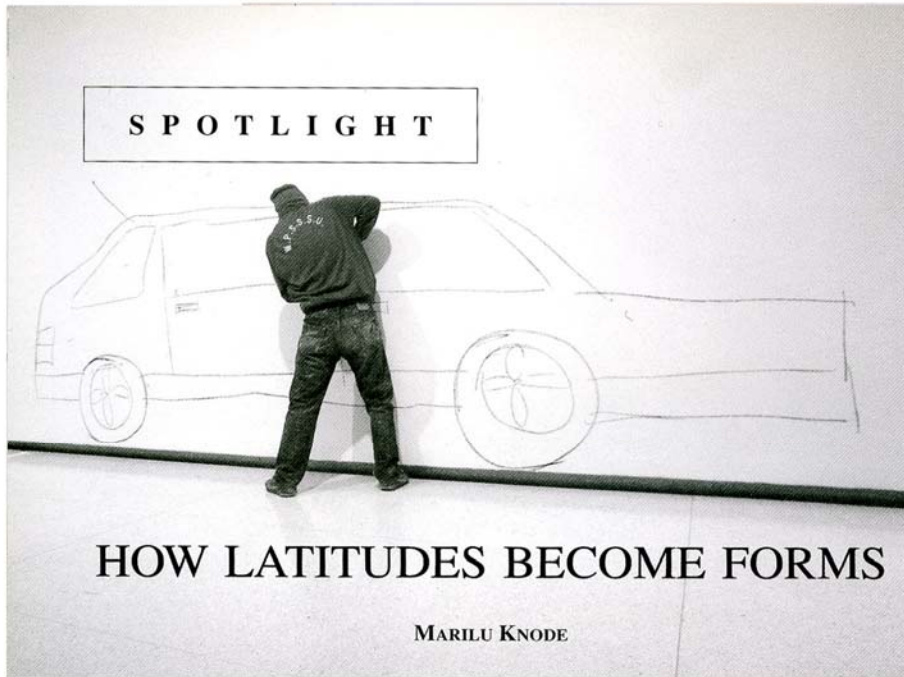


Flash Art



HOW LATITUDES BECOME FORMS

MARILU KNODE

PERMANENCE AND CHANGE — the uncomfortable poles between which artists, cultural producers, and arts institutions have to migrate — are explored through gallery works, on-line projects, performances, and extensive catalogue texts for “How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age.” The dispersed curatorial team mimics the working processes of the artists included (particularly the interactive projects by Raqs Media Collective with Atelier Bow Wow and Andreja Kuluncic), evoking the sometimes messy, sometimes exhilarating (and occasional possible failure) of a biennale such as, say, Gwangju. This risky behavior is bolstered by the summation — or justification — of the work by these mostly younger artists through dense but compelling texts: yet the catalogue does nothing to diminish the fresh air of experimentation in the show.

Permanence and change have been reconciled — by both artists and institution — through the exploration or explanation of context, and the most effective works are those that carry at least part of their own social, cul-

tural, even physical framing devices with them. Additionally, the juxtaposition of works helps to elucidate this flux in value and meaning: Tsuyoshi Ozawa’s *Museum of Soy Sauce Art* — concise rooms filled with soy renderings of traditional scroll paintings, a faux On Kawara, cases of tools, and a cash register (the most important accessory for museums today) — suggested a sly and slightly ludicrous reconciliation of Eastern and Western modernisms. By contrast, Marepe’s street vendor’s table of poisons proposed alternative solutions to personal crisis in the crush of globalization. Playing off anime’s huge commercial success, Tabaimo’s gritty anime came with a Xerox key for deciphering her dystopic world, which included a Japanese schoolgirl peeing out a flag. The intimate conversation between two women in Esra Ersen’s *Hamam* represents an ancient, yet largely hidden, social ritual of women in a bathhouse.

Physical endurance appears as a psychological frame for global excess and simultaneous privation. Song Dong’s breathtaking *Jump*, performed in front of the Forbidden

Left: ROBIN RHODE creating *Car Theft*, 2003. Bottom, from left: WANG JIAN WEI, *Living Elsewhere*, 2000. Video still; TSUYOSHI OZAWA, *Museum of Soy Sauce Art* (detail), 2000. Mixed media.

Palace amidst the cacophony of daily life, finds the artist pacing between the edges of the video camera’s frame, jumping up as he reaches the limits of the camera. This caged animal behavior suggests that constrictions in contemporary society drive individuals to fruitless yet extraordinarily perverse and resistant acts. In his documentary *Living Elsewhere*, Wang Jian-wei follows four rural families who have taken over abandoned, neo-Californian “villas” to scrape together a living inside the failed frame of Chinese capitalism.

Robin Rhode’s *Car Theft* simply enacts the neuroses of living in any social environment. In the video documentation of his opening night performance, the artist quickly sketched a black charcoal car onto the wall, then stepped back to throw a brick at it, setting off the car alarm. Whereas this work takes on an interesting tone in the context of a segregated midwestern city, Rhode’s gesture is instantly legible to citizens of any town. Somewhat more romantic and nostalgic are Yin Yuzhen’s series of suitcase cities whereby the sounds and abstracted landscape of various cities are packed up along with the nomadic traveler. All of these works exemplify the most interesting of contemporary global art, work which embraces its own irreconcilable differences as both resistant to, and part of, its time and context.

In his introductory essay for “Alternative Modernities,” Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar briefly outlines the global conflicts around the ever-narrowing White Modernism of the West. While these conflicts are negotiated daily outside the Western mainstream, the Walker show aims to suggest, even through this thumbnail sketch, the products of this critical struggle.

At the Walker Art Museum, Minneapolis. The show is currently at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, and will travel to the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.

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