



Zomia

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Zomia is a contested geographical term that refers roughly to the huge massif in mainland Southeast Asia that connects with the northeastern region of India and southwestern region of China. The term became widespread following the publication of *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (2009), a book by political scientist James C. Scott that explores the history of state-resistance by ethnic minorities in the highlands. Scott's analysis of highland cultures inspired contemporary art in Asia and influenced international exhibitions such as "A beast, a god, and a line," Dhaka Art Summit, Dhaka (2018); "The Strangers from beyond the Mountain and the Sea," The 7th Asian Art Biennial, Taichung (2019); and "Every Step in the Right Direction," The 6th Singapore Biennale (2019). Despite its late arrival as a concept in contemporary art, the term challenges the existing geographical boundaries of Southeast Asian art historical discourse and opens up a new field of studies that used to be dominated by ethnographical research.



Community Photography project (2007-2008). Mae Hong Son province, Thailand. Image courtesy of 'From (different) Horizons of Rockshelter Project' and Vipash Purichanont



Vanghoua Anthony Vue, *Present-Past-Pattern* (2019), Photographic prints on vinyl and duct tape, Dimensions variable, installed at Block 9, Gillman Barracks, Singapore. Singapore Biennale 2019 commission.

Related Keywords

The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia