IDENTITY POLITICS AND COMMUNITY ARTIVISM
A Strategic Arts Project of Cultural Landscape Conservation at Treasure Hill, Taipei

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ABSTRACT

Artivism is a conscious combination of art and activism, and is adopted to demonstrate a more radical approach and value-loaded attitude to engage in social-spatial issues through arts projects. Artivism is also an intentional attempt to bring about the community and environmental concerns and collaborate with the participant subjects to precipitate the transformation of certain social meaning. In the case of the Treasure Hill settlement in Taipei, a series of planned community artivists projects (GAPP, Global Artivists Participation Projects) were strategically initiated to confront difficult urban planning and cultural landscape conservation issues. This paper will review the processes and outcomes of GAPP from both the project director's insider perspective and from the community's evaluation of how individual daily-lives in a pre-modern, pre-planned setting are inevitably influenced by waves of artivists movement. From rags to tags, from squatter movement to institutionalized artists-in-residency program, will Treasure Hill evolve into an obsolescent urban settlement of organic nature or a progressive urban planning model of creative sustainability? This paper will not only be a case study on artivism, but also an interface of more dynamic discussions on an on-going process of landscape conservation which will eventually affect the future of many residents of a marginal, heterogeneous community.

THE FLUIDITY OF PLACE IDENTITY

Place identity refers to two different but interrelated concepts. It reflects certain distinguishable, self-manifested idiosyncrasies of a place in terms of its spatial form; yet it also implies how cultural subjects identify with a particular place through daily practices or committed discourses. The recognizable spatial features connect directly with the collective memory and the cognitive maps of the cultural subjects; while their identifications with a place further inscribe meanings to and reinforce personal attachments with the cultural landscapes and spatial narratives of the place. The place-bound identity varies in scales: it can be as expansive as a country (which is oftentimes imagined), or as intimate as a store (a gay bookstore is a reincarnation of a social subgroup's collective identifications and a corner grocery store may represent a locus of tacit identifications of a neighborhood). It can strengthen the internal cohesion of a finite area or converge the intercommunication network of a dispersive social community into a symbolic place as a substantial support of identity politics (Calhoun, 1994; Pile &Thrift, 1995; Keith & Pile, 1993).

The significance of place identity of the local is stressed in many theories and discourses of planning, architecture, human geography, and landscape studies, especially those which follow the phenomenological approaches (Relph, 1976; Seamon, 1979; Warf, 1986) and Heidegger's philosophy of place and dwelling (*domus*) (Norberg-Schulz, 1988). Place identity, accordingly, is expected to counter the place-annihilating forces of industrial modernism and the transnational flow of capitalism. The processes of rapid urbanization and homogenizing globalization are criticized as unyielding threats to the meaningful local and its associated values, while place identity indicates a type of resistance against such threats through conscious community empowerment, re-established grassroots confidence, and conservation of the vernacular authenticity.

The Heideggerian discourses of place identity meet serious backfire from the post-structuralist dialectics on differences, complexity, urbanity, and mimesis (Jacobs, 2002; Jameson, 1994; Girard, 1995). Heidegger's personal association with the Nazi identity and place aesthetics exposes a moral doctrine veiled under the façade of strong place identity, which is also exclusive, defensive, anachronistically nostalgic, and static (Leach, 2002). On the other hand, the romanticized images of the vernacular can be quickly subsumed by the post-modern kitsch and the culture industry to manipulate a sense of historical and local legitimacy (Ellin, 1995). Place identity sometimes becomes a cultural tool of capitalist leisure consumption, penduluming between its original strategic position of resistance and a new recreational potential of middle-class aesthetics. The uprising community empowerment voices echo the political call of place identity, yet the pervasive flow of tourism easily offsets the grassroots struggle for autonomy and, in the milieu of complex urbanity, the emphasis on a community's common consensus can lead to a bumptious tribalism if the concomitant individual differences and diversity of urban living are overlooked. The city, in a crude way, challenges exactly the necessity of place identity since the anonymous freedom of individual citizens (therefore, dissolving identity rather than forging identity) is regarded as an indispensable urban psyche.

The argument of identity through consumption and mimesis, instead of articulate place narrative and meaning interpretation, augments another debatable dimension to the discourse of place identity. The studies of mass culture, urban culture, and cult, heavily influenced by the Baudrillardian analysis of consumption and not restrained by the Marxist moralistic ideologies, confront different realities of identity tempered by cultural propaganda, image anesthetics, media network, internet communication, gender politics, material desire and fetishism (Baudrillard, 1994; Butler, 1997). These types of identity induced by mimesis and image industry weaken the bond of place identity, but re-affirm the positive draw of a global city (still an identifiable 'place'). Magnified by the critical issues of identity politics and the ambiguous sense of constantly changing urban reality, place identity no longer serves the static purpose of dichotomizing place from placelessness (of modern urban landscape); rather, it's a dynamic and shifting concept which contextualizes cultural subjects' physical/psychological experiences and imagination with particular places.

The recognizable traits of place identity often symbolize collective rootedness; however, the internal nuances within bounded cultural subjects or between sub-divided places, or certain individuals' up-root/rootless intentions in a cultural group, perform subtler patterns of distinction among the identified commonness. *Differences* and *others* thereby mirror the frailty of place identity from a critical distance (Nancy, 1991). For example, a marginal squatter settlement of heterogeneous minorities located at the edge of a city, disempowered and chaotic at first glance, exhibits an unapologetic defiance against the place identity of the city as a whole as well as against the concept of an allied community. Such a place of disregard can simply be itself or be turned into a place of resistance. Yet, resistance itself does not necessarily lead to an organized community or a better place identity since, essentially, the squatter settlement has never been the outcome of a conscious plan or act. It is thus debatable that fostering place identity in a place like this should aspire to upgrading its organic charm or maintaining its critical stance.

Castells (1997) suggests to divide the form of identity into three categories: *legitimizing identity* forged by dominant social institutions; *resistance identity* fending from an oppressed position to counter the domination logic; and *project identity* - through which cultural subjects re-establish their social position to strive for a reform of social structure. Place identity operates across all three types, but is more critical of the ideological manipulation of *legitimizing identity* and of the reactionary tribalism of *resistance identity*. Place identity is doubtless territorial, but it goes further to summon "a progressive sense of place" (as a repudiation to a nostalgic sense of place, Massey, 1993) with an emphasis on the formation of subjects and project identity. However correct and appealing it seems, a place-project identity still appears elusive and jargonized if not realized in reality. As an agent to activate this concept, community artivism comes to the fore.

THE POLEMICS OF COMMUNITY ARTIVISM

Artivism is a conscious combination of art and activism, and is adopted to demonstrate a more radical approach and value-loaded attitude to engage in social-spatial issues through art projects. *Artivism* is also an intentional attempt to bring about the community and environmental concerns and collaborate with the participant subjects to precipitate the transformation of certain social meaning. Artivism, from this regard, seems to be a creative and constructive tool to serve the social purposes of activism or to build place identity from the bottom up. Yet artivism is also self-reflexive and disinclined to take things for granted. The place-specific artivism project can, therefore, problematize the legitimacy of punctuating fixed place identity and initiate a critical dialogue between art, activism, place, community, and cultural subjects.

