Bringing The Land Foundation Back to Earth: a new model for the critical analysis of relational art

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Abstract
In 1998, the publishing of Nicolas Bourriaud’s *Relational Aesthetics* drew together a group of contemporary art practices that took human relationships as their medium. These practices presented a significant problem for conventional art criticism, which either took an approach based on notions of artistic ethics or an approach that valued the avant-garde and “antagonism.” In this paper, the limitations of these critical approaches are addressed and the field of critical attention expanded towards an analysis of a work’s discursive dimensions, operating beyond its immediate physical manifestation. Expanding analysis in this way introduces a tension between the lived temporality of relational works, as experienced by a limited audience, and their fictional dimensions within contemporary artistic discourse. Distinguishing between these two interrelated dimensions of relational works opens up the space for criticism between the work’s idealistic or utopian aims and the reality of their effectiveness in a contemporary capitalist context. This critical approach is tested against the case study of Rirkrit Tiravanija and Kamin Lertchaiprasert’s project, *The Land Foundation* in Northern Thailand. The project, a functioning farm, which also includes houses and structures by international artists and artists’ groups, including Superflex and Philippe Parreno, effectively demonstrates this tension between the work’s apparently successful utopian, fictional dimension and the reality of its isolated physical manifestation. In separating the work’s physical and discursive forms in this way, one is therefore able to create space for the evaluation of its political and artistic efficacy in its entirety.

Keywords: relational aesthetics; dialogical art; art criticism; Rirkrit Tiravanija; Kamin Lertchaiprasert; discursive analysis; The Land Foundation; contemporary art; Thai art

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In accordance with cultural convention, Thai artists and authors are referred to by their first names.

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In 1998, artistic projects drawing upon long-standing histories of works predicated on strategies of audience collaboration and participation, gained considerable renown when repackaged in Nicolas Bourriaud’s work *Relational Aesthetics*. Relational art’s popularity occurred in synchronicity with the evolution of the exhibition-as-event and the expansion of the market for contemporary art, providing another spectacular artistic form within the curatorial arsenal with which to tempt an often intellectually underestimated audience to galleries. The difficult nature of evaluating human relationships as an artistic medium has meant that with few exceptions, these projects have evaded considered critical analysis. Viewing relational practices as tools for political or social action in desperate times, criticism has therefore largely taken the form of didactic praise for works’ ethical values rather than their artistic merit. Alternatively, Claire Bishop has proposed a critical framework based simultaneously on debates concerning the autonomy of artistic praxis and the political potential of antagonistic relational practices. In presenting the limitations of both these approaches, this paper outlines a new critical model founded in an evaluation of the paradoxical relationship between relational projects’ fictive and realistic dimensions. This is then tested against a case study of The Land Foundation in Sanpatong, North Thailand.

**CRITICAL FOUNDATIONS**

*The Land*, initiated in 1998 by Rirkrit Tiravanija and Kamin Lertchaiprasert, is described as “a laboratory for self-sustainable development . . . [and] a site where a new model of living is being tested.” The project comprises of a single rice field, several architectural structures designed by prominent contemporary artists, and, according to the principles of relational aesthetics, relationships between artists, participants, paid staff, farmers, and contributors to the work’s discursive field. Criticism of the project has oscillated between its successes or failures in terms of its functional, aesthetic, and relational aims, or criticism of the work’s lack of functioning amenities. A notable exception is Kraynak’s paper on *The Land* and its relationship to ecological movements. In her paper, Kraynak alludes to a paradox between *The Land* as a fiction and its materialization in reality stating, “The Land functions not simply as a place but as an idea.” As she further establishes, information concerning *The Land* is limited and given its relatively isolated location few are able to visit the site in order to conduct comprehensive critical analysis. Despite this, Kraynak fails to address how *The Land’s* discursive, and ultimately fictional forms may impact readings of the work, or how these forms may be consciously constructed dimensions of the work itself. Furthermore, given that at the time of writing Kraynak had not visited the site, her article itself is a pertinent example of how the work is experienced in its fictionalized form.

