

Michael Krichman: Good morning everyone. I'm Michael Krichman, one of the two executive directors for inSite_05. It's a real pleasure to welcome you here. And I particularly want to thank the three distinguished participants in today's program: Arjun Appadurai, Sally Stein and Judith Barry, for their enormous generosity in being with us here this morning. It's great to see so many of you and also to welcome so many people who have come from outside of the region. I want to acknowledge first the collaboration of the Stuart Collection and Mary Bebee, the Department of Visual Arts and Steve Fagin who we are very glad to see here today. And really without their collaboration we would not be able to so easily use the wonderful resources and facilities of the university. I also want to thank the sponsors of the conversation series, this being the third in the series of conversations for inSite_05 – the Panta Rhea Foundation and Hans Schoepflin Foundations, the Bancomer Foundation and the James Irvine Foundation, who have made the conversations possible. These conversations also coincide with the third residency for the artists who have been commissioned to make new work for inSite_05, and I'm particularly pleased to acknowledge the enormous contribution of the Warhol Foundation in supporting the residencies for inSite_05 artists. A couple of quick notes. One is that the compilation of material from the first two conversations is now available. We have it outside for those of you who want to have a copy or take a look at a copy. I also want to invite everyone who's here to join us tomorrow evening at the Centro Cultural Tijuana for the fourth in the conversation series at seven o'clock with Jose Manuel Castillo, Peter Zelner and Raul Cárdenas from Torolab speaking on urbanisms. So, we hope that you'll join us for that and then move on to Marcos Ramirez ERRE's space close to the border for *Pasale* and MFA Exhibition being undertaken with UCSD. So, we hope that you'll join us for all of those events.

It is now my great pleasure to introduce Sally Yard, the curator of conversations, who will introduce the program. Thanks very much.

Applause.

Sally Yard: Oh good. I'll be brief. But, um, I thought I would just reflect on the title of the discussion today. When Arjun Appadurai and Judith Barry arrived at the title for today, *Geography, Imagination, and the Traffic in the Everyday*, it immediately provoked an array of directions and thinking on my part. And I couldn't help but think of the very compelling work that Arjun has done focusing on, as he puts it, "the work of the imagination and the capacity to aspire" – concepts that are beautifully intertwined and original, and we'll see what we hear about those today. I think most of you know that Appadurai is, of course, the author and editor of crucial books on globalization and its cultural dimensions, currently provost at New School University and John Dewey professor of the Social Sciences. His long, sort of, record of academic positions is sort of mind boggling in fact. But, as well as all of that, I would like to just recall for everybody that in 1988 he and Carol Breckenbridge were the founding editors of the journal *Public Culture* and more recently they've launched the PUKAR Project in Bombay – Partners for Urban Knowledge, Action and Research. Um the topic also called up for me Judith Barry's musings some ago in a conversation with Mark Leagly(?) on what she spoke of as the economy between the imagination and the possible. It's a lovely sort of, again a lovely sort of emotion I felt. She's both an artist, a beautiful writer and theorist, currently professor in Film/Video at the Merz Academy in Stuttgart. Sally Stein, who's the moderator today, is wonderfully on some quest, I think, to think through these issues as they evolve in the discussion. I admire and think again of the precision with which Sally has long elucidated the very powerful role of photographic imagery in forging, really curtailings, longings, imaginings. The essays *The Graphic Ordering of Desire* and *American Resistance To Photo Montage between the Wars* among the many, really compelling pieces of writing she's done about all of this. Associate professor of Art History, Film and Media Studies at the University California, Irvine, Sally has co-authored and co-curated an array of wonderful projects. Among these the very pivotal exhibitions and books, *Official Images: New Deal Photography* and *Montage and Modern Life*. So, Arjun, . . .

