

C

NTU CENTRE FOR
CONTEMPORARY
ART SINGAPORE



A

Symposium
Saturday, 28 October 2017

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Ghosts and Spectres – Shadows of History

**SYMPOSIUM:
GHOSTS AND SPECTRES – SHADOWS OF HISTORY**

Organised on the occasion of the current exhibition *Ghosts and Spectres - Shadows of History* curated by Professor Ute Meta Bauer and Khim Ong, and the 4th anniversary of NTU CCA Singapore

Saturday, 28 October 2017

9.30am – 8.00pm

The Single Screen, Block 43 Malan Road, Gillman Barracks

Taking the works in the current exhibition as points of departure, the symposium brings together the participating artists, as well as curators and scholars researching the complexities of history in Asia, to generate a discussion on muted pasts and legacies, as they cast light upon foregone events that still impact society today, particularly in terms of power structures and restrictions on social freedom. The role of the moving image—the medium used by the four exhibiting artists—will be analysed to demonstrate how it reveals, as much as it conceals, historical traumas that evade representation.

Divided into two sessions, the symposium consist of lectures, presentations, and moderated discussions, all of which explore the artists' working processes and methodological approaches. The focus will lie on the sources of inspiration as well as on the motivations of the artists' practices, and on the construction and contestation of official narratives. **Ho Tzu Nyen**, **Nguyen Trinh Thi**, and **Park Chan-kyong** will expand on the historical events and socio-political contexts that feed into their work, and on the different strategies employed to revive collective memory. Scholar **Dr Clare Veal** will highlight the medium specificity in the works of **Apichatpong Weerasethakul** to address conflicted histories, whereas the keynote lectures by **Dr May Adadol Ingawanij** and **Professor Kenneth Dean**, as well as the lectures by curators **Dr June Yap** and **Hyunjin Kim**, aim to articulate the complicated geopolitical relations in contemporary Asia.

Cover:
Nguyen Trinh Thi,
Letters to Panduranga, 2015.
Courtesy the artist.

SYMPOSIUM SESSIONS

11.00am – 1.10pm

Session I: *Shadows of History*

Chaired by **Dr Roger Nelson**, curator and art historian, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, School of Art, Design and Media, Nanyang Technological University (NTU), and NTU CCA Singapore

Dedicated to the uncovering of neglected histories, this session will look at the construction of historical narratives and their role in reflecting social, political, and cultural conditions. Occluded by the propagation of progress and nation building, what has been left out and rendered unspeakable in the region's bid to establish national identities and political autonomy? Referencing the works of **Ho Tzu Nyen** and **Nguyen Trinh Thi**, this session traces post-war and Cold War legacies in Asia and investigates their lingering spectres.

2.30 – 4.30pm

Session II: *Ghosts and Spectres*

Chaired by **Dr David Teh**, researcher and curator, Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore (NUS)

Alluding to the works of **Park Chan-kyong** and **Apichatpong Weerasethakul**, this session deals with notions of ghosts and spectres as allegories of historical moments and dreamlike realities. Embedded in myths and folklore, what roles do they play in constructing an understanding of the past and in reflecting socio-political circumstances? How do cinematic works engage their medium specificity in a play of historical phantoms and repressed collective memories, to create a language for portraying trauma, loss, dreams, and nightmares?

SCHEDULE

- 9.30 – 10.00am **Registration**
- 10.00 – 10.10am **Welcome Address: Professor Ute Meta Bauer**, co-curator and Founding Director, NTU CCA Singapore, Professor, School of Art, Design and Media, NTU
- 10.10 – 11.00am **Keynote Lecture: “The Art of Uncertainty”**
Dr May Adadol Ingawanij, curator and moving image theorist, Co-director of the Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media (CREAM), University of Westminster, London

Session I: *Shadows of History*

- 11.00 – 11.45am **Lecture: “In the Interest of Time”**
Dr June Yap, Director of Curatorial Programmes and Publications, Singapore Art Museum
- 11.45am – 12.00pm **Break**
- 12.00 – 12.20pm **Presentation: “On Distances Between an Artist and Her Subjects”**
Nguyen Trinh Thi, artist
- 12.20 – 12.40pm **Presentation: “Recycled Images: *The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia*”**
Ho Tzu Nyen, artist
- 12.40 – 1.10pm **In Conversation: Dr Roger Nelson with Ho Tzu Nyen, Nguyen Trinh Thi, and Dr June Yap**
- 1.10 – 2.30pm **Lunch Break**
- 1.30 – 2.00pm **Exhibition Tour of *Ghosts and Spectres – Shadows of History***
Khim Ong, co-curator and Deputy Director, Curatorial Programmes, NTU CCA Singapore

