

## **Lightning Studies: Centre for the Translation of Constraints, Conflicts and Contaminations (CTCCCs)**—a diagram and another thick layer\*

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*\* The text below was performed by project curator Renan Laru-an to culminate the month-long Encura Curatorial Residency Project by Hangar Barcelona in association with Curators' Network. In the vein of evaluation and reflection, the text was written and produced to account for the production of the project without considering the demand of being read by an external auditing group, such as funding agencies, or of becoming explicative like the usual consignment of the curatorial in a project. This slow approach and complicated contextualization of the project remains—the curator insists—to be the only way of allowing the project to grow and to speak about the project after the production, instead of fueling the premature conclusions of project-based research practices in the art world.*

*On one hand, the diagram of the project **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** is a structure of reflection that considers the logistical, organizational, institutional and relational components of the project. The diagram insists on the softness of "models" as usually represented in charts. In creating a diagram, it provides a comparison to the initial text—the proposal, to initiate a reading for all parties involved, without being forced for mechanical contemplation on the outcome and flow of the project.*

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Welcome to the culmination of **Lightning Studies: Centre for the Translation of Constraints, Conflicts and Contaminations (CTCCCs)** at Hangar Barcelona. My name is Renan Laru-an, researcher and curator based in the Philippines.

Tonight, we gather to show how an institution can be proposed, then translated. Tonight, we have been gathered to confront the risks of a proposition and to remember the safety of a position. Tonight, we will gather the residue of an institution we have dearly imagined and fictionalized. Together with artists Megan Michalak, Giuliana Racco-Matteo Guidi, Christina Schultz, and Mario Santamaria, tonight, we surround an institution.

In the beginning, **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** was built according to two intertwined goals: as a reference for undoing the overdetermined proposition of the so-called pedagogical models, which could position translation as a critical method and praxis of pedagogy; and as a vector of exploring partially visible modes of organization, such as co-production of discursive elements, conceptual histories, and incidental alternatives through the interpellation and injunction of texts and images. **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** took the relay translation of Joaquin Tuason's *Robinson Crusoe*, the Tagalog translation of Tomas Iriarte's Spanish version, as a plastic interface—a form to grasp. Then, modes of conviviality and intimacy with people, materials, and places were registered as *Footnotes*. The fever of the document and its archival act resolved the threat of irrelevance and the impossibility of transmission. Through negotiations, **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** has expected to realize a discursive architecture by enabling horizontal scenes of knowledge.

All this sophistication of theoretical and curatorial approaches embedded into **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs**, and the way it shines on paper or on your screen remain to be an illusion of modernist cynicism. How does **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** appear as a proposition for building an institution, and how does **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** locate a position for translation?

We could exhaust various constructions and conceptions of pedagogy, translation, and institution; and of course belabor the rationality of **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs**. But all this ends with criticality, a terminal point, a point where movement stops, a point of when and where to resume, to begin, to see a horizon, a long-term, and the reflexive. But what exactly is life at the Centre of Criticality? Why do we always find signs of life in criticality?

Maybe, we need to show what lies underneath the attempt to form an institution. Take **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** as the concrete manifestation of the major artery that allows us to move: criticality. Maybe we look into what presupposes and predetermines criticality / **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs**. Maybe we start again by interrogating how and where criticality / **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** takes its nourishment and libido. This is how we live now—as critical agents of, for, against, with, inside, outside, and alternative to institutions.

- 1. WORKING WITH NAIVETE**
- 2. LIVING INSTITUTIONALLY**
- 3. DREAMING FOR CRITICALITY**

We all know that there is no outside, that any lateral step to the side is a reference to the binary structure of the inside and the outside, or that sleeping with the enemy results in falling in love. There might be other ways of course. But the ways we know to have a form is the constitution of work, life, and dream. And this is how criticality continues to live—by attachment. Criticality is the basic unit of survival. And the operations it can manage are furthered by conjunction:

- 1. Criticality works with naivete.**
- 2. Criticality lives institutionally.**
- 3. Criticality dreams for criticality.**

Criticality is promiscuous and unfaithful. So is **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs**. It is solitary and lonely, but it appears to be with someone or something, to be friendly. It is never communal. It is contingent to the administration of ignorance, institutions, and criticality itself. It only lives when it knows that other nutritive faculties exist. It only desires when the plane for desires is plotted, mapped out. Criticality is a protected zone.

This is the all-familiar, omnipresent, and exhausted tradition of criticality.

