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Rirkrit Tiravanija Curates 'The Way Things Go' at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

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As part of his residency at the [Headlands Center for the Arts](#) in Fort Barry in the Marin Headlands near San Francisco, the Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, who often involves food in his works, was assigned the task of conceptualizing a dinner for about 80 guests, so he decided to fuse the cuisine of Thailand with locally sourced ingredients found at nearby green markets. The meal was co-presented by the [Yerba Buena Center for the Arts](#) in San Francisco, where Tiravanija recently curated an exhibition titled [The Way Things Go](#) (more on that later).

Tiravanija, along with the help of the Headlands Center for the [Arts](#) Mess Hall chef Damon Little, created a menu of five dishes: Yum Som, a citrus salad with blood orange, sweet lime, Valencia oranges, avocados, glass noodles, and a spicy dressing; Tom Yum — a dashi broth with galangal, lemongrass, lime, chili, cilantro and local root vegetables; Gang Keaw Wan Je — a green curry with coconut milk, mushrooms and halibut; Gang Panang Ped — a panang curry with coconut milk, pan seared duck breast and potatoes; and kombu ice cream with a sesame nori cracker for dessert.

“I’m not a good cook, but the only way I get away with it is the fact that everybody is enjoying whatever it is they’re enjoying when they’re together,” revealed Tiravanija to his guests at the beginning of the dinner. “So this kind of family dinner style is really perfect for me cooking because everyone is going to enjoy it and they won’t remember what they ate.”

Most of the guests probably would agree with me when I say that Tiravanija was being humble. They loved the meal, which was full of fresh fruit and vegetables. The Gang Penang Ped was rich and creamy, and the halibut in the Gang Keaw Wan Je just melted in your mouth. I have a feeling they’re going to remember not just the conversation they had, but the food they ate as well.



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A still from *The Way Things Go*, by Fischli and Weiss

Meanwhile, across the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts is the exhibition that Tiravanija curated. He selected works by 13 artists and art collectives from [Asia](#), [Europe](#) and the San Francisco Bay Area who include Camille Henrot, Arin Rungjang, Superflex, The Propeller Group, Luc Moullet and more. Tiravanija got the title from Swiss duo Peter Fischli and David Weiss’s seminal 1987 video piece that follows a chain of actions and reactions titled *The Way Things Go*, which is also part of the exhibition.

“It’s a metaphor for life,” said Tiravanija about the Fischli and Weiss video. “We go through life bumping and ticking and falling and tripping into things, and good things happen and bad things happen, but anyway we continue to roll along on a path which either we shape it, or we fall into it, and I think that’s part of the whole idea of understanding our existence is the fact that we have to be aware of where we are within the world.”

Culture, cuisine, and discovering the source of where things stem appear to be some of the unifying themes in the exhibition. According to Tiravnija, “It’s about existentialism. We need to know where we are and what is around us and how do we exist in this present time, and where that is going to take us into the future.”

