

NTU CENTRE FOR
CONTEMPORARY
ART SINGAPORE

A

Trinh T. Minh-ha.
Films.

Exhibition
17 October 2020 –
28 February 2021

NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

C



C



sound of memory

a fragile equilibrium between land and water



Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Night Passage*, 2004, film still.

NOTES FROM THE CURATOR

“The making of each film transforms the way I see myself and the world. Once I start engaging in the process of making a film or in any artistic excursion, I am also embarking upon a journey whose point of arrival is unknown to me.”

—Trinh T. Minh-ha

Trinh T. Minh-ha. Films. is the first institutional exhibition of filmmaker, music composer, writer, anthropologist, feminist, and postcolonial theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha in Asia. The spatial configuration of five small-scale movie theatres, one next to the other in our Exhibition Hall, evokes Trinh’s exhibition at the Secession, Vienna, in 2001. In each theatre we present a film, shot in different parts of Asia over a quarter of a century: *Forgetting Vietnam* (2015), *Night Passage* (2004), *The Fourth Dimension* (2001), *A Tale of Love* (1995), and *Shoot for the Contents* (1991). Trinh does not see herself as an Asian filmmaker, yet she deeply engages with Asia’s colonial, postcolonial, and the imperial histories of Vietnam, Japan, and China. In each of Trinh’s cinematic work, she questions different aspects of filmmaking and investigates the way we perceive, see, and listen, pushing frontiers of cultures, genres, disciplines, and realms.

Creating unique physical and temporal spaces to be inhabited between and across her films constitutes an alternate mode of viewing a cinematic narrative initially produced by Trinh for a single screen. The spatial proximity of one film to another, each

unfolding a specific context and history in time, invites the viewer to wander from one theatre to the next, and the different layers of Trinh’s oeuvre, from the visual to the sonic to voice, begin to oscillate and interrelate. The conjoining of historical time and narrative of each film within the same time-space frame, that of the exhibition, reveals unexpected connecting threads. Another juxtaposition, both across and within each featured film, is Trinh’s deliberate integration of footage filmed through the years, shifting in aspect ratio, image quality, or colour palette. Also, the journey of each film from one format to another, from celluloid to video, from analogue to digital, brings to the fore the inherent history and materiality of moving image.

At the Centre’s Single Screen is Trinh’s most recent production, *What about China?* (Part I of II, 2020–21), initiated by NTU CCA Singapore and co-commissioned with Rockbund Art Museum (RAM), Shanghai. At the core of the film is the notion of harmony, which has played an important role in the lives of Chinese people

Cover: Trinh T. Minh-ha, *A Tale of Love*, 1995, film stills.

since ancient times, summing up three main relations: harmony with society; harmony with nature; and harmony with oneself.

Born in Hanoi, Vietnam, Trinh grew up in Ho Chi Minh City where she studied music. Her environment, background and identity are, however, multiple and transnational. In 1970, she left Ho Chi Minh City for the United States, where she graduated in music and French literature. She has studied, taught, and lived in a range of countries and cultures, including the United States, France, the Philippines, Senegal, Japan and Korea. It was in Senegal where she got involved in cultural theory and cinema. She shot her first two films in Africa: *Reassemblage* (1982), and *Naked Spaces—Living is Round* (1985). Combining ethnographic and documentary elements with the personal and the subjective makes Trinh's practice and her experimental approach so distinctive.

Over four decades, as an artist and writer, she has developed a multi-layered theoretical, visual, and poetic language as a way to engage the complexity of the implicit politics that regulate images of cultural difference and the production of discourse. Viewers are able to encounter her practice as a writer through *Trinh T. Minh-ha. Writings.*, two reading platforms displaying her books, along the passageway connecting the five theatres.

In The Lab, *Why are they so afraid of a lotus?* showcases a year-long research season on Trinh's multifaceted practice, conceived by CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts (Wattis), San Francisco. The convening, *Mother Always Has a Mother*,

presented by the Centre, Wattis, and RAM, connects the various institutions that joined this long-term conversation on Trinh's practice. Curated by NTU film faculty, *Speaking / Thinking Nearby*, an online film programme, juxtaposes films by Trinh with those of other filmmakers, historical and contemporary, and addresses the complicatedness of engaging cultural heritage, identity, and roles of language, voice, and translation. "Speaking and thinking nearby" points to the existence of a narrator and the subjectivity and fictionality inherent in documentary films. This programme ends with "**There is no such thing as documentary**"¹, a conference that brings together filmmakers, film historians, and curators to question the politics embedded in presentation and representation, perception, context, and the spatial.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to Trinh T. Minh-ha for the commitment and time she has generously dedicated to this multi-year endeavour. I would also like to thank the members of our trans-institutional partnership, Kim Nguyen, Curator and Head of Programmes, Wattis; Larys Frogier, Director, and Billy Tang, Senior Curator, RAM; and Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler, Directors of Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart.

I further thank the Secession, Dr Annette Sübeck, for providing us with the architectural plans of Trinh's 2001 exhibition.

¹The conference title is derived from Trinh T. Minh-ha's text "Documentary Is/Not a Name", *October*, 52 (Spring, 1990): 76–98.

My thanks go to NTU Associate Professor Laura Miotto for her spatial consultancy; NTU Assistant Professors Dr Marc Glöde and Dr Ella Raidel for curating the film programme and co-convening "There is no such thing as documentary"; Dr Erika Balsom, King's College London, for chairing the conference with us; and the NTU Centre for Liberal Arts and Social Sciences for supporting this collaboration.

We are immensely grateful to the U.S. Embassy Singapore for their generous support of this exhibition.

