Rirkrit Tiravanija
Exhibition, Ikon Gallery, November – January 2004

Born in Buenos Aires (1961), based in New York and Berlin, Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija is a leading figure in a generation that has radically changed the way art is proposed and apprehended. His work epitomises a refreshing openness in art practice, blurring the distinctions between process and finished work, between art work and its various contexts and, above all, between art and its audience. Diametrically opposed to notions of the self-contained art object, Tiravanija's work constitutes a challenge to conventional aesthetic values – forming the basis of the art market - as serious as it is easy-going, as engaging as it is stringently undogmatic.

An early work by Tiravanija involved him serving *Pad Thai*, a traditional Thai noodle dish, at the opening of his first solo exhibition, at Paula Allen Gallery, New York, 1990. The eating and socialising that took place was the art work, and the remains of the meal stayed on view as evidence of the event. Since then there have been hundreds of such Thai meals, and a wide range other projects remarkable for their collaboration and conviviality: film screenings of home movies, a car trip with students from Los Angeles to Philadelphia, recording sessions for amateur guitarists and drummers, a reconstruction of his New York apartment as an open house, providing facilities for visitors 24 hours a day etc. For Ikon, Tiravanija proposes three projects: a pool hall, an exhibition of drawings and an ongoing programme of practical demonstrations.

The pool hall, on the second floor of the gallery, will consist of a bar, playing and lounge areas. Its décor will be a collaboration between Tiravanija and fellow Thai artist Udomsak Krisanamis. The exhibition, adjacent, will consist of drawings commissioned by Tiravanija, based on press photographs of political demonstrations. Graphic representations of human expression *en masse*, they embody at the same time the careful craft of an individual.

In this respect the drawings correspond particularly to the practical demonstrations. These will be undertaken, on the first floor, by volunteers representing amateur or professional activities such as food presentation, calligraphy, model railway construction, indoor gardening, golf putting, flower arranging, origami and so on. Characteristically emphasis is thus placed on manual dexterity and the simple pleasures derived from "making things". Social interaction is engendered by shared experience and connections made between local practitioners and a wide ranging audiences. To this end, particularly, besides catering for gallery visitors, the artist is proposing live web-cam broadcasts of demonstrations.

Coinciding as it does with the Christmas/New Year holiday, the goodwill and generosity of this exhibition could not be more timely.