The polemics of involving direct community participation in the process of making public art seem particularly acute while art confronting the organic (or unorganized) grassroots community. Whether art uses the community as the backdrop or as indispensable subjects; or whether community participation enhances or diminishes the autonomy of art often triggers vehement debates on both sides of community empowerment and public art; and the skeptics might as well question the necessity of art in a perceived mundane community on such a basis. Yet the effect of art in strengthening community identity and inducing creative social transformation is relatively palpable, compared with public discussions and calculated actions. Art, if not deliberately offensive, can also be liberating and fun to motivate a greater variety of community members who are otherwise perceived apathetic and voiceless by the power representatives. Community is, after all, not an undifferentiated mass of people; and art should not be expected to simply tend the need of an institutionalized whole.

Art can take many forms; while the aesthetic quality, refined craftsmanship, and creative expressions of art are commonly appreciated, the other aspects of art (particularly modern art) its independent nature, unrestrained freedom, personal opinions, and critical thinking, to name a few are understated, controversial, or even considered defiant and detrimental to a coherent society. The liberal spirit of art does not follow traditional values and morals stereotypically associated with grassroots communities. The outsider artists sometimes set back a necessary distance from the community to secure a broader perspective while representing the community through their works. The double-edged blade of art in a community thus cuts both sides: it is a creative force to inspire, and in the

meanwhile, an aggressive intervention to disturb the daily-life patterns of an ordinary community.

Comparing with general public art or installing art in a community, the concept of community artivism focuses less on artists and artworks than the community itself. The implication of activism also indicates that the involved community is, to some degree, in certain condition of needing advocacy support and direct mobilization. Community artivism inevitably turns strategic from this perspective. It is then crucial to specify issues arising from that certain condition and the characteristics of the particular community (*rural* or *urban* community, urban *fenced* community or urban *fringe* community, *historical* community or *squatter* settlement) to measure the best-fit actions/projects for the community be it linked to landscape conservation or community empowerment or environmental protest. With this understanding, community artivism has to construct an action scenario and a local narrative from within; thus, even critical or controversial art projects can hardly disrespect the community in the name of art. But still, the place-bound community artivism needs to further explore the possible solutions for the following questions:

- How does community artivism, acting *in situ* to given social and landscape values, reinforce the autonomous creativity of collective and independent cultural subjects without relegating the creative processes to condescending services for the functional need of the community?
- How can an outsider's keen observation and perceptive sensitivity of human-environment relations be transformed into creative forms of representation that also includes the experiences and stories of the implicated community?
- Can artivism become a myth-making tool to help community individuals identify with their living environment and endow meaning to the associated landscape through creative processes?
- How does artivism translate community stories and landscape narratives into sensible forms, and how do such forms manifest community qualities as well as its internal heterogeneity?
- Can artivism deal with the fear and desire of the community individuals as well as the community psyche as a whole?
- How can artivism be transcended from reactionary purposes to creative initiatives for place identity?

The Power of Place Studio at UCLA demonstrated an exemplary mechanism of initiative community artivism through the public history workshop, which gathered narrative materials from community participatory story-telling process for an inventive art project (Hayden, 1995). It not only represented the subaltern life-force of urban plebeians via the interpretations of paintings, books, and sculptures; but also transformed a line of cold wall in a commercial area into a moving profile of an Afro-American woman's life history. For the community residents who had participated in the workshop or simply passed by, reading the completed art project was like looking back at themselves and the ordinary scenes of their everyday lives etched into the realm of art. Through the reflexive gaze of art, the power of identity brought forth a brand-new and progressive sense of place.

THE 2003 TREASURE HILL GAPP (GLOBAL ARTIVISTS PARTICIPATION PROJECTS)

To further elaborate on the relationship between community artivism and place identity, the 2003 GAPP at the Treasure Hill settlement, located in a zoned-parkland of Taipei City, contributed first-hand observations and experiences to the related discourses with a wide range of community actions and art projects. Originally initiated to confront difficult urban planning and cultural landscape conservation issues of the riverside squatter village, the 2003 GAPP witnessed the creative power of art as well as the heightened tension between the community and art.[1] When the highly political and calculated tactics of conservation persuaded the city government to recognize the settlement's artistic potentials for public good and the original squatters as an integral part of the unique and artistic milieu, the settlement became officially perceived as an artists-in-residency setting for struggling poor artists. Yet the residency status of the squatters was far from secure. It would have to go through extremely uncertain and long processes of rezoning and historical heritage review to make the squatter residency and their self-help buildings legal, and it was hardly an easy task to persuade both the urban planning committee and historical heritage committee that conservation of this cultural landscape and the community did not diminish the public value of Treasure Hill's existing land use as a public park.

To argue the legitimacy of replacing the green park with an artistic village was controversial, to advocate a social welfare program within the artistic village to preserve the social network of the Treasure Hill community was an even more challenging idea. But first of all, Treasure Hill had to be seen and its value appreciated by the general public to precipitate the necessary legal procedure of rezoning. One of the tacit missions for the 2003 GAPP, therefore, was to raise Treasure Hill's publicity and public support through an art program. But the medium exposure also caused disturbing consequences in the community's low-key lifestyle. Art was never a familiar term at Treasure Hill before, however, the "artless" community was obliged to participate in art projects or to make contact with art in their daily routines during the 2003 GAPP to boost

the opportunity of being exempt from the green bulldozers of the Park and Recreation Department. Art might be a ticket to permanent residency, practically speaking.

Yet the close encounter with art, for the community participants, did have some unexpected effects inspired or perturbed, but more than activism's political purposes or an exchange of participation for residency on their relationship with the city, the community, the environment, and themselves. Even though the overall plan for GAPP attempted to attenuate the impact of high-concept and avant-garde art on the extant community and to get as much participation from the community as possible, the insistence of maintaining the artivists' autonomy did leave indelible traces on the community and the fragile landscape. In a way, the Treasure Hill community would never be able to return to its innocent age of being an organic settlement at large once its land ownership was reclaimed by the government and zoned for park use in an urban system. The crisis of being institutionalized was impending, and it was only a matter of *how* it would be managed in the future. Art programs stood out as one of many options.

From rags to tags, from squatter movement to an institutionalized artists-in-residency program, will Treasure Hill become an obsolescent urban settlement of organic nature or a progressive urban planning model of creative sustainability? The following description of the 2003 GAPP is based on a project director's subjective perspective, and represents only a portion of the entire programmed event. Meanwhile, a far more complicated planning process for the conservation and restoration of the Treasure Hill settlement and its adjacent landscape, thanks to the direct feedback from the GAPP experiment, is trying to lay out a feasible management program for the Treasure Hill Co-living Artsville.[2] Perhaps, it's not art itself but the intensity of art implemented within a short span of time that really affects the squatter community, and that evaluation should not be overlooked.

