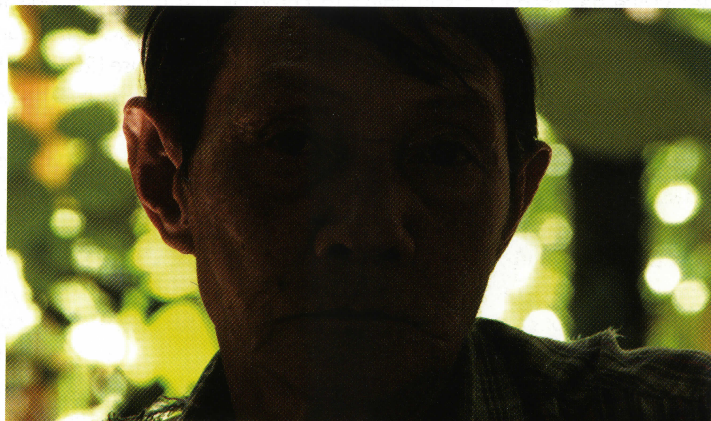


Rirkrit Tiravanija is, it could be said, a founding member of the relational aesthetics club. The Thai-born, New York-based artist had work in *Traffic*, the 1996 Nicolas Bourriaud-programmed show at Bordeaux's CAPC Museum of Contemporary Art, for which the curator coined his most famous term, and much of Tiravanija's past practice has been a neat illustration for Bourriaud's claim – which has attracted many detractors – that a circumstance had emerged in art that moved away from the tangible towards the catalysing of nonmaterial, nonhierarchical social networks. There's been the requisite dinner as art (a Tiravanija solo exhibition at New York's 303 Gallery in 1992), Tiravanija's apartment as art (replicated in 1999 at Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, and for the artist's 2005 Serpentine Gallery solo show, London), curatorial immersion as art (*Utopia Station*, which Tiravanija staged alongside Liam Gillick and Hans Ulrich Obrist at the 2003 Venice Biennale, and filled to bursting with works by 160 artists while still leaving space for a discussion lounge). The artist, however, has gone on record as saying that he is unnerved by the label, given that, at heart, his work is about the organics of interaction and social productivity, and thus demonstrates an antipathy to the idea of labelling, or absolutely defining, a practice. Describing Tiravanija's work, he seems to be saying, should be a process that's as slippery as the chaotic situations he sets up.

Perhaps as a consequence of this unease, Tiravanija's first exhibition at London's Pilar Corrias Gallery consists of two works that move away from the social and democratic as artmaking processes, in which he assumes instead the more traditional role of the artist privileged by his platform to speak. And rather than trading in the highly charged and revelatory moment of the 'art experience' that has marked Tiravanija's work previously, the works centre on the challenging and mundane experience of the everyday. *Lung Neaw* (both works 2010) is a Warholian video portrait of a Thai man, Uncle Neaw, going about his business over the course of a working day. Where Warhol asked us to gaze upon extremes – subjects with an alienating glamour attached to them – Tiravanija shows us an outsider. Uncle Neaw is older, his clothes worn; and despite his patience and tranquil demeanour, he appears at times to tire – understandably – of his role: the video lasts eight hours, revealing changes in light and other signs of time passing over the course of a day. (The display of the video strictly corresponds to this passage of time; it won't, for example, be played during the evening private view.)

As for the gallery's staff, a comrade has joined them for six weeks, a new face to add to the ones that greet them every day, five days a week, week in, week out. For them the work invites a familiar bond with the man, a shared act of endurance. The video is social in this sense, but crucially departs from the democratic partaking of relational aesthetics: we are now viewers, and at a remove. A second new work for the show, *Pilar, 08/10/10*, demonstrates a similarly one-way communication. It documents a performance that takes place this month, in which Tiravanija's gallerist, Pilar Corrias, stands on a soapbox at London's Speakers' Corner and recounts the mundanities of a day in her life (as scripted by Tiravanija from Corrias's diary notes). With a nod to Marcel Broodthaers's 1972 silent performance at the same venue, the unexceptional, uncontroversial nature of Corrias's narrative, delivered at a site hallowed for the free and unmediated airing of political and other polemics, mirrors the ambivalence of the passing pedestrian traffic. In emphasising the everyday, Tiravanija is metaphorically kicking away the very stage he has built for himself with this show, pouring scorn on the idea of the artist as visionary, placing himself instead in the realm of normality's unique tedium. In this manner Tiravanija's practice still provides no answers, just meetings. *Oliver Basciano*



Rirkrit Tiravanija

Pilar Corrias

13 October - 1 December