

Freytag's dramatic structure as inspiration

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In the fall of 2008, thirteen students in the MA group at San Francisco Art Institute commenced a collaborative project. After a series of group discussions, the group agreed that the central theme would be anticipation, and titled this curatorial *project In Anticipation*. The word anticipation implies hope, excitement, fear, and uncertainty about the future. To sustain this main theme of anticipation, we decided to use Gustav Freytag's dramatic structure as a frame. Freytag's dramatic structure has five parts that include Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action and Denouement. This dramatic structure functions to reinforce the viewer's anticipation in a theater or a drama. For our purposes, each part of Freytag's dramatic structure was divided into sub-themes: Question of Truth, Friction, Metamorphosis, Re-enactments, and Alternate Reality. Under the form of Freytag's dramatic structure, five artists were invited to submit proposals that relate to each sub-theme. These five artists were carefully chosen for the correspondence to each category based on their previous art works. Artist proposals generate anticipation by presenting the possibility of producing something tangible out of that which is abstract or yet to be realized. We did not commit to producing any of the proposed ideas, and artists created their proposals without planning or perceiving of the connection to other proposals. This was a move to align our own efforts with an implied collaboration between our five chosen artists whose combined ideas have unlimited possibilities and outcomes. Freytag's structure also encourages a process where the audience might anticipate the direction in which a series of events may unfold.

In Anticipation was one-year project. As the time passed, the MA group made numerous decisions to progress the project effectively. Our decision-making was the creative process of forming *In Anticipation*. One of the most famous Japanese writers, Yamazaki Masakazu, wrote about the process of creation in his article, "The Aesthetics of Transformation: Zeami's Dramatic Theories:"

The difference between resolve and success is manifest in model from in artistic activity. For example, no matter how great a genius he may be, an artist cannot plan to perfect accomplishment of a work of art or an artistic impression. This is true because, as R.G. Collingwood insists in *The Principles of Art*, the artist cannot possibly know, before the completion of an artistic activity, just what the goal of the completion is. Be it a poem or a landscape painting, the artist cannot know in advance the objective goal; he cannot know just when completion will be reached. He adds word after word, or brush stroke after brush stroke, and in this process of groping along will suddenly, unexpectedly acquire the pleasurable feeling of success.

Masakazu emphasizes that until the final action of creation is finished, a creator cannot know where and when the complete form will be reached. Just as Masakazu says, the MA group will not know the final form of this collaboration project until it is finished. At a certain point, we realized that *In Anticipation* turned out to be a non-sequential project. Freytag's dramatic structure was not valid anymore for the project even though the sub-themes were still critical. The group chose to let the project flow naturally rather than absolutely commit to the original plan of structuring the project based on Freytag's dramatic structure. It has been a learning process as a curatorial team.

Freytag's dramatic structure joined with the concept of anticipation, and it gave inspiration to the collaborative project *In Anticipation*. However, through releasing Freytag's structure, we, the MA group, provided more space to the project itself, participating artists, curatorial team, and the audience, as a way of accepting the unexpected development of the project.