

Art

2015

volume 01

Report

International Seminar on  
Cultural Rebellion in Asia  
1960-1980

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About  
The Japan Foundation  
Asia Center:  
Art Studies 01

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In April 2014, the Japan Foundation re-launched the Japan Foundation Asia Center with the following four “C’s” as its guiding concept: to “Communicate,” “Connect and Share,” “Collaborate” and “Create” in the Asian region. Spanning from the establishment of the ASEAN Culture Center in 1990 to the present, the Japan Foundation has organized and implemented numerous regional exchange projects in the field of art through activities that include exhibitions, symposia and intellectual exchange. The new Asia Center will further develop exhibitions and other projects addressing the new challenges Asia is confronting in the age of globalization, and also engage in the exchange, accumulation and dissemination of art-related studies and research. This publication, *The Japan Foundation Asia Center: Art Studies*, is being launched as part of this program.

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This first edition compiles the papers presented at the International Seminar 2014: “Cultural Rebellion in Asia 1960–1989,” held September 30–October 2, 2014, as well as documentation of the discussions that took place over the course of the event. This seminar was planned by the Asia Center as the first step in preparation for an exhibition on the theme of art movements in Asia from the 1960s to the 1980s, to be jointly presented several years from now with the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, and the National Gallery Singapore.

Over the past 20 years and more, Asian art, with a focus on contemporary art, has spread not only within Asia itself but also around the world through nationally-specific, regionally-specific and thematic group exhibitions, as well as through solo exhibitions of artists. And against the backdrop of intellectual trends toward a global history, recent years have seen an ever-increasing interest in Asia's 20th-century art movements in general. Particularly with regard to post-war art, much dedicated work is carried out to reconsider how art practices developed in relation to contemporaneous political and social movements in the formation process of nation-states as Asia's territories cast off colonial rule. At the Asia Center, we understand this as a task for the entire region, which we plan to realize in the form of an exhibition based on collaborative research by the curators of the three hosting institutions and researchers from across Asia. We hope that in documenting this preparatory seminar and sharing the information with our readers, we can more constructively contribute to discussions on art research in this region. Indebted to the participating researchers for their cooperation in writing and revising their papers, we would like to once again express our gratitude to them.

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In conclusion, we ask for your continued support and encouragement as we endeavor to bring to you exciting art projects at the new Asia Center.

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The Japan Foundation Asia Center  
March 2015

Art  
Studies

01

Cultural Rebellion in Asia | 1960–1989

# Cultural Rebellion in Asia

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1960–1989

Art  
Studies

01

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## International Seminar 2014

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Day 1 | September 30, 2014 | Tues | 18:00–19:30

Day 2 | October 1, 2014 | Wed | 10:00–18:30

Day 3 | October 2, 2014 | Thurs | 10:00–13:00

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Venue | JFIC Hall "Sakura," The Japan Foundation, Tokyo

Organizer | The Japan Foundation Asia Center

Cultural Rebellion in Asia 1960–1989  
Report

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Notes

This seminar was organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center and was held from Tuesday, September 30, 2014 to Thursday, October 2, 2014 at the Japan Foundation in Tokyo, assisted by Japanese/English simultaneous interpretation.

Simultaneous interpretation: Hiroi Hatsumi, Kobayashi Akiko, and Yokota Kayoko.

This report consists of the presentation papers submitted and transcription of the discussions that took place during the seminar.

The Japan Foundation Asia Center is responsible for editing and finalizing the materials for this report.

The original presentation papers were revised and finalized by the authors after the seminar for this report.

The positions and affiliations of the panelists are as of October 2014.

The order of family names and given names of people spelled out in Japanese and English follow a set of standard rules applied by the Japan Foundation, except for those names that already have existing rules. As a rule, Chinese, Taiwanese, Korean, and Japanese names are spelled out in the order of family name and given name.