THE OTHER HOME-LAND THEME

Before there was GAPP, the Treasure Hill New Discovery Film Festival programmed in the 2002 Taipei International Arts Festival had put Treasure Hill on the city's art map. The community was thereafter transformed from the setting for multiple filming locations into the scene for cinema arts happenings. The Treasure Hill Family Cinema Club, informally organized by graduate students at National Taiwan University Graduate Institute of Building and Planning and community members, screens popular and alternative films - from propagandist military films to art-house documentary films - every Wednesday at the re-painted white wall of a defunct building left blank after the large-scale demolition in 2001. The Club has tacitly become a new community tradition, simply by showing films at regular hours at a ruins-turned-plaza to draw residents out of their living rooms to gather for a weekly event at a new public arena.

The 2003 GAPP further expanded the collaboration experiment between the community and the artivists by ushering in artists and activists from all over the world to initiate creative artivist programs related to landscape and settlement conservation. The 2003 overarching theme was designated "the Other Home-Land" a dialectic between the social and cultural others and their transitional shelters into the alternative homeland, as well as a reflection of the collective identity of many immigrants in the community from different eras and native lands - inviting global artivists to probe into the historical roots, marginal status, current reality, ecological aspects, and subconscious psyche of the Treasure Hill settlement.

The lineup for the 2003 GAPP included: the multi-dimensionsional landscape art project *Organic Layer Taipei*, the collaborative lomography project *Asia 108 and the Street Gallery of Treasure Hill Flood Images*, the *Ethnography and Choreography Film Festival* at the Treasure Hill outdoor cinema plaza, the 3-week 3-group environmental theatre and workshop series *Happening*, the field experimental actions and international forum of *Ecological Homeland and Micro-climate Architecture*, the subtle *Garden Portraits* project, the international *Creative Sustainability and Self-help Center* participatory workshops and forum, the domestic *Artists-in-Residency Program* and *the Treasure Hill Tea +Photo*, and the paper-pulp based landscape art project *Blue River*. The interested artivists came from Finland, Japan, Germany, Spain, the US, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and other regions of Taiwan to participate in the experimental event. Unfortunately due to the constraints of time, budget, resources, and artivists' own schedules, very few of them could stay more than a month to really blend in or establish long-term relationships with the community. Their proposals and actions had to rely on the second-hand descriptions of Treasure Hill and their brief observations and perceptions about the site. However, they all seemed to find inspiration in the uncommon setting and context of Treasure Hill which, unlike a planned artistic village composed only of artists, was blunt, honest, real, unpretentious, and socially critical. Some of the invited proposals were targeted toward community needs or planning purposes in other words, their artivist goals and expected outcomes were clear at the outset. Those projects will not be discussed in detail in this paper, though they are not less interesting or creative. The following chosen projects are relatively more ambiguous in setting objectives and open to artistic interpretation. Their scrupulous moves between artistic imagination and community activism became dynamic and unpredictable processes in exploring the meaning of place identity in the most unlikely place.

THE *ORGANIC LAYER TAIPEI* PROJECT

The Finnish architect-landscape artist Marco Casagrande proposed an artistic concept "the attic" for his project at Treasure Hill based on his keen observation, sensitive intuition, and personal social-ecological concern. The attic, excluded from specific use types in the Western dwelling unit, is a special space which takes in many less used yet not to be discarded objects of the family. The attic space does not follow any architectural order, and may not be considered necessary for a house. Yet some afternoons, one crawls up in the attic, withdraws a photo album from ten years ago in a corner and opens a diary from five years ago at that corner, memories well up as each page turns, then she realizes that the attic is the indispensable subconscious and soul of a house.[3] Casagrande argues that Treasure Hill is the Attic of Taipei edged out from the city's land-use plan. He found a used military belt and a family photo album in an abandoned house, and the memento stimulated a personal scale of association that connected his own memories with Treasure Hill's idiosyncratic social context. He thereby conducted a series of artivist projects to converse with Taipei's subconscious.

Casagrande and the participant students first put on black jumpsuits (costumes used for the underground city workers in Fritz Lang's classic film *Metropolis*) to dig out a huge amount of garbage to search for traces of community memories on one hand, while on the other hand, to directly help the community clean up the living environment. The deserted objects were displayed on the grassy lawn like a free flea market after general classification, and very soon many of them were picked up again by different community residents. Casagrande then applied some of the remnant materials for props and lighting to develop a nocturnal environmental theatre based on his concept of the attic. Treasure Hill in the daytime was so much taken for granted, but at night when the fire lit up, the subconscious of the city began to manifest itself through a mysterious and surreal unfolding.

Casagrande and 30 torch-holders dressed in black stood at various dark corners on the ruins façade (de)constructed by the bulldozers which demolished 38 riverfront dwelling units in 2001. Each empty window frame was lit up by flickering fire, altogether reflecting a bizarre yet tangible dreamscape. Casagrande disappeared into a dim chamber for a few minutes, and then came out through fire as a veteran running from the threat of war. His costume, symbolizing local veteran's casual dress code, came directly from the discarded materials cleaned out of the memory lane earlier. He sat on a broken chair for a while and took a sip of alcohol; then all of a sudden, he gushed out flame from his mouth like an anguished beast. Right above him, torches of fire descending from the top of the hill created a zigzag route which re-connected the upper-level dwellings with the ground. That was the "flow of consciousness" meandering through different chambers of memory, and would be the pattern of a future stairway to be constructed in the second mode of the artivist project.

When the fire gradually faded, the bright spot-lights illuminated a series of larger-than-life photo portraits hanging on some of the remnant building walls images of the original residents who were cast out when their houses gave way to the claws of the "green bulldozers." At the beginning of the theatre, the first torch was lit by the 78-year-old neighborhood chief lady; the still-burning flame came back to her when the performance was over. She did not seem to understand what the theatre all meant, but she was affected as many community neighbors were mesmerized and claimed that Treasure Hill had never been more spectacular.

The second mode of the project conducted by Casagrande lasted 10 days. Extremely hard labor by the "underground city workers in black" and local residents removed many truck-loads of garbage; finished a series of stairways, platforms, and a bamboo bridge, connecting the community route with used construction materials; cultivated more than 20 plats of vegetable garden; constructed a view deck and a garden tool space under the trees; diverted slope drainage into a made-over ecological pond; and built an organic-form shelter out of bamboo stems for a future farmers' market. These impressive works were not only the outcome of an artist conception, but also evidence of what the community used to be and was to become, made possible by intensive collaboration between the artivist team and the community.

Casagrande and the collaborative team also completed four sets of "book-stop" made out of used steel scaffold, containing soil, native plants, photo albums, mementos, and swings to carry local residents. At the end of the second mode project, more than 100 community residents and participants, dressed in black "Who Cares Wins" T-shirts, pushed the wheeled book-stops from Treasure Hill to the "independent book-store streets" of the nearby Gong-guan area for a themed parade entitled "Transporting the Fire, Delivering the Books." Each resident and every story at Treasure Hill was regarded as a dust-sealed book, and when the book was re-opened and the light in the attic re-kindled, the city would be re-reading the 'brewed' scenario of the overlooked settlement. The community's grand march into the city brought in new energy and new perspective from the very margin. It was a bold claim to request the city to look straight at Treasure Hill, as well as a reflexive attempt to help the Treasure Hill community re-visualize themselves via the others' gaze.