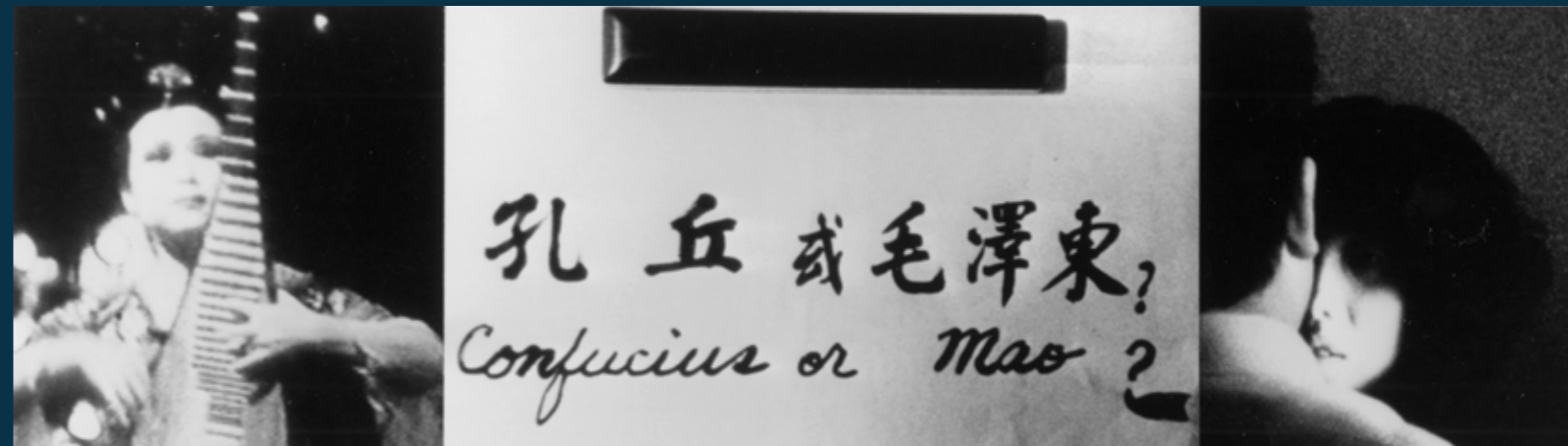
Trinh T. Minh-ha. Films. is NTU CCA Singapore's final presentation in its current exhibition space, coinciding with the Centre's seventh anniversary. Her film *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989) was presented as a video installation in the Centre's inaugural group

exhibition, *Paradise Lost* (2014), alongside works by Zarina Bhimji and Fiona Tan. Come March 2021, as life goes, the curtain of our Exhibition Hall closes with Trinh.

I take this opportunity to thank NTU CCA Singapore's entire team, present and past, for the seven years and 55 exhibitions.

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

Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Shoot for the Contents*, 1991, film still.



Reality is more maddening, more strangely manipulative than fiction. To realise this is to recognise the naivety of a development of a cinematic technology that promotes increasing unmediated access to reality.

*No real under the fake
No frame without framing
Whenever it erupts
Intruding into symbolic reality
The real remains in permanent dislocation*

In the tuning in with the forces of a life event, a form is attained only to manifest the formless. While raising questions about the social and political dimension of form, a work at odds with classifications such as documentary, fiction, or experimental film art, also explicitly explores its fluid relation to *infinity within the finite*. To use an image, it's not only the shape or the flowers and fruits of a plant that matter, it's the sap that runs through it.

Form in its radical sense should address the formless as it ultimately refers to the processes of life and death. Affirming form is recognising the important contribution of each vibrant life as a continual creative process. All the while, letting form go is acknowledging our own mortality—or the necessity to work with the limits of every instance of form.

*Reality is wilder, weirder than fiction
Merely adding up facts leads not to truth
For the resilient question never fails to rebound
“What really happened?”*

In these times of ending and returning decolonial struggles, postmodern recovery, “green sustainability”, and global pandemic resilience (to use some trendy terms), artists working in third intervals, at the margins of mainstream productivity would have to be at once very primitive and very cultured—awkwardly, efficiently “low” and competently, unfittingly “high”; shuttling effortlessly between the *avant-* and *arrière-garde*; and thriving in the fissures of categories. Socially marginalised groups could, accordingly, be both provocatively high-tech and defiantly vernacular.

Coupled with the advent of new technology and of social media, the phenomenon of massive migration and refugeeism has substantially changed our sense of identity and stability, of home, family, community, and nation. What seem to pertain to our era are the countercultural *feel for both continual displacement in interconnectedness and the sensibility for the fragile, the ephemeral, the marginal, the small, the portable, and the mobile in our everyday*.

In ancient African and Asian “arts,” if composition, legibility, or resemblance never really constitutes the criteria for true artistic work, it is mainly because rather than abiding by the old pair of



Trinh T. Minh-ha on set of *A Tale of Love*, 1995, with crew. Courtesy the artist.

form or content, emphasis is laid on the “breath” that animates a work and brings it to life. In my practice, such a work remains attentive to its own “nature,” to the movement of its unseen undercurrents, and to its continual processes of formation and de-formation. Highly attuned to moments of transition and to the transience of visible realities, it threads its way in the seen, the unseen, the barely seen, and is free to move between genres, between the photographic realism of mainstream films, the anti-representative materiality of experimental films, and the anti-photographic of virtual reality.

*Of sounds and sound effects
They're mere bubbles*

*On the surface of silence
So they both said
Thoreau and Cage*

*Hear not then
For sound is vibration*

When reality starts speaking to us differently, it leads, in my work, to what I called *an elsewhere within here*: a between that breaks with a here and a there, and with the prevailing systems of binary oppositions. Films and installations are made to induce in the viewers a state where “they see sounds and hear images” and to let the world come to them with each step taken. They are conceived so as to shift our perception of reality and to experience sound-images as immersed in the whole of our body. This is aesthetics’ radical force. Otherwise, without an awareness of its inter-social and existential dimension, aesthetics remains largely conventional and normative.

A dimension of one’s consciousness in being, politics permeates our everyday, which is said to be most difficult to discover because it is what we are, ordinarily. The everyday escapes; it allows no hold; it is where the familiar could show itself to be most surprising. Rather than merely speaking of production of images or of meaning, working with an ear and eye for the empty field of potentials and possibilities allows one to approach image and

sound making as a net of under- and crosscurrents—a manifesting of forces.

Art could then be the force that enables change and keeps history alive, while the poetics of the creative everyday could be both a dimension of political consciousness and a transformative mode of history. Of relevance to our Age of migration is a film and art practice in which *form is fully lived so as to feel the vitality of no form*. Such a practice resists consumption in its most intimate needs, and remains a challenge for many programmers and curators to work with.

What one sees in an image is a manifestation of how one sees it.

Whether one is conscious of it or not, rhythm, for example, marks one's experience of film. A commentary, a dialogue in film is first viewed and felt as a rhythm, a sound, and a colour before it takes on a meaning. So in conceiving an image, a shot, or a sequence, one is above all working with rhythm. Rhythm is what determines nonverbally the quality of a relationship. It should convey a multiplicity of experiences between what is seen, heard, and felt; experiences in which neither the word is ruled by the image, nor the image by the word; and hence experiences which can continually shift one's ground in one's perception of people and events. Rhythm is the base from which a work is created and undone. It defines

both social and sensual relationships. In the dance of hear and see, silence and sound, stillness and movement, the hearing eye and the speaking ear are constantly at play, and form and formless are the two facets of a single process—or of life and death.