As relational works frequently exist outside the boundaries of galleries and museums, and are circumscribed in their physical materializations, the limitations of Kraynak’s and other’s analyses are repeated in the preponderance of critical models for the analysis of these practices. As Grant Kester has suggested, given the dialogical nature of relational works, where the moment of creation and reception co-exist, critics are no longer able to assign to the work a hypothetical audience whose experiences will co-align with the artist’s intentions or the critic’s reading. This paradigm shift from a hypothesized audience to an actual one frequently means that criticism of works takes the form of an ethical evaluation. As Bishop has recognized this ethical focus means that, “There can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of collaborative art because all are equally essential to the task of strengthening the social bond.”

Bishop’s own critical model contrasts these ethically based practices with those she views as “antagonistic” in the sense intended by Lacau and Mouffe. However, both her model and the ethical model, having based analyses in the actuality of real relationships that are rarely communicated to the critic, fundamentally misunderstand the open nature of relational practices beyond the limitations of a project’s immediate temporal and physical space. Here, the problematics of analysis based unselfconsciously on second or even third hand discursive accounts also points to an integral part of the structure of relational works. In addition to their actualized form, relational works also exist in an often, but not always, utopian fictionalized form within the discursive space of critical analysis, participant accounts, videos, photographs or artist
interviews. In these discursive spaces the work is frequently created as much as it is recreated, sometimes under the careful control of the artist and sometimes as an expression of the open-ended nature of the work itself. The recognition of the dual-structure of relational artworks in this way, reconfigures their relationship to the political and the ethical, opening the way for deeper, considered criticism of their efficacy in a contemporary context.

FUNCTION AND AESTHETICS

Initiated as a pragmatic response to Thailand’s financial crisis, *The Land* is a pertinent example of complex relationship between fictional and actual forms in relational projects. Believing his income from artistic practices to be insecure in the midst of Thailand’s economic crisis, Kamin began devising a plan for *The Land* after developing an interest in Buddhist farming and self-sufficiency. In particular, the non-interventional farming of Masanobu Fukuoka and the Thai Buddhist agricultural theories of Chaluay Kaewkong formed the basis of *The Land*’s agricultural development. Simply put, the initial aim of *The Land*’s proposal was the development of a functional farm on which one could survive should the need or desire arise.

The functional possibilities of *The Land* were extended through the inclusion of architectural structures and experimental projects. While the importance of *The Land*’s functionality continues to be reinforced by Kamin, many of the buildings are now in disrepair. The degeneration of *The Land*’s buildings results from the fact that most of the buildings were constructed without regard to the environmental context in which they would be situated. Tobias Rehberger’s and Rirkrit’s houses for example, originally built for the exhibition, *What if ... Art on the Verge of Architecture and Design* at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm in 2000, were transported and installed at *The Land* in 2001. While Rirkrit’s structure still stands, Rehberger’s structure, built entirely out of Swedish wood unsuitable for the Thai environment, has now been removed as a safety precaution (Figure 1).

The experimental projects designed to make regular inhabitation of *The Land* possible were similarly conceived without concern for the environmental specificities of the site. Superflex’s ambitious *Biogas* project, intended to provide *The Land*’s kitchen with cooking gas derived from buffalo feces, was removed after the balloon-like storage receptacle broke less than a year after its installation. With a local, affordable biogas system already used by villagers in Sanpatong, Superflex’s expensive system was a didactic experiment representing the vast distance between *The Land* and its immediate context. Philippe Parreno and François Roche’s *Hybrid Muscle*, a large, futurist structure constructed to address the site’s electricity issues, has never functioned. Designed as a counter-weight system to be set in motion by an elephant, Parreno and Roche did not consider that work-elephants are no longer used in Thailand. This oversight of *The Land*’s context was not rectified by the elephant’s replacement with a buffalo; the buffalo not having the strength to lift the heavy weight for the work to function.

The fictional dimension of *The Land* operates though the discourse surrounding the project including films, photographs, interviews and public talks, participant blogs, and art press articles. The inclusion of design and artworks by internationally prominent artists such as Rirkrit, Parreno, Roche, Superflex, and Rehberger captured the attention of critics, curators and art “fans,” while simultaneously securing *The Land*’s image as an ambitious relational art project. This inclusion in artistic discourse has shifted focus away from the failure of *The Land*’s functional aims to its perceived success with regards its aesthetic or symbolic aims.
According to early panoramic photographs, published on the project’s website, Rirkrit’s house and Thaivijit Puangkasemsomboon and Somyot Hananuntasuk’s house are clean and modern. The kitchen-meeting room, jointly designed by Kamin, Rirkrit, Rehberger, and Superflex, the gardener’s house designed by Kamin for The Land’s farmer, and Angkrit Ajchariyasophon’s house are aesthetically pleasing, but in their traditional Thai design differ little from the houses of surrounding farms. The grass is neatly mown, the area free from rubbish, and even Hybrid Muscle, covered by elastomer fabric, appears congruous with the landscape. Taken soon after the construction of Parreno and Roche’s structure in 2003, less than 2 years after the installation of Rehberger and Rirkrit’s houses, The Land appears idyllic, a contrast to the disintegrating buildings which greet the visitor today. This fictional rendering of The Land’s image is further reinforced through photographs accompanying articles about The Land. Panoramic photographs taken at dusk, sunlight reflecting on the interior of Rirkrit’s house, buffalos grazing beside a fully inflated (and presumably functional) Biogas structure, and Hybrid Muscle lit up with lanterns at night accompanied an acclamatory article written by Daniel Birnbaum in 2005. Drawing exclusively from these images, The Land’s representation as a utopian project where aesthetics combine seamlessly with function is difficult to dispute.

The fictionalization of The Land was further reinforced through Parreno’s science fiction film, The Boy from Mars, shot at the site (Figure 2). The illusion of Hybrid Muscle’s functionality was created in the film through shots of the structure eerily lit from the inside, intercut with images of buffalo effortlessly working against the counterweight. The film’s exhibition at the 2003 Venice Biennale increased The Land’s prominence in art networks while simultaneously solidifying its fictional image. While the film itself is visually stunning, Hybrid Muscle’s latex roof—which allowed for the structure to be beautifully lit from the inside in the film—was completely unsuitable for the Thai environment, soon melting and being replaced with a far less visually appealing corrugated iron roof (Figure 3). The structure now functions as storage for the rice yield and as a stand to some gaudy pinwheels designed to scare birds away from the field. In Boy From Mars the incongruity between the dramatic images of the Thai landscape and Hybrid Muscle’s alien structure, may have effectively communicated Parreno’s message of alienation and hybridity, but in its continued existence at The Land it is more symbolic of the disinterest which accompanies the project’s gradual disintegration. The importance of these fictionalized images to understandings and interpretations of The Land cannot be overstated. Despite Kamin’s complaints about “art tourism,” Chiang Mai remains a rarely visited location for art enthusiasts. Consequently, most experiences of The Land are through such idyllic images, which stand as timeless representations of its appearance.
COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION

Criticism of The Land’s realistic form in terms of its functional and aesthetic aspects has been rendered problematic through the project’s central maxim of no-ownership. As a relational artwork, The Land was developed “with certain intentions towards community, towards discussions and towards experimentation in other fields of thoughts.”23 From Kamin and Rirkrit’s perspective, the dissolving of hierarchies is central to community development in The Land and while they see themselves as the project’s “founders,” they are not the project’s “owners.”24 Each artist is responsible for the funding and upkeep of their own structure, though few are able maintain a sustained interest in the project. Originally, the Swedish wood of Rehberger’s house was to be replaced piece by piece with Thai wood. Unfortunately, the structure disintegrated too quickly and the artist was unable to find the resources to rebuild it.25 Additionally, while all the artists involved in The Land are required to visit the site before they propose works, few have volunteered to stay for an extended period of time.26 For example, although Parreno and Roche designed Hybrid Muscle, Thai workers constructed the work. Once completed, the artists visited the site to film The Boy from Mars for 2 days, before leaving again.27

Despite Kamin and Rirkrit’s purported desire to relinquish ownership of The Land, analysis of the positions they occupy in the project’s real and fictionalized forms dispel any such illusions. Employees of The Land’s office in Chiang Mai refer to Kamin and Rirkrit as aajaan, the respectful Thai term for “teacher.” The Land’s One Year Project #1 and #2 further bolstered Kamin and Rirkrit’s position as teachers within the project’s structure. Although conceived as residency programs for young artists, the One Year Projects were not so concerned with making art as teaching students “the art of living”; all participants were required to undertake a Vipassana meditation course and learn sustainable farming techniques before moving on to art-making.

