

kurimanzutto

Rirkrit Tiravanija

untitled 2014 (todos juntos)

september 11 – 13, 2014

The work of Rirkrit Tiravanija (1961) explores participatory events that examine human interactions within a social environment. For *untitled 2014 (todos juntos)* the gallery has become a convivial space, a common meeting area surrounded by ping-pong tables, charcoal grills and palm trees.

Colossal in its proportions, *untitled 2014 (todos juntos)*, is the first in a series of three hammocks commissioned by Rirkrit. Made by the inmates of a correctional center near Valladolid, Yucatán, each hammock requires four months of work to complete and is laden with financial significance as it is the only craft inmates are allowed to sell and thus a major source of their economic support.

Woven in the center of the hammock, the slogan “todos juntos” (all together) refers to the collective effort of the inmates, an idea reflected in the hammock’s capacity to carry approximately a dozen people and the group public participation in the act of lying on it. Reclining together shoulder to shoulder with others is a physical manifestation of the slogan that activates the hammock as both a political space and a platform for interaction and communication with others.

Interspersed at different points throughout the gallery are the ping-pong tables, palm trees and grills that offset the hammock’s central slogan. Often reusing newspaper headlines and political captions in his paintings or printed on mundane objects such as towels and t-shirts, Rirkrit now employs these phrases on ping-pong tables. The slogans have a cultural and political grounding permeating the object on which they are inscribed; they are words to read, to meditate, but above all to be utilized. Playing ping-pong on a table that reads, “tomorrow is the question,” imbues the game with a sentiment which sharpens the way it is both played and observed, a gesture that makes evident the implications of language as it is used in political campaigns and daily press.

Another similarly recurring element in Rirkrit’s work, the areca palms present in the gallery are an allusion to work by artist Marcel Broodthaers, who used them as icons and cultural references. The palm symbolizes the encounter with the tropical and the exotic, a topic Rirkrit previously explored in installations such as *Palm Pavilion* (2006), conceived for the 27th Sao Paulo Biennale and shown at kurimanzutto in 2008.

Echoing the construction of the hammock, the four grills used for the massive barbecue were commissioned from a nearby blacksmith shop. The result of local ingenuity, rods, barrels and metal grids are improvised into formation of a functional grill. These grills are the necessary companions to another interactive aspect of the exhibit: dinner. While eating barbecue served off the grills, the spectators become at once both dinner guests and collaborators in the performance that takes place in the gallery.

Cooking has defined the career of this Thai artist for more than two decades. One of his first pieces, *untitled (free)* from 1992, transformed a New York gallery into a kitchen where curry was prepared and served to visitors. While the menu for *untitled 2014 (todos juntos)* is slightly different, roast meat with a vegetable side dish, the overall idea remains the same. Rather than a host that directs and supervises a social event, Rirkrit dedicates himself to playing the role of a cook seasoning a reunion that provides his guests with the social grease to mingle on their own.

In this scenario amongst palms, ping-pong and grills, an action occurs of which everyone partakes, whether observing, eating, playing or rocking on the hammock. These situations seek to eliminate the distance created between art and everyday life, between the artist and the spectator. According to Rirkrit “it is not about food but about people coexisting in a space...what matters is not what you see but what happens between people.”

Rirkrit Tiravanija is a professor at Columbia University in New York and works and lives between New York City, Berlin and Chiang Mai in Thailand.