

PRESS RELEASE: February 4, 2016

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**Joint Symposium Organized by
the National Art Center Tokyo, Mori Art Museum, and the Japan Foundation Asia Center
“How Has Japan Engaged with Contemporary Art in Southeast Asia?”
— A Research Project Now Underway, Building to a Joint Exhibition in Summer 2017!**

In 2015, the National Art Center Tokyo, the Mori Art Museum, and the Japan Foundation Asia Center teamed up to launch the “SEA PROJECT: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia – 1980 to Now.” This joint project conducts studies focused on the ASEAN-10 countries, building to a jointly-organized exhibition scheduled for summer 2017. With the research process by which “SEA PROJECT” conducts its studies considered an



important element, the project website has been launched. There will also be some pre-exhibition events continuously taking place for the purpose of sharing this process with the public from an early stage. We are pleased to announce that, as the first edition of such events, Symposium entitled “How Has Japan Engaged with Contemporary Art in Southeast Asia?” is to be held on Saturday, February 27, 2016.

The Symposium will formally explore the questions of how art specialists in Japan have researched and introduced Southeast Asian contemporary art, how they have elaborated academic discussions on such since the 1980s, and what role Japanese performance art has played in Southeast Asia.

Presentations in first half of the Symposium will revolve around the activities of such institutions as the Fukuoka Art Museum, which had made significant contribution in the expansion of cultural and interpersonal exchanges as well as pioneering research on Asian contemporary art since its 1979 inauguration; the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum that took up such activities in 1999; and the Japan Foundation that continues to stay active in Southeast Asia ever since the ASEAN Culture Center first opened in 1990. In addition, the activities of the Nippon International Performance Art Festival (NIPAF), which has made major contributions to the development of performance art in Southeast Asia since 1990 will be touched upon. The following panel discussion, featuring the curatorial team members of the “SEA PROJECT” will center around the issues of how such accumulated knowledge and experiences in the past can be utilized in interchange between Southeast Asia and Japan from now forward. We cordially extend our invitation to the Symposium for covering and publicizing the event.

■ Symposium “How Has Japan Engaged with Contemporary Art in Southeast Asia?”

[Time and Date] Saturday, February 27, 2016 5:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

[Venue] Auditorium (3rd floor), The National Art Center, Tokyo

[Presenters] Masahiro Ushiroshoji (Professor, Faculty of Humanities, Kyushu University)

Yasuko Furuichi (Art Coordinator, The Japan Foundation Asia Center)

Seiji Shimoda (Director, Nippon International Performance Art Festival [NIPAF])

[Program Schedule] Host: Naoki Yoneda (Curator, The National Art Center, Tokyo)

5:00 p.m. Project Introduction: Yusuke Minami (Deputy Director, The National Art Center, Tokyo)

5:05 p.m. Presentations (30 min. each): 1) Masahiro Ushiroshoji, 2) Yasuko Furuichi, 3) Seiji Shimoda

6:45 p.m. Panel Discussion & Question-and-Answer

Moderator: Mami Kataoka (Chief Curator, Mori Art Museum)

7:25 p.m. Closing Remarks: Fumio Nanjo (Director, Mori Art Museum)

[Language] Japanese (English simultaneous interpretation provided)

[Capacity] 250 * First-come-first-served basis.

[Booking] Admission Free

Booking required: online booking available from Wednesday, February 4, 2016, on the Mori Art Museum website. www.mori.art.museum

[For Reference]

About the Exhibition

[General Information]

Dates: Wednesday, July 5 — Monday, October 23, 2017

Venues: The National Art Center, Tokyo; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo

Organizers: The National Art Center, Tokyo; Mori Art Museum; The Japan Foundation Asia Center

Throughout the postwar years to the 1990s, many of the Southeast Asian countries gradually achieved independence and democratization: new ideas of nation-building, national identity, and conflicts between the acceptance of Western dominated modernism and the sustenance of each of their respective cultural traditions have frequently surfaced as themes in expressions of art. While attention was given to ideas of narrativity, mythology, and magical thinking in contrast to Western formalism during the 1980s, new issues and new modes of expression began to emerge during and after the 1990s when economic development and modernization at home - and multiculturalism internationally—progressed further and systems surrounding the contemporary art became all the more globalized.

For the “SEA PROJECT,” Japanese curators from the National Art Center, Tokyo and Mori Art Museum, Tokyo collaborate with a group of Southeast Asian curators of the new generation (all born in, or after the 1980s) in an attempt to collect and connect contemporary perspectives rooted in the histories. Within this framework, many current issues of interest come to the fore: 1) desires or intentions to portray new stories by turning their eyes to previously untold parts of the history; 2) a number of collective activities in order to preserve or rediscover cultural memories and values of local communities and provincial towns amidst the development of urbanization and modernization; 3) acceleration of active inter-regional exchange and travels due to the proliferation of regional hub airports and low-cost carriers; 4) DIY-spirited performative activities to bring about changes to the status quo on their own, faced with undeveloped public support system, or the lack thereof, for contemporary art; and more. As well, there also seems to be a strong will to pass down the generations the fruits of the development of contemporary art in the respective region through education and archiving can also be witnessed.

From the research trips that commenced in January 2015, the team not only saw the obvious progressivist, economic development, but also a positivist attitude to the “present/current” societal conditions that still continue to be fraught with changes of stagnation, regression, reform, loss, and transposition. While continuing these research trips from FY2015 to FY2017 and deepening our communication with professionals of the region, we will explore the ways in which we can share, with Japanese audiences, the many paths the contemporary arts of this region lead in the exhibition.

* Please note that “SEAPROJECT” is the project title, and *not* the exhibition title.

[Members of the Curatorial Team]

From The National Art Center, Tokyo: Yusuke Minami, Naoki Yoneda

The From Mori Art Museum, Tokyo: Mami Kataoka, Natsumi Araki, Kenichi Kondo, Reiko Tsubaki, Haruko Kumakura

Ong Jo-Lene (Malaysia), Merv Espina (the Philippines), Grace Samboh (Indonesia), Vera Mey (Singapore)

* “SEA PROJECT” Website: <http://seaproject.asia/>

Officially launched on February 4, 2016, the website is to house essential information so as to include not just “SEA PROJECT” research archives but lists of referential materials based on research on the region conducted to date.

● **General Inquiries** (about the Organizers and “SEA PROJECT”):

The Japan Foundation Asia Center Murakami (Ms.), Sano (Ms.) Tel: +81-(0)3-5369-6140

● **Press Inquiries:** The Japan Foundation Communication Center Kawakubo (Ms.), Mori (Ms.)

Tel: +81-(0)3-5369-6089 / E-mail: press@jpf.go.jp