This is **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs**. It is practical, opportunistic, and seductive. It has all the possibilities of a presupposed life. And as a safe and verified zone, it provides the ecology for performing translation and forming an institution. It is also the same ground where corruption and fertilization occur. It becomes a watershed that accommodates the necropolitical and forecloses the biopolitical.

Now, let us clear the site, then divide **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** into two areas: *Centre of Criticality* and *An Assembly of Naivete*. The former operates around translation, and the latter operates in subtraction. In short, **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** carries a possibility and complicity. It is a sealed deal: translation and subtraction, possibility and complicity, criticality and naivete. The extraction of one from the other means losing a life.

Now, we scan quickly how each chamber of **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** breathes.

The *Centre of Criticality* of **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** inhabits two sites of translation: an institutional and the institutionalized. Institutional critique as a discipline cuts the link between criticality and institutions outside its body. Criticality knows already that it is an institution in itself, but it also knows that it can only exist with the other. Criticality's Other lies in the desire to deconstruct and replace the institution (*an institutional*), and in the introduction of brute force to transform the institution (*the institutionalized*). While they have opposing directions (*an institutional* moves outside-inside-outside; and *the institutionalized* moves inside-outside-inside), the conditions are the same: constraints, conflicts and contaminations. And as we learn from the tradition of critique and criticism: the method of navigation is through the artistic and the intellectual. In the same vein that Agamben describes testimony as "bearing witness to what is unsayable, that is, bearing witness to the impossibility of speech and making it appear within speech," the events of translation with the conditions and sites we just enumerated are in the acts of close(d) reading, dictation, didacticism, dictatorship, sanitation, and context specificity. In other words, the venerated dialogue of criticality can only be verified in closed reading, dictation, didacticism, sanitation and context specificity.

Now, we move to the second chamber of **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs**, which for some might appear as dialectical to criticality. Naivete is not a dialectical component of criticality; neither a component that completes or fills the gap within criticality. NO. NO. *An Assembly of Naivete* cannot be anchored to a site, to a ground. It is perennial, floating like water lilies. The naïve is a state of *already* being extracted. It doesn't know a land, an island, a territory. So it considers its space of movement according to the terms of subtraction, to the particular modes of violence, inflicted onto it: before and after being read, dictated, educated, oppressed, sanitized, and

contextualized. Its limbo between the pre and post is the only markers that register its life. But it knows that this limbo is a procedure of subtraction. While the critical's conditions are constraints, conflicts and contaminations, the naïve's processes of bearing life and baring its life is by becoming conflicted, constrained, and contaminated. It is not a precarious life anymore. The naïve's precarity has long been exhausted, long before being subtracted. Embodying conflicts, constraints and contaminations is a way to desire to be grievable, to own a presupposed life. This is not tactical, however. This is not a molecular strike, or a strike in order to highlight a transversal route. Naivete's libidinal desires are linked to the limits of criticality and to the eventual displacement of methods of criticality, such as **the artistic** and **the intellectual**. The naïve knows how the artistic and the intellectual accumulate criticality, and it patiently waits for the transition from one method to another. The transition opens the chance of being intelligible and legitimate. It acts on inappropriateness, illegitimacy, and incompleteness. It is opportunism of the will, of the naïve's desires: *to be artistic and to be intellectual* is to be naïve. And this is how the naïve access criticality through composing its life in scenes of subtraction: Forming and unforming, organizing and disorganizing, and doing and undoing institutions. The temporary habitus of the naïve is a scenography of un-institutional and de-institutionalized characterized by radical waiting, appearance of complicity and vulnerability, spectral movement and inscription and suspension of action. We are all familiar with the naïve. The naïve is the one declaims and reclaims.

In **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs**, the critical and the naïve produce antagonism between the dialogue and the monologue. If we take **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** as a new, last, alternative, or parallel institution, it remains to be the same institution of criticality. The antagonism that we need to enfold in **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** is an antagonism that bares a life and carries its life—a *pasearse, to walk itself*. **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** must be an injured institution for criticality. **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** must be an ecstatic institution for naivete. Contra being protected and being taken care of, **Lightning Studies: CTCCCs** is a zone for *to be wounded*—not for the one who desire to appear—for *to be wounded*—not beings with wound, because when the naïve nourishes the wounds of the critical; it allows an institution for the critically naïve. The one who could take a bolt of lightning. The one who could be a spectre of its own monologue.