

sculpture

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Rirkrit Tiravanija, *untitled 2022 (chance will never abolish)*, 2022. Plywood and silkscreen print workshop, 300 x 268 x 500 cm. Photo: Anke De Backer, Courtesy the artist and CC Strombeek

Rirkrit Tiravanija

April 12, 2022 by [John Gayer](#)

Grimbergen, Belgium

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Rirkrit Tiravanija's "Another Sunny Afternoon" ([on view](#) through May 1, 2022) gives the word "free" a new currency. It appears in the image on the original exhibition flyer (more on this later) and emblazons every T-shirt coming out of the show's screen-printing studio. At the opening, visitors could grab free beers, and, throughout the run, free shirts are available, printed with statements such as FREE TIBET, FREE HEALTH CARE, FREE PRESS, and FREE OF MSG. More slogans can be found in *untitled 1992 (free)*—*personal notes*, a set of typewritten pages displayed in an elegant wood and glass case. Taken from Tiravanija's archive, these notes establish a direct link between "Another Sunny Afternoon" and his [landmark 1992 showing at New York's 303 Gallery](#) in which he set up a kitchen in the back office and served two curries—one made from his Thai grandmother's recipe and the other adapted to American tastes.

Though pertaining to the global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Tiravanija's pervasive use of "free" also urges us to consider its many meanings and associations. Today, that four-letter word resonates clearly, something that failed to happen 30 years ago. Jörn Schafaff emphasizes this point in the exhibition text, noting that *untitled 1992 (free)* was misunderstood as signifying "free food for all," leaving its poetic dimensions largely unnoticed."

Though most of the works are new, the current show feels approximate, retrospective, even slightly nostalgic. Yet Tiravanija's talent for interweaving current and past events with references to the work of artists who count among his influences makes it incredibly thought-provoking. His deployment of a 1968 Peugeot 204—a surreptitious reference to the 1968 student riots in Paris and Situationist Guy Debord's 1953 slogan "Ne travaillez jamais" ("Never work"), which the protesters adopted—bears this out. Only after viewers discover that the unlocked trunk of this wheel-less vehicle sitting on blocks doubles as a fridge stocked with beer does the title *untitled 2018 (icebox 204)* make sense, drawing attention to the interlinked states of containment and invisibility. This awareness is extended by *untitled 2021 (condition icebox 204)*, a preserved condition report that provides the sole record of the Peugeot's inclusion in Tiravanija's "Fear Eats the Soul" exhibition at the Glenstone Museum (2019–20), where it remained in a closed-off space. Here, the condition report, housed in another wood and glass cabinet, successfully balances containment with visibility.

References to Marcel Broodthaers's "Industrial Poems" (1968–72) come off beautifully in *untitled 2022 (white walls are meant for climbing)*. The five vacuum-formed white reliefs, which resemble brick walls, quote the production method of Broodthaers's plaques and employ the same size and style of frame used to depict the double doors to his fictional museum, while also manifesting contradictions. By realizing an asymmetrical arrangement on the smooth white walls of the gallery, and excluding images, text, punctuation, and color, Tiravanija's panels simultaneously critique the neutrality of the white cube and imply exterior, as opposed to interior, surfaces.

Tiravanija's idea of referencing Broodthaers's *La Salle blanche (The white room, 1975)* could not be realized as planned, however. It was supposed to include a model, *untitled 2022 (yes we used white T-shirts)*, and a life-size structure, *untitled 2022 (chance will never abolish)*, but an 11th-hour intervention by lawyers for the Marcel Broodthaers Foundation led to rapidly executed alterations. While the offending features in the model were easily hidden, the structure, containing the screen-printing studio, had to be partially dismantled. The result is an airy, open-frame construction. The changes were concluded after all the promotional materials had been updated.

In addition to activities such as the screen-printing workshops in the gallery, a performance will close the show on May 1, Labor Day in Belgium and many other countries. This action will offer another reference to Guy Debord's slogan. Charlotte Crevits, the exhibition curator, has confirmed that the Peugeot 204 is to be made roadworthy and driven by Tiravanija to Botanic Garden Meise for closing-day beers.

"Another Sunny Afternoon" takes us on a journey packed with twists and turns that, by exposing us to a multiplicity of potential meanings, diverse references, and issues, pushes us to look and look again. Repeated viewings of *untitled 1992 (free)*—*personal notes*, for instance, shifts attention away from the slogans to the opening text. Those lines read: "divert attention away from the anticipated act, the production of a creative act, the production of an idea, negation of an act." Tiravanija's words appear to revise Jasper Johns's sketchbook note, "Take an object / Do something to it / Do something else to it. [Repeat.]" but they also open up the project of art-making to encompass objects, actions, configurations, and viewer collaboration with other viewers and the presented situations. This realization confirms the intent behind the kinds of experiences offered by Tiravanija's work.

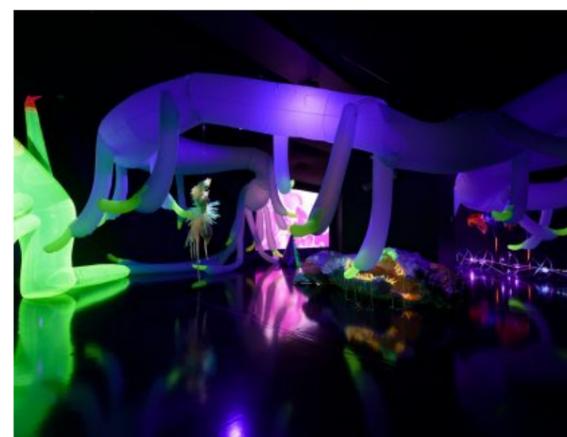
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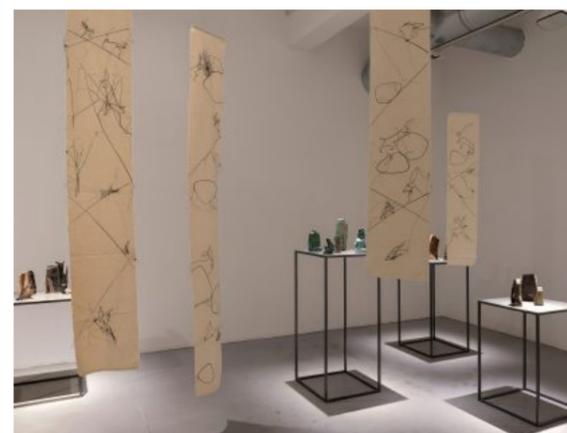
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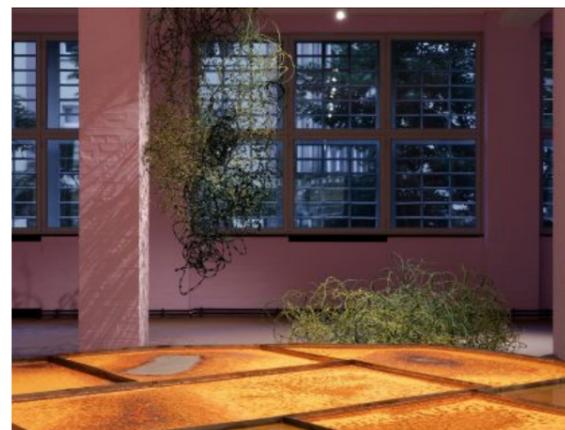
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