The parade was itself a street theatre. The underground city workers in black jumpsuits put on white masks and red wide-brimmed leaf hats, carrying tall red banners and banging pots

and basins along the way. AM radio tunes and buzz, often pressed to the ears of the senile veterans in the community when they paced around the neighborhood, was amplified through a loud speaker and accompanied by impromptu tenor saxophone to set the parade's eccentric and jazzy tone. Many curious bystanders and passersby were so overwhelmed that they couldn't but follow the pied piper to march on.

The parade stopped at a used bookstore to purchase used books and left a Treasure Hill native plant at the store corner. The native plant was also planted at the entrance corners of many idiosyncratic coffee shops along the route, where their street-front windows were showcasing images of Treasure Hill taken by a group of Asian artists (Asian 108) and some community residents in the manner of a street gallery. The parade marched on to Jing-jing gay bookstore to present the book-stop, the bookstore owner raised their pink triangular flag to gesture a grand welcome and recited a radical paragraph from a manifesto book that most represented the spirit of the independent bookstore. The Treasure Hill community purchased the book and placed it in the book-stop as an enthusiastic support for the gay community.

The parade continued onward to the feminist bookstore, the leftist underground bookstore, the Taiwanese-culture themed bookstore, and the Mainland-Chinese literary publication based bookstore to present book-stops and purchase books. Each owner of the independent bookstores personally picked the most significant book of the store to recite out loud in front of the street crowd and put it in the book-stop, then the parade team replied with the most energetic cheer and scream. The "Transporting the Fire, Delivering the Books" parade was not only a declaration of squatter settlement conservation, but also an unexpected meeting of Taipei's different social groups and communities and a warm exchange of their cultural emotions. They expressed their individual identities and dignities through the art form of an action theatre on the public streets, and they treasured each others' voices of differences. The encounter was brief, yet the meaning was extraordinary - as art critique Wang Moe-Lin put it, the parade was a leftist re-writing of the city map charted by a dynamic flow of citizens at the margin.

Marco Casagrande's Organic Layer Taipei project at Treasure Hill attracted extensive medium attentions and gained explicit governmental support. For the very first time, the Bureau of Cultural Affairs of the Taipei City Government agreed in public that the illegal squatter residents were an integral part of the settlement conservation when the commissioner of the Bureau had a direct conversation with Casagrande. The conversation content was published in the China Times, a major newspaper in Taiwan, which cheered up the community and the planning crew's morale. Many community residents expressed to Casagrande and the participant students their hospitality and friendship, regardless of the language barrier. But Casagrande's progressive move and zealous artivist actions were not without controversy.

For a project this ambitious and of this magnitude, the 2-week span of planning and implementation was less challenging than problematic. Other than the few key persons, most participants were not able to fathom the meaning of the project, let alone the community residents. Some people were touched and inspired by Casagrande's actions (a carpenter resident living close to the constructed stairway later self-built a step garden on the ruins façade, to be described later), but some residents were annoyed that their daily lives were affected by the project. Some critiques even questioned, did Casagrande see the Treasure Hill community as only the provisional actors or the subject of his artivist performance? Did the entire event fulfill the artivist's own artwork or the community need? Casagrande was audacious to touch on the issue of community psyche despite the expectation for him to mobilize and organize a marginal society toward common goals through artivism. But what could be the consensus on the public interest of Treasure Hill, and how long might it take to reach that goal? The past social actions and protests focused on the imminent crisis of community banishment, but once the crisis was changed into opportunities, can the community come up with a new vision without knowing itself? Casagrande interpreted the meaning with such an intense empathy, but how far was that from the truth of the community?

THE GARDEN PORTRAITS PROJECT

Quite on the contrary to Casagrande's eye-opening and theatrical approach, the artivist project Garden Portraits, proposed by community activists Jeremy Liu and Hiroko Kikuchi, kept a very low profile. They were invited to engage in creative programming of the vegetable garden cultivated by a few community individuals since the previous Organic Layer installation, but they were also aware that their project schedule at Treasure Hill was constrained and their understanding of the community and its complex situation was largely from second-hand reports and mail. Other than giving practical advice about community garden management, they decided to initiate an art project based on their temporal, personal, and intimate interactions with the cultural subjects to indirectly encourage informal discussion and conversation about the vegetable garden.

The "publicness" of the vegetable garden had become a critical issue in the community since, for the first time, the behavior of growing vegetables in the open land of Treasure Hill was deemed legitimate under the guise of the Organic Layer Taipei project, yet formally sharing the produce for public profit was still a novel concept for the squatter residents whose petty illegal farming by the river bank used to cater for private purposes

only. However, to grow vegetables on open lots and to work directly on the land had been recognized as one of the most significant living patterns of the Treasure Hill community. The challenge for Liu and Kikuchi was to bring more residents to the garden and to further raise their interest in participation and establish a mechanism in management through an art project; obviously it was not a mission that could be completed in less than 10 days.

Without any strong intention to push gardening and public discourse, Liu and Kikuchi proposed a simple and workable scheme: taking portraits of the Treasure Hill residents among the lushest garden area. Before the shooting actually happened, they tried to talk with as many families as possible about their stories, perceptions, needs, and their willingness to take part in the garden portrait project with the help of a few students who had been doing a social survey for a long time. Without the student intermediaries and their previous meticulous social study, these artivists could hardly win the community's trust and carry out their project in such a short time. Upon agreement, Liu and Kikuchi would ask each individual or family to bring something particularly meaningful or valuable to be included in the portraits, be it a favorite vegetable, possession, homeland folklore, or human being.

Through translation, Liu and Kikuchi got to sit down and chat with different individuals and families in their own living rooms. The informal interviews led to a variety of story telling, soon many agreed to come to the garden and take the portrait photo, notwithstanding that some of them did not even grow anything in the garden yet. A newly wedded couple came to the green spot in their formal wedding attire, happily holding each other; the neighborhood chief lady came with her gardening partner, proudly presenting their new crop; an earnest painter with a learning difficulty took his loving single mother by the arm, shyly smiling at the camera; one veteran showed up with his old pal dog in his arms, grinning like a naughty child; each face, indeed, told a story. Altogether, 17 portraits were taken at the same position then nicely framed in a bright red color. These portraits were given back to the participant residents by the artivists as something to remember and talk about; in other words, the artwork disappeared into the residents' living rooms once they were finished.

