

Come Together

(AUSTIN)

Testsite asked me to do a collaborative project with radio producer Ruxandra Guidi. We decided to do a new version of an ongoing project of mine called **Come Together** in which a set of local people are asked to find someone else to give a ten minute public lecture. We asked eleven people who were already in some way connected to Testsite to select someone they knew who wasn't connected to Testsite to give a lecture on a topic near and dear to them. The selectors supplied info about the lectures for this publication and introduced their lecturers at the event. The only requirement for the lecture topics was that they were not about contemporary art. The lectures were presented at **Fluent-Collaborative** on Saturday, March 12th, one after another, followed by a party for all of the participants. Regine Basha (along with the Testsite staff) was instrumental in the organization of the event.

- Harrell Fletcher

**11 ten minute lectures by 11 different people
Saturday, March 12, 2005
Testsite/Fluent-Collaborative, Austin, Texas**



1

The Little Deli

Lucretia Doyer, the owner and proprietor of **The Little Deli**, spoke about her restaurant and the role it plays as the warm-hearted anchor of the 1954, slice-out-of-time shopping center in Crestview, a central Austin neighborhood in transition. She discussed the challenges of running two businesses—she and her husband have just started a second restaurant closer to their home—and how her family life and business life are virtually identical. And, as usual, she’s made some spontaneous wisecracks—they’re as excellent as her sandwiches.

An apparent born comedian/performance artist, Lucretia greets her customers with an amusing challenge and/or sassy insult, and a cheerfully stubborn refusal to customize orders, leading to comparisons to Seinfeld’s “Soup Nazi.” If you’re in a bad mood (it is recommend to go on Mondays) or hungry, your condition will have improved immensely by the time you leave her establishment. In business for more than a decade, she employs a legion of female relatives and friends behind the counter, but Lucretia’s voice is the one you hear. Her place is a magnet for construction workers, landscapers, teachers, small business owners, retired folks, young hipsters, and old hipsters from the surrounding neighborhood, who all crowd onto the few stools/tables inside and dozen or so picnic tables outside the deli. She has known the proprietors of the surrounding quaint pharmacy, grocery store, barbershop etc since her childhood (her grandparents ran a business there), and notes that each business is now being run by children of the original owners, further supporting the timeless, multi generational feel of the place.

Annette Carlozzi, a self-described nomadic contemporary art curator who is trying to learn to stay put, invited Lucretia to participate so that she would have the chance to have more than two sentences of conversation with this woman who is so very different from herself, yet the same age and from an apparently similar background. Carlozzi moved into the neighborhood a bit more than a year ago and found The Little Deli on the recommendation of friends who lived there—otherwise, it’s like a close-kept secret. She has been quipping back to Lucretia since her first visit, although it still terrifies her. She recommends the club sandwich on a kaiser roll, no onions.

2

Cave Biology

Andy Gluesenkamp showed slides of his underground exploration of a variety of gorgeous, remote Mexican caves. He also discussed the diverse and strange animals that live in them.

Andy is a cave biologist in Austin, and has gone on many adventures. “Adventures”, meaning “exploring places underneath remote Mexican jungle”. He’s also a not-bad Volkswagen mechanic and amateur butcher.

Ian Quigley selected Andy. He is a graduate student in developmental biology at UT. Ian first met Andy while exploring an underground river in San Antonio about six years ago and has since had the pleasure of his company in unusual situations on a regular basis.



3

The Daily Sandwich

Jessica Buonocore talked about her catering business, **The Daily Sandwich**.

After working for several years in the restaurant business in Los Angeles, Jessica felt a need to contribute to the food world of Austin. Realizing that there are many offices full of employees too busy to leave their desks (let alone the office to go get lunch) her goal is to provide something good, something interesting, and something different to this core audience as well as the wider public of Austin—to give them an alternative to the frozen meals in the lunch room, or an alternative to packing their own brown bag lunch at home.

Laurence Miller invited Jessica to speak. Laurence is the Founding Director of **Fluent~Collaborative**, a speculative non-profit contemporary art initiative based in Austin, Texas.



4

Stories

Dunya Bean read the first pages from a number of her own short stories. Illustrating special insight into both genders and their quotidian interactions, her writing combines a sense of the absurd with wildly inventive humor. After her public reading she answered questions from the audience addressing how she developed her personal voice, writer's block and the mechanics of daily fiction writing.

