

Dinh Q.Le *Untitled* 2002



MOVING COLLECTION

Australia > Bangladesh > Brazil > Germany > India > Japan
Korea > Sri Lanka > United Kingdom > United States > Vietnam

05 OCTOBER - 8 DECEMBER 2002

>>> Re-Routing Energies

The key descriptors of *Moving collection* are: 'moving' and 'collection'. It is an exhibition or a proposal perhaps, that tries to create a constantly potent exhibition. I have invited artists from around the world to send me a work by post. Most have responded by sending me actual objects or drawings, some with modular pieces that can be arranged in different formations, some with simple instructions. Sending by post already sets some basic parameters for what kind of works will be shown – small scale, light weight, not too fragile and perhaps inexpensive. The works are gathered in Tokyo, by me, and become a collection.



>1 >2



>1 Tushar Joag
>2 Honda Makoto
>3 Sharmila Samant
>4 Guy Mayman
>5 Peter McDonald
>6 Satoru Aoyama

This type of exhibition or experimentation is not new. There is a rich and still growing archive of projects and exhibitions that have explored similar territories. So, to start with is also in some way to look back and around, to recognise other exhibitions in my field of view. I could mention many but here are four: Andre Malraux and his idea of exhibitions that can emerge anywhere with just pictures and images; Lucy Lippard and her exhibitions which could be packed into suitcases; Hans Ulrich Obrist and Hou Hanru and their exhibitions *On the move*; and Yoko Ono with her instructions on how to make a work of art anywhere. Running parallel to more orthodox exhibition practices in sanctioned art spaces, such initiatives have cast a constant shadow that has at times critiqued, at times offered much needed lightness and absurdity and at times helped to re-direct thinking about what exhibitions are and can be. Like the art it displays and shows, the exhibition as a constructed set of rules and systems, continues to evolve.

A curator was traditionally someone entrusted with collecting and preserving works of art, and in a similar way I become the keeper of this modest moving collection. It is not by any means a grand collection, but rather something more intimate and random – perhaps like a *wunderkammer*, a cabinet of curiosities. Furthermore, I have selected the artists and the works according to my tastes. There is no direct theme as such to the collection, only the parameters that I mentioned above, which must influence the artists in some way.

The idea of forming such an exhibition around the notion of a 'collection' is a gesture of acknowledging the history of exhibitions themselves, and how they emerged largely out of private collections. Indeed, what we think of as museums today can be said to have, in part at least, developed out of the unique relationships between private collections of wealthy individuals and the fate of such collections, donated or bequeathed to the state or an institution, to then be named, labelled and incorporated into a 'museum'. The passage of the collection of John Tradescant the elder at Lambeth, London in the eighteenth century illustrates this well. Originally a private collection of different artefacts, selected and displayed according to the tastes of its owner and available for viewing at the payment of a small fee, after it was inherited by Elias Ashmole and donated to the University of Oxford, it took the name of 'museum' in recognition of its purpose as a public foundation rather than a private collection. A similar story can be told regarding the founding of the British Museum in London, through the transformation of the private collection of Sir Hans Sloane into a public institution. In the case

>>>

of the *Moving collection*, a similar trajectory of building up a collection of diverse artefacts according to the direction of its curator may be charted, although I don't actually own the works. Artists keep ownership of their works and may, if they wish, leave the exhibition at any point. New artists join at a regular pace, often at the suggestion of other artists or a curator. In this regard, *Moving collection* tries to re-emphasise the role of the curator as literally a 'keeper' of art works, someone who is entrusted by the participating artists to hold their works and make opportunities to show it. The curator must therefore adopt a long-term and sustainable vision for the exhibition that keeps the



>3 NO MORE

artists informed of its progress and develops friendships through the communication networks. Since the exhibition was begun in early 2001, I have sent participating artists regular up-dates via e-mail, informing them of what kinds of works are being sent in, by whom and what opportunities for exhibition may have arisen. The collection is both made up of the contributed works, materially, but also of the slowly evolving group of participating artists, as a largely online community.



>4

The *Moving collection* is shown in many different spaces and at many different times, depending on opportunities which arise. Moreover as the individual works are small in size, the collection can be carried in its entirety easily by hand. In this way it becomes something totally flexible, not tied to one exhibition space or date or the will of one institution. Exhibitions of art tend to be fixed situations, where works are gathered from all over and brought to a centralised place. A lot of energy and money is used in this process. An important concern for the *Moving collection* has rather been to think of ways that an exhibition could be less demanding, less stressful and less special. Such ideas came out of the daily experiences of trying to operate as an independent curator and make exhibitions, whilst also having to work on different projects in order to make a living. Do exhibitions have to be so precious? Could exhibitions have a greater relationship with the personal pace and rhythms of everyday life and not be such isolated, purified (and expensive) events? Such questions open up what is perhaps one of the most debated issues in art over the last 100 years, the unceasing debate about the integration of art and life and the significance of modernism in defining our art and museums today. It seems possible to stake a ground for an 'ecology of exhibition making or curating', not in the environmental sense of the term, but rather in the broader sense of thinking about exhibitions as elements within a much wider inter-related system of parts that can inter-act with one another in different ways depending on inputs, outputs, energy and resources.