This was exactly Liu and Kikuchi's intent returning the subjectivity of creative art back to community individuals and diminishing the role of an outsider artist. The exhibition space of this particular work would be the community itself, and an avid art appreciator would have to visit all these families and talk with them to understand the full spectrum and depth of this art project. Liu and Kikuchi argue that, "this project is about bringing the garden to the homes as a balance for the interest in getting the people to the garden. It is the beginning of a "dialogue of space" between the home and the garden." Before the portraits forever retreated to the walls of 17 private rooms, Liu and Kikuchi invited all of the photographed to present their portraits in a public forum which was the only public viewing of the complete work. These residents sincerely expressed their feelings and perceptions about the Garden Portraits project and the vegetable garden itself. Even though it was a long way from the discourse about the management of a public organic garden, almost every attendant of the forum was deeply affected by the heart-felt presentations and stories of the portrayed.

The Garden Portraits was an artivist project with an open end. It was meant to be the beginning of a real portrait studio project, continuing to take pictures and document the life stories and changes of the community (the concept was somewhat resumed later by Yeh Wei-li's Treasure Hill Tea + Photo). Liu and Kikuchi's conscious act of hiding their artist status (it also reflected the post-structurist idea of "decentering the subject," Smith, 2001) in order to shift the focus on the subjectivity of the residents did reveal a great respect for the Treasure Hill community and carefully reserved a limited outsider's distance in interpreting the community. Yet their humble approach also provoked serious questions about artivism and artwork: when the artwork virtually disappears, do the artists further help empower the subjectivity for the community or simply declare the death of their own subjectivity? Do the artists thereby promise a continuous commitment to the community or retreat from the scene and sever their relationship with the community since they will not have to be responsible for their work (there is virtually no artwork)? Does "artwork" have to be the original sin of artivism because the artist's role of reinforcing the creative self through her/his works is somehow condemned?

Perhaps the conscious retreat of the artistic self exposed the structural problem of a conscientious artivist's short-term commitment through a project commission. It is an honest as well as strategic and paradoxical reflection on the reality that the outsiders cannot blend into the community in a short span of time to represent the community's needs and desires. Even if they move in to acquire a quasi-insider status, is their stay perceived as legitimate to motivate certain community actions? Is it possible that, in some way, an artivist's role is to conduct a genuine and sincere *dialogue* with the community based on her/his in-depth understanding and empathy for the community, no matter how long she/he can commit to the community? It is definitely not appropriate to re-write the community with the artist's personal signature, but it is also not necessary to give up one's artistic signature and difference in the face of the much-too-generic term of community.

HAPPENING - THE TREASURE HILL ENVIRONMENTAL THEATRE SERIES

"The Fire in the Attic" performance by Marco Casagrande and the workers in black transformed Treasure Hill's ruins façade into a theatrical space which, according to some local theatre critics, could be Taipei's most outstanding stage. In fact, the idiosyncratic ambiance and spatial tension of the Treasure Hill community a living squatter escaping the control of modern urban planning, unwilling to succumb to specific elite aesthetics, and interweaving its organic texture with the surrounding natural environment preset an intriguing context for the critical contemporary fringe theatre and environmental theatre. Under the GAPP framework, "Happening: the Treasure Hill Environmental Theatre Series" aimed to delve into the collective consciousness and personal experiences of the settlement via re-interpreted spatial scenario and body performances, as well as to extend the social and environmental dimensions of theatrical art by adapting to Treasure Hill's critical alternative space.

The first Happening performance was not in the original program. A visiting Indonesian behavior performing artist Yoyo Yogasmana who happened to be undertaking a Muslim Lebaran ritual in Taipei, decided to perform the ritual at the Family Cinema Club plaza with the Sun-Son Theatre, a drum-based theatre group about to start its artist-in-residency status at Treasure Hill for the Happening series. The Lebaran ritual was mesmerizing and exotic. Its religious themes about catharsis, redemption, and forgiveness, crossing cultural and language barriers, resonated effectively with the onlookers' perceptions through the performers' movements and expressions. Many community residents came unprepared to be transported to a fantastic dreamland, yet touched by a sensible religious mood, they appreciated the ritual with curiosity and respect. Hence, when Yogasmana invited participation from the audience, all attendants felt more than willing, or even competed to join the performance.

Despite the wind chill, Yogasmana soaked and fluttered himself in the cold water in an abandoned bathtub, while Sun-Son Theatre's mystical chanting echoed around the plaza. He came out of the water under the floodlight, standing motionless for a long while like a traumatized man with a soul redeemed. Then he sat down with the Theatre performers around a circle of petals, gradually swaying their bodies into waves of circular motion and humming their inner voices into a hypnotizing rhythm. Even if the performance had been rehearsed, there were dynamic moments of improvisation when the onlookers were engulfed in the ritual. Some Treasure Hill residents were asked to spread flower petals on Yogasmana to cleanse his spirit, they did that with honor and deep respect as if they were saints baptizing a disciple. The air was charged with a shared belief beyond the dogma of religion. The dramatic finale evolved from a gentle quest for forgiveness when Yogasmana held an onlooker's hands and vibrated with the hopping sound of drums, then the onlooker moved to his side to shake the second onlooker's hands. As the drumming went on, every onlooker stood up and gave her/his hands to Yogasmana and the growing line of hands for each other's forgiveness. The drumming got louder and more passionate, shaking hands started to go with dancing feet. Without any instructions, everyone in the plaza was holding hands and dancing wild! It was magical and liberating. And it happened in the most unlikely corner of a secular city.

It seemed that at that particular moment, whether it was Muslim or Catholicism or Buddhism it did not really matter; yet, rarely had any community in Taipei or Taiwan been granted an opportunity to witness a religious ritual or theatrical performance of such a "difference" and thereby to expand the scope of inter-cultural experiences. The Lebaran ritual was certainly not related to Treasure Hill's everyday life or the community's perceptual domain on the surface. It was exactly this unfamiliarity that evoked an overwhelming sense of curiosity and excitement out of the ordinary. This impromptu performance did not treat the audience as passive or receptive objects as many fixed-frame theatres did, and it elicited immediate and enthusiastic participation without specific narrative formation or meaning exploration. In a sense, it trusted that human feelings shared common ground and transcended political and social estrangement. It did not seek for a complete understanding of meaning or storyline, but called for a primitive resonance from the heart. The Lebaran ritual and the following theatre series did not cater to the community needs or routine expectations (but did a Taiwanese or Chinese opera serve better purposes at the heterogeneous Treasure Hill community? And if it did, based on what conjectures?), it accentuated the community's acceptance and appreciation for "otherness."

The Sun-Son Theatre started a week-long drumming workshop following Yogasmana's performance the next evening. Surprisingly, quite a few elderly residents came with their grandchildren to learn hand-drum playing. Since drumming required less musical technique with tunes and chords, the workshop participants picked up certain fun rhythms to jam with one another soon after the instructor demonstrated basic steps and orchestrated layers of playing. Even though some of the drummers occasionally missed the beat, it did not sound bad once individual drumming was wrapped within the collective funky rhythm. It was simply fun since no beat was a wrong beat. Very often, the theatre members would start a bonfire in the lawn plaza adjacent to the bamboo grove and tempt workshop drummers and onlookers to dance to the fire-and-drums. Strange at first glance, yet it was also refreshing to watch the Treasure Hill elderly residents playing drums with

professional drummers while women and children danced intoxicatedly by the bonfire a lighter and brighter side of the community stereotypically associated with a sedate state and an aging image.

