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INTRODUCTION

This book is our attempt to constellate the perspectives of artistic initiatives that have a deep investment in local context and which operate outside of conventional institutional frameworks. These approaches present an array of methods, both discursive and practical, for responding to context and relating to a sense of “community” beyond the interpellated “public” of a museum. The spaces represented herein tend to be small in scale and are often relatively short in life span, and they thus often think and work against the grain. This collection is not meant to be a survey; it is neither comprehensive nor, even, representative. While we aimed to provide some geopolitical diversity, the organizations featured here ought not to be understood as token slices of regional contemporary art practices. Instead, we hope that this book’s collection of reports, histories, and opinions will shed light on what making space can be today, and on how the malleable identities of art and art-adjacent spaces have and do work as platforms for organizing and research; social hubs or social refuges; and supporters of craft, education, aesthetic development, and general weirdness.

In seeking out spaces, writers, and mediators to contribute to *Practice Space*, we relied upon our own experiences and networks, the networks of those networks, and so on. This dependence on our own, already-established connections is admittedly a limitation, but it is one that, tacitly or not, frames most contemporary curatorial endeavors, at least those without unlimited means. We point this out not to diminish the work achieved through affinity networks, but to instead take a moment to describe, for one, how this kind of social research is profoundly connected to the global-social sphere of art, as well as to say that we don’t wish to claim any all-knowing authority. Over the course of our research, we traveled to Mexico, Taiwan, Lebanon, France, the Philippines, and Guatemala, and we sought out fellow travelers in and

residents of both these places and those that we could not visit in person. These travels, and the nodes of camaraderie and intelligence that we encountered along the way, are here on these pages. We intend to use this book to maintain connections and conversations and to foster new ones—its aim is not to summarize the field but to return enlivened ideas and information to it.

We have structured the book around three main themes: “Local Time,” “Situated Infrastructure,” and “Cotranslations.” These themes are key terms for thinking about what defines locally embedded work, thinking, and practice, and they serve here as signals of non- or para-institutional thinking. In order to understand how we arrived at the multiplicity of senses of place present today, this book starts with the past. It begins with a reflection and travelogue that gestures at the specificities of place. The initial section, “Local Time,” delves into projects that have ended or have a limited time span, and its texts contemplate how to navigate and inhabit spaces in ways that remain sensitive to their particular genealogies. The selections in “Local Time” consider how duration both helps and hinders a project, and they demonstrate how time is measured differently in different places, often with different ambitions. In the second section, “Situated Infrastructure,” many of the contributors reflect upon how working in a locally embedded manner necessitates an engagement with the governments, buildings, capital, and history of various places, and expound on the various strategies for such engagement. “Situated Infrastructure” is anchored by an essay by Victoria Ivanova that outlines the flows and counterflows of institutional space and the ghostly, global presences of more “universalized” art. Finally, many pieces in “Cotranslations” focus on the ways in which language is used to create and exclude communities. Between the lines in this section, vernaculars take flight in institutional

language and in the conceptual language of art. Our use of “co” is an attempt to capture how many of these initiatives transcend translation from one world into or for another and instead enact translations as continual movements that bring different worlds into relation.

With this publication’s many styles, urgencies, and shifts in tone, we have aimed to provide a snapshot of resonant and critical local practices. As a whole, the book attempts to apprehend place and context not only as intersections of social, economic, political, and historical conditions, but also as carriers of different conceptions of how a collective self relates to the world. We hope that it also carries a message of encouragement to all that is small, practical, and nurturing. We would like to thank all of the contributors, as well as the many people with whom we spoke whose efforts may not be present within this book’s pages but who nonetheless help shape an art world we want to see.