# Old New Territories:

## ISCP at Moore Street Market



Lotte Van den Audenaeren, *cha cha cha usted verá!*, 2012, Daylight projection, Variable dimensions, Installation view

International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP)

### **Old New Territories**

Text by Barbara Adams

Minja Gu: *Atlantic-Pacific co.*, December 8-December 31, 2011

Lotte Van den Audenaeren: *Potentialis*, April 13-June 7, 2012

Francisco Montoya Cázarez & Su Yu-Hsien: *Body & Soul*, July 18-August 19, 2012

#### Foreword

Initiated in 2011, the International Studio & Curatorial Program's (ISCP) Participatory Projects commissions and produces the work of current residents and alumni in the public realm. Through connecting residents to resources in East Williamsburg and Greater New York, Participatory Projects supports resident and alumni practices, strengthens the vitality of East Williamsburg and integrates residents' work into the life of the city. Not limited to a singular form of social or public practice, ISCP is interested in supporting resident proposals, with a focus on temporary site-specific and time-based work. In addition, ISCP solicits proposals for specific commissions and seeks out meaningful partnerships with other organizations in addition to providing funding for selected commissions.

Artists Minja Gu, Lotte Van den Audenaeren, Francisco Montoya Cázarez and Su Yu-Hsein are all interested in negotiating and collapsing boundaries. Working with a producer is an intimate process and I am grateful to each of them for allowing me into their process.

I would like to thank Barbara Adams for her thoughtful essay on ISCP's collaboration with Moore Street Market and Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) President Joan Bartolomeo for her tireless work and deep understanding of community development. These projects would not have been possible without the generosity of the New York City Council Diana Reyna's Office, which enabled ISCP to offer the above residents fiscal support and the help of Studio Assistants who were fundamental to their creation.

Juliana Cope, Special Projects Coordinator

#### **Old New Territories**

Barbara Adams

Inside the red brick shoe box that is the Moore Street Retail Market lies a tiny patch of Latin America. The stalls of this Brooklyn public market on the edge of Williamsburg explode with Caribbean colors and sounds, as local shoppers buy everything from yams and peppers to maracas and mystic potions.<sup>1</sup>

This description from the New York Times presents the Moore Street Market as a quaint and exotic locale, seemingly contained by culture and architecture. A common trope in the discourse that links the cultural to the built environment, this type of narrative risks sidestepping the lived experiences of actual people. The artists involved in the International Studio & Curatorial Program's (ISCP) Participatory Projects at Moore Street Market, considered the ways in which site-based work, that engages communities, can both accommodate and problematize this nexus of place and culture. As they engage the social, these artists contend with the ways in which art in the public realm is simultaneously expedient in objectifying and in empowering local neighborhoods. Through their collaborations, these artists, along with local participants negotiate the difficult task of creating work that expresses social, historical and spatial specificity while avoiding essentializing and exoticizing clichés. Moore Street Market occupies an antipodal character where on the one hand, it is seen as a locale central and vital to the community; while on the other it is understood as a forlorn, anachronistic place in a state of deterioration and decay. These competing discourses constitute an ongoing construction to which the artists contribute via their dialogue with participants and place.

<sup>1</sup> David Gonzales, "A Caribbean Corner of Brooklyn, Fighting to Survive," *The New York Times*, February 11, 2008.

Moore Street Market, known also as La Margueta de Williamsburg, is one of four surviving public markets (of the original nine) built by Mayor Fiorella La Guardia during the Depression to move pushcarts indoors from New York City streets. As early as the 1960s the markets were seen as outmoded, ineffective and messy, and the city agency managing the markets recommended their closure.<sup>2</sup> However, this threat was overruled by overwhelming public response in favor of the markets citing their cultural and social importance. Moore Street Market, like many urban institutions (including those in the art world), has undergone a series of tactical transitions and strategic changes in order to remain vital in new contexts. This ability to adapt alongside larger urban and global changes, has led many institutions to forge alliances with outside, often very different, institutions and organizations. Collaborations such as that between ISCP, a residency-based contemporary arts institution in East Williamsburg, Brooklyn and Moore Street Market are characteristic of re-imagining urban revitalization through creative initiatives that animate places and spark economic development.<sup>3</sup>

In the wake of plans to demolish the market to make room for housing in 2008, public agencies argued that the markets have been historically unsuccessful, attractive only to "the kind of population that is in transition."<sup>4</sup> Reading this comment in the context of our lives today, one might argue that the markets are then, widely relevant, as the majority of us live in states of transition. Moore Street Market has passed from Jewish and Italian vendors to merchants from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Ecuador. Now, the market has forged alliances

<sup>2</sup> This historical overview is elaborated on the Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation (BEDC)'s website at: http://bedc.org/subsidiaries/moore-street-market/. BEDC currently manages the market.