To be real, one needs to go before, beside, beyond the "real".

Trinh T. Minh-ha



Trinh T. Minh-ha (b. 1952, Hanoi, Vietnam) is Professor of Gender & Women's Studies and of Rhetoric at the University of California (UC), Berkeley, and an award-winning artist and filmmaker. She grew up in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War and pursued her education at the National Conservatory of Music and Theater in Ho Chi Minh City. In 1970, she migrated to the United States where she obtained a Master of Arts in French Literature, a Master

of Music, and a doctorate in French and Francophone Literatures at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She embarked on a career as an educator and has taught in diverse disciplines which brought her to the National Conservatory of Music in Dakar, Senegal.

Trinh's eight feature-length films have been honoured in over sixty retrospectives and surveys at film festivals around the world. She has also participated in biennales across the globe including Documenta11, Kassel (2002), and most recently at Manifesta 13, Marseille (2020). Her cinematic oeuvre includes large-scale installations such as *Forgetting Vietnam* at The Asia Culture Center, Gwangju for its inauguration (2015–2018); *Old Land New Waters*, commissioned for the opening of Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum (2007) and exhibited anew in 2009; and *L'Autre marche (The Other Walk)* in collaboration with photographer Jean-Paul Bourdier for the inauguration of musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac (2006–2009).

As a prolific writer, Trinh has authored nine books, with an additional seven in collaboration with others, and over 160 articles and book chapters on cinema, cultural politics, feminism, and the art. She is also the recipient of numerous awards, including a three-year Toban Faculty Fellowship, funded by UC Berkeley, Arts & Humanities, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Toban Family, United States (2016–2019).

Photos of Trinh T. Minh-ha. Courtesy the artist.

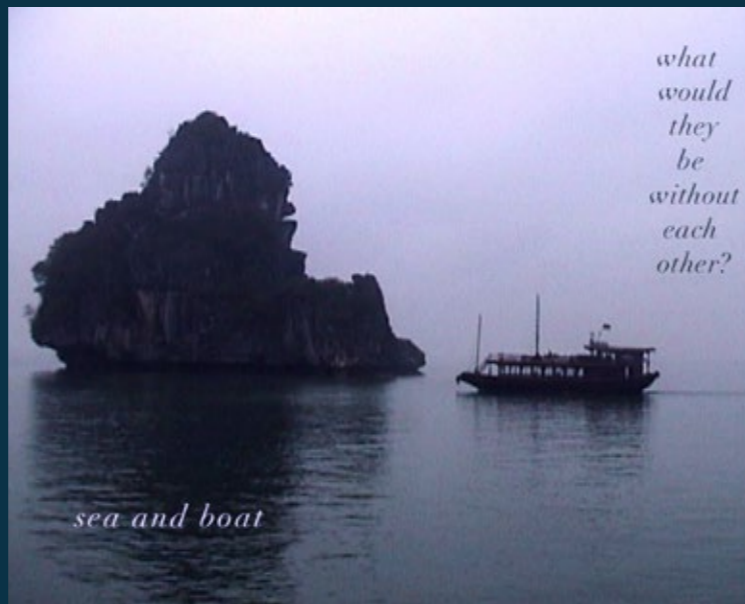


FORGETTING VIETNAM, 2015

Digital, colour, sound, 90 min.

Made in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, *Forgetting Vietnam* is framed by two ancient myths, one concerning land, and the other, water. Together, they suggest the multi-dimensional roles of these two elements in Vietnam, once called “the land of ten thousand springs”. A dialogue between the two unfolds, featuring picturesque landscapes, religious rituals, cultural traditions, and scenes of everyday life with a focus on ordinary women, shot between 1995 and 2012.

Resisting the binary opposites of remembering and forgetting, Trinh engages both instead, suggesting that there are always multiple entries into the film’s narration. In place of the spoken voice, text comprising evocative questions and quotations appear and dissolve throughout the film. At one point, a quote by Vietnamese contemporary writer Pham Thi Hoài reads: “To really forget, we must fully know what we want to forget”. In addition to insights of witnesses to the war, and snippets of conversations about the State and the Communist Party, the historical, cultural, and social memory of the war is brought to remembrance through traditional Vietnamese folk music and pre-1975-era ballads.



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NIGHT PASSAGE, 2004

Digital, colour, sound, 98 min.

Inspired by Miyazawa Kenji’s novel *Milky Way Railroad* (1927) in which a train takes a boy and his companion on a journey through the Milky Way to heaven, *Night Passage* takes a female immigrant and her two companions on a spiritual journey centred on friendship and loss. Appearing within a series of vistas that moves like a speeding strip of celluloid film, rhythmic image sequences reveal the hopes and memories of the three passengers as they experience new encounters during their train ride. As a mode of transportation, the train provides the means of access to new discoveries and possibilities.



In this film, Trinh’s second in the digital format, specific filmic gestures of lighting, colours, sound, silence, and resonances, as well as a distinct choreography of camera and body movements, are used to depict the transformation of time. It is through this passage of time between fact and fiction, life and death, where one finds magic and the freedom to dream. In an interview by Dr Alison Rowley, Reader in Cultural Theory, in 2013, Trinh summarises: “Life is not explicable when it is lived intensely, with magical freshness. What I kept of Miyazawa in *Night Passage* were spirit, structural forces, and field of action.”

THE FOURTH DIMENSION, 2001

Digital, colour, sound, 87 min.

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Set in Japan and similarly framed by a journey on a train, *The Fourth Dimension* examines the spiritual world—a fourth dimension, through its culture. The fourth dimension refers also to cinematic time itself, highlighting the unseen in our everyday reality, and pointing to our own spirituality. In exploring the role of rituals in ordinary, everyday life, Trinh juxtaposes modernity with tradition, using it as a creative tool to question how meanings are assigned to imagery and categories. Two main characters—the train and the drum—the film’s guiding rhythms, are drawn from Trinh’s own experience as a Visiting Professor in Tokyo in 1998.

Veering away from the sophistication of rehearsed, seamless panning, Trinh used a handheld camera for shooting; embracing the hesitation of movement, and allowing the audience to follow her steps in the process of filming. In doing so, she highlights the unexpected found in intervals between each scene, following French philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s theory of the time-image, in which the film unfolds over time. As her first digital film, it uses special video effects to composite a multi-layered montage of images, text and sound, creating an experience of time and speed in stillness, that evokes a new way of seeing.