Arjun Appadurai: I want to begin by some words of thanks, which are heartfelt. First of all to Sally Yard, who thought of asking me, and also Carol Breckenbridge, to come to San Diego and opened this door to us to join and see something of this extraordinary project and its

history. We are very grateful to Sally for her patience and helpfulness and generosity but also to others in Project inSite and that would include Michael Krichman and Maryann Moore and Merete Kjaer and Joy Decena and others I know who were involved, as always is the case in complicated projects in making things seem very doable even when they take huge efforts to get done. So I know I have been beneficiaries of lots of such efforts on the parts of the organizers. Two more important words of thanks and I'm sure these are all the exhausted people to whom we should be grateful and we will continue to add to that list as we go along on this visit. I want to thank Teddy Cruz for a really fabulous journey through San Diego that Carol and I went on with Sally and Michael and Teddy on our first day here, which seems like it was a long time ago but I think it was the day before yesterday. And then in advance to thank you for what we look forward to, which is a journey to the other side, to Tijuana, also with your eye and experience to guide us. These are going to add to our knowledge and understanding. And last but by no means least, I want to thank Osvaldo and the artists whose work we were privileged to see for two evenings in a row and though we just sat more or less speechless and more or less dumb and dumbfounded, we, I think I speak for Carol and myself to say this was also a tremendously interesting way to be immersed in some extraordinary work which pertains to the subject of today's conversation. And it is very much not just in the back of my mind but in the middle of my mind and occupying large parts of the front of my mind, so I do have my own comments to make this morning, but I want to say that a good bit of my own thinking is already affected by the readings of the work of the projects so far of those authors involved in it, and the artworks that we saw samples of, I know they are compressed ones, yesterday and the day before and I hope those conversations and those provocations will continue to inform me in the coming months and years as I try to struggle with some of the issues we're talking about this morning. So there's a lot for us to be truly appreciative of and I wanted to take the time to say that and say it forcefully before speaking a little bit about the subject of *Geography, Imagination, and the Traffic in the Everyday*. I look forward also very much to hearing Judith and Sally Stein make their own comments and observations and reactions so that a conversation can occur which is collective. So let me know go to what I have to say about what I've been sort of thinking in different ways ever since this visit became a possibility. And my thoughts have

been shifting throughout the last few months and I knew that this was going to occur notably in the conversation with Judith in New York when we tried to figure out how to give some shape to this exchange and to give some direction to it. And I think some very good ideas emerged from that, but I also have to say that because of the rush of stimuli, both before we got here and since we got here, I keep having new thoughts about what might be the most useful thing to put forward today. And so this is a kind of uh, certainly a work in progress. It is certainly an informal presentation, and is intended to be a contribution to a conversation and not to be an exposition or a lecture in the standard way.

Let me begin by saying that something quite important happened in my own life, which allows me to offer something to your engagement here or our engagement in this conversation. That is, that I found myself returning to the city in which I was born, which is the city of Bombay. Some of you know something about it; some of you may have seen it. It's in a very extraordinary phase. It's probably got a population now hovering around 15 million, depending on how you define the region. Around the city it's growing very, very fast. It's likely to be around 30 million in 20-30 years – one of the ten or so most populated cities in the world. It's a very complicated place. I grew up in it. The 18 years I spent there I lived in a very tiny part of it, in quite a privileged part. Though my family was a middle class family we lived in a very privileged little part of it. So even then I knew very little about it. It may be like growing up more or less within a block say of Coronado or something and knowing nothing about the rest of San Diego, much less of Tijuana or anything else, for 18 years. So, yes I lived in Bombay and I grew up in Bombay so I have some sense of it but at most it was very constrained. Many years I didn't do much work in or on Bombay because it seemed too much. It was also the city which had my friends and my family, so somehow I segregated it away from my mental life or my critical life such as it was, and conducted that in other places in India and elsewhere. But about 7 or 8 years ago I began to return to Bombay, first of all with an interest in understanding, through the lens of Bombay, the horrifying renewed ethnocidal project in relation to Muslims that was marked with a new beginning in 1992 when a very important mosque was destroyed in north India. But although a project to eliminate Muslims from Indian public life began to become very

