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Singapore

- June 18, 2014 Written by [Marilyn Goh](#)

[Rirkrit Tiravanija: Time Travelers Chronicle \(Doubt\): 2014 – 802,701 A.D at Singapore Tyler Print Institute](#)

“There is no difference between Time and any of the three dimensions of Space except that our consciousness moves along it.”—H.G. Wells, The Time Machine (1895)

In 1992, [Rirkrit Tiravanija](#) converted the spaces of [303 Gallery](#) in New York into a kitchen where he served rice and Thai curry to a crowd that became unwitting participants in a hybrid installation titled *Untitled (Free)*. Seven years later, Tiravanija further blurred the experience between art and life in *Untitled (Tomorrow Can Shut Up and Go Away)* (1999) by re-creating the interior dimensions and spaces of his three-room East Village apartment, then extending the invitation to the public to spend time in it the way they would in a friend’s home.

The transactional quality in Tiravanija’s hybrid installations is unmistakable, even for those who are sceptical of art that takes participation as its point of departure as well as its endpoint.[1] In fact, it’s better termed as [relational aesthetics](#), a concept coined by Nicolas Bourriaud as a practice that seeks to establish “live” encounters in a carefully constructed environment where the experience of the viewer becomes the art in question, despite that smacking a little too optimistically of art’s relatively recent paranoia regarding the audience’s role and function in the gallery space.



Rirkrit Tiravanija. *Doubt Does Not Travel in a Straight Line*, 2013; etching, screen print, metal foil, horse hair, STPI handmade abaca paper; 99.5 x 99.5 cm. Edition of 6. Image courtesy of Singapore Tyler Print Institute.

At the very least, Tiravanija's staged tableaux of exaggerating, then capturing unscripted human responses throws the spotlight on the fine demarcation lines that stand between viewer, materiality, and artist by shifting the onus of art production to spectator-artist interactivity, even if the purpose of what the spectator is supposed to glean from his or her participation is often unclear. Considering Tiravanija's constant desire to redefine these boundaries, it is surprising to find the apparent absence of the patois of socially engaged art and interpersonal activity in his latest show *Time Travelers Chronicle (Doubt): 2014 – 802,701 A.D.* at the [Singapore Tyler Print Institute](#), a conceptually driven exploration of time and space that's loosely inspired by H.G. Wells's novel [The Time Machine](#).



Rirkrit Tiravanija. *Almost, Always, Never, The Further the Distance the Closer Is Time*, 2013; etching, screen print, metal foil, horse hair, STPI handmade abaca paper; 99.5 x 99.5 cm. Edition of 6. Image courtesy of Singapore Tyler Print Institute.



Rirkrit Tiravanija. *The Time Travelers Calendar B, Negative Present*, 2013; embossing, screen print, thermo-chromic ink, STPI handmade extra-thick cotton paper; 114.5 x 114.5 x 3 cm. Edition of 4. Image courtesy of Singapore Tyler Print Institute.

At first glance, Tiravanija's latest offerings appear to be set in stylish and sombre silver-gray flat surfaces that form circular planes of sharp but sterile contrasts against sterile white gallery-wall space. The quirky details emerge upon closer scrutiny: bold, squiggly sketches, the crooked branches of trees, precise mathematical lines that appear to be drawn by a giant compass—contained within silver circles of varying sizes. Silver is the show's dominant color in white gallery space, chosen for its ability to “reflect and absorb time and space” and “to represent the possibilities of present, past, and the future.”[2]

The installations seem to be constructed around a narrative of measuring time in the realms of the physical (*Moon Rise – Time Is Setting – Tomorrow Never Arrives* posits the means of chronicling time through phases of the moon) and the metaphysical (*Eight Chapter: Return to the Unknowing Desire, The Further One Travels the Closer One Returns (To Doubt); Spongebob's The Surreal Realm of Nothingness, He Wakes Up Under the Tree Again*). Arguably the most eye-catching of the works are eight

life-sized screen prints, each chronicling a chapter in a traveler's logbook, each telling a story of a merry romp through space and time beginning with evolutionary time and Charles Darwin's tree of life (*First Chapter: The Tree of Life, The Eclipse and Drink a Nigrone to the Future*).



Rirkrit Tiravanija. Sixth chapter: take the spin off, unwind, reverse directions, and shatter the bonsai, on the way back don't forget to smile, 2013; screen print, metal foil, cast paper, STPI handmade cotton paper, stainless steel pedestal, 3D printed object; 259.5 x 259.5 cm; 4 sheets. Image courtesy of Singapore Tyler Print Institute.

Jocularly playful, the amusingly long titles of each work are guaranteed to trip up every well-meaning

viewer, departing from the formal logic validating Wells’s narrator’s journey into the future. Throw a bowl of curry noodles, a martini glass, a math compass, and a miniature toy of Spongebob into the loop and these small three-dimensional objects on stainless-steel plinths, deliberately positioned in front of each flat screen print, add effervescent absurdity to the entire show. In all the materials used in the show, we’re also given glimpses into Tiravanija’s retrospective reconstructions of his entire oeuvre: the iconic curry experience way back in 1992, the Negroni cocktail imbibed before flights, or the mirrored surfaces in *Untitled 2002 (He Promised)* that explicitly reflected human activities rather than the architectural structures of the building. As such, they present a conflation of memories — and a retrospective of sorts — that override the phenomenological experience of time and bear witness, by their material presence alone, to the porousness that exist in the apparent lines dividing audience and artist.

Time Travelers Chronicle (Doubt): 2014 – 802,701 A.D. *will be on view at Singapore Tyler Print Institute through June 28, 2014.*

[1] Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” *October 110*, Autumn 2004.

[2] Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Exhibition Catalog*, Singapore Tyler Print Institute, 2014.

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