## Cultural Rebellion in Asia | 1960-1989

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## Panelist Profiles

[Alphabetical order of family name]

**Patrick D. Flores**

Professor, Art Studies Department, University of the Philippines Diliman

Born in Manila, the Philippines, 1969. Received M.A. (Art History) in 1995 and Ph.D. (Philippine Studies) in 2000 from the University of Philippines. Publications include *Painting History: Revisions in Philippine Colonial Art* (University of the Philippines Office of Research and Publications, 1999), "Apparently, Cubism," (*Cubism in Asia*, exh. cat., 2005), and *Past Peripheral: Curation in Southeast Asia* (National University of Singapore Museum, 2008). Curatorial projects include the Philippine Pavilion for the 1st Melbourne Biennale (1999), "36 Ideas from Asia," (organized by the Singapore Art Museum traveling in Europe, 2002–03), and "Luz: Traces of Depiction," (Philippine National Museum, Manila, 2006). Currently also curator of the University of the Philippines–Jorge B. Vargas Museum and Filipiniana Research Center. Lives and works in Manila.

**Hayashi Michio**

Professor, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Sophia University

Born in Hakodate, Japan, 1959. Received M.A. in 1991 and Ph.D. (Art History) in 1999 from the Department of Art History and Archaeology, Columbia University. Specializes in Western art history and art criticism. Author of *Painting Dies Twice, or Never*, vol. 1–7 (Art Trace Press, 2003–09), and co-editor/writer of *From Postwar to Postmodern: Art in Japan 1945–1989* (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2012). Catalogue essays include, "On the Table: Experiments on Still Lifes," (*Cubism in Asia*, exh. cat., 2005), "*Kaiga to Kukan – Rosukō Chaperu no Keiken* [Painting and Space – Experiencing the Rothko Chapel]," (*Mark Rothko*, exh. cat., 2009), and "Tracing the Graphic in Postwar Japanese Art" (*Tokyo 1955–1970: A New Avant-Garde*, exh. cat., 2012). Lives and works in Tokyo.

**Prapon Kumjir**

Head of the Art Center, Center of Academic Resources, Chulalongkorn University

Born in Bangkok, Thailand, 1972. Received M.F.A. (Multidisciplinary Practice) from Glasgow School of Art, Scotland, and D.F.A. (Media Arts) in 2009 from RMIT University, Melbourne. Lecturer at the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University. Current position since 2004. Exhibited works in shows such as "Somewhere Beyond the Sea" (Bangkok University Gallery, Bangkok, 2001), "Memory and Disappearance – Recent Thai Art" (Momenta Art, New York, 2003), "Bangkok, Bangkok" (De Markten, Kunstenfestivaldesarts,

Brussels, 2005) and "My Time is Not Your Time" (RMIT School of Art Gallery, Melbourne, 2009). Lives and works in Bangkok.

### Lai Ying-ying

Professor, Graduate School of Arts Management and Cultural Policy, National Taiwan University of Arts

Born in Taipei, Taiwan, 1959. Received Ph.D. (Art Education and Art Administration) from the National Taiwan Normal University. Served as the senior curator at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum and deputy director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei. Publications include *Taiwanese Avant-Garde: Complex Art in the 1960s* (Yuan-Laou Publishing Co. Ltd., 2003), and *Contemporary Arts Management* (Artists Publishing, 2011). Curatorial projects include, "The World According to Dada" (Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1988), "Gravity of the Immaterial: The Inaugural Exhibition of ICA, Taipei" (Institute of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taipei, 2001), and "Labyrinth of Pleasure" (Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taipei, 2001). Lives and works in Taipei.

### Nguyen Trinh Thi

Video Artist

Born in Hanoi, Vietnam, 1973. Received M.A. (Journalism) in 1999 from the University of Iowa and Masters of Pacific International Affairs in 2005 from University of California San Diego. Uses a variety of materials such as documentaries, experimental films, single-channel videos, and photographs to produce moving-image works. Exhibited works in shows such as "LIM DIM" (Sternerssen Museum, Oslo, 2009), the 2nd Kuandu Biennale (Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan, 2010), and "Move on Asia: Video Art in Asia 2002 to 2012" (ZKM, Karlsruhe, 2013). Founded Hanoi DocLab, an independent space for documentary film and video art, in 2009. Lives and works in Hanoi.

### Park Hyesung

Curator, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

Born in Incheon, Korea, 1974. Received M.F.A. (Art Theory) in 2003, and Ph.D. (Arts Management) in 2011 from Seoul National University. Curator at the Museum of Art, Seoul National University during 2011–13. Current position since 2013. Involved in shows such as "Kim Byung-ki" (Gana Art Gallery,

Seoul, 2000) and "Re: Quest – Japanese Contemporary Art since the 1970s" (Museum of Art