

NO DINING TOGETHER

Text by Ellen Adams

Gallery Seescape Community and Torlarp Larjaroensook
Chiang Mai, Thailand
27 July

Relational aesthetics, an artistic practice that gained attention in the 90's, prioritizes human interaction as its subject. The artist becomes a catalyst, rather than author, of art. In this new frame, the social interaction arising from its artist-curated circumstances becomes both content and form.

The installation *NO DINING TOGETHER* calls into question the frame and experience of relational aesthetics. It stands as an overturned relic of a month-long dining program. After tipping over the white wooden block of a gallery divider and transforming it into a large communal table, the community of Gallery Seescape was invited to create and share nightly dinners. Organized through a public sign-up board, each night's volunteer chef announced, provided, and prepared the ingredients for their chosen menu. These meals, which included a range of international foods as well as impromptu musical performances, were served right above the divider/table's text *IT'S NOT ART EXHIBITION JUST ENJOY DINER WITH US* [sic]. Such insistence coyly acknowledges and declines the easy association with the iconic work by Argentinean-born Thai artist Rikrit Tiravanija, who made a name for himself and relational aesthetics by cooking Thai food in New York gallery.

The exhibition's installation, however, is—quite literally—post-relational. The gallery divider, which lost its initial function of separating space once it was leveled into a place of gathering, has been returned to its upright position. The supplies (spices, sauces, mosquito repellent, tissues, a hotplate) that enabled such togetherness are rendered useless, super-glued to the communal table's now vertical surface. The ingredients of this supposedly non-art activity are anchored to the outside of the physical and proverbial white cube.

As with much of gallery owner Torlarp Larjaroensook's conceptual work, this installation raises questions about the former lives of now functionless objects. The physical remnants of *NO DINING TOGETHER* offer a deeper investigation into the role of invitation in the art world. Who really holds the authority to delineate, divide, or open the spaces and experience of art? After all, a gallery divider can easily be turned into a table. By publicly and playfully denouncing the label of exhibition in the month-long dinner series, and then exhibiting an unannounced, un-publicized installation of its artifacts, *NO DINING TOGETHER* makes clear that interaction and art might not be so evenly aligned.

NO DINING TOGETHER Photos to Accompany Exhibition Text



Ellen Adams on her cooking night



Gallery divider once upright