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17<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Electronic Art  
ISEA2011 Istanbul

# UN CONTAIN ABLE

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# Uncontainable – ISEA2011 Istanbul: Some Thoughts After The Fact

**When talking about ISEA2011 Istanbul one of the things I believe will remain as a legacy of the symposium is its magnitude.** ISEA2011 was the most attended to date with almost 1500 attendees, the last count we had was of 1489, and it had over 100 artists – the ones we could account for - who participated and engaged with the city in multiple ways, authorized and non.

Overall ISEA2011 responded to the idea that we crafted for the event: a sprawling series of art events, exhibitions, initiatives, encounters, talks and performances that would reflect the sprawling uncontainable nature of the city of Istanbul. It was also about the 'uncontainable' nature of contemporary digital media which cross over physical borders and interfere with the local cultural order. These interferences may at times have generated conflicting relationships but in doing so also spurred development and innovative approaches.

ISEA2011 Istanbul proved how the lines and borders of contemporary national states present the observer with ideological and cultural frameworks that are no longer valid. Concepts of identity, cultural identifiers, nation state and belonging as well as place and time are challenged in both real and virtual contexts.

As Artistic Director for this exhibition – together with Özden Şahin, the Program Director – I wanted to showcase the complexity of contemporary social

interactions and the role that technology is playing in redefining contemporary aesthetics.

The exhibition Uncontainable was part of the official Parallel Program of the Istanbul Biennial, which allowed participating artists and curators to provide diverse perspectives on the contemporary developments within fine arts aesthetics.

For this reason I am very grateful to all of the artists and delegates that supported ISEA2011 Istanbul through what at times was a difficult process in a difficult economic climate. Turkey does not have public funding for the arts – as for example in European countries – and ISEA2011 Istanbul was made possible through a long string of private sponsorships, institutional support and donors that we solicited.

In the end the variety of the venues and programs provided a colorful framework and allowed artists to engage not only with one another and the public but also with the Istanbul Biennial, with the art market held during two wonderful boat journeys across the Bosphorus and with the city of Istanbul itself.

For the first time in the history of ISEA an electronic art exhibition program was officially part of the parallel program of an international biennial. The exhibition with its artists was publicized in the press package of the 12<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial together with initiatives and events dotted across the city and internationally.

Therefore the art program was conceived as an artistic itinerary across the city that placed art events in proximity to the major touristic attractions of the city, creating an electronic/new media/digital layering that would interact with the socio-political history of the city. The art program did not limit itself to the ISEA conference period – September 14 to 21, 2011 – but continued with its events until November 2011.

The catalog becomes a way to place an order to all of the events and activities, creating a record of the artists participating and the invited curators, to whom I am extremely grateful for their contributions. It is a snapshot of the city and of the event itself, which has signed, we hope, a milestone in the history of the ISEA Foundation.

**Lanfranco Aceti**

*Artistic Director and Conference Chair*  
ISEA2011 Istanbul

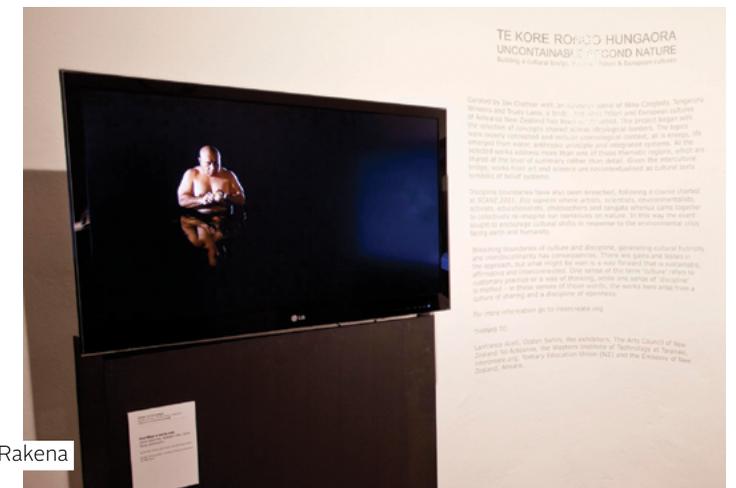
Istanbul, May 5, 2012

# RACHAEL RAKENA

*A solitary and self-contained male figure eats at the table of Tangaroa (the god of the sea) in a dark water world, which is at once sensuous and forbidding - evoking narratives of Narcissus, Maui and Hine nui Te Po.*

**Rachael Rakena** was born in 1969 in Wellington, New Zealand, of Maori and European/Pakeha descent (Ngai Tahu, Nga Puhi). She has a Master of Fine Arts (Distinction) and is a lecturer at Massey University, School of Maori Visual Arts. Rakena has been exhibiting widely for more than 10 years throughout New Zealand, Australia and Europe, and in the UK and USA. Rakena is a video artist who frequently collaborates. In 2007, *Aniwaniwa* a collaborative project with Brett Graham was included in the collateral events section of the 2007 Venice Biennale. Other major international exhibitions of recent years have included the Busan Biennale, 2008 and Sydney Biennale 2006. In work that is both ethereal and political, she employs a new language and new tools derived from digital media and video to invoke a contemporary Maori identity that is timeless and fluid. She is a highly innovative artist who explores the application of contemporary technology to articulate timeless notions of Maori culture and identity that flow from the past, through the present and into the future.

*One Man is an Island*, 2009, Rachael Rakena (Iwi - Ngai Tahu, Nga Puhi). High definition video, courtesy of Bartley and Company Art, Wellington.



*One Man is an Island*, 2009, Rachael Rakena (Iwi - Ngai Tahu, Nga Puhi).