In the meanwhile, the Sun-Son Theatre set up another mask workshop to teach paper-mache mask making at the community terrace lawn. Waste paper and newspaper were transformed into a variety of artistic masks with the help of simple technique and touches of creativity, and the outcomes would later become props and ornaments for the weekend performance. Again, some enthusiastic participants from the community showed up every day to make art, mixed occasionally with cynical and skeptical looks from the passersby. But there was one particular comment from an old handicapped veteran, after he observed the mask workshop for a few days, that surprised the planning team most. He said, "if I did not join the army in my youth, I would have strived to be an artist." His statement indicated a psychological desire never made clear in the previous social survey and interviews, but unexpectedly revealed during the workshop. This episode was meaningful and encouraging for the GAPP experiment. If artivism could inspire certain individuals to bring out or recollect their creative sides, it might be able to discover new creative powers of the community overlooked by formulated community empowerment process.

Another intriguing comment was gently expressed during the bonfire dance by a woman who had been living at Treasure Hill for more than 30 years. She was then wrapped up in the wild drumming and fire dance taking place in the lawn plaza where a group of older male residents usually sat around the bamboo grove chatting, and she said, "It's good to be able to come down here and watch performances. I rarely set foot on this lawn after the grocery store was gone. Those old men sit under the bamboo all the time, and if not for the dance, I would not come down to the lawn." Her comment was mild but sarcastic if compared with the description of the highly-adored pattern of "a group of local senior citizens sitting under the bamboo trees chatting." Indeed, in a marginal community like Treasure Hill, subtle issues of gendered spaces were rarely exposed under the criticism of political-economy and zoning injustice in general. Cherishable spatial patterns of an organic settlement were well documented at Treasure Hill, but the previous comment critically pinpointed that some of those patterns might also be romanticized and shield the unquestioned power relations within. The critical distance of artivism did not intend to undermine the living patterns of Treasure Hill, but to further look into the taken-for-granted realities under the commonness of community.

The eventual performance by the Sun-Son Theatre drew a huge crowd to Treasure Hill, many of them heard of the place for the first time. The series of performance adapted many unlikely corners for different scenarios the frame of a broken window, the relics of a torn down building basement, the strip in front of a line of blank walls, the steps leading to an old family barbershop, the terrace lawn, the outdoor cinema plaza, to name a few, - the ingenious uses of peculiar environment and spaces shed new light on Treasure Hill, as if untold stories were hidden at every corner of the community. Constrained by an extremely low budget, the theatre group summoned many professional volunteer performers to interpret Treasure Hill through their improvised or contextualized theatre. The audience had to follow the performers around the community spaces and stand right in the settings. Boundaries between the real, the unreal, and the surreal sometimes dissolved when the theatrical stages and the living environment were both de-constructed and re-constructed by each dramatic turn. The performances seemed to disclose modern human conditions and vulnerability more than the stories of Treasure Hill.

Quirky, mysterious, and awe-striking, the theatre combined dances, poetry-reading, aboriginal chanting, drumming, and role-playing to conduct physical dialogues with the varied environments. It was not easy to eliminate the image of a tethered man cocooning in the ruins window or of a woman in a 10-meter-long red veil dragging herself inch by inch uphill. And when she disappeared into the woods on the terrace lawn, along came a couple of half-naked celestial beings and a Flamenco dancer charging the melancholy night air with a heart-wrenching dance. The bonfire drumming and dance, accompanied by Yoyo Yogasmana's bizarre body-roping ritual, culminated the evening performances and unleashed the emotions of the enthralled audience. Many Treasure Hill residents and families who attended the drumming and mask workshop, some even in costume, exhibited high spirit and wild instinct for dancing. The fire glowed, and nobody seemed to care if they ever fathomed the meaning of the environmental theatre.

The Sun-Son Theatre workshops and performances were, predictably, received with controversies. And the community reality was, there was always only a small portion of the entire population motivated enough to join the public events, especially when these events had no direct relations with their private interests or pleas for their understanding. Complaints about the drum noise and the intense activities whispered behind the workshops and performances, even though very few came forward to the organizers. Skeptics were not convinced that the exogenous arts program could do much to the community when the fireworks died out, not to mention that the fireworks themselves might be seen as disturbances rather than celebration of the community life. It was always a legitimate question to ask if high art could actually represent the best interests or the needs of the community and if the 'fireworks' type of arts program could help the community further establish

its own identity. But such a question was also a much-too-easy one if it did not further distinguish whether the community was an appropriate site for a reinforced identity or on the contrary, for dissolving identities; or, whether we should look beyond the need-base to differentiate the nuances of the community psyche. We could go on to question the discrimination between traditional cultural events and an arts program, and if the latter could, given a longer time span of sedimentation, be absorbed into the former. Could the community events be liberating, free, and fun (if not offensive and intrusive) rather than meaningful, purposeful, and appealing to the majority? Would there be alternatives in constructing the community narrative other than telling comprehensible stories - for instance, poetry grounded on perceptual experiences?

The Taidong Theatre and the Parliament Theatre two burgeoning fringe theatre groups tried different approaches for the Happening series at Treasure Hill. The Taidong Theatre chose a specific theme “Where do I come from?” to reflect the community characteristics of Treasure Hill and structure their scenario thereafter. They meant to do some interviews with local residents about their backgrounds and life stories, vis-à-vis their own immigrant experiences. Instead, they established a broadcast workshop and gave the community residents vocal training to tell stories through an expressive medium. It was a creative and fun approach as well as an effective tool for the few participants to manipulate drama through their voices.

The Parliament Theatre moved into one of the squatter houses to make close contact with the residents everyday. They attempted to arrange a few potluck dinners with the community and to participate in the garden farming in hopes that their theatre piece could develop out of real community life.

But perhaps the previous Sun-Son Theatre and Marco Casagrande’s dynamic projects ate up too much community energy, these two theatres both had difficult times involving resident participation even though their theatre subjects addressed more community issues. The week-long residency also did not allow these two less experienced groups to get acquainted with the community and work out their own rehearsal schedules. Reactions to their workshops and performances were tepid, but ironically, complaints were hardly heard. Many residents were not even aware of their existence. The Taidong Theatre finally got to perform with a few residents at the lawn plaza, asking again and again that fundamental “where do I come from?” question; but the Parliament’s performances, following a disinterested potluck party, were largely self-serving without calling much community attention. Considering their original project ambitions, the disappointment of their performances cut even deeper than the controversies about the previous theatre. For a play involving the community’s internal narratives by the exogenous group or individuals, it took serious interaction and strategies to make things work; otherwise, the duration of residency had to last much longer than a week.

