, will speak on Jan 19 about the Art & Museum Project: MINGON MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART.

Check out <http://flyingcircusproject2013.wordpress.com> for details of the events.

All events are by invitation only.
For invitations, please contact TheatreWorks at +65 6737 7213 or tworx@singnet.com.sg
Free admission.
Donations are required for refreshments.

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

THE FLYING CIRCUS PROJECT 2013 ARTISTS:

Anomaa Rajakaruna, Colombo

Aw Pi Kyeh (APK), Yangon

Brett Bailey, Cape Town

Fiona Koh, Vertical Submarine, Singapore

Joshua Yang, Vertical Submarine, Singapore

Ju, Yangon

Julie Tolentino, Los Angeles

Kaffe Matthews, London

Keiko Sei, Bangkok

Ko Tar, Yangon

Lin Htet, Yangon

Lorène Tamain, Paris

Maija Hirvanen, Helsinki

May Phue Thet, Yangon

Min Thein Sung, Yangon

Moe Naing, Yangon

Mriganka Madhukailya,

Desire Machine Collective, Guwahati, Assam

Nge Lay, Yangon

Okkar, Yangon

Ong Keng Sen, Singapore

Rachael Swain, Broome

Sithu Zeya, Yangon

Sonal Jain,

Desire Machine Collective, Guwahati, Assam

Sanathanan Thamotharampillai, Jaffna

Tadasu Takamine, Tokyo

Tellervo Kalleinen, Helsinki

Thaiddhi, Yangon

Thu Thu Shein, Yangon

Tun Win Aung, Yangon

Venuri Perera, Colombo

Vuth Lyno, Phnom Penh

Wah Nu, Yangon

Wai Mar Nyunt, Yangon

Wen Hui, Beijing

Wu Wenguang, Beijing

Zarganar, Yangon



Kaffe Matthews *Sonic Bench* 2007



Julie Tolentino *Cry of Love – A Labyrinth* 2009



Vertical Submarine *UnderWriter's Table* 2011

Visit <http://flyingcircusproject2013.wordpress.com> for biographies of the artists.

ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY IN “INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS MOBILITY”

THE FCP 2013: BURMESE DAYS IS COMMISSIONING AND SUPPORTING A NUMBER OF INDEPENDENT LOCAL PROJECTS IN MYANMAR:

Our belief in artist mobility is that we can work towards enriching the local, the small, the intimate, and not just the international, the big, the spectacular. International curation can be responsible for the development of conversations in local arts communities and their audiences. The international arts market should not just ‘cream’ off the interesting artists to be exhibited abroad. Hopefully, we can *all* slowly move towards a more sustainable process in the art-ecosystems of production and circulation.

1 Commission: The Art & Museum Project
“We initiated the Art & Museum Project because as we travel around the countryside

we are always faced with questions as to what artists like us do. People want to know what artworks we make. Where are our exhibitions held? They think the ‘art-museum’ is still a far away land. Hopefully this project will respond to ‘what is art?’ and ‘what is museum?’

In 2010, we started to realise small scale exhibition spaces in different villages and towns where there are no art galleries or museums built for the people. We thought exhibition designs should be connected and reflect on local people’s daily life, situations or landscapes. Space designs should be friendly and accessible for local people. So, we chose local small huts, tents, and barns. After that, we asked what pieces should be exhibited? We decided to collect local artifacts & handicrafts even though they were not seen as ‘artworks’. We walked around the villages, met children and asked for their toys in exchange for our new ones. We walked by the river to find flotsam which the water brought.

Related to ‘the urban’ in Yangon or Mandalay or Taungyi, we will work with a variety of different spatial designs from the pagoda festival bazaar to an open-air museum of new media art. We invite artists and support them to create artworks for these spaces. These spaces can turn into studios, workshops



Tellervo Kalleinen *The Making Of Utopia* 2006

and private classrooms. Through conversations with the artists, new works may be imagined and developed.

We propose these four artists May Phue Thet (b. 1992), Min Thein Sung (b. 1978), Phyo Kyi (b.1977) and Zar Min Htike (b. 1975) for collaboration with us."

Tun Win Aung & Wah Nu

2 Bridging the Wathann Film Festival Yangon with Mandalay

For the first time, the emerging Wathann Film Festival will screen prize winning works of young Myanmar film-makers in Mandalay. This allows a circulation of Myanmar films within Myanmar, rather than being 'for export' only.

3 Hotel Reverie Part 2 – Titus Andronicus (work-in-progress) by Theatre of the Disturbed

4 Subtitling of Myanmar (Burma) films

The subtitling in English of Maung Wanna's first film which has become a classic. Also the subtitling of Okkar's newest film. This allows for the circulation of Myanmar (Burma) films internationally to introduce that there was once a film culture which was dynamic, integrated with society, and hopefully there will be another era of vibrant film culture again.



Tadasu Takamine *Inside Of The Ball* 2012 Image by Ayako Abe



Venuri Perera *Thalattu* 2012 Image by Lekha Edirisinghe



Maung Wanna *Wearing Velvet Slippers, Holding a Golden Umbrella* 1971



Desire Machine Collective *Slow Flow* 2012



Brett Bailey *Big Da* 2001 Image by Pieter Hugo and Brett Bailey

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