Session II: *Ghosts and Spectres*

- 2.30 – 3.15pm **Lecture: “Contested Modernity and the Image of History in East Asia”**
Hyunjin Kim, curator, writer, and researcher
- 3.15 – 3.35pm **Presentation: “Colonial Unheimlich”**
Park Chan-kyong, artist
- 3.35 – 3.55pm **Presentation: “The Spectre of Photography in the Works of Apichatpong Weerasethakul”**
Dr Clare Veal, art historian, Lecturer, MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore
- 3.55 – 4.05pm **Break**
- 4.05 – 4.30pm **In Conversation: Dr David Teh with Hyunjin Kim, Park Chan-kyong and Dr Clare Veal**
- 4.30 – 5.30pm **Closing Keynote Lecture: Professor Kenneth Dean, Head, Department of Chinese Studies, NUS**

EVENTS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- 5.45 – 6.30pm **Book Launch: *Thai Art: Currencies of the Contemporary* (MIT Press and NUS Press, 2017)**
Introduction by author, Dr David Teh, and conversation with Dr May Adadol Ingawanij and Dr Roger Nelson

The Seminar Room, Block 43 Malan Road, Gillman Barracks

- 7.00 – 8.00pm ***The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia Volume 4: V for Voice***
Performance by artists Ho Tzu Nyen and Bani Haykal

The Single Screen, Block 43 Malan Road, Gillman Barracks

PROGRAMME INFORMATION

Keynote Lecture: “The Art of Uncertainty”

Dr May Adadol Ingawanij, curator and moving image theorist, Co-director of the Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media (CREAM), University of Westminster, London

Focusing on artists' cinema and moving image installations in Southeast Asia, the keynote lecture addresses the relationship between contemporary moving image aesthetics, historical invocation, and the politics of enunciation. Dr Ingawanij will expand on how everyday life, conflicts, violence, and historical erasures specific to places in Southeast Asia are sources of inspiration and motivation for many artists.

Dr May Adadol Ingawanij (Thailand/United Kingdom) is currently writing a book titled *Animistic Cinema: Moving Image Performance and Ritual in Thailand*. Her publications include *Exhibiting Lav Diaz's Long Films: Currencies of Circulation and Spectatorship* (2017); *Nguyen Trinh Thi's Essay Films* (forthcoming); *Animism and the Performative Realist Cinema of Apichatpong Weerasethakul* (2013). Her curatorial projects include *Lav Diaz Journeys*, London Gallery West, (2017), and *On Attachments and Unknowns*, Sa Sa Bassac, Phnom Penh (2017).

Lecture: “In the Interest of Time”

Dr June Yap, Director of Curatorial Programmes and Publications
Singapore Art Museum

The incidences and treatment of history within the works of contemporary artists raise a few questions: What are the purposes of and reasons for undertaking such aesthetic mediations? How efficacious have these undertakings been? With a focus on works of this nature, the lecture considers the notions of subjectivity and subjectivation as key ideas in the examination of these works. In the notion of subjectivity, the historical act is appraised as a self-regarding activity that emerges from a sense of historicity. Following from this, it is considered if subjectivity might lead to subjectivation.

Dr June Yap's (Singapore) selected curatorial projects include *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia* for the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative (2013–14), *The Cloud of Unknowing* by artist Ho Tzu Nyen at the 54th Venice Biennale (2011), and *The Future of Exhibition: It Feels Like I've Been Here Before*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Singapore (2010). She is the author of *Retrospective: A Historiographical Aesthetic in Contemporary Singapore and Malaysia* (2016).

Presentation: “On Distances Between an Artist and Her Subjects”

Nguyen Trinh Thi, artist

Focusing on the process of filming *Letters from Panduranga* (2015), Nguyen will elaborate on the motives that drive her artistic practice, while foregrounding her research on the Cham community in Vietnam and their threatened existence. The artist will discuss how the epistolary form of the film, which takes as its basic structure an exchange of letters between a man and a woman, activates broader questions about artistic representation and ethnography. Nguyen will also give an account of her interest in the unknown, which presents itself in her practice as a generative concept that undergirds her strategies of resistance against the comprehensibility and linearity of history, the power and authority of the image, and the regimes of narrative and representation.