*<sup>3</sup>* There is much written about this. See in particular, Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa, "Creative Placemaking," 2010, accessed December 23, 2012, http://www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/ prie/ and Martha Rosler, "Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part II," *e-flux Journal* 23, March 2011, accessed December 21, 2012, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/culture-class-artcreativity-urbanism-part-ii/.

<sup>4</sup> Suzanne Wasserman, director of the Gotham Center for New York City History, as quoted in Gonzales, "A Caribbean Corner of Brooklyn."

with a number of other organizations, collaborations that express how the mobilities of people, culture, and capital extend beyond that of national origin. It is perhaps too obvious to note that the ways in which we move today are as evident in the art world as they are at La Margueta. Artists increasingly move from place to place for residencies, art fairs, international exhibitions, and for work and education. Artists today respond to and embody a new globalized perception as they reconcile their need for a connection with site and environment with the forces of uprooting. This negotiation entails "setting one's roots in motion, staging them in heterogeneous contexts and formats, denying them the power to completely define one's identity, translating ideas, transcoding images, transplanting behaviors, exchanging rather than imposing."<sup>5</sup> This sort of cosmopolitan temperament involves dialogue across difference, a curiosity for conversation with strangers and those who might appear radically different.<sup>6</sup> Thus, conversation becomes an integral part of the work and, as dialogic, this sort of work constitutes conversation as a locus of different meanings, interpretations and points of view.7

In their project, *Body and Soul*, ISCP residents Francisco Montoya Cázarez and Su Yu-Hsien, based in Germany and Taiwan respectively, engaged vendors at Moore Street in order to create work specific to the booths in which it was shown. Positioning themselves as social mediators, Cázarez and Yu-Hsien, reflect the socio-spatial dynamics of the market's habitus. Their project places participants as agents through practice that positions the market as a laboratory for investigation and experimentation. Making art useful, Cázarez and Yu-Hsien address the needs conveyed by vendors. Placing the fabric of broken umbrellas over the glass roof of the market to shield workers from the intense sunlight, mounting fans over a vegetable stall to discourage fruit flies and facilitating a video advertisement for the

<sup>5</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant* (New York: Sternberg, 2009), 22.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to Bourriaud, see also Kwame Anthony Appiah's understanding of cosmopolitanism in his book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Grant Kester, "Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially-Engaged Art," in *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, ed. Zoya Kucor and Simon Leung (Cambridge: Blackwell, 2005), 153-165.



Francisco Montoya Cázarez and Su Yu-Hsien, *Body and Soul Umbrella,* 2012, Umbrella fabric, 8 x 45 ft., Installation view



Francisco Montoya Cázarez and Su Yu-Hsien, *AC Tropical*, 2012, Fans, Variable dimensions, Installation view

botanica in which the owner describes every item including intangible ones for sale in her stall, Cázarez and Yu-Hsien position art as a way of doing versus a way of seeing. Useful art involves "a way of working with aesthetic experiences that focus on the implementation of art in society where art's function is no longer to be a space for 'signaling' problems, but the place from which to create the proposal and implementation of possible solutions."<sup>8</sup> The practice posed by Cázarez and Yu-Hsien places them seemingly at the disposal of the vendors while maintaining their own agenda. They seek local knowledge as they offer artistic service. *Body and Soul* attests to the production of a particular social space and renders aesthetic the socio-spatial dynamics of the market as it charts the creative responses of participants to their extant milieu.

This emphasis on participation resonates with dialogue-based public art that favors "temporary rather than permanent projects that engage their audience, particularly groups considered marginalized, as active participants in the conceptualization and production of process-oriented, politically conscious community events or programs.", Cázarez and Yu-Hsien approach the site of the market not as a tabula rasa, but rather as an animate and complex social context. They do not see their collaborators as 'noncreatives' who provide raw material for their work nor do they see the market simply as a backdrop. Instead, *Body and Soul* offers a rich rapport between the artists, the participants and even the market itself with its capacity to mediate social relations and behaviors. This is evident in "Ramonita's Bachata Lesson" when Ramonita, owner of the restaurant that serves as the video's set, teaches a traditional Dominican dance to participants and viewers, and in "For Luck, For Love, For Everything," when Maria Vasquez promotes her store, Botanica La Esperanza. These two videos show how the spatial and the social are dialectically produced based on values and the construction of meanings—production that ultimately shapes our perceptions and practices.

*<sup>8</sup>* Tania Bruguera, "An Introduction to Useful Art." Accessed December 25, 2012, http://www.taniabruguera.com/cms/528-0-Introduction+on+Useful+Art.html.

<sup>9</sup> Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT, 2004), 6. Also see Tom Finkelpearl, "Five Dialogues on Dialogue-Based Public Art Projects," *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

Two other videos in the series take us to the basement of the market, posing an analogy for the unearthing of tensions that rumble beneath the surface. In "Testimony", barber Guillermo Martinez occupies the basement's corridors as he performs a monologue that weaves together past and present experiences as he describes his tumultuous upbringing and the encounters which enabled him to escape a life of violence. Diego Arista also goes to the basement and pulls a podium out of storage for his reenactment of a speech given by the market's management corporation, adding his own opinions of better ways to redevelop the market. In these video pieces, the performers simultaneously subvert the rituals and engage the rhythms of the everyday. They embody the space that lies beneath the surface and animate passages normally neglected and uninhabited. In this way,

Moore Street market reveals how urban, public space links the body in space, the global-local power relations embedded in space, the role of language and discursive transformations of space, and the material and metaphorical importance of architecture and urban design. It is through this embodied space that the global is integrated into the areas of everyday urban life and becomes a site of translocal and transnational as well as personal experience...The market is a form of spatialized culture that encompasses multiple publics and conflicting meanings, contestations, and negotiations.<sup>10</sup>

*Body and Soul* amplifies these qualities and processes by providing a performative platform. The vendors are understood as agents interpreting and enacting their experiences. As actors in the project, they actively participate in the aesthetic construction of the work and in illuminating the socio-spatial dynamics of the market.

<sup>10</sup> Setha Low, "Claiming Space for an Engaged Anthropology: Spatial Inequality and Social Exclusion," *American Anthropologist* 113 (2011): 389-407. A portion of this paper was the result of a study conducted by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) and the City University of New York (CUNY) to analyze the market's situation and develop a management plan in 2009.



Francisco Montoya Cázarez and Su Yu-Hsien, *For Luck, For Love, For Everything,* 2012, Video installation, 11:00 mins., Video still



Francisco Montoya Cázarez and Su Yu-Hsien, *Testimony,* 2012, Video installation, 3:50 mins., Video still



Francisco Montoya Cázarez and Su Yu-Hsien, *The Brooklyn Economic Development Corp. Bonus*, 2012, Video installation, 1:40 mins., Video still



Francisco Montoya Cázarez and Su Yu-Hsien, *Ramonita's Bachata Lesson*, 2012, Video installation, 5:00 mins., Video still

That "artists have the capacity to condense, anatomize, and represent symbolically complex social and historical processes,"<sup>11</sup> is certainly the case with South Korean artist-in-residence Minja Gu's *Atlantic-Pacific co*. In this project, Gu allegorizes ocean exploration in the age of discovery through a local expedition along the corridors of Atlantic Avenue and Pacific Street in Brooklyn. Here, the mode of participation is mediated through exploration and exchange. Gu's project resonates with the power relations of imperialism as participants embark on voyages into unknown territories to collect rare and exotic products. These explorations reveal how the sovereign powers of imperialism have given way to globalized economic and cultural configurations without clearly identifiable territorial power centers, and without fixed boundaries and borders. This disjuncture is evident in the mélange of commodities that accumulate in *Atlantic-Pacific co*.

Although the commodity takes center stage, the conditions of exchange are not defined by economics alone. Rather, the commodity is rearticulated as a mediator to activate social and cultural dialogue. Gu creates a market within a market at Moore Street, and like the Greek agora, it functions as a composite of social, cultural, economic and spatial relations, posing a fragmented narrative and critical commentary. The company's "rare products" assembled at Moore Street as an interactive installation act as a parable of the existing booths at the market and its exotic persona. These artifacts, the plunder and booty of adventuresome explorers, are assembled in a functional store alongside a logbook and map that tells the stories of the voyages. Collecting items from Brooklyn thoroughfares creates a fictional, subaltern version of historic colonial trading companies. Gu gives the same care to record keeping as her predecessors, yet the trajectory of the cultural commodity is disrupted and re-sited, resulting in shifts in terms of value and meaning. The acts of consumption along which

<sup>11</sup> Martha Rosler, "Take the Money and Run? Can Political and Socio-Political Art 'Survive'?" *e-flux Journal* 12, January 2010, accessed December 21, 2012, http:// www.e-flux.com/journal/take-the-money-and-run-can-political-and-socio-critical-art-%E2%80%9Csurvive%E2%80%9D/.



Minja Gu, Atlantic-Pacific co., 2011, Installation view (detail)

these commodities move, reflect broader patterns of migration and show how the mobilities of goods and people transfer objects from one repository of memory and context of ordering to another.

If it is true that "commodities, like persons, have social lives,"<sup>12</sup> then the ways in which they travel and encounter struggles over their meaning, tells us something not only about the objects, but also about the cultural, economic and social values around which these objects circulate and coalesce. In Gu's project the object's value is reinterpreted through its out-of-placeness, through its imagined biographical tale, through its uniqueness, or through recognition of its simple utility, expressing the

*<sup>12</sup>* Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value" in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3.

"commodity potential" that allows objects to change value and status at various points in their lives. In creating new trajectories for these objects, *Atlantic-Pacific co.* presents the conditions that now characterize a global economy. In this way, Gu's project expresses a Benjaminian proclivity that it is only when the object is ripped out of its normal context that we are able to clearly see the structures of which it is a part.<sup>13</sup>

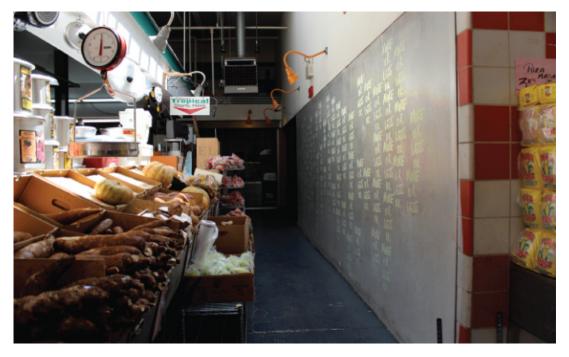


Minja Gu, Atlantic-Pacific co., 2011, Performance and mixed media installation

Belgian artist-in-residence Lotte Van den Audenaeren also plays with context and atmosphere in her work that was on view at the market. *Potentialis*, Dutch for "potential modus," is an apt moniker for Van den Audenaeren's project that is more suggestive than assertive, comprised of conceptual gestures and subtle interventions that shift along with the rhythms of the day. Each piece coyly provides just a glimpse or trace

<sup>13</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

of something as it is suspended in those moments before change or disappearance—perhaps a metaphor for the market itself. The work has a reticent, even secretive quality. With "good news," a phosphorescent vinyl cut out hangs in a space only accessible by the market's workers. And with "more or less or," a phosphorescent silkscreen repetition of the title words covers an entire wall, yet the effect is of near invisibility unless seen and lit from a particular angle.



Lotte Van den Audenaeren, *more or less or*, 2012, Phosphorescent silkscreen on wall, Installation view

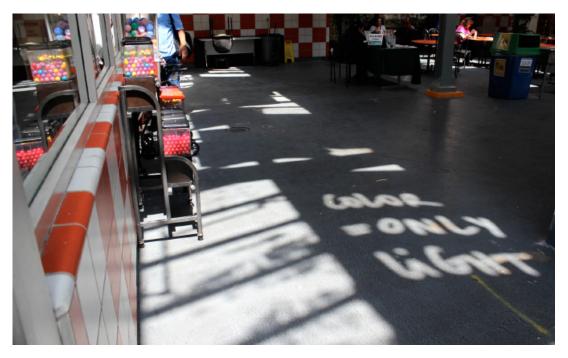
The subtlety of the work shows how art in public space need not dominate or overwhelm, but how it can linger on and make present what is already there, creating elegant effects. The daylight projections ("color = only light" and "cha cha cha usted verá!") cast text along the interior of the market that shift in intensity and position along with the movement of the sun. Ephemeral in its intent, the work marks time throughout a single day and over a longer period as it erodes and eventually disappears. Van den Audenaeren imagines this text as a timekeeper<sup>14</sup> and the effect is a slowing of the usually frenetic urban pace that marks our quotidian experience. The work is phantasmagoric (a term derived from phantasm and agora, fitting for the site of the market) producing a scene that constantly changes, a series of apparitions simultaneously present and absent.

