
Thomas Charvériat

Thomas Charvériat, founder and director of **island6 Arts Center**, has been a seminal force behind the promotion and research of electronic and technological production in the Shanghai area. With a tour de force in the international artistic milieu behind him, and having originated numerous electronic and interactive projects in the USA, Spain and France, he has established his unique vision in the creation of one of Shanghai's first fully independent, not-for-profit, artist-run art centers. He has directed the transformation and expansion of a historic flour mill, abandoned amidst the urban renewal that has gripped this city, and created an infrastructure which has supported and elicited the participation of more than two hundred artists in the past two years, offering a subsidized residency program.

An artist in his own right as well as chief instigator, director and operations manager, Thomas Charvériat has also nurtured the (otherwise individualistic) milieu of contemporary artistic practice in Shanghai by offering an open lab, the now reputable **island6 Lab (Liu Dao)**, which has provoked endless interpretation and variations in the implementation of digital and electronic art in a highly collaborative manner. Artists arriving at the center typically find themselves immediately immersed in a collective process; a conduit of exchange, open dialogue and critical examination of contemporary visual art. The core impetus behind the in-situ creative process and manufacture of the works lies within the professional vision of Thomas Charvériat to challenge artists and guests alike in a studio that remains in a state of constant flux. **island6** is continually host to a stream of volunteers and young enthusiasts hungry for new innovative electronic invention. Moreover, **island6** has continued to offer their space for highly innovative public exhibitions, housing interactive labs and symposiums stimulating cooperation with numerous art centers, museums and commercial galleries.

Thomas' initiative has brought inspiration, knowledge and training to diverse new voices in the field, helping them achieve the required expertise while breaking dogmatic preconceptions. The artistic director responds intuitively to the complexity, accelerated growth and maddening discord of Shanghai by incorporating an interactive response into the instance of creation and fragmentation of sensorial perceptions in the **island6 Lab**, creating an artistic echoing of reality. As a conceptual visual artist, his digital electronic installation and video art productions have been selected for over 50 exhibitions internationally, and have been chosen for several prestigious festivals. His creations are mostly process oriented and may be interpreted as an interactive fusion of electronics, experimentation and found materials, infused with a subversive sense of humor. Most importantly, spontaneity is the magical essence in the mind of Thomas Charvériat, an artist who is able to poke fun at himself as well as the societal convention and elitism of our day. Although the artist's brusque and uncompromising principles of process and reinvention of formal and technical aspects have earned him adversity, challenge and provocation, he has endured impassioned and inspired by his own doctrine against theoretical doctrines. The painter Georges Braque once stated, "Science reassures, art provokes". With a dose of irony, we observe that the director of **island6**, colleagues, the local and international body of artists and the site itself are undergoing constant transformation which, in effect, serves as an experiential retort: what is born of science evolves as art.

The stratification of national boundaries, especially the facile dichotomy of East/West, Occident/Orient are rejected within a collective spirit: the evidence lies within the walls, on the outdoor grounds and in the collective visual memory

visitors to **island6** see on display every day. When truths are challenged there are no easy or simple answers as to what one experiences, as parameters of expression consistently redefine themselves, manifest in artistic creations essentially non-determinist in nature, and an alarming signal within the sincerity of practice reveals the abandon, fragility, loss and ruptures of life, day and night, in the nefarious metropolis of Shanghai.

island6 remains in a process of contraction and expansion in a moment equal to a non-deliberate act which transcends, in a rather intelligent and lucid manner, placid absolutes, and which may only further adapt with a mission of artistic constancy at the core.

R A Suri – 05.25.2008