Dunya Bean's mother was born and raised in Budapest, Hungary, her father in Lowell, Massachusetts. After a brief educational stay at Harvard her father found himself a college student in Texas. He adopted the lone star state as his own, and then went to fight in the Big War where he met and married a lovely Hungarian young woman. They moved back to Texas and Dunya was born and raised in San Angelo, a somewhat bleak west Texas town, deeply part of the Texas oil culture. This is all to say, Dunya has something to say. The oldest of four children, her vision was influenced by her mother's flamboyant and civilized Eastern European heritage and her father's "can do" business success. Always a unique character, Sue Graze met Dunya in Dallas over 25 years ago through her now ex-husband. They had befriended each other through their respective positions related to the very large county hospital, Parkland, where Kennedy died, among many others. Always intrepid and someone who embraces kismet, she worked for the Houston Grand Opera, an energy company, a Dallas developer and the state senate of Texas. As her life moved forward (she had a brief marriage and a fabulous son) she recognized her fiction voice and obtained a masters degree in Creative Writing at the University of Texas at El Paso. She has published short stories, been an English instructor and a writer-in-residence, and has a novel aching to be published – any leads?

Sue Graze is currently the Executive Director of **Arthouse**, a contemporary (kunsthalle) space in Austin, Texas. She never thought she would end up in Austin after growing up on Long Island, attending college in the midwest, going to graduate school in Southern California and then having a long curatorial stint in Dallas and a shorter one in Miami. But, after six years she is adjusting and has just purchased her very first condominium.

5

Worker's Rights

Judith Rosenberg discussed workers' rights—in particular Mexican Factory workers.

Judith is originally from New York City. She worked at a major company there for many years, and one day, when she was in her 50s, Judith realized that her job wasn't satisfying enough. She wanted to commit fully to her activism. So she moved to Austin, TX to start a PhD program in labor studies with a focus on women workers. The way Judith tells it, one day she attended a meeting at a Latino church in Austin's east side, where she met some dissatisfied Mexican factory workers – and from that day on, she became a serious advocate of women's workers' rights. Judith heads "Austin Tan Cerca de la Frontera," a non-profit organization that exposes Americans living in Texas to the realities of life south of the border, as a way to encourage dialogue.

Judith was invited by **Ruxandra Guidi**. Ruxandra is a public radio producer who's been living in Texas for the last 1 ½ years, and often doing stories about the border. Much like Judith, Ruxandra feels that Texas has changed her life, and has given way to a renewed sense of purpose and wonder.



6

Egyptian Cab Ride

Tariq El Seewi's presentation was to read a selection of his poetry and fiction writing aloud for the first time. His reading rang with clarity, wit and a colorful visual richness that managed to transport us all to the backseat of a tense Egyptian cab ride.

Tariq is one of the first people Regine Basha met when she and her husband moved to Austin from New York. He's a childhood friend of Regine's best friend Rachel. Half Egyptian, half Oklahoman, Tariq (who once went as 'Rick') has lived in California and Texas while going back and forth to Egypt to visit his family and friends every once in a while. The disconnect between the two cultures has been a continual source of fruitful confusion and mayhem for Tariq – especially now, at this time of war. Luckily, Tariq recently quit his desk job of eight years and decided to take his poetry and short story writing more seriously and go back to UT Austin to get his Phd in Radio, Television and Film. Regine doesn't know anyone who has a more active interest and understanding of the ins and outs of current Arab media sources. Tariq is also in a band in Austin called 'Siwa'. When they get their act together, they play the Carousel Lounge most Wednesday nights.

Regine Basha is an itinerant curator who moved from Austin to New York two years ago (where she is training herself to relax more) with Gabriel Perez-Barreiro, her husband. She works as Adjunct Curator at Arthouse and has consulted with Laurence Miller to launch Fluent Collaborative. With parents from Iraq and a similar half-breed Arab-Israeli-Canadian-American trajectory growing up, she found a kindred spirit in Tariq. They are both of the tribe that believes Arabs and Jews to be cousins, not enemies.





7

Big Bang Rock Opera

Dr. James Caras showed a video of a Rock Opera about the evolution of life on Earth.

Jamie is a scientist and educator who Peat first encountered through the company Jaime started, Science Technologies. After receiving his PhD in Biochemistry, Jamie founded Science Technologies, dedicated to creating engaging and sophisticated educational material. Many people might find creating interactive animations of molecular processes to be boring, but Peat has always found the work that he's done for him to be fascinating. What Peat found more fascinating was Jamie's dream to create a heavy-metal/opera/animation about the evolution of life on earth.

Peat Duggins has been in Austin for a solid 5 years now, during which time he has illustrated and designed a lot of educational content for a slew of textbooks, tests and CD-ROMs, and yet has only once seen the fusion of Heavy Metal and learning, but remains hopeful for more.

8

Russian Poetry

Caitlin Haskell presented two poems: the first was a traditional Russian children's rhyme and the second, a classic work by Alexander Pushkin about the grand city of St. Petersburg.

Caitlin is currently pursuing her Masters degree in Art History at the University of Texas at Austin, but one thing that sets her apart is her passion for the Russian culture. Caitlin's interest in Russia began in the seventh grade in Exeter, New Hampshire and was fostered through a consistent study of the language and culture as well as several extremely immersed visits where she sometimes stayed for several months at a time. She recently brought that love to Austin where she worked at a Russian grocery store for several months last fall.