The sensorial qualities of the interventions, register on a phenomenological level. In fact, "color = only light," as both text and image, addresses the structure of our perception as both cognitive and embodied. The sunlight that spells the phrases can be felt and seen while the meaning and interpretation of the text is apprehended on a conceptual level. Van den Audenaeren's projections appear in English and in Spanish, perhaps referencing the multilingual lives of the market's denizens—a choice that underscores that there is no single experience or meaning. Rather, there is an opaqueness—a point that is made most evident with the words "so unclear" (in the piece by the same name) spelled out in reflective tape on the tiled wall of the market. Van den Audenaeren taps into the mood of the market and how this particular place is enmeshed in networks that extend from the built environment to complex relationships that operate on a on a global scale.

As an intervention, this work does not impose or create discomfort. Instead, *Potentialis* offers slight adjustments to everyday spatial and temporal experience. There is a sense of something on the horizon, something impending, something yet-to-come where we recognize potential as the process of immanence where a thing is moving in a state still indeterminate and underway.<sup>15</sup> This immanence, it can be argued, is as true of Van den Audenaeren's work as it is for the contemporary urban and global places and processes in which it is nested—in this case, the potential viability of Moore Street Market. The market has endured only through its ability to continuously demonstrate its

<sup>14</sup> See Van den Audenaeren's website at: http://www.lottevandenaudenaeren.com

<sup>15</sup> Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke, 2002).



Lotte Van den Audenaeren, *color = only light*, 2012, Daylight projections, Variable dimensions, Installation view

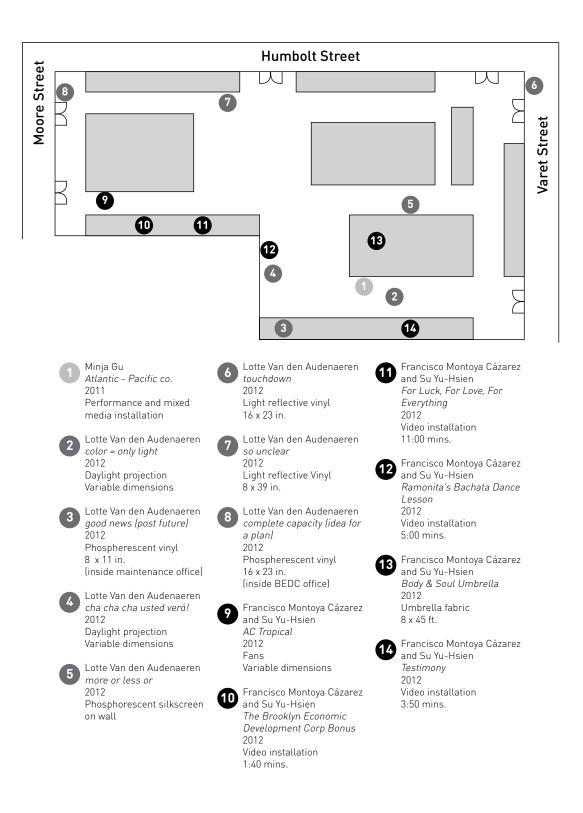


Lotte Van den Audenaeren, *so unclear*, 2012, Light reflective vinyl, 8 x 39 in., Installation View

social and cultural relevance. As neoliberal models dominate not only economic systems but also those that are social and cultural, this sort of flexibility and adaptability become essential dispositions. Alliances with arts organizations present potential in establishing relevance, yet these collaborations, however compelling, also pose many challenges. Artists and participants from local sites must negotiate not only the spatial politics of site-specific work, but also the terms of representation and participation that can range from alterity to affinity. ISCP's project at Moore Street Market shows how site-based practice can go beyond simply drawing inspiration from people and places. In these works—*Body and Soul, Atlantic-Pacific co.*, and *Potentialis* local actors interface with artists and participate in a variety of roles ranging from interlocutor to interpreter to performer. These projects conspire to make art with the public instead of about the public, and as a result, they rethink the ways in which art and place might be produced.



Lotte Van den Audenaeren, *good news (post future)*, 2012, Phosphorescent vinyl, 8 x 11 in., Installation view



**Barbara Adams** studies the creative practices of artists, designers and social scientists with a particular interest in the ways in which creative practitioners grapple with and diagnose contemporary unease through their work. Her research also considers what social scientists might learn from artists and designers in terms of methodology. Adams studied social sciences at the University of Amsterdam and is now working on her dissertation in sociology at The New School for Social Research. She teaches urban studies and social theory courses at The New School, Eugene Lang and Parsons The New School for Design. She is also co-editing the book "Design as Future-Making" with Susan Yelavich, forthcoming from Berg, which is concerned with the social capacities of design.