A TALE OF LOVE, 1995

35mm film transferred to digital, colour, sound, 108 min.

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A Tale of Love is an allegorical retelling of 19th-century Vietnamese national poem *Tale of Kiều* (1820). The female protagonist, Kiều, is seen as a personification of Vietnam, who has suffered from continued invasion and foreign domination. She speaks of the condition of many immigrant women and more, particularly to those of the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States.

With the camera following the characters throughout the film, moving from performed reality, memory, and dream, the thread of voyeurism runs through the film, forming its narrative. Offering intimacy to the viewer while at the same time evoking a sense of discomfort, voyeurism is also played out provocatively through the photographer. Experimenting with forms of lighting, scenography, camera movements, script, sound, and “acting” itself, Trinh draws connections between sensuality, voyeurism, identity, and consumption, bringing to the fore, the fictionality inherent in love. This fictionality is further intensified by varying musical textures as well as the film’s tonality, with the use of primary colours yellow, blue, red.



SHOOT FOR THE CONTENTS, 1991

16mm film transferred to digital, colour, sound, 101 min.

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In *Shoot for the Contents*, Trinh examines the culture and identity of China from her situated position, both as an outsider and intimate neighbour to China, with a desire to transform her own consciousness of the country, at the same time, allowing her to dive deeper into the heritage of Vietnamese culture. The film opens with two women playing a Chinese guessing game, to which the title refers, followed by a dialogue between them that incorporates sayings of Mao, Confucius, and other classical Chinese philosophers.

Engaging with rural life, storytelling, calligraphy, and Chinese musical and operatic traditions interwoven throughout the film with interviews with cultural workers on topics ranging from independent filmmaking to gender and class inequality, Trinh creates a layered composition of multivocal reflections on the shifting culture and politics of China.

WHAT ABOUT CHINA? (Part I of II), 2020–21

Digital, colour, sound, 58 min.

Drawing from footages shot mostly in 1993–1994 in Eastern and Southern China, specifically the provinces of Anhui, Hubei, Zhejiang, Fujian and Guanxi—all linked in common lore to the remote origins of Chinese civilisation—*What about China?* (part I of II was edited for this exhibition) takes the notion of harmony in China as a site of creative manifestation. As a core value of governance, it has been used by the Chinese leadership to promote societal balance, and to pursue social development and co-existence. Featured in a wide and inclusive sense in the context of this film, “harmony” involves not only the way music fundamentally defines reality, or the way space takes shape and structures daily life, but also the dynamic agents in the ongoing process of safeguarding the “roundness” of a world of social justice and equity.

Offering a journey into the wealth of China’s traditional architecture, for example, the multistoried Hakka roundhouses and Ganlan dwellings, while exploring the hinterlands of self and other in their encounter, the film addresses the process of “harmonising” rural China, due to the country’s Great Uprooting. It seeks to engage the viewer further by asking: What exactly is disappearing? And how?

Situated in the realm between ancient wisdom, avant-garde experiment, and popular folk acumen, the film features



a multiplicity of voices and narratives embedded in a rhythmic conversation between the still image and the moving image. Songs, music, poetry, memoir, history, and theory woven in this cinematic tapestry, work to enrich rather than illustrate the visuals, to diversify rather than homogenise the narrative space. By effecting experiences of transience through an aesthetic of disappearance, Trinh creates a work that is interrogative and reflexive by nature; one that exposes the naivety of a cinematic technology and ideology that claims increasing unmediated access to reality.

WHAT ABOUT CHINA? (Part I of II)

Credits

Production

Directed, written and edited by Trinh Minh-ha

Produced by Jean-Paul Bourdier

Co-produced by Ute Meta Bauer and Larys Frogier

Cinematography by Trinh T. Minh-ha (video) and

Jean-Paul Bourdier (still photography)

Music

Wu Wei on sheng, erhu, lusheng, xun, malouqin, bawu,

and voice with Ulrich Moritz on percussion

Haina Jin on guqin and violin

Music editing and sound design by Trinh T. Minh-ha

Voices

Xiaolu Guo

Xiao Yue Shan

Yi Zhong

Trinh T. Minh-ha

Folk Singers

Cao Xiyun 曹義勻

Liz Liu (with Ming Bo)

Qin E 秦萼

Incantation, singing

Huan Cheng (Anny)



Research

Jean-Paul Bourdier: architectural research and filming locations

with Hui Zou for field work assistance

Co-commissioned by

NTU CCA Singapore

Rockbund Art Museum

With special thanks to The Toban Family Faculty Fellowship,
University of California, Berkeley, Arts and Humanities, California.

TRINH T. MINH-HA. WRITINGS.

Books by Trinh T. Minh-ha

Lovecidal: Walking with the Disappeared, 2016

D-passage: The Digital Way, 2013

Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism

and the Boundary Event, 2011

The Digital Film Event, 2005

When the Moon Waxes Red. Representation, Gender

and Cultural Politics, 2005

Cinema Interval, 1999

Framer Framed: Film Scripts and Interviews, 1992

Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality

and Feminism, 1989

TRINH T. MINH-HA. FILMS.

17 October 2020 – 28 February 2021

NTU CCA Singapore

Curator

Ute Meta Bauer

Assistant Curator

Tian Lim

Exhibition Design Consultancy

Laura Miotto, Associate Professor, NTU ADM

Construction and Technical Installation

SPACElogic

Collaterals

mono.studio

Supported by

U.S. Embassy Singapore

All films and film stills courtesy the artist, except *What about China?*,
courtesy Moongift Films.