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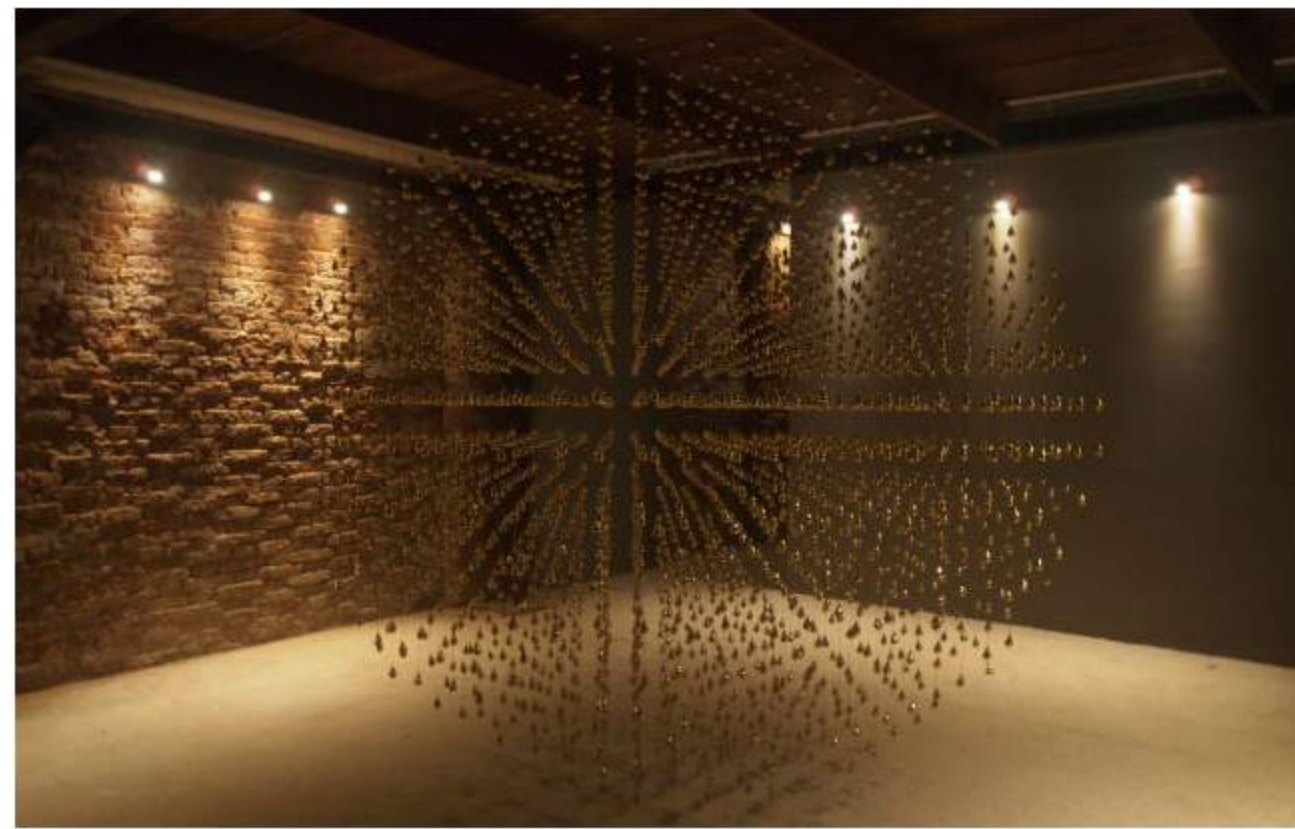
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In the 1978 film *Genénesse d'un repas* (Genesis of a Meal), French filmmaker Luc Moullet investigated the path of origin to consumption of four essential elements of his diet: a can of Senegalese tuna, a French omelet, an Ecuadorian banana, and a reel of 35-millimeter film. The viewer sees the social and political issues, such as the low wages of the Senegalese fishermen, behind each item.

Thai artist Pratchaya Printhong's 2015 sculpture *Nam Prik Zaunguna*, features two triangles comprised of clear plastic cannisters of a chili paste of the same name made of fish, coconut, cashews, vegetable oil, dried shrimp, fish sauce, vinegar, tamarind paste, dried chili powder and salt.



Golden Teardrop by Arin Rungjang

The star of the show is Rungjang's 2013 piece *Golden Teardrop*, which was showed at the 2013 Venice Biennale. The film takes viewers through the history of Tong Yod, a Thai dessert, told by a Japanese woman who migrated to Bangkok during World War II. The accompanying sculpture is an assemblage of 5,500 hanging hammered brass teardrops.

The works in the exhibition are as layered and complex as the back stories behind them. One can spend a whole day in the exhibition just watching the video pieces in the show, so be prepared to set aside several hours if you're going to visit.

Does Tirvanija think curating is any different than creating art? "Making art is the same as curating," said Tiravanija. "I would say I would curate exhibitions that are very close to myself or to my understanding, or to at least to my perception, or to the perception that people who see it would understand, so it's all integrated."

***The Way Things Go* is on display at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts through May 24.**

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