

RESIDENCY FOR ARTISTS ON HIATUS

Residency for Artists on Hiatus, a collaborative art project by visual artists Shinobu Akimoto and Matthew Evans, is a virtual yet functioning residency available to artists who, for one reason or another, are not currently making or presenting art. The residency will exist in the form of a website, and residency artists will be selected based on their proposals of “on-hiatus” activities (or non-activities) through open calls. To be eligible to apply for the *Residence for Artists on Hiatus*, artists must have previously created an independent body of work and have exhibited in a public context. Selected artists will be represented on the website with related information including a biography, the dates of their residency, and a summary of their proposed activities. Their individual page may contain components such as periodic reports of their activities or a blog on which they post the course of their endeavours. At the conclusion of their residency, participants are expected to submit a written report along with other relevant documentation on how they benefited from or were otherwise influenced by this opportunity. A modest stipend will be awarded to successful applicants to assist in their on-hiatus endeavours.

In its ultimate/ideal incarnation, the residency will be “hosted” by an art institution, who would provide access to the site through their own website, and assist in funding the programme. The selection of participating artists, residency requirements, its duration and the amount of stipend paid, may reflect the decisions made by an advisory board, potentially comprised of personnel from the supporting institution and/or other selected external professionals. The period of our collaboration with the host institution remains open to discussion. Alternately, we may promote the residency through an international online art forum such as e-flux, and seek potential supporters to help sustain the project. We will remain as directors and operate the residency, corresponding with the participants on a regular basis during their residency period, updating the website, and being responsible for other administrative tasks. While principally a web-based operation, we intend to travel to promote the residency at art-related events, design and produce small items with the residency’s logo for its promotion, and publish an annual report as a full-colour catalogue of the participants’ on-hiatus activities.

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Stemming from our personal queries into the life/art relationship and “artist” identity issues, this project attempts to highlight the limbo space many artists tend to find themselves in at different times in their careers, and how they perceive or negotiate such times and conditions. The onset of globalism has given rise to the exotic notion of the artist-celebrity as a globetrotting, biennale-showing, party-attending cultural worker. At the same time, a majority of artists continue to maintain modest careers while working other jobs or foregoing any otherwise comfortable, if less “glamorous” lifestyles. Moreover, our everyday encounters with media and technology in recent years have created a culture where we no longer necessarily equate creativity with lengthy and strenuous activity or with the specific material dexterity of an individual. We are much more open to the idea of the artist as inter-textual organiser of disparate materials and signifying processes -- perhaps a 21st century sequel to the artistic explorations by numerous 20th century artists into the possibility that anything could be art and anyone could be an artist by simply designating ones activities as such.

The project also grew out of a question of what determines one’s artistic identity, when do artists cease to be recognized as artists, or does having a professional career at anytime in one’s life grant life-long artist status. We are reminded of Marcel Duchamp who gave up art for chess, yet whose artist identity endures without question. Similarly we can consider conceptual artist Tehching Hsieh, who completed the last of his year-long performance pieces in 1985/86, with a work in which he did not engage with, read about, or produce "art" for an entire year. Following this project, he continued to be essentially "on hiatus" for the next 13 years and when asked at a lecture in Montreal about his silence during this time period, he responded only that he had no better ideas. Interestingly, he added that he now plans to create a physical installation, which addresses this on-hiatus period.

Regardless of the diverse understanding of “artistic” engagement in our time, many artists endure some level of anxiety and pressure of meeting the demand to be productive. They seek the tacit approval or at least acknowledgement of our peers and an art world economy deemed necessary to maintain their artist status. *Residency for*

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Artists on Hiatus will allow artists freedom from the obligations of being an artist, yet at the same time, they inevitably and paradoxically participate in an art project as a kind of collaboration. The project's presence on a public institution's website will further layer this paradox, provoking questions about institutional authority and endorsement of an "artist's" status, while it may make the issues more visible and accessible to the general public. Through inhabiting familiar or established systems such as an artist residency or the Internet, we wish to set up conditions for re-imagining the capacity and scope of "the arts". The outcome of *Residency for Artists on Hiatus* will be vastly influenced, if not determined by the participants and the potential cooperation of an institution. As well, our roles and identities will remain obscured but open-ended as we work as webmasters, designers, and facilitators "in support of" other artists. All these elements pertaining to this project reiterate our interests and concerns we have respectively explored, while it allows us to expand our own practices towards new modes of artistic production.