Nguyen Trinh Thi (Vietnam) is a Hanoi-based independent filmmaker and video/media artist. She is the founding and acting director of DOCLAB, a centre for documentary filmmaking and video art. Her practice has consistently investigated the role of memory in the necessary unveiling of hidden, displaced or misinterpreted histories, and examined the position of artists in the Vietnamese society. Her works have been shown at numerous festivals and art exhibitions, namely the Rotterdam International Film Festival (2016); 5th Fukuoka Triennale (2014); and *If The World Changed*, 4th Singapore Biennale (2013).

Presentation: “Recycled Images: The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia”

Ho Tzu Nyen, artist

This presentation is based on Ho Tzu Nyen’s works *The Name* (2015) and *The Nameless* (2015), both of which come out of the artist's ongoing project *The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia* (*cdosea*). The former is derived from “G” for Gene Z. Hanrahan and the latter from “L” for Lai Teck, “L” for Legibility of abécédaire of six concepts, motifs and biographies that constitute the *cdosea*. Since its inception in 2012, *cdosea* has generated a number of works, serving as sketchbook which facilitates ongoing research and generates future projects. It proposes a term for each letter from the English alphabet.

Ho Tzu Nyen (Singapore) works primarily in film, video, and (theatre) performance, developing immersive multimedia installations. Drawing from historical and philosophical texts and artefacts, he appropriates structures of epic myths, invoking their grandeur while revealing the discursive qualities therein. In 2015, he was awarded the prestigious DAAD Scholarship, and represented Singapore at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011. His works have been shown in places such as the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao (2015) and New York (2013); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012); and Tate Modern, London (2010).

Lecture: "Contested Modernity and the Image of History in East Asia"

Hyunjin Kim, curator, writer, and researcher

The lecture addresses Asia as a region in-between becoming and unravelling. Referencing images of resistance and spirituality, Hyunjin Kim will discuss works that observe and excavate unarticulated modern and contemporary realities that pervade the (East) Asian region today. Part of the lecture proposes ways to rethink the radicality of tradition as an "ungovernable" apparatus, in contrast to the brutal adaptation of Western modernisation and to the rise of nationalism. The following examination looks at the discourse of "Asianism," engaging with Sun Ge's idea of "homecoming" and Takeuchi Yoshimi's notion of *zengzha*. Understanding the region as a space of anomalous events, the speaker will demonstrate how the complicated historical relations and hegemonic struggles endemic to the region can accelerate the production of discourse.

Hyunjin Kim (South Korea) is an advisor to Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong. Her recent curatorial and interdisciplinary practices explore disparate points of regional modernity, in various forms and productions. She was Director at Arko Art Center, Seoul (2014–15), co-curator of *2 or 3 Tigers*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2017), 7th Gwangju Biennale (2008), and curator of exhibitions including *Tradition (Un)Realized*, Arko Art Center, Seoul, South Korea (2014). She has published extensively on contemporary artists including Park Chan-kyong.

Presentation: "Colonial Unheimlich"

Park Chan-kyong, artist

"... if a critique of Orientalism avoids the object of its criticism it is also unsound. Criticising Orientalism is fine, but a more flexible approach within the structure of Orientalism itself should be entailed in the criticism. Criticism of Orientalism should be better than Orientalism itself or contain certain surpassing elements within it. The criticism and the exceeded may conflict with each other. Even the critical reflection of 'what is not Orientalism?' may be derived from outer, especially Western perspectives. This is imperative: what we can do in between escaping the Orientalist structure and demystifying it may even include intentional use of Orientalism..." (From *The Phantom of "Minjok Art"* by Park Chan-kyong)

Park Chan-kyong (South Korea) is a media artist, film director, and writer. Park served as the Artistic Director of the SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul in 2014. His major works include *Manshin: Ten Thousand Spirits* (2013) and *Night Fishing* (2011, co-directed with Park Chan-wook). Park has exhibited internationally including in Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2017); Taipei Biennial (2016); and Art Sonje Center, Seoul (2013). In 2011, Park was awarded the Golden Bear for Best Short Film, *Night Fishing*, at the Berlin International Film Festival.