THE ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCY PROGRAM AND THE TREASURE HILL TEA + PHOTO

The last phase of GAPP called for proposals from domestic artivists who, once chosen, would acquire a two-month artivist-in-residence status to adapt an abandoned housing unit at Treasure Hill and make art on a grant basis. Altogether seven artivist individuals and partners were selected by a committee, who was informed about Treasure Hill’s situation and history, to carry out their independent projects. These proposals, ranging from photography studios, sound projects, installations, and recycled object composition, reflected the diverse backgrounds of the artists as well as their interpretations of the community and its adjacent environment. The cultural subjects of Treasure Hill were not particularly emphasized, but subtly implicated as an indispensable part of their projects. The living squatter community located at the edge of the city became a source of creative and critical inspiration for these young artists. Yet unfamiliar with its complicated zoning problems, none of them attempted to challenge the state machine or to initiate another social movement; instead, they chose to humbly engage in more personal and poetic conversations with the site and the people. Unlike the Environmental Theatre series, they didn’t induce direct resident participation through specific workshops either; in a sense, they were more like an ad-hoc artist team neighboring the Treasure Hill community making art projects about their neighborhood.

These creative and temporary residents caught the community’s attention when they moved in, and their behavior was also monitored by certain moral standards. The Treasure Hill community was not particularly conservative compared with other parts of the city, but the original residents were always cautious about reckless misdemeanors and sabotage. The first lesson for any artist-in-residency at Treasure Hill would be that the artist does not have privilege over the community and that the daily-life patterns of the community do not have to adapt to any artist’s personal will unless consent is given. Throughout this artist-in-residency program, the tacit understanding was mostly respected except for a few incidents which magnified certain individuals’ anarchistic conduct into unnecessary tension between the program and the community. Due to such unpleasant experiences, the community might take more drastic measures to write down a community charter to regulate themselves and the future newcomers if a part of Treasure Hill were gradually transformed into an artist sector.

However, their artwork and projects did not cause too many raised eyebrows despite that some were walking on a thin line between being provocative and inspirational. *The Sounds*

from the Landscape project employed many hi-fi microphones hidden at various corners all over Treasure Hill, then installed inside a line of tubing beside the trail of the lawn plaza. A passerby could easily hear sounds of a dog-barking, insect-chirping, cooking, mahjong-playing, or even talking and fighting through the speaker tubes. It was a surprising slice of Treasure Hill's mundane reality never before documented, but it could also be interpreted as a breach of privacy. *Me and the Minute of Being with Myself* project asked any volunteer to enter a disturbing, Duchamp-ish room to be absolutely solitary, then push the shutter of an aperture camera for a minute-long exposure. The artist was curious about how one was thinking at that singular minute, which would be written down or drawn out in a notebook by the experimental subject. Some weeks later, the front chamber of the house was filled with intimate self-portraits and documents. Fear and desire abounded in the strange room. It was more about human and community ego than the community stories.

Among all artist-in-residency works at Treasure Hill, one particular project stood out as the most noteworthy. The *Treasure Hill Tea + Photo* (THTP) project by Yeh Wei-li and Liu He-rang started with a simple concept to establish a humble teahouse in the community, open and free to all who passed through. And behind the teahouse, a professional portrait studio would take pictures for those who came in to drink tea and share stories. Yeh and Liu brought many books and portfolios to the teahouse, along with some re-assembled and manufactured objects that they found in the community, and ingeniously rearranged the setting to make the living room into a library-gallery type of space. They intentionally avoided aggressive and manipulated interactions with the community residents in hopes that passersby might step into their semi-public yet highly intimate teahouse by accident or as if they were just visiting a neighbor on some casual evening. In a way, they wanted art and community life to collide in the most relaxed way around the least expected corner.

Yeh and Liu's low-key attitude did not open the door wide enough to receive an impressive influx from the community, but many students and outside visitors came frequently to chat with artists and take portraits. They made prints of the portraits for the visitors and exhibited some of them on the wall of the living room. Once in a while, their immediate neighbors would show up and the planning crew would bring some local residents to take pictures. Yeh and Liu picked a few excellent portraits and enlarged them into light boxes, one of which was of his next-door neighbor. But at the end of their project term, portraits of the Treasure Hill residents were comparatively fewer than those of the outsiders. Yeh believed that they needed more time to develop the project.

So when the rest of the artists moved out after the final open-house exhibition, Yeh and Liu resumed their teahouse photo studio and further expanded it to another dwelling unit to include a dark room and a carpentry workspace. Gradually more local residents' portraits showed up on the wall, quietly replacing the outsiders' slots. Yeh decided to actually move into Treasure Hill and become a local resident. He committed at least two years to reinforce his collaboration basis with the community and to lead a life of making art in the community at his personal expenses. His project would come to fruition if a photography facility and resource center could be established to offer classes and lectures to the public.

Yeh's commitment to the community was not for his personal benefit or reputation. He acknowledged that the real subjects for his work were the local residents, but their participation would no doubt augment the social meaning of his or any artist's work. He observed that, in a letter to the mayor of the city, "…the social fabric that makes up Treasure Hill is a rich source of inspiration, history, and sustenance for artists to draw from. The oral histories passed down through exchanges with the residents here contextualize and deepen the experience and understanding of being in Treasure Hill. For without the voices and lives of these living residents, Treasure Hill would be but an empty shell of crudely constructed rubble." Yeh was actually writing to request that the city not dislocate the residents even if the squatter buildings were preserved. His statement, along with letters from many other artivists and scholars who had come to experience Treasure Hill or work there and shared the same stance, played a vital role in persuading the city government to recognize the community residents as an integral part of the future artist village.

The formal surface of the THTP project displayed faces of all walks of life, who happened to show up at a particular time in Treasure Hill. Yeh argued that, "through our differences in histories, backgrounds, languages, class and education, life experiences that are shared and told and retold ultimately give clues to where and who we are." He expressed a humanistic, understanding, and unassuming value for his ongoing project and dialogue with the community, and that was in many ways more significant than a condescending approach of token participation.

GAPP REPERCUSSIONS A SEMI-CONCLUSION:

GAPP was at first consciously developed as a strategic tool for cultural landscape conservation at Treasure Hill. It was meant to turn a pre-determined, somewhat dogmatic and unilaterally wishful idea of implementing an artist village in a grassroots squatter community into a conservation tactic as well as a contextualized program to explore the social outreach of liberal arts. The original intention of GAPP, admittedly, questioned arts' autonomy and did not see art for art sake.

Artivism was derived from and at the same time antithetic of art. Artivism's punctuating activism challenged art for not being serviceable to more meaningful social purposes, and this critique might just subvert art's understated essence the use of being useless. Artivism is affiliated to the Frankfurt School's "negative aesthetics" (Adorno, 1984; Marcuse, 1978), but not yet built up on a firm aesthetic ground. It's more of an activist proposal than a manifesto of aesthetic movement. Adorno's argument of social meaning within the autonomy of art is a long contemplation on the nature of art as well as a critique of high-culture aesthetics being dominated by the institutional powers. But the fine balance between social critique and autonomy of art needs to be learned through practice. Casagrande's attic concept for Treasure Hill (and his associated actions) was artistic and exotic, but it did capture the spirit of the place more precisely than many previous social jargons. Then we can examine where the autonomy of art lies (if there indeed is) and if it achieves the intensity of social critique in this case.

There were a few episodes of GAPP emerging after the flamboyant events were cooled down and most artivists were gone, invoking the creative subjects out of the subordinate society of Treasure Hill. These episodes surfaced among the ripples of GAPP, but were not programmed to happen accordingly. Some were always there or already there but had hardly been noticed or looked at squarely. Some were indeed inspired by the artivists' projects. Mr. Lee, a self-taught carpenter living right behind the stair path conceived and built by Marco Casagrande's artivist team, began to follow the steps after the *Organic Layer* project was officially over. He constructed another stairway going down from his personal window to the main path with better recycled materials and better craftsmanship, then he cleaned another garbage dump into a look-out patio. Gradually he added a small garden, a line of plant-filled pipe fence, a few ingenious built-in seats, a couple of driftwood handrails, a billboard, and so on. And his construction is still growing. The community and the live-in planning crew got to know him more and more because he always mentioned that his cultivation was for the public and not to privatize any more land and he did improve the quality of the environment at the fuzzy edge of Casagrande's artivist project. He has turned himself into another artivist without being crowned with a laurel.

Lin Mu-shan had a measles attack during his childhood, and he remained like an innocent boy ever since. He had problems articulating language or learning at school, but he had an enthusiasm for painting. He lived with his mother quietly at the upper level of the Treasure Hill settlement after his father and brother passed away, and he started to take painting lessons at the Eden Welfare Foundation. Very few neighbors in the community knew his talent till the last stage of GAPP when Yeh Wei-li opened his Treasure Hill Tea + Photo next door to Mu-shan's home. Mu-shan hung out at the teahouse photo studio oftentimes with a strong sense of curiosity and enthusiasm, and he communicated with the photographer in a special way. Yeh took portraits for him and enlarged one of them into one of the most conspicuous light-box artworks of the studio. In the meantime, Mu-shan's paintings were chosen for an exhibit in a prominent city gallery and used for the promotion poster. Yeh shot a series of Mu-shan's paintings to be used in an upcoming book (all the copyright income will go to Mu-shan's family), Mu-shan helped Yeh paint his studio walls and ceiling. And soon Yeh will invite Mu-shan to paint in his studio when his learning term at Eden Foundation is over. Mu-shan became more and more visible in the community, and he even designed the logo for Treasure Hill when the international Creative Sustainability Self-help Center project initiated a collaborative mural artwork at the entrance of the community. Mu-shan's instructor at Eden Foundation wrote a letter to the project office about his growing confidence. His new paintings and exhibitions are occasionally the topic of neighborhood conversations. To say the least, a new set of micro social relations is evolving and restructuring. The artivists are now simply community neighbors, and the old neighbors have become real creative artists.

Mr. Ding, after participating in many different projects and events, began to voice that the Treasure Hill community should come up with their own artwork. He joined the photography session with young Asian designers to take pictures of Treasure Hill for the Street Gallery exhibition, and his work impressed and surprised everyone. Then he proposed a marvelous idea during a performance meeting recording a CD of native-land folklore representing different immigrant histories of Treasure Hill where one could easily capture dialects and accents from a variety of Mainland China provinces, Southeast Asia, and other regions of Taiwan. His proposal was almost realized when two musicians/sound artists from the artists-in residency program volunteered to help. But the lack of budget and adequate equipment postponed it. Mr. Ding was not frustrated, and built a decorated archway at the fork of two alleys near where he lived entitled "Gazebo for the Other Homeland" on one side and "Residence of Befriending Neighbors" on the other. Under the archway was a corner of literature with poems and aspiring words selected by him. With the onward push from GAPP, he seemed to gain the stamina and legitimacy for what desired to do.

If ever Mr. Ding's folklore assemblage CD can be recorded, we will also be expecting Mrs. Chu's fabulous Huang-mei tune, Mr. Feng's heart-breaking harmonica, Mr. Lee's traditional erhu fiddle, the big family of the neighborhood chief lady doing theatrical, and many more local voices. With creative powers from different individuals with distinguished characteristics and histories, the Treasure Hill community is undergoing a transformational process that might transcend a localized

resistance identity into a place-project identity. There are always higher priorities of problems to be solved rezoning details, landscape conservation, community livelihood, building restoration, continuous aging, and so forth, and the community is not yet firmly organized to reach any consensus in the wake of GAPP. But somehow from the few identified individuals, the disempowered squatter community cannot be merely perceived as a collective lump of dependent minorities waiting for care-takers. Art may not do much of practical use value to improve their income, but the creative power which art unleashes from the community infuses a breath of fresh air and new possibilities to a squatter nearly sentenced to a penalty of eternal demise.

ENDNOTES

[1] The Treasure-Hill settlement is a fringe urban village characterized by its intimate physical relations with the Guan-Yin Hill and the Hsin-Dian River and conservation of the treasure-hill settlement has confronted the rationale of modernist planning in Taipei which prioritizes urban function as a whole rather than collective memories of the few. Stigmatized by some urban discourses as the tumor of a pro-growth city, the informal and pre-modern appearance of the settlement is not only reminiscent of the tight spatial fabric of the city's organic past, but also houses the everyday life of many immigrants and families of different periods of urbanization, many of whom are elderly veterans and members of the disempowered social underclass.

On one hand, the Treasure-Hill settlement is condemned as an urban squatter area whose residents maintain their basic subsistence on piecemeal self-help mode; yet on the other hand, it is ironically romanticized as a hill-side village setting which bears the potential of an artistic community. Either viewpoint cannot depict the situation of the settlement today. Ever since the declaration of a future park according to the city's physical plan in the 1990s, the Treasure-Hill settlement was overcast in a gloomy shroud of insecurity.

[2] After the planning responsibility for the Treasure Hill Settlement was transferred from the Department of Park and Recreation to the Bureau of Cultural Affairs, the cultural imagination faced the challenge of programming a "planned" village out of an "ordinary" settlement by piecemeal evolution.

OURs (the Organization of Urban Re-s) is now commissioned by the Bureau of Cultural Affairs to undertake the planning task as well as the 2003 GAPP, and for the time being, the new program intends to propose a "co-living commune" which will incorporate the original residential units as "welfare homeland an alternative social housing," a youth hostel, an ecological learning field, and an artist-in-residences program. All the residents of the new village will share the facilities of a co-kitchen, a co-dining room, a bakery, a café, waterfront organic gardens and farms, a co-op neighborhood self-help center, and various workshops for recycled-material-based arts and creative theatres, darkroom, etc. Restoration of the physical structures will call for the help of International Workcamp, and all the labor put to the care of the community can be transferred as a substitute for rent or meals.

[3] The attic concept appears also in the phenomenological study of Gaston Bachelard's *the Poetics of Space*.

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