The point here is not to criticize these relationships but rather to indicate how such constructions are incompatible with the founders’ aims concerning no-ownership. As Rancière has stated, the structure of teaching is itself founded on an inequitable premise: “The role assigned to the schoolmaster in that relationship is to abolish the distance between his knowledge and the ignorance of the ignoramus … Unfortunately, he can only reduce the distance on condition that he constantly re-creates it. To replace ignorance by knowledge, he must always … install a new form of ignorance between the pupil and himself.”29 If the student/teacher relationship is fundamentally unequal all attempts at equality in The Land are circumvented by precisely this relationship.

Parallels exist between the teacher/student relationship created through the One Year Projects and the relationship between the founders and visitors to the site. The Land is imagined to be available for use by anyone at any time, with Kamin citing local peoples’ use of the site as a public park as exemplifying the project’s open and equitable facets.30 When the project was initiated, charitable aims were expressed by the founders, including the provision of rice to several families in Sanpatong affected by AIDS. Both aims are still claimed by the project in its fictionalized form, but in the project’s realistic form have failed to come to fruition. First, as Kraynak noted, The Land itself is not a completely public space; with the project having to be “literally fenced in” after local people pillaged the site’s plants and fruit trees.31 Second, notwithstanding claims on the project’s website, rice is no longer given to people affected by AIDS in Sanpatong.32 Despite such inconsistencies, the fictionalized image of The Land frames the project as a selfless act of generosity, leading to acclama-
tions for the project’s founders emanating from prominent curators and critics such as Hans Ulrich Obrist. 33

As Kamin and Rirkrit have become the primary spokespersons on behalf of The Land’s “collaborative” community, both artists are able to exert a significant degree of control over the work’s fictionalized form. This positioning is recognized by Rirkrit, who contends, “while we always stress that the Land is collaborative, most people assign my name to the place because of my profile and the fact that I often speak about it in public.” 34 In a joint retrospective at Chiang Mai University in 2002, The Land featured prominently amongst Kamin and Rirkrit’s other works, and several essays in the exhibition’s catalogue referred to The Land as a collaborative work between the two artists. 35 Additionally, Kamin and Rirkrit both speak regularly about the project in public forums with Kamin most recently speaking about The Land as a part of the exhibition, run in parallel with the 2011 Singapore Biennale, entitled Negotiating Home, History and Nation: Two Decades of Contemporary Art in Southeast Asia, 1991–2011.

As the only members of The Land’s “collaborative” network who speak regularly for and about the work, Kamin and Rirkrit’s positioning is emblematic of Bourdieu’s theory of the “delegate.” As Bourdieu writes, “it is because the representative exists, because he represents (symbolic action), that the group that is represented and symbolized exists and that in return it gives existence to its representative as the representative of a group.” 36 In this way, The Land’s community comes to exist via Kamin and Rirkrit’s framing of the work in a particular fictionalized form. Compounded with ideas of no-ownership, this positioning contains three functions: firstly, the founders evade criticism of the project’s non-functionality or aesthetic aspects. Secondly, as the only members of The Land’s “collaborative” network who speak regularly about the project, all positive fictional renderings of The Land are attributed to the individual insight of these two artists. Finally and most importantly, Bourdieu’s theory of the “delegate” indicates the way in which The Land’s fictionalized form comes to exist through its two founders; all discursive flows emanate from their persons and return to them. From this perspective, notions of no-ownership become antithetical to the paradoxical relationship between the project’s fictional and realistic forms.