Presentation: “The Spectre of Photography in the Works of Apichatpong Weerasethakul”

Dr Clare Veal, art historian, Lecturer, MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore

The histories of photography and film in Thailand intersect in multiple ways. Yet the revelatory, iconic nature of photography in this context has meant that it has often been considered separate from filmic practice in which the “real” lacks weight. The trans-disciplinary nature of Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s practice, described by Dr May Adadol Ingawanij and Dr David Teh as “permeable,” complicates these distinctions. Despite Apichatpong’s preference for cinema and video, the photographic is implied through the slow, rhythmic pace of his time-based works, as well as their reconstitution as stills. By aligning these references with the implications of different media forms in the Thai context, this presentation considers the role of the photographic and the filmic to reveal and conceal, and how medium specificity is implicated in the visualisation of traumatic pasts that resist representation.

Dr Clare Veal (United Kingdom/Singapore) undertakes research on Southeast Asian photography, art, and visual culture, with a focus on Thailand. She received her PhD from the Department of Art History and Film Studies at the University of Sydney for her thesis entitled *Thainess Framed: Photography and Thai Identity, 1946-2010*. She was the sub-editor for Asian Art for the *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Modernism* (2016) and has contributed papers to a number of publications, including *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* and *Trans-Asia Photography Review*.

Closing Keynote Lecture by Professor Kenneth Dean, Head, Department of Chinese Studies, NUS

Professor Dean will reflect on the day’s discussions from the perspective of local historical research, and expand on the topics by referencing folkloric and vernacular practices.

Professor Kenneth Dean’s (Canada/Singapore) research interests include Chinese religions, temples, and Daoist studies. He received his BA in Chinese Studies from Brown University and PhD in Asian Studies from Stanford University, and has taught at McGill University, where he was Director of the Centre for East Asian Research. Professor Dean has been published widely and has produced a documentary, *Bored in Heaven* (2010), about ritual celebrations around Chinese New Year in Southeast China.

EVENTS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Book Launch: *Thai Art: Currencies of the Contemporary* (MIT Press and NUS Press, 2017)

Introduction by author, **Dr David Teh**, and conversation with **Dr May Adadol Ingawanij** and **Dr Roger Nelson**

5.45 – 6.30pm

The Seminar Room, Block 43 Malan Road, Gillman Barracks

Since the 1990s, contemporary art in Thailand has achieved considerable international recognition. While many Thai artists have shed identification with their nation, “Thainess” remains an interpretive crutch for understanding their work. In the first scholarly book on the subject since 1992, Dr David Teh examines the competing claims to contemporaneity staked in Thailand, and on behalf of Thai art elsewhere, against a backdrop of sustained political and economic turmoil.

Dr May Adadol Ingawanij – Please refer to page 5

Dr Roger Nelson – Please refer to page 11

Dr David Teh – Please refer to page 11

The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia Volume 4: V for Voice
Performance by artists Ho Tzu Nyen and Bani Haykal

7.00 – 8.00pm

The Single Screen, Block 43 Malan Road, Gillman Barracks
Limited capacity, priority is given to symposium attendees

The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia (cdosea) has, since its inception in 2012, generated a number of filmic, theatrical, and installation works for Ho Tzu Nyen including *The Name* and *The Nameless*, and a number of projects engaging with the figure of the tiger. Since 2016, Ho has been working with a group of collaborators to manifest the dictionary itself, most recently creating an algorithm that endlessly composes new combinations of audio-visual materials glossed from the Internet, according to the 26 terms of the dictionary (cdosea.org). *Volume 4: V for Voice* is the first time *cdosea* is presented in a live context, with sound artist Bani Haykal performing in response to the spontaneous audio-visual images conjured up by the ghostwriter that is the algorithm.

Ho Tzu Nyen – Please refer to page 6

Bani Haykal (Singapore) experiments with text and music. As an artist, composer, and musician, Haykal considers music as a metaphor for cybernetics and his projects revolve around modes of interfacing and interaction in feedback and feedforward mechanisms. In his capacity as a collaborator and a soloist, Haykal has participated in festivals including Media/Art Kitchen (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Japan), Liquid Architecture, and Singapore International Festival of Arts, among others.