important, we really just perhaps come to a break point in that story with the elections of last week but I won't go into that except if it comes up later. But to say that in '97 I was trying to understand what happened in '92/93 when there was a very, very bad series of episodes, riots you could call it, basically genocidal episodes in Bombay and I was soon working on that and in the process began to write a set of essays that tried not to prove the center of the violence, which I now see as actually a very hard thing to do, that the closer you get to the center the less you actually understand, that you have to keep zooming out is the main thing that I've learned. And so I've been trying to write a set of essays on things, inspired by the injustice the violence, but now have moved to housing, to the film industry, to crime, to a whole series of things. So what I am now finding myself doing is writing some kind of open-ended set of essays that have something to do with Bombay but don't seek to encapsulate, contain or write a book or a monograph that tells the story of Bombay because I don't think that's doable except in a collective and open-ended manner. But something happened at that time, which I feel will help to situate the thoughts I want to share with you today, which is I met, completely by accident, and now I have a whole new respect for the world of accident and contingency and in research in my kind of social times, where we always imagine that we have proposals and projects and a plan and then this and that. But the reality is it's often not like that. I met in '96-97 while beginning this work on ethnic violence, a group of housing activists - about whom I've written so I won't say a lot now, who are an extraordinary group, who are an alliance in Bombay of two or three different groups - an NGO, a women's group, a national group of slum dwellers - basically working with poorest of the urban poor in Bombay, and that means very poor people indeed by any global standards, and who are transforming the conditions of housing for these people in very small increments because Bombay's under-housed or unhoused population is perhaps 6-8million out of 15. It's not a small problem. So when you make 200 houses or 400 houses it will be a tiny dent but a very big step. These people have created some extraordinary solutions about which I can say more later, but I was profoundly moved both by their work in Bombay, by their own imagination, and by the fact that they were linked up already in '96/97 to poor communities, people like themselves, in already at that time about 10 countries - mainly in other parts of Asia and in Africa, South Africa was the most important, Cape Town, Johannesburg, etc. Now they have

connections in about 20 to 25 countries and are also engaging with the UN, with the World Bank, with the municipality, with the state. I regard this group as conducting probably one of the most important efforts to capture, not oppose, but capture globalization for the purposes of disenfranchised populations in the world's poorest and biggest cities. It's a very big project, in other words. But meeting these people somewhat changed my life, and made me add to my urban **violence(?)** project a very different project, which is – who are these people? How have they built these connections? How are they succeeding in changing anything in this very difficult, corrupt, overwhelmingly dense city? How are they making any dent on these things? So, it became, so my project is now turn and this leads me to make a few substantive comments, to be a kind of dialectical or double helical project, one side of which is to try to understand how complicated a cosmopolitan city like Bombay also is the site of very considerable ethnocidal energy. It's the home of India's probably most important fascist party, which is called the **xxx(?)**. So why this cosmopolitan city produced this most important fascist movement, the most viable, long-term one. That question. On the other hand there's the question, how does this kind accrue, this housing allowance survive and subsist and work and succeed in many important ways in this very same city? So, the double helix is something that I'm struggling with. But overall I would say that these two projects, as well as the project that Sally mentioned which is the effort on my part along with Carol and a few other friends to start something in Bombay, which is a small, independent group called Partners for Urban Knowledge, Action and Research which is cross-disciplinary which has sociologists, artists, planners, architects, mostly what I consider younger people, people in their thirties and sometimes even younger, to create a different kind of conversation about urban futures and to connect to their counterparts in other parts of the world. To tell the story of Bombay to other people but also to learn from the story of other cities. That is my own personal undertaking in Bombay, but my critical project may be encapsulated in saying I'm interested now overall in contributing critically and personally and otherwise to the politics of hope. So that allows me then to say something more on our themes and I'll do so in the next 10 minutes or so because I don't want to go on too long. I hope this background is helpful to make it clear that in some ways, like the work of the artists in this room, this did not come out of a plan. This did not come out because I had some theoretical object that had