Moving collection can be realised in art spaces or really anywhere with a capacity to show a collection of works. Audiences will therefore also change depending on where the collection is shown, from totally public situations to rather more limited ones. One way the collection can be used is as a teaching platform in art schools, hopefully generating different ideas about contemporary life and art and leading to discussions. This is important in Japan now, where contemporary art education still tends to focus on technical aspects with little emphasis placed on discursive thinking and ideas.

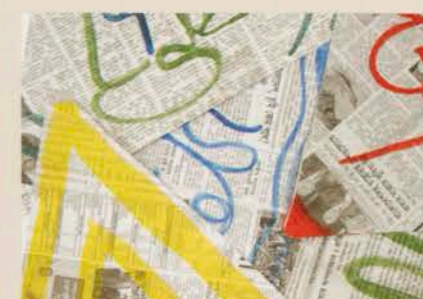
Many aspects of our societies today are also becoming more un-fixed and mobile communications can be made from anywhere, work can be done anywhere with portable computers and cell phones and the need for pe

>>>

rmanence in many respects – job, work space, ideals – seems to be lessening. This implies an increase in the speed with which many of us live as well as an increased sense of what we can call contemporaneity. This means that there is a greater awareness on the individual level of belonging to a planetary society, and a moving away from classical anthropological ways of thinking which emphasised distant, 'exotic' cultures, towards an awareness of the contemporary as the key referent for much of our lives. Marc Auge has written about this phenomenon at length, pointing out that because of global networks and modes, everything



>5 >6



is inter-related, criss-crossing through one another, in a shared and constantly constructed reality. Needless to say, such realities are also intimately tied to global geopolitical and economic systems which Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have referred to as 'Empire', the regulator of global markets, circuits of production and sovereignty which has emerged from this. Curating any exhibition that encompasses a global dimension, especially one like *Moving collection*, is also to enter into this planetary matrix of networks and modes. It involves using such networks in ways which disrupt usual patterns of production and consumption, developing micro solutions, switching between different systems (electronic/analogue/human) and trying to maintain an awareness of where one is at any given moment.

An experimental exhibition such as *Moving collection* shows another way in which exhibitions can be organised and made today, alongside what is happening in museums or in large-scale international exhibitions. In its own way it is also an international exhibition, involving works by artists from around the world, but using what is available to anyone, such as the postal system as the way to transport works, and e-mail to communicate. In Japanese there is a phrase '*muri ga nai*' which means 'there is no wastage or no unnecessary energy exerted'. The martial art of Aikido also adopts this kind of thinking, using the energy of an opponent to defeat him. Recently the Japanese artist and writer Genpei Akasegawa (one of the key members of the important avant-garde group 'Hi Red-Centre') published a series of books titled '*Ro-jin-ryoku*' which means something like 'The Power of Old People or the Elderly'. In it he identified the ways in which elderly people invent ingenious ways to perform daily actions in simple, effective ways that might actually be far more effective than more accepted ways of operating. Much of his thinking is based around simply turning an idea on its head so that we can see something from a different position and maybe find another way to do something, another routing of energy.

Artists are constantly engaged in this type of activity, making works that prompt us to see something in a different way using minimal means or with a constant level of complexity. *Moving collection* is not a work of art as such, but hopefully a framework that can act like another kind of museum or exhibition space. It obviously has limits, like all exhibitions. What is interesting and exciting is how it is possible to think about these limits in different ways in order to remember how exhibitions have operated up to now, and how *Moving collection* exists in the shadows of many previous experiments.

Roger McDonald <<<

>>> In presenting *Moving collection*, organised by Tokyo based curator Roger McDonald, the Govett-Brewster is interested in opening up debate on the nature of collections and touring exhibitions. This is the first time that the *Moving collection* has been exhibited in a museum, reflecting the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery's policy of presenting emerging and new international art to our audiences. The exhibition is also relevant to the Gallery's founding policy focus on the Pacific Rim, given that that *Moving collection* includes work from Japan, Vietnam, Australia, South Korea and the USA, all part of the Pacific region.

This collection of portable works, travel with curator Roger McDonald, which challenges conventional models of curatorial practice, notwithstanding the precedents of artists such as Marcel Duchamp or Joseph Beuys. In contrast to traditional touring exhibitions, where the same works are shown at every venue, *Moving collection* is a dynamic show to which new works are added at each location as the curator meets new artists and asks them to contribute work. For the exhibition in New Zealand McDonald will meet local artists thereby contributing to the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery's dedication to building links for artists. It is likely artists from New Zealand will be added, meaning that the exhibition also presents the growing travelogue of the curator. As a model for a touring exhibition *Moving collection* reflects an itinerancy and international dialogue that is characteristic of much contemporary art.

Gregory Burke <<<

>>> List of works

Satoru Aoyama, **Japan/UK**, *CD-R* 2002
embroidery, 470mm x 350mm

Yiso Bahe, **S. Korea**, *Untitled* 2002
painted wood, 700mm x 500mm

Helmut Batista, **Brazil**, *Capacete* 2002
newsprint

Arham ul-Huq Chowdhury, **Bangladesh**, *newspaper and calligraphy banners made for Language Day Movement February 21st 2002*
newspaper paint 230mm x 170mm

Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, **Vietnam**, *My biennale medals* 2001
ongoing, artists passes from international exhibitions,
dimensions variable

Matthew Hunt, **Australia**, *Points of demarcation* 1999
mixed media in plastic cases

Tushar Joag, **India**, *Can you have his cake and eat our bread too?* 2002
50 paper tags, string, dimensions variable

Takako Kimura, **Japan**, *Untitled* 2002
bought stickers on paper, 200mm x 90mm

Mayumi Kuronuma, **Japan**, *Fish-tapeworm* 2002
embroidered thread, 8000mm

Dinh Q. Le, **Vietnam**, *Untitled* 2001
moulded plastics in the shape of baby pacifiers, 50mm x 60mm

Pol Malo, **Germany/ Japan**, *Geysers* 2002
hanging cut out paper words, dimensions variable

Honda Makoto, **Japan**, *Violin players* 1998
acrylic on canvas, 380mm x 260mm

Guy Mayman, **UK**, *Gallery hell*, 2002
painted matchboxes, 50mm x 20mm

Peter McDonald, **UK/Japan**, *Untitled*, 2002
acrylic on paper, 600mm x 400mm

Kate McMillan, **Australia**, *Move*, 2002
rope, blankets, foam, wood, tape, cardboard,
dimensions between 150mm x 80mm, to 70mm x 50mm

Claudia McMonte, **USA**, *Mano di Miracoli* 2001
digital print on fabric, 120mm x 80mm

Akane Nakamori, **Japan**, *Untitled*, 2002
ongoing, colour thread, mixed media, 40mm x 40mm

Sharmila Samant, **India**, *NO MORE*, 2002
T-shirts with print, printed coasters, dimensions variable

Titus Spree, **Germany/Okinawa**, *Crossing urban reality*, 1997-2002
wooden box and paper, 300mm x 160mm

Koki Tanaka, **Japan**, *Grace*, 2002
looped DVD, dimensions variable

Chandraguptha Thenuwara, **Sri Lanka**
Before 1983, 2001
After 1983: Barrelism, 2001
Barrelism, 2001
watercolour on paper, 500mm x 350mm

Ren Yamazaki, **Japan**, *Untitled*, 2002
modified GameBoy, 130mm x 100mm

Junko Yuhara, **Japan**, *Untitled*, 2002
Acrylic on canvas, 350mm x 600mm

<<<

Roger McDonald was born in Tokyo where he currently lives and works. Educated in England and Europe, he was awarded a Doctorate in Art History focussing on Asian philosophy at the University of Kent, at Canterbury in 2000. Since 1998 McDonald has been working in the curatorial field when he toured an



exhibition of work by four contemporary British artists in Japan. In 2001 McDonald worked on two major international initiatives, as assistant to leading Japanese curator Fumio Nanjo on the Yokohama Triennale, and as the Japanese contributing curator to the UKS Biennale in Norway. He has contributed major catalogue texts to both of those events and recently wrote about the work of Jun-Nguyen Hatsushiba for the catalogue of the 13th Biennale of Sydney. In addition to this institutionally based practice, McDonald has organised several artist-initiative exhibitions in schools, bars, and outdoors. In April 2001 he became co-founder of AIT an initiative that facilitates links between organisations and stages exhibitions, performances, lectures and symposiums in Tokyo. AIT is a young organisation that has been responsible for coordinating events involving major art world luminaries. McDonald is constantly working on the *Moving collection* and will be touring the exhibition internationally.

Published in 2002 by the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in association with the exhibition *Moving collection*
5 October – 8 December 2002 at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

Copyright © 2002 Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, the artist and writers. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Queen St,
PO Box 647, New Plymouth, New Zealand.
www.govettbrewster.com

ISBN 0-908848-56-0

Curator: Roger McDonald
Director: Gregory Burke
Editor: Simon Rees
Designer: Jessica Gommers

Govett-Brewster Art Gallery

The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery is a museum that fosters the development and interpretation of contemporary art.



NEW PLYMOUTH
DISTRICT COUNCIL
newplymouthnz.com

PUBLICATIONS
GOVETT-BREWSTER
ART GALLERY