ABOUT THE CHAIRS

Dr Roger Nelson (Australia/Singapore) is an art historian and curator. He joined School of Art, Design and Media, NTU and NTU CCA Singapore as a Postdoctoral Fellow in September 2017. Prior, he pursued his PhD in Phnom Penh, researching modern and contemporary arts of Cambodia. Nelson is a co-founding co-editor of *Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia*, a journal published by NUS Press. He co-convoked *Gender in Southeast Asian Art Histories*, an international symposium at the University of Sydney (2017). Recent curatorial projects include *People, Money, Ghosts (Movement as Metaphor)*, an exhibition and lecture series at Jim Thompson Art Center, Bangkok (2017).

Dr David Teh (Australia/Singapore) is a researcher based at NUS and is the director of Future Perfect, a gallery and project platform based in Singapore. His curatorial projects have included *Misfits, Pages from a Loose-Leaf Modernity*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2017), *TRANSMISSION*, Jim Thompson Art Center, Bangkok (2014), *Video Vortex #7*, Yogyakarta (2011), *Unreal Asia*, 55. Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen (2009), *The More Things Change...*, the 5th Bangkok Experimental Film Festival (2008). His writings have appeared in *Third Text, Afterall, Theory Culture & Society, LEAP, Aon Journal* and *The Bangkok Post*. His new book, *Thai Art: Currentcies of the Contemporary* was published in 2017 by MIT Press.

ABOUT THE CURATORS OF THE SYMPOSIUM

Professor Ute Meta Bauer (Germany/Singapore) is the Founding Director of NTU CCA Singapore, and Professor at the School of Art, Design and Media, NTU. Previously, she was Associate Professor (2005–12) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, United States, where she served as the Founding Director of the MIT Program in Art, Culture, and Technology. Bauer is a curator for contemporary art, film, video, and sound, with a focus on trans-disciplinary formats. Since 2015, Bauer has been an expedition leader of TBA21–Academy The Current exploring Pacific Archipelagos and littorals that are most impacted by climate change and human interventions in their environments.

Magdalena Magiera (Germany/Singapore) is Curator, Outreach & Education at NTU CCA Singapore. She was an independent curator, Managing Editor of *frieze d/e* and she is currently editor of *mono.kultur*, a quarterly interview magazine. She co-curated *Based in Berlin* (2011) as well as exhibitions for *The Building* and *SPLACE* in Berlin. Magiera was also project manager of The Maybe Education and Other Programs of DOCUMENTA(13) (2012) and *UNITEDNATIONSPLAZA* (2006–2008) in Berlin. Prior to joining NTU CCA Singapore, she worked for *e-flux* exhibitions and public programs in New York City.

Khim Ong (Singapore) is Deputy Director, Curatorial Programmes, NTU CCA Singapore. Prior, she worked as independent curator and held curatorial positions at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, LASALLE, and Osage Gallery, Hong Kong. She was Manager, Sector Development (Visual Arts), at the National Arts Council during which she contributed to conceptualising NTU CCA Singapore. She co-curated with Founding Director Professor Bauer the exhibitions *Incomplete Urbanism: Attempts of Critical Spatial Practice* (2016), *Amar Kanwar: The Sovereign Forest* (2016), and *Yang Fudong: Incidental Scripts* (2014). Selected curatorial projects include the Southeast Asia Platform, Art Stage Singapore (2015), and *Landscape Memories*, Louis Vuitton Espace, Singapore (2013).

**SYMPOSIUM:
GHOSTS AND SPECTRES - SHADOWS OF HISTORY
28 OCTOBER 2017
NTU CCA SINGAPORE**

Curators

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Khim Ong
Magdalena Magiera

Co-ordinators

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Syaheedah Iskandar
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Special Thanks

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Professor Ute Meta Bauer, Founding Director, NTU CCA Singapore and Professor, School of Art, Design and Media, NTU

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Jevon Chandra, Young Professional Trainee, Outreach & Education
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VISITOR INFO

Exhibition Hours

Tuesday – Sunday, 12.00 – 7.00pm
Friday, 12.00 – 9.00pm
Closed on Mondays
Open on Public Holidays
(except on Mondays)

Public Programmes

Wednesday and Friday evenings

Free admission to all programmes,
unless otherwise stated

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