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Curatorial Brief Structural Integrity

*2010 Next Wave Festival
Melbourne, 13 – 30 May 2010*

OVERVIEW

Structural Integrity is a large-scale exhibition initiative that will be developed as a keynote project in the 2010 Next Wave Festival. *Structural Integrity* will bring together six Australian and four Asian Artist Run Initiatives (ARIs) as part of a rigorous exhibition and cultural exchange project. *Structural Integrity* will continue Next Wave's longstanding engagement with ARI culture, providing a critical forum to explore independent and emerging arts practice and extending the dynamic creative work of the ARI sector. *Structural Integrity* will also consider the cultural, social and economic conditions that artists across the region are currently grappling.

This will be the first time that Asian artists have been prominently featured in the Next Wave Festival, making *Structural Integrity* an invaluable opportunity to extend emerging artists' networks, mobilise cross-cultural collaborations, and inspire future exchanges. Next Wave's Artistic Director Jeff Khan and Artistic Program Manager Ulanda Blair have both undertaken intensive research trips through Asia in recent months, and they are excited by the dynamism of many Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, Philippine and Singaporean ARIs and artist collectives they have encountered.

EXHIBITION

The *Structural Integrity* exhibition will be housed within the City of Melbourne's Arts House Meat Market complex, engaging with the cavernous architecture of the Main Pavilion, as well as with the exterior spaces of the historic building. The exhibition will highlight the shared, as well as distinctive characteristics of grassroots artistic culture across the region, providing a snapshot view of emerging arts practice in today's rapidly changing artistic and geo-cultural context.



Above: Arts House Meat Market Main Pavilion, with Ash Keating's 2020? at the 2008 Next Wave Festival pictured right.

Each participating ARI in *Structural Integrity* will be invited to create a structure or 'pavilion' that will be installed within the Meat Market building. Historically, the pavilion structure has been loaded with cultural values and ideals (think of the grand expositions of the 19th Century, or of the Venice Biennale). Each pavilion in *Structural Integrity* will thus be developed as an expression of the ARIs' artistic principles, in relation to their particular cultural or geographic situation. As both metaphoric and physical structures, the ten pavilions will be in turns playful, provocative, melancholic, speculative and rhetorical. We expect that some of the pavilions will house additional artworks, whilst others will simply exist as the artwork itself. *Structural Integrity* will look like a melancholic world's fair, examining national and local cultural identity through the lens of innovative, grassroots, contemporary arts practice.

Some key **curatorial questions** framing the exhibition include:

- What are the economic, political and cultural forces currently affecting creative output, and how do artist collectives and ARIs adapt, resist and embrace these forces whilst maintaining their 'structural integrity'?
- What artists, and what sorts of practices are best served by ARI models?
- How are new, difficult-to-define and risky practices accommodated by the ARI system?
- What is the role and position of ARIs in contemporary society?
- What place does independent, non-institutionalized and collective artistic practice have in the broader cultural imaginary?

RESIDENCY

Over the next six months Next Wave will work with all interstate and international ARIs to secure travel and accommodation support. Pending funding, we hope that participating artists in *Structural Integrity* will undertake a one-month residency at the Meat Market in the weeks immediately preceding the 2010 Next Wave Festival (i.e. mid-April to mid-May 2010). This residency will allow the participating artists to undertake comprehensive research for their project, and allow them to construct their pavilion inside the Meat Market space, ensuring a site-sensitive and resolved outcome. The Meat Market will thus become each ARI's 'home away from home', operating as a studio, a think tank, a development space and a networking hub.

SYMPOSIUM

A discussion forum exploring the present state of artist-run networks, and the benefits and challenges of cross-cultural exchange for emerging artists, will accompany the *Structural Integrity* exhibition. The forum will form part of the 2010 Next Wave Festival's Public Programs, and will involve *Structural Integrity* artists along with local organisations committed to cultural exchange between Australia and Asia. Next Wave will also welcome additional public discussions, workshops and other modes of community engagement, initiated by project participants, throughout the development and presentation of *Structural Integrity*.

ABOUT NEXT WAVE

Next Wave is a biennial festival and artist development organisation, presenting genre-busting new work by the next wave of Australian artists. Next Wave supports the creation and presentation of new work across all artform areas including visual arts, performance, dance, new media, text, hybrid projects and beyond, pushing the boundaries of traditional media and encouraging connections between diverse art forms and disciplines. Established in 1984, Next Wave encourages artists to undertake ambitious new projects, to experiment and engage with new ideas, and develop new skills and networks. Next Wave is also dedicated to exploring different contexts for contemporary arts practice, activating unconventional spaces for exchange between artists and audiences.

Next Wave is a not-for-profit organisation supported by the Australia Council for the Arts, the Federal Government's arts funding and advisory body; Arts Victoria; and the City of Melbourne.

Information on Next Wave and our programs and activities can be found online at www.nextwave.org.au

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

Themed ***No Risk Too Great***, the 2010 Next Wave Festival will explore the role of risk in a risk-averse culture. Under pressure to conform, we have all become experts in micro-managing our own behaviour. But is this self-surveillance distracting us from the bigger risks, the more un-manageable ones which are increasingly – and radically – changing our world? Just what does “risk” actually mean in these volatile times?

In a wider culture of risk management, how prepared are we to make decisions that are brave, courageous or transgressive? Where is the line between our own personal, moral and ethical worlds, and the codes and principles which circulate in the broader context of contemporary culture? What is our capacity to draw, hold or cross this line? What are the real risks of our time, what are the risks worth taking, and what is our role as individuals, and as artists, in relation to them? How can we act boldly and imaginatively, in art and in life?

More information

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