DISTANCE AND NOMADISM

The paradox between The Land’s fictional and realistic forms is similarly illuminated in the tension between the project’s role as a functioning farm and its image as a “rest-stop” for internationally acclaimed artists. Conceived as a “retirement home,” where artists can meet and rest, The Land has been imagined as a space both physically and conceptually outside the international art world. 37 Paradoxically, The Land is simultaneously imagined as a nodal point within a “globalized” art world, where nomadic artists move across borders with little or no hindrance in a never-ending calendar of international exhibitions and events. Born in Argentina in 1961, Rirkrit moved between Thailand, Ethiopia, and Malaysia throughout his childhood, later moved to Canada, and now resides in New York. In the writings of authors and curators Rirkrit’s biography thus substantiates his personification of nomadic values. 38 Rirkrit’s artistic projects have similarly worked to validate the image of his almost mythic movement between locales: from videos and records of his journeys, 39 to portable tools to support a nomadic lifestyle, 40 and impermanent “stations,” 41 Rirkrit’s work re-affirms the liberation of movement in a world unfettered by borders.

Drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari’s treatise to the nomadic in A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Demavivas describes The Land as an “ambivalent amalgam of forms bespeaking or implying layered functions and rhizomatic connections.” 42 According to Deleuze and Guattari, rhizomatic connections join two points without privileging either over the other, thus refusing center-periphery capitalist models in favor of linkages in flux between deterritorialization and reterritorialization. 43 Nomadic thought or physicality is founded in movement along these lines in which, “the coupling of place and the absolute is achieved not in a centered, oriented globalization or universalization but in an infinite succession of local operations.” 44 In this way, nomadism becomes a means of circumventing state controls placed on the individual, allowing nomadic personalities to (potentially) enact political change beyond these boundaries. However in reality,
as Verhagen has observed, nomadism does not so much predicate political engagement based on outside perspectives as much as it places the nomadic artist firmly inside the workings of an economic system that is itself increasingly nomadic.\textsuperscript{45}

If the nomadic is founded in movement and dynamism, by way of contrast, \textit{The Land} is imagined to be uncannily static. Since \textit{One Year Project} \#2 in 2007 in which several artists came to live at the project site for a short period of time, as well as the relocation of the Thai farmer and his wife offsite, the project has not housed any residents.\textsuperscript{46}

\textit{The Land’s} static position, outside a “globalized” art world was exemplified in Coxon’s article about the project:

Settled within the gentle hills and lush green foliage of Northern Thailand, two rice fields and a pond are bordered by a number of unusual stilted structures and trees, several heavy with mangoes …. This rural idyll, seemingly a million miles away from the contemporary art circuit, was in fact acquired and initiated by the artists Rirkrit Tiravanija and Kamin Lertchaiprasert.\textsuperscript{47}

This construction fetishizes the life of the Thai farmer as a reprise from the life of the nomadic artist. In fictional renderings of \textit{The Land}, Rirkrit’s position in particular is contrasted to the local people of Sanpatong including, presumably, the Thai farmer and his wife who ensure the project’s survival on a day-to-day basis. As Birnbaum exemplifies: “In Sanpatong, he [Rirkrit] is something of an ambassador who travels around the world and brings back interesting people and ideas.”\textsuperscript{48}

While the fictionalized form of \textit{The Land} imagines the project as outside international art networks, the very existence of this form places the project firmly within these networks. Encompassing a network that may be described as a multifarious game of Chinese whispers, \textit{The Land} has become the art world’s equivalent of a mythical \textit{Shangri-La}. Spaid’s account of how she came to know of \textit{The Land} exemplifies one such network:

I first heard about \textit{the land} in 2001 when collectors Andy and Karen Stillpass visited, only to be reminded again when \textit{Artforum} dedicated its Summer 2005 issue to art and land. Artists Michael Barton Miller and Tera Galanti’s tales of multiple pilgrimages there further piqued my curiosity. Once I began work on the exhibition “Green Acres: Artists Farming Fields, Greenhouses, and Abandoned Lots” ..., the land became a must-see destination.\textsuperscript{49}

While \textit{The Land’s} fictionalization places it firmly inside art world discourse, the efficacy of its perceived utopian structure derives from the project’s image as outside this system. This again demonstrates the influential force of \textit{The Land’s} fictional forms to readings of the project, and their importance effective critical analysis.