Elizabeth Blackburn invited Caitlin. They both are graduates from Davidson College and their friendship began as roommates on their semester abroad in France.



9

Wild Mushrooms

Tom Benton cooked up a variety of wild mushrooms and served them bruschetta style for guests and participants in the living room of Testsite.

Tom is a former scientist and currently runs a catering business with his friend and band partner, Jeremy Bruch called **Two Straight Guys Cookworks**. Elizabeth first met Tom two years ago at a party hosted by his other band member and friend, Liz Pappademas, during which he whipped up delicious soup and appetizers. Elizabeth later heard about his annual trips to Iowa to forage for wild mushrooms. To learn more about Tom's catering company, please visit: www.2sgcookworks.com.

Elizabeth Blackburn has lived in Austin for two years and currently works at **Fluent~Collaborative** and **Arthouse**.





10 Women's Boxing

Aubrey Edwards discussed and demonstrated what it takes to become a boxer.

Aubrey is a photographer working out of Austin. She is known for her creative portraiture and sassy band photos. Along with Boxing and a passion for fashion design, Aubrey is one of Austin's own, **Boom Chica Boom Girls**, a Go-Go Party Duo that knows how to dance and make people have fun.

Jason Singleton lives and works in Austin, TX. He received a BFA from The University of Texas at Austin in studio art and has exhibited at Arthouse, The Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, Casteglion Florenta, and The Fresh Up Club.

11

Gamelan

Clint Newsom discussed and played samples of Gamelan music. Gamelan is “A generic term used for various types of Indonesian orchestra. These vary in size, function, musical style and instrumentation, but generally include tuned single bronze gongs, gong-chimes, single- and multi-octave metallophones, drums, flutes, bowed and plucked chordophones, a xylophone, small cymbals and singers.” The Grove Music Online definition does a somewhat decent job of naming the ingredients of the Indonesian Gamelan—although, two important words have been left out, the two “C-majors of Indonesian music”, communal and cooperative. These descriptors are important when conducting informed listening and discussion regarding Indonesian musics. Three essential ingredients of Gamelan are *Ostinato* (cyclic motion of rudimentary melody), polyphonic stratification (or stratified polyphony, the difference has sparked academic debate), and lastly interlocking parts. These elements fuse together in what the Balinese term as “*Kotekan*”—a notion of economically expensive musicianship where through the dissection of notes and melodic patterns, tempos eight times faster than those played by a single musician may be achieved. This level of cooperation lives vibrantly in all areas of Balinese life from rice pounding, irrigation, worship, and gongsmithery, to present issues such as technological adaptation and education. No matter how far the world progresses and technology changes, the Balinese claim to be ready to absorb it—however, their cultural practices and music act as a the mirror image of their modern selves, keeping them irreverently “Balinese”. Indonesians live through their art. In Bali, Every 420 days, temples are opened for three days. In this time people worship ancestors, gods come to be worshiped and demons are drawn in hoping for blood. Offerings are sculpted from crude resources representing some of Bali’s most impressive art; however, many tourists never see these works – where the more perfect an artwork, the sooner it is burned in homage to a god or demon. Through music and art, equilibrium is maintained between the forces of decay in the underworld and the middle world – the world of the living. The Balinese use dance, puppetry, and music to negotiate these realms. While black magic and other lesser-known superstitious practices are sometimes swept under the rug and guarded from foreigners. Music plays a central role throughout these practices. Villages maintain gamelan instruments, orchestras and dance troupes alongside necessary vocations—and hearing the sound of numerous troupes practicing (especially in Ubud) is no irregularity.

Clint decided to take a trip to South East Asia in May of 2004. After visiting India and Hong Kong, he made it to Bali where like so many before him, he became entranced with the music and arts of the Island. Having read Covarrubias’ *Island of Bali*, he went in search of *Barong* (dragon costumed dancers) and *Topeng* (masked dancers) performances, the mysterious *Kecak* fire chant and as many forms of Gamelan as he could absorb. After returning to Austin he told stories about his experiences in Bali and realized that most of his friends had never heard of Gamelan, and most certainly couldn’t define the word.

Dave Bryant invited Clint to speak about Gamelan. He likes to know people who know about things that he doesn’t know about. Clint is exploding Dave’s mind right now with bits and pieces of music from around the world. The two have a nice relationship built around sharing knowledge and cracking jokes. They come together famously when they hear any music by The Band.



Harrell Fletcher has created socially engaged, interdisciplinary projects over the last decade for a variety of venues internationally. He was a participant in the 2004 Whitney Biennial. In 2002 Fletcher started *Learning To Love You More* (www.learningtoloveyoumore.com), an ongoing participatory website with Miranda July. He is a professor at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon.

Brian Scott of **Boon Design** (www.boondesign.com) designed this publication.

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