TRINH T. MINH-HA. FILMS.
17 October 2020 – 28 February 2021
NTU Centre For Contemporary Art Singapore

The Exhibition Hall

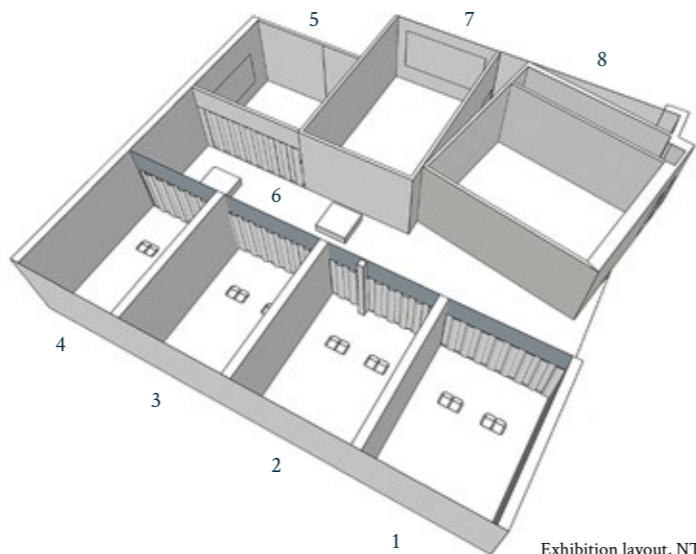
1. *The Fourth Dimension*, 2001
2. *Shoot for the Contents*, 1991
3. *A Tale of Love*, 1995
4. *Night Passage*, 2004
5. *Forgetting Vietnam*, 2015
6. *Trinh T. Minh-ha. Writings*.

The Single Screen

7. *What about China?* (Part I of II), 2020–21

The Lab

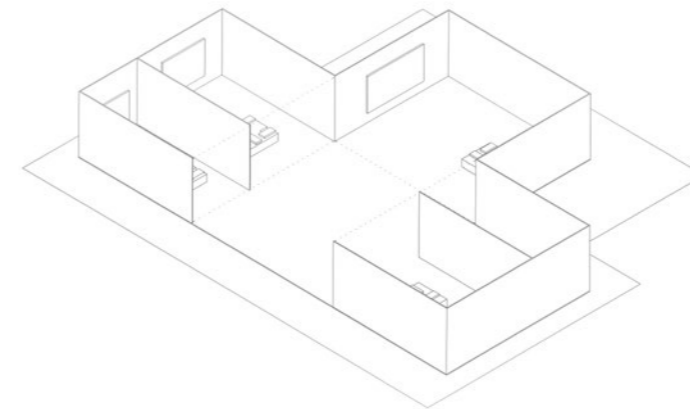
8. Research presentation:
Why are they so afraid of a lotus?
CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts



Exhibition layout, NTU CCA Singapore, Block 43

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TRINH T. MINH-HA
7 March – 22 April 2001
Secession, Vienna



Exhibition architecture by Adolf Krischanitz. Courtesy Secession, Vienna.

- A Tale of Love*, 1995
Naked Spaces—Living is Round, 1985
Reassemblage, 1982
Shoot for the Contents, 1991
Surname Viet Given Name Nam, 1989

17



Trinh T. Minh-ha, 2001, Secession, Vienna, installation view. © Pez Hejduk.

The Secession, in 2001, for the first time, featured Trinh's films as an exhibition installation in an institution. In its main hall, Austrian architect Adolf Krischanitz created five spaces as screening rooms surrounding a central square area. Viewers could access these theatres through black heavy drapes that operated as separators, invited to see the films while resting on elevated platforms or chairs.



Trinh T. Minh-ha is on our mind, September 2019 – July 2020, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco. Photo by Diego Villalobos.

“Speaking nearby” to the exhibition *Trinh T. Minh-ha. Films.*, this research presentation showcases CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts’ (Wattis) year-long research season on Trinh’s multifaceted practice as a filmmaker, writer and theorist. What does the promise of “speaking nearby” rather than “speaking about” look like today? What are the politics of hospitality? What are the problematics of “post-feminism,” and how do we challenge

the West as the authoritative subject of feminist knowledge? Expanding the discursive orbit of these questions, the presentation features projects by artists Hồng-Ân Trương and Genevieve Quick, among others.

Conceived by **Kim Nguyen** (Canada/United States), Curator and Head of Programmes, Wattis

Saturday, 17 October 2020
10.00 – 11:30am
In Conversation:
Trinh T. Minh-ha. Films.
with **Trinh T. Minh Ha** and
Ute Meta Bauer

Following an excerpt of *What about China?* (Part I of II, 2020–21), her newest film, Trinh will read from her film script. This point of departure will bring Trinh’s multivocal practice in conversation with the curatorial and spatial concept of this exhibition.

Tuesday, 27 October 2020
5:30 – 7.00pm
Reading Group:
Good Immigrant, Bad Immigrant
with **Billy Tang**

Presented in collaboration with RAM

Inspired by the commentary and writings of novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen, this reading group explores the overlapping concepts related to immigration and transnationalism. Moving between reportage, criticism, and fiction, it will explore how the framing of good or bad immigrants is intimately tied to questions of belonging, otherness, identity, and empathy. It draws on the archetypal literary figure of the antihero to challenge underlying prejudices, and locate counter-images embodying a more fluid way of identifying with transnational experiences around the world.

Billy Tang (United Kingdom/China) is Senior Curator, RAM.

Thursday, 29 October 2020
7.00 – 8.30pm
In Conversation:
Speaking/Thinking Nearby
with **Dr Marc Glöde** and **Dr Ella Raidel**

Special attention in the accompanying film programme has been given to Trinh’s approach of the withdrawal from the usual pattern of the documentary with regard to authenticity, representation, observation, or the creation of sentiments in favour of non-linear storytelling in which the documentary appears as a performance. This conversation will focus on key aspects in Trinh’s work, and their correlation to the films selected for the programme.

Dr Marc Glöde (Germany/Singapore) is Assistant Professor, NTU ADM

Dr Ella Raidel (Austria/Singapore) is Assistant Professor, NTU ADM, and WKWSCI

Tuesdays, 10 and 24 November 2020,
8 and 22 December 2020,
2 and 16 February 2021
5:30 – 7.00pm

Reading Group:
Dislocating/Locating Southeast Asia/
Trinh T. Minh-ha

with **Nurul Huda Rashid** and **Phoebe Pua**

This reading group takes ideas central to Trinh T. Minh-Ha’s writing as points of access to raise questions about the imagined histories, geographies, and communities of Southeast Asia. Over six sessions, the group will discuss themes of storytelling, feminism, and identities, and explore terms such as “third world,” “nusantara,” “woman,” and “native” with an eye towards interpreting them as acts and articulations of counter-narrative.

Nurul Huda Rashid (Singapore) is a visual artist and writer.

Phoebe Pua (Singapore) is a film scholar.

Saturday, 21 November 2020
2.00 – 5.00pm

Workshop:
The Filmic Soundtrack
by **Lim Ting Li**

Registration: [thefilmicsoundtrack.peatix.com](https://www.peatix.com/event/11111111)

Explore the art of movie soundtracks with Lim as she breaks down the layers of audio behind film sequences, showing you how dialogue, Foley, ambience, and sound effects add to the action. Then, apply these principles and create your own soundscape for a film scene.

Lim Ting Li (Singapore) is an award-winning sound designer. She was conferred the National Arts Council’s Young Artist Award in 2018 and is currently the Director of Sound at Mocha Chai Laboratories.

Saturday, 12 December 2020
10.00am – 1.00pm
A Convening:
Mother Always Has a Mother

Presented in collaboration with Wattis and RAM

In “Grandma’s Story,” the last chapter of *Woman, Native, Other* (1989), Trinh T. Minh-ha writes that, “The story depends upon every one of us to come into being. It needs us all, needs our remembering, understanding, and creating what we have heard together to keep on coming into being.” This convening builds upon this idea of a multiplicity of storytellers and intergenerational, intercultural linkages in art, activism, stories, and histories.

Session 1: 10:00 – 11:15am
In Conversation:
with **Hồng-Ân Trương** and
Ranu Mukherjee,
moderated by **Kim Nguyen**

Screenings
by **Genevieve Quick** and
Ranu Mukherjee

Hồng-Ân Trương (United States) is an artist and Associate Professor of Art, and Director of Graduate Studies in the MFA Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Ranu Mukherjee (United States) is an artist and Associate Professor in Fine Art and Film at the California College of the Arts, San Francisco.

Kim Nguyen (Canada/United States) is Curator and Head of Programs, Wattis.

Genevieve Quick (United States) is an artist and arts writer.

Session 2: 11:15am – 1.00pm
Panel:
The Welling Up and the Very Coursing of Water: On the Transnational, the Transgenerational, and the Diasporic
with **Eunsong Kim**, **Jungmin Choi**,
Green Zeng and **Billy Tang**,
moderated by **Kim Nguyen** and
Dr Karin Oen

Eunsong Kim (United States) is Assistant Professor of English and Cultures, Societies and Global Studies at Northeastern University, Boston.

Jungmin Choi (Korea) is a campaigner and nonviolence trainer at World Without War, Seoul.

Green Zeng (Singapore) is an artist and filmmaker, and Artist-in-Residence at NTU CCA Singapore from April 2020 to January 2021.

Dr Karin Oen (United States/Singapore) is Deputy Director, Curatorial Programmes, NTU CCA Singapore.

Tuesday, 12 January 2021
7.00 – 8.30pm

Exhibition (de)Tour:
The Life of Memory: Xiaolu Guo on her writing and filmmaking
by **Xiaolu Guo**

Co-presented with NTU School of Humanities and the Asia Creative Writing Programme

In Trinh T. Minh-ha’s newest work *What About China?* (Part I of II), Guo reads from her memoir *Nine Continents: A Memoir In and Out of China* (2017) as a voice-over. Reflecting on her childhood, her early career in the Beijing art world, and her current life in Europe, aspects of which are chronicled in her films and novels as well as her memoir, this (de)Tour focuses on the relationship between memories and art practice.

Xiaolu Guo (China/United Kingdom) is a novelist, essayist and filmmaker. She is currently a Visiting Professor at Columbia University in New York. Her most recent novel is *A Lover’s Discourse* (2020).



Trinh T. Minh-ha, *What about China?* (Part 1 of II), 2020–21, film still.

TRANS-INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIP

The exhibition *Trinh T. Minh-ha. Films.* is part of an in-depth inquiry into the multi-layered practice of Trinh T. Minh-ha as a filmmaker, writer, music composer, and educator, that generated a multi-year (2019–2022) research and programme partnership between NTU CCA Singapore, Wattis, RAM, and WKV. What originally started as conversations between the Centre and each of these institutions more than a year ago, in the meantime led to discussions across these institutions, not only in the area of research, but also involving education and outreach.

This transnational, multi-institutional partnership across three continents, sharing research, co-commissioning new work and exploring new ways of outreach, creates a larger discursive space and exchange of artistic practices and cultural knowledge, demonstrating the possibilities of collaborative efforts beyond this pandemic-driven global crisis.

Liaison, NTU CCA Singapore

Dr Karin Oen, Deputy Director, Curatorial Programmes
Magdalena Magiera, Curator, Outreach & Education
Soh Kay Min, Executive, Conference, Workshops & Archive

CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts (Wattis) is a non-profit exhibition venue and research institute dedicated to contemporary art and ideas. Part of California College of the Arts in San Francisco, it operates as a laboratory for testing the future of contemporary art through public exhibitions, public programs, and in-depth research.

wattis.org

Rockbund Art Museum (RAM), located in Shanghai, is developing an oceanic vision of contemporary art, aiming to explore the importance of seas and archipelagos across Asia in order to unfold richer perspectives into today's challenges, practices and networks within the art world. Its curatorial approach incorporates alternative learning programmes and para-performative formats.

rockbundartmuseum.org

With a program exploring new and unusual forms of presentation, conveyance, and participation, **Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart** (WKV) is conceived as a place for the open, and also controversial, investigation of the manifold methods and practices found in contemporary art.

wkv-stuttgart.de



Film still courtesy Heidrun Holzfeind and Sixpackfilm.

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Trinh T. Minh-ha's approach to film has addressed a wide field of discussions—ranging from the ethics of representation in ethnographic film, to aspects of migration, debates on global socio-political developments, and different layers of feminist discourse. Her films are investigations into the question of the voice as well as the relationship between the visible and audible. This programme presents a selection of films that echo some of these discussions negotiated by Trinh in her filmic works as well as her writings, and create a dialogue with other filmmakers and scholars.

Co-curated by Assistant Professors, **Dr Marc Glöde** (Germany/Singapore), NTU ADM, and **Dr Ella Raidel** (Austria/Singapore), NTU ADM, and WKWSCI



1 – 14 November 2020
***the time is now. (I+II)*, Heidrun Holzfeind, 2019**
Colour, sound, 48 min

Holzfeind is interested in architectural and social utopias that create an alternative living. She documents the shamanistic rituals of the Japanese improvisation/noise duo IRO, Toshio and Shizuko Orimo, in what they call “Punk Kagura”—in reference to Kagura, a ritual dance tradition and music for the gods. Holzfeind uses a visual language that adapts their mystical rituals: breaks in image; the colour and narrative corresponding with the soundscape; the modernist architecture of Takamasa Yosizaka; and the surrounding nature in which the duo performs a choreography for healing our damaged planet. The urgency is underlined in the title *the time is now*.

Heidrun Holzfeind (Austria/Germany), an artist and filmmaker, explores the interrelations between history and identity, individual histories and political narratives of the present.



Film still © Kimi Takesue.

15 – 28 November 2020
***Heaven's Crossroad*, Kimi Takesue, 2002**
Video, colour, sound, 35 min

What does it mean to “look” cross-culturally? This film follows up on this question by creating a visual journey through Vietnam. Instead of following the established patterns of the classic documentary, Takesue creates an experimental experience that challenges the audience and invites us to reflect on what it means to “truly see another culture”. Within this beautiful visual travelogue, questions of desire, projection, and communication begin to appear, that are embedded in this idea of the cross-cultural encounter.

Kimi Takesue (United States) is an award-winning filmmaker and recipient of the Guggenheim and Rockefeller Fellowships in Film.

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Film still courtesy Trinh T. Minh-ha.

29 November – 10 December 2020
***Naked Spaces—Living is Round*, Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1985**
16mm transferred to digital file, colour, sound, 135 min

Six West African countries (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, and Senegal) stand in the centre of this film. The work explores the life in the rural environments of these countries by taking a closer look at the everyday. With its nonlinear structure, the film steps away from the classical traditions of the documentary/ethnography tradition and offers a sensuous approach. It is a poetic journey to the African continent in which the interaction of the encountered people or the spaces in which they are living becomes relevant.



Film still courtesy Women Make Movies.

11 – 24 December 2020
***A Song of Ceylon*, Laleen Jayamanne, 1985**
16mm film, colour, sound, 51 min

This film is an intense study of the body, gender, and the multiple aspects of colonialism. It addresses theatrical conventions by recreating classic film stills and presenting the body in striking tableaux. A remarkable film on which Trinh T Minh-Ha, in *Discourse* (1989), commented: “The anthropological text is performed both like a musical score and a theatrical ritual...The film engages the viewer in the cinematic body as spectacle...”.

Laleen Jayamanne (Sri Lanka/Australia) is a filmmaker and Professor of Cinema Studies at the Power Department of Fine Arts at the University of Sydney, Australia.



Film still courtesy Trinh T. Minh-ha.

25 December 2020 – 5 January 2021
***Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989**
16mm film transferred to digital, colour, sound, 108 min

This film is Trinh’s complex deep dive into the difficulties of translation, as well as themes of exile or dislocation. By using historic material, dance, printed texts, folk poetry, and combining it with anecdotal narratives, she examines the status of Vietnamese women since the Vietnam War, as well as the status of images as evidence. It is a complex approach that invites the audience to reflect on the modes of perception and encourages a profound critique of audio-visual strategies.



Film still courtesy Reel Suspects.

6 – 19 January 2021
***Nervous Translation*, Shireen Seno, 2018**
Colour, sound, 90 min

This film follows the inner voice and play of an eight-year-old girl who cooks perfect miniature dishes, mimicking the world of adults. The perception of the child is translated through fragmentation and sounds that are written into words, such as the ring of the telephone, and the sound of the aircon, all forming together, an orchestra of the everyday. Waiting, boredom, and dead time pave the temporality of her imagination, while she listens to cassette tapes recorded by her father, a migrant worker in Saudi Arabia. The personal phantasmagoric vision encounters the political dimension echoing the times of the People Power Revolution in the Philippines.

Shireen Seno (Japan/Philippines) studied architecture and cinema at the University of Toronto before relocating to Manila. Her work addresses memory, history and image-making, often in relation to the idea of home.



Film still courtesy Trinh T. Minh-ha.

20 – 31 January 2021
***Reassemblage*, Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1982**
16mm film transferred to digital, colour, sound, 40 min

With her remarkable and widely discussed first film, Trinh brings the conventions of the documentary to our attention and asks how films in the field of documentary and ethnographic tradition have consecutively established a power to manipulate the way in which we perceive different cultures. By gathering filmic means and techniques that reject the traditional narrative forms, Trinh constantly alerts us to our own process of perception, furthermore reminding us that watching a movie is not a passive, but an active process.



Film still courtesy Icarus Films.

1 – 14 February 2021
The Human Pyramid, Jean Rouch, 1961

DCP, colour, sound, 93 min

At the Lycée Français of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Rouch worked with students there who willingly enacted a story about the arrival of a new white girl, Nadine, and her effect on the interactions of and interracial relationships between the white colonial French and Black African classmates, all non-actors. Fomenting a dramatic situation instead of repeating one, Rouch extended the experiments he had undertaken in *Chronicle of a Summer*, including having on-camera student participants view rushes of the film midway through the story. The docu-drama shows how working together to make the film changes their attitude towards each other.

—Icarus Film

Jean Rouch (France), ethnographer-turned-filmmaker, was the father of modern cinéma vérité together with his collaborator, Edgar Morin. Their work has had great influence on French New Wave filmmakers.



Film still © Kimi Takesue.

15 – 28 February 2021
95 and 6 to Go, Kimi Takesue, 2016

Digital, colour, sound, 85 min

While visiting her grandfather, a recent widower in his 90s in Hawai'i, Takesue begins to follow his everyday routines. When he shows interest in his granddaughter's stalled romantic screenplay, an interesting discussion about her work, family, memories, and identity unfolds. Shot over six years, this film shows how personal aspects intertwine with a critical reflection of the documentary genre.

“THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS DOCUMENTARY”

Conference

Friday and Saturday, 26 – 27 February 2021

This four-part conference brings together scholars and practitioners across filmic, anthropological and curatorial disciplines, addressing notions of multivocality, performativity, and truth in fiction, through Trinh T. Minh-ha's practice as a filmmaker and theorist.

As Trinh wrote: “There is no such thing as *documentary*... The words will not ring true.” Both a response and homage to Trinh's provocation, and at once a close but also an opening, the conference extends multiple threads of inquiry beyond the ontological frames presented in Trinh's films, to further explore the theoretical parallels and proximities between arrangement and composition, territorialisation and deterritorialisation, that underscore Trinh's cinematic works.