**FICTIONALIZED UTOPIAS**

Given the paradox between \textit{The Land}’s realistic and fictionalized forms, how may one critically approach the project’s utopian aims? Originally coined in Sir Thomas More’s book of the same name, the term “utopia” derives from Greek words meaning, “no-place.”\textsuperscript{50} Here, the concept of utopia was already linked with impossibility and, ultimately, fiction. Although the term “utopia” does not appear on \textit{The Land’s} website, it is perhaps the most frequently utilized term in descriptions of the project.\textsuperscript{51} Drawing from Bourriaud’s understanding of relational projects’ aims as the creation of “micro-utopias,”\textsuperscript{52} this reading of \textit{The Land} is most clearly exemplified in Obrist’s terms: “\textit{The Land} is a concrete Utopia, but it is also first and foremost a self-imposed Utopia, one that is not rooted in intransigent beliefs on how others should live.”\textsuperscript{53} How \textit{The Land} has retained its image as a “concrete utopia” is difficult to determine, as the site’s inability to support functional inhabitation seems to contradict this notion. Given the non-functionality of its realistic form, conceptualizing the work’s utopian structure must then occur entirely through the project’s fictionalization.

A similar construction and manipulation of fictional utopian forms was utilized in Rirkrit’s work with Obrist and Molly Nesbit at the 2003 Venice Biennale entitled \textit{Utopia Station}. In appropriating relationships as a metaphor for the staging of large-scale \textit{tableaux vivants} illustrating cosmopolitan cultural diversions.”\textsuperscript{54} In this way, focus was diverted from the applicability of utopian aims explored in the project, and aimed at discourse emanating from the work in its fictionalized form. Criticism of
the non-applicability of utopian forms produced through relational projects is avoided through assertions that these projects provide impetus for political and social change by proposing, “new ‘life possibilities’”. In this way, *Utopia Station* acted as, “a catalyst, a concept so much useful as fuel... motivated by a need to change the landscape outside and inside, a need to think, a need to integrate the work of the artist.”

This focus on the *discussion* of imaginative utopias as a stimulus for political and social change is similarly discernable in *The Land*’s organizational structure. Although discussions of *The Land*’s electricity problem have not yielded any tangible results, Kamin reaffirms the importance of these conversations. The focus on discussion as opposed to manifesting results in *The Land* again reinforces the work’s fictional dimension; when asked about the non-functionality of *The Land*, Kamin underscores the project’s experimental qualities, stating that *The Land*’s functionality is not as important as the creation of space for the discussion of alternative possibilities.

Relational works’ fictionalization of utopian ideas has materialized as a knee-jerk reaction to the utopian programs of avant-garde artistic movements, subsequently dismantled by post-modernist discourse. As Bourriaud explains, “social utopias and revolutionary hopes have given way to everyday micro-utopias and imitative strategies, any stance that is ‘directly’ critical of society is futile, if based on the illusion of a marginality that is nowadays impossible, not to say regressive.” Concern with avoiding the “pitfalls” of avant-garde projects has meant that rather than developing discussions concerning the political and social change that *The Land* may enact, its fictional forms have dis-integrated into didactic assertions of the project’s excellence in and of itself. Investigating the paradoxical relationship between *The Land*’s realistic and fictional forms does not open an inquiry into utopian structures and their relationship to social and political change, but rather demonstrates the *failure* of artistic practices to engage with these concepts meaningfully. As Gillick eloquently stated:

> it is arguable that the notion of utopia within the cultural sphere is most attractive to those who have no ongoing interest in making productive change. Instead they create a sequence of mirage visions of how things could be if they were everything other than the way they are now.

Gillick’s statement was reflected pertinently in Jay Koh’s protest at Rirkrit’s 1996 re-construction of his apartment in Cologne. Koh, reacting against Rirkrit’s simulacrum of social engagement, posted the following statement (in Thai) on the door: “Sawasdee Khrap, Nong Chai [Greetings, younger brother]. Your Process art sounds good, but what about the ‘process’ in your [Thai] society? The women and poverty?” Koh did not evoke these issues to suggest that Rirkrit’s work is in some way connected them, but rather to draw attention to the essentially nihilistic attitude that accompanies relational artworks’ attempts at social and political change when only proposing fictionalized simulacra as potential tools to manifest this change.