Francisco Montoya Cázarez's work explores his cultural identities, Mexican and German, through various materials and actions. Through this exploration Montoya is interested in how the two cultures both relate and yet can confront each other. In a recent video, Montoya juxtaposed two culturally specific situations with one another; a spiritual healer woman within the Sonora Market in Mexico City and a search of the German nuclear waste containers situated in different parts of the country (Gorleben, Asse and Morsleben), enabling the viewer to consider two distinctly different variations regarding notions of energy. In Montoya's work he not only attempts to create large-scale sculptural structures that reference significant cultural vernacular to his native country, Mexico, but also address the tumultuous political and social situation within the country. Montoya's works expand upon the folkloristic clichés typically reflected in the European perception of Mexico and intentionally give a closer inspection and examination of the country's economic and political realities.

*Minja Gu* works with various media including photography, video, installation, and drawing based on personal performances which start from ordinary behavior and the questions it raises. She graduated from the Department of Painting at Hongik University with a BFA, from the Department of Philosophy at Yonsei University with a BA, and from the Department of Fine Art at Korea National University of Arts with an MFA. She participated in various residency programs including Ssamzie Space Studio Program, the Hangar Residency in Barcelona, and Gyeonggi Creation Centre in Ansan. She had her first solo exhibition *Identical Times*, Space Croft, Seoul, 2009 and participated in many group exhibitions: *Taipei Biennial*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 2008; *Now What*, Space Hamilton, Seoul, 2009; *Anyang Public Art Project*, Anyang, 2010; *VIDEO: VIDE & 0*, Arko Art Centre, Seoul, 2010; and *Trading Future*, Taipei Contemporary Art Center, 2012. Recently she was selected as one of the young artists for the exhibition *New Visions New Voices*, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, 2013.

Su Yu-Hsien's work focuses on a unique understanding of the everyday, from the simple detritus to a range of individual portraits. Yu-Hsien is curious about how a sense of reality gets constructed or is adhered to in people's daily lives. Focusing primarily on creating a series of portraits, Yu-Hsien sees his subject matter in a series of desolate people leading barren lives with a sense of non-existence, which is often highlighted and put front and center. Additionally his work allows for a sense of humor to be captured in this constructed reality. For instance in *Plastic Man*, 2012, Yu-Hsien filmed and produced a record of a band of seemingly ordinary Taiwanese individuals standing on a plastic recycling dumpsite. The two worlds are juxtaposed utilizing the typical music video troupes while having a recognized dumpsite landscape in the background, but the band itself is made up of non-musicians and instead focuses on their individualness as being representative of the common person. Yu-Hsien captures an intimate reality of his subjects by constructing and adhering to various rules, forms, games, or recognized perceptions. The act of capturing these individuals with a video camera allows Yu-Hsien to highlight the distance between reality and the perceptions of his subjects.

**Lotte Van den Audenaeren's** site-specific installations, urban interventions, neon sculptures, word images and ephemeral works revolve around the determination and transience of place and content. Van den Audenaeren explores and unfolds multiple layers of perception through simple deconstruction and reconstruction of visual representation. The interventions, additions and deletions organized by Van den Audenaeren have a minimal or limited materiality, though they cause a drastic impact on their environment. Her works have a tendency to appear barely present, or in the process of disappearing – like light, shadows or apparitions. Van den Audenaeren lives and works in Brussels. She is a post-graduate of Sint-Lukas Brussels University College of Art and Design and of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts KASK Ghent. She participated in the Erasmus Program at Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Tilburg, The Netherlands. Van den Audenaeren received the Award Legacy Franciscus Pycke and became Coming People Laureate at S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium. Recent solo shows include: *Extra Muros*, Cultuurcentrum Strombeek Grimbergen vzw, Brussels; *paper planes*, Nadine, Brussels and *some pictures some things i left behind*, New York. Recent group shows include: *Melancholy is not enough....*, Unicredit Pavillon, Bucharest; *Make-Up On Empty Space*, Larissa Goldston Gallery New York; *...Is this Free*?, Nurture Art, Brooklyn solo project *VOLTA Art Fair*, New York; *I sent you*, Vancouver.

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