Friday, 26 February 2021
4.00 – 8.00pm

Session 1: *Speaking Nearby*
chaired by **Dr Erika Balsom** (United Kingdom), Senior Lecturer, Film Studies, KCL

Keynote lecture by **Dr Erika Balsom**

Saturday, 27 February 2021
1:30 – 8.00pm

Session 2: *Reverberations — Spatialising the Temporal, the Sonic, and the Pictorial*
chaired by **Ute Meta Bauer** (Germany/Singapore), Founding Director, NTU CCA Singapore, and Professor, NTU ADM

Session 3: *Performing the Documents*
chaired by **Dr Ella Raidel** (Austria/Singapore), Assistant Professor, NTU ADM, and WKWSCI

Session 4: *Filmic Interferences*
chaired by **Dr Marc Glöde** (Germany/Singapore), Assistant Professor, NTU ADM

Speakers include:

Professor Chris Berry (United Kingdom), Professor of Film Studies, KCL

Iris Dressler (Germany), Director, WKV
Rosalia Namsai Engchuan (Germany/Thailand), social anthropologist and filmmaker

Larys Frogier (France/China), Director, RAM

Dr Nicholas Helm-Grovas (United Kingdom), Lecturer in Film Studies Education, KCL

Dr Philippa Lovatt (United Kingdom), Lecturer in Film Studies, University of St Andrews

Dr Karin Oen (United States/Singapore), Deputy Director, Curatorial Programmes, NTU CCA Singapore

Tan Pin Pin (Singapore), film director

Presented in collaboration with King's College London (KCL)

Supported by





Trinh T. Minh-ha, *What about China?* (Part I of II), 2020–21, film still.

NTU CCA SINGAPORE PUBLICATIONS

Culture City. Culture Scope. (Forthcoming 2021)

Edited by Ute Meta Bauer, Sophie Goltz, and Khim Ong.

Climates. Habitats. Environments. (Forthcoming 2021)

Edited by Ute Meta Bauer.

The Impossibility of Mapping (Urban Asia)

NTU CCA Singapore and World Scientific Publishing, 2020.

Edited by Ute Meta Bauer, Khim Ong, and Roger Nelson.

Thảo Nguyên Phan: Voyages de Rhodes

Artist's Book Series. NTU CCA Singapore, 2018.

Edited by Ute Meta Bauer and Anca Rujoiu.

Place.Labour.Capital.

NTU CCA Singapore and Mousse Publishing,
distributed by NUS Press, 2018.

Edited by Ute Meta Bauer and Anca Rujoiu.

Tomás Saraceno: Arachnid Orchestra. Jam Sessions

Audio Publication. NTU CCA Singapore, 2017.

Edited by Ute Meta Bauer and Anca Rujoiu.

Becoming Palm

Simryn Gill and Michael Taussig.

NTU CCA Singapore and Sternberg Press, 2017.

Edited by Ute Meta Bauer and Anca Rujoiu.

(Out of Print)

SouthEastAsia: Spaces of the Curatorial

Jahresring 63. Sternberg Press, 2016.

Edited by Ute Meta Bauer and Brigitte Oetker.

***Theatrical Fields: Critical Strategies in Performance,
Film, and Video***

NTU CCA Singapore, König Books, London,
and Bildmuseet, Umeå, 2016.

Edited by Ute Meta Bauer and Anca Rujoiu.

Publications are available for purchase at Block 43, Malan Road, S109443.
For online purchase and delivery, please email ntuccaresearch@ntu.edu.sg

A leading international art institution, NTU CCA Singapore is a platform, host, and partner creating and driven by dynamic thinking in its three-fold constellation: **Exhibitions**; **Residencies Programme**; **Research and Academic Education**. A national research centre for contemporary art of Nanyang Technological University, the Centre focuses on *Spaces of the Curatorial*. It brings forth innovative and experimental forms of emergent artistic and curatorial practices that intersect the present and histories of contemporary art embedded in social-political spheres with other fields of knowledge.

The Centre seeks to engage the potential of “curating,” and its expanded field. What are the infrastructures and modes of presenting and discussing artistic and cultural production in diverse cultural settings and in particular throughout Southeast Asia’s vastly changing societies? NTU CCA Singapore’s exhibition spaces, designed by artist and curator Fareed Armaly, respond to this curatorial framework to unfold different juxtaposed formats.

Your support is integral to the Centre’s ongoing success from presenting internationally acclaimed, research-driven exhibitions, to artist residencies and extensive educational programmes!

Regardless of the amount, your contribution goes a long way in supporting the development of local, regional and international art scenes and our Centre. If you are a taxpayer in Singapore, your donation is not only eligible for a 250% tax deduction for yourself but also qualifies for the Cultural Matching Fund.

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Master of Arts in Museum Studies and Curatorial Practices

The MA in *Museum Studies and Curatorial Practices* has been designed to prepare graduates for professional positions in the highly complex and diverse museum landscape in South East Asia and the ever-expanding field of Contemporary Curating and Contemporary Art. This requires specific knowledge, experience and creativity going beyond the conventional. Thus, this new study program places great emphasis on addressing theoretical and practical challenges working with art historians, curators on historical and contemporary art.

With Singapore being a cosmopolitan nation with Asian sensibilities, the School of Art, Design and Media (ADM) seeks to play a weighty role in transforming the island state into a global media city. The inter-disciplinary courses are designed to mould creative individuals into outstanding artists, designers, animators, new media performers, and business leaders. The school is equipped with exceptional hands-on studios, digital creation laboratories, media studios, and open spaces. ADM’s long-term plan is to focus on nurturing local talents and providing opportunities for international study and education at a world-class standard.

A research-intensive public university, NTU has 33,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students in the colleges of Engineering, Business, Science, and Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, and its Graduate College. NTU’s campus is frequently listed among the top 15 most beautiful university campuses in the world and has 57 Green Mark-certified (equivalent to LEED-certified) buildings. Besides its 200-ha lush green, residential campus in western Singapore, NTU has a second campus in the heart of Novena, Singapore’s medical district.

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

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Dr Karin Oen, Deputy Director, Curatorial Programmes

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Isrudy Shaik, Senior Executive, Production

Zahra Abdul Aziz, Young Professional Trainee

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Seet Yun Teng, Curatorial Assistant

Clara Che Wei Peh, Young Professional Trainee

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Magdalena Magiera, Curator

Ilya Katrinnada Binte Zubaidi, Curatorial Assistant

Jason Leung, Young Professional Trainee

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Trinh T. Minh-ha, *The Fourth Dimension*, 2001, film still.



Trinh T. Minh-ha, *The Fourth Dimension*, 2001, film still.



Trinh T. Minh-ha, *The Fourth Dimension*, 2001, film still.



Trinh T. Minh-ha, *The Fourth Dimension*, 2001, film still.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Exhibition Hours

Tue – Sun: 12.00 – 7.00pm

Closed on Mondays

Open on Public Holidays including
Christmas, New Year's Day and
Chinese New Year

Free admission

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