to be completed our some system that required to be finished or some **monograph** graph that denied that they had some gap or something like that. It was completely the product of, and I'd say that there's much to be said for this kind of double project - one concerned with not just ethnocide in India but with extreme violence worldwide in cases like Rwanda, Kosovo, extreme bodily violence. And I'm deeply troubled by the question why do we have, particularly in the 90s, a series of projects in many different parts of the world, where not only are groups usually minorities have targeted extreme clumps or organized violence stage or otherwise, but also why the violence is so excessive. Why it's so degrading. Why it's so decomposing of the body. So, there's that project. But then there's the other project. Where is the energy to reshape globalization coming from in movements like the one I'm studying? So, the politics of hope now. In the book *Modernity and Violence* which is now almost 10 years old and I know some of you have read some parts of it. I do use the phrase "the work of the imagination" trying to take imagination, the idea, away both from its flat, romantic individual ethos but also away from its implications of escape into the space of something else, which is more productive and constructive, more transformative. I won't say much more about that idea as it's developed in the book, except to say that I use the phrase "the work of the imagination" to signal that use of the imagination is work, is laborious, and is also potentially liberating in how it is organized and that it has therefore a politics and that its collective in its essence. And I wanted to suggest that the imagination is a collective faculty, a collective resource, if you like a collective project. Even though it may enact itself through the energies and agencies of individuals there is something collective about it. So, this was a, in social times standard, an old-fashioned effort to say the imagination also is a kind of **xxx(?)** thing. Because it'll just appear in "selves." It's somehow profoundly social and I'm still trying to think through the implications of that. In that book, *Modernity at Large*, I tried to locate this idea in an understanding of ambiguities on global flows and things. That book was occasionally criticized, perhaps with some justification, as being too celebratory. I don't think it's exactly celebratory. It has a lot about ethnicity, nationalism, primordials and this, that. . . I don't think it's exactly a poem about the goodnesses of globalization. But, never the less it does speak about global flows and things and now I am aware that there are many tensions surrounding these flows. More than when I first wrote that book. But most of all

today I am interested in connecting the idea of the work of the imagination in the world of subjugation and of flows, circulation of people and objects and messages and media, but also circulation of forms, like the novel or like research itself or like disciplines like architecture, etc. These are also circulated things in that context I want to connect the idea of the work of the imagination to the phrase that Sally Yard just mentioned – the idea of the capacity to aspire. And this too comes out in my work with the housing activists that I've been working with in Bombay. And very briefly I'll say when I use the phrase "the capacity to aspire", which is a title of an essay in a book in a collection of essays which has just appeared, edited by other friends, but will also appear in a book that I'm planning on these housing activists. Indeed, it will be the center of that small book I hope. By "the capacity to aspire" I mean to, as with the imagination, to flag the idea that hope is first of all not a sentiment, something we feel or don't feel. Secondly that hope is also not only a faculty, like judgment or cognition or something like that. It may be that also. And that above all, hope is not, that hope is not individual, just like the imagination, that hope can be experienced by individuals, but as a complicated thing. It's actually social. And finally, and most importantly I'm beginning to understand that hope is not, by its nature, hope cannot be built around abstraction. That you cannot have hope in general. You have to have hope about this or that, and that the more specific the objects and forms that inhabit any horizon of hope, the more likely that project is likely to have life. So, in other words I understand more clearly now, and this perhaps has implications, especially for the work of art and artists and of the power of words, that hope, it's actually somehow deeply unproductive to tell oneself or tell others, particularly marginal groups, excluded groups and so on to be hopeful, as it were, in general. That said, I, in this paper I've tried to develop the idea that, and I've said it's a controversial thing, that poverty is many, many kinds of things, of course. But one of the things it is a bad position in the distribution of the capacity to aspire. So, when I say the capacity to aspire, it's not just anybody doesn't have it equally. To be poor means to have less of it. And why do you have less of it? You have less of the ability to practice the capacity to aspire. So, I see that capacity as something, like everything else, that has to be developed through the occasions to practice it. And when you look at poor populations in anyplace, but I know them a little bit better in India than elsewhere, you can see that the exercise of the capacity to aspire is limited because

the experiences around which it can be built are insufficient. In other words, there are not enough stories you can tell about the journey to some kind of place, which is a concrete place, whether it's about housing or anything else. So, you have in poor populations, in marginalized populations, it's not that people do not have hopes, that they do not have aspirations. Of course, they do. But the maps of getting to those places are thinly developed because the experiences are thinly developed. And what it means to be privileged is to have a bigger stock of stories about getting from here to there. And as you have a bigger stock you can play with that stock more fruitfully, and that is why the rich get richer, in short. So, the idea of the capacity to aspire is that, whoever is interested in this needs to work on improving the capabilities of its poorer populations to exercise the capacity to aspire. Now this sounds of course a bit abstract but, in this paper and now other work I'm trying to specify more fully that they can't be able to do, and therefore change the tones on which they participate in conversations about their neighborhoods, their cities, their regions, indeed about globalization itself. Because it's that lack of ability to participate which is a huge part in the reproduction of exclusion. So, let me then quickly come to a conclusion by saying, having sketched, I feel very quickly and I hope not entirely opaquely, this idea of "the capacity to aspire", that there's a link then, which I want to make, between the work of the imagination and the capacity to aspire." I put it this way, that for the imagination conceived as I have tried to conceive it, as social, as collective, as a project, as fundamentally political, for imagination in this sense to capitalize the capacity to aspire, we surely need art worlds, art practices, art interventions, all of these into the everyday, which is one of the terms of our discussion today. I think this is the only way, with the means in which to create, and this is why I think there's a connection with the imagination and aspiration conceived in the manner in which I am trying to think about them, this is the only rubric to create an archive of possibilities - the word possibility just came up a moment ago in relation to Judith's own message, from which an archive of possibilities, from which ordinary people, especially those excluded from the processes of globalization can be helped to develop their own practices of imagination and aspiration. So very simply I put this is that the work of art, the work done by art that is, not the artwork, but the work done by art, I think especially the way that it is being done in a project like this one, in inSite, expands the archive, and expands the archive

