



## TK Sabapathy, Writing the Modern

**Beverly Yong**

*Writing the Modern* brings together 57 selected texts from four decades of writing by TK Sabapathy, art historian, curator, educator, critic, advisor to institutions, “who has been shaping knowledge of art of the region for over 45 years”. The editors have approached their selection with a mindfulness of context and careful scrutiny befitting the author of these texts. Four sections map areas of interest and impact, covering Sabapathy’s writing on artists and their situation in art history; his methodology as art writer and art historian; his recommendations for institutions, exhibitions and his own curatorial approaches; and his persistent call for and perspectives on developing a Southeast Asian art history.

Essays from books and exhibition catalogues, symposium papers, newspaper reviews, artist interviews, letters, even opening speeches for exhibitions take us through 40 years of art scene development in Singapore, as well as significant shifts in representations of Malaysian and Southeast Asian art.

“Through a compounded lens in the reading of [T.K. Sabapathy’s] writings, we may well come to a more complete regard of the relationships between his many undertakings, as cycles of theorising, provoking, and doing; alternating between criticism and practice” (Ahmad Mashadi). We also come to a clearer understanding of this chief instigator’s commitment to building critical frameworks and methodologies for writing on art and art history in the region. Many of the questions he has asked continue to resonate.

T.K. SABAPATHY

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the  
modern

Selected Texts on Art & Art History in  
Singapore, Malaysia & Southeast Asia  
1973–2015

**Source:**

- TK Sabapathy, *Writing the Modern: Selected Texts on Art & Art History in Singapore, Malaysia & Southeast Asia 1973-2015*, edited by Ahmad Mashadi, Susie Lingham, Peter Schoppert & Joyce Toh (Singapore: Singapore Art Museum 2018)

## Related Links

- Carmen Nge, "Book Review: Writing the Modern: Selected Texts on Art & Art History in Singapore, Malaysia & Southeast Asia", *Arts Equator*, 12 September 2018 <https://artsequator.com/book-review-writing-the-modern/>
- Gregory Galligan, "(Re)Making History: Two Recent Books Recast Southeast Asia's Postcolonial Modernism", *Art in America*, 5 December 2019 <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/southeast-asia-postcolonial-modernism-tk-sabapathy-ambitious-alignments-1202670830/>