**CONCLUSION**

The failure of critical systems for the evaluation of relational works is that in focusing on the real, lived experience of these projects, critics have passed over works’ fictionalized forms. The importance of fictionalized forms to the analysis of relational works derives from the fact that real experience of these projects is generally only available to a select number of people, and that the majority of the project’s audience comes to understand the work in this form. *The Land Foundation*’s fictionalization through discursive networks largely allows the project to evade serious, considered criticism. More importantly, despite attempts to utilize fictional forms to promote social, political and spiritual change through dialogue, critical discussion concerning *The Land* has largely failed to meet these criteria. Enamorment with the project has rendered *The Land*’s fictionalized forms impotent as critical attention invariably disintegrates into didactic praise. This paper, as another manifestation of *The Land*’s fictional form, is an attempt to take this game of “Chinese whispers” in another direction, towards a reinvigoration of the critic’s voice in the face of consensus.

**Notes**

1. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002).
2. Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents,” *Artforum* 44, issue. 6 (February 2006): 178–83.

3. Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” *October* 110 (Autumn 2004): 51–79.

4. Hans Ulrich Obrist, “Merzspace,” *Spice* issue. 4 (2005): 15–19.

5. See Susan Cross and Vivien Greene, “Utopia: Of Its Past and Present; Susan Cross and Vivien Greene on ‘Utopia Matters’,” Deutsche Bank Art Works, http://www.db-artmag.com/en/58/feature/utopia-matters-an-interview-with-curator-vivien-greene/ (accessed February 15, 2011); Ann Coxon, “Fieldwork,” *Art Monthly* no. 288 (July–August 2005): 9–12; and Hans Ulrich Obrist in James Meyer, et al., “Global Tendencies: A Roundtable Discussion,” *Artforum International* 42, issue. 3 (November 2005): 159.

6. Sarah Browne, “Artists Not Farmers,” *The Visual Arts’ News Sheet* 3, issue. 4 (September–October 2005): 1–3.

7. Janet Kraynak, “The Land and the Economics of Sustainability,” *Art Journal* 69, issue. 4 (Winter 2010): 24.

8. Ibid., 25.

9. Grant Kester, “The Device Laid Bare: On Some Limitations in Current Art Criticism,” *E-Flux Journal* issue. 50 (December 2013). http://www.e-flux.com/issues/50-december-2013/ (accessed January 4, 2014).

10. Bishop, “The Social Turn,” 180.

11. Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.”

12. Interview with Kamin Lertchaiprasert, Chiang Mai, March 8, 2011.

13. Ibid.

14. Masanobu Fukuoka, “Excerpts from Masanobu Fukuoka’s Book: The One Straw Revolution,” Rosanna Tosita-Rial, trans. Japanese to Thai, Supasiri Songsiride, trans. Thai to English, 114–39; Vitoon Liamjumroon, “The Buddhist Agriculture of Chaluay Kaewkong,” 140–57 both in Rirkrit Tiravanija and Kamin Lertchaiprasert, *Rai Ken San = Nothing* (Exhibition Catalogue) The Chiang-Mai University Art Museum, (Krungh Thep: PLAN.b Limited Partnership, 2002).

15. Interview with Kamin Lertchaiprasert.

16. Ibid.

17. On the local biogas system see Karen Demavivas, “The Land,” in Tiravanija and Lertchaiprasert, *Rai Ken San = Nothing*, 74.

18. Superflex is now a registered company, with its systems sold to families in developing areas at a considerable cost. See Åsa Nacking, “Interview with Superflex,” in *Design and Art*, ed. Alex Coles (London: Whitechapel, 2007), 129.

19. Interview with Kamin Lertchaiprasert.

20. The Land Foundation, “Panor Gallery,” http://www.thelandfoundation.org/?House_Project:Panor_Gallery (accessed March 1, 2011).

21. Daniel Birnbaum, “The Lay of the Land: An Experiment in Art and Community in Thailand,” *Artforum International* 43, issue. 10 (2005): 270–6. Similar examples include: Anne Kirker, “Art for Social Change: Kamin Lertchaiprasert and a New Chiang Mai Enterprise,” *EyeLine* (Autumn-Winter 2003); and Sue Spaid, “One Year Project #2,” *ArtUS*, issue. 22 (March 2008): 48–9.

22. Kamin’s complaints are documented in: Birnbaum, “The Lay of the Land,” 276. On the physical isolation of *The Land* see Kraynak, “The Land and the Economics,” 25.

23. The Land Foundation, “About the Land,” http://www.thelandfoundation.org/?About_the_land (accessed March 1, 2011).

24. Interview with Kamin Lertchaiprasert.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Browne, “Artists Not Farmers.”

28. Interview with Kamin Lertchaiprasert.

29. Jacques Rancière. *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009), 8.

30. Interview with Kamin Lertchaiprasert.

31. Kraynak, “The Land and the Economics,” 25.

32. Interview with Kamin Lertchaiprasert.

33. See, for example, Obrist, “Merzspace.”

34. Rirkrit Tiravanija in Tim Griffin, “Remote Possibilities: A Roundtable Discussion on Land Art’s Changing Terrain,” *Artforum International* 43, issue. 10 (Summer 2005): 296. This point is also mentioned in Kraynak, “The Land and the Economics,” 24.

35. See, Gridthiya Gaweewong “An Intersection of Buddha and Duchamp,” 12–29 and Demavivas, “The Land,” 54–83 both in Tiravanija and Lertchaiprasert, *Rai Ken San = Nothing*.

36. Pierre Bourdieu, “Delegation and Political Fetishism,” in *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 204.

37. Interview with Kamin Lertchaiprasert.

38. See, for example, Alice Yang, *Why Asia: Contemporary Asian and Asian American Art* (New York: The Estate of Alice Yang, 1998), 8.

39. See, for example, Rirkrit’s work exhibited at *Cocido y Crudo* in Madrid, 1994 that included video documentation of his bicycle trip from the airport to the exhibition as well as a record of all meals eaten and people spoken to on the way, described in Ibid., 6–7.

40. See, for example, Rirkrit’s work *Prototype for Untitled (Travels with Charity)* that consisted of a portable tent attached to a jacket. See, Roberta Fallon, “Spiritual Comfort,” *Artnet*, 2002, http://www.artnet.com/magazine/features/fallon/fallon4-15-02.asp (accessed April 20, 2011).

41. See, for example, Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Rirkrit Tiravanija, “What is a Station?,” in *La Biennale di Venezia 50th International Art Exhibition: Dreams and Conflicts*, The Dictatorship of the Viewer,
ed. Piccinini, Patricia (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2003). 327–342.
42. Demavivas, “The Land,” 57. My italics.
43. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 1987), 11.
44. Ibid., 422.
45. Marcus Verhagen, “Nomadism,” Art Monthly issue. 300 (October 2006): 7–10.
46. On the static nature of The Land see Claire Bishop in Jennifer Roche, “Socially Engaged Art, Critics and Discontents: An Interview with Claire Bishop,” Community Arts Network, 2006, http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2006/07/socially_engage.php (accessed April 20, 2011).
47. Coxon, “Fieldwork,” 9.
48. Birnbaum, “The Lay of the Land.”
49. Spaid, “One Year Project #2,” 48.
50. Paul Turner, “Introduction to in Thomas More, Utopia,” in Utopia, ed. Paul Turner (London: Penguin Classics, 1965), xii.
51. Tiravanija and Lertchaiprasert, Rai kæn san = Nothing.
52. Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics, 31.
53. Obrist, “Merzspace,” 17.
54. Dan Fox, “Welcome to the Real World,” Frieze, issue. 90 (April, 2005): 72–6.
55. Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics, 45.
56. Nesbit, Obrist, and Tiravanija, “What Is a Station?” 333.
57. Interview with Kamin Lertchaiprasert.
58. Ibid.
59. Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics, 31.
60. Liam Gillick, “Utopia Station for a ... Functional Utopia,” in Utopics: Systems and Landmarks, ed. Simon Lamunière (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2009), 57.
61. Grant H. Kester, “The Art of Listening (and of Being Heard): Jay Koh’s Discursive Networks,” Third Text 47, issue. 13 (1999): 25.