as it were not for artists alone, I think, but for others outside the art world to create a bigger archive of the possible. And furthermore an archive which is, in its examples, concrete. Because I feel that the abstraction surrounding all the idioms and ideologies of hope, religious ones particularly, is that they are, they have an eternity of abstraction in them and that is why they never have traction. Whereas when you have artworks opening up an archive of possibility, they are always specific. And therefore they open the road to other kinds of specificities. And in this logic, circulation – which I mentioned briefly and I think perhaps Judith and Sally may also say something about it, is certainly something that surrounds us here in San Diego and Tijuana and interests me a lot. I haven't said much about it today but the question of the circulation of forms as opposed to the forms of circulation is something I'm thinking about very hard in relation to my own work on globalization. But let me just say again, perhaps too briefly, that if you follow or are willing to go with my suggestions so far, that there's a deep relationship between the work of the imagination and its ability to capitalize the capacity to aspire among people who are not privileged, and that art work, art worlds and art practices can get to be a particularly strong instrument in making the connection between the imagination and aspiration, then circulation in these conditions can become, I think, a means of reimagining geography, locality, memory, etc. so that places like for example the extended San Diego/Tijuana complex, instead of only being sites of inequality, forced traffic which are like forced marches back and forth, surveillance and militarization, can become, through new connections between the imagination and aspiration, sites, rather than for these bad things, also sites for the everyday exercise of the capacity to aspire. And I'll conclude by saying, for that to happen, for spaces like this – San Diego/Tijuana, but also here I refer to Bombay and so on – all of which do contain borders of different kinds that people are crossing all the time, above all the border from, what my colleague **x(?) Imbembe**, calls, the position which, in the English translation, we would call “licking the pane”, the window pane through which you see the goods of globalization and many people have this position of being on the side, that border is everywhere right now, that when I speak of everyday exercise of the capacity to aspire it can be in lots and lots of arenas that ordinary people can exercise this capacity but because my own interest recently has been in housing, I think there is an interesting case where the kinds of connections I am

suggesting really open up possibilities for people who either are very badly housed or insecurely housed or unhoused begin to have conditions into which they can participate in thinking about, and I know Teddy has been thinking about this here and my friends in Bombay have been thinking about it in relation to sanitation, infrastructure and so on, can actually begin to seize and claim the capacity to plan, design, finance, execute, all those things. All of which require the capability to project a horizon and to claim expertise in many key areas – money management, project management, hiring architects, not having architects tell them what to do actually hiring architects and telling the architects what to do, building toilets, more or less, for example in Bombay, through and in these communities, rather than having the strategy be simply putting toilets out, or not, which is most usually what happens. This is what I mean then, in great specificity, about the capacity to aspire, I believe that if you take a simple, but in a case like Bombay actually a crucial example, which is who will build toilets for people who don't have toilets? People defecate in public all the time. Poor people. Why? There are no toilets. There are communities where there are four toilets for 800 people. Imagine that. Imagine what your morning experience would be if you had four toilets for 800 people going to work. You do what you can. It's plainly bad for public health; it's bad for morale, bad for dignity, bad for everything. But in that kind of exercise, in which **process strategy(?)** shifts to the people to are themselves the beneficiaries, there is really open space for planning, for designing, and for more engaged practices, because of course there are the steady questions and there are questions of dignity and of life and representation as well as of public health and of infrastructure and so on. So, on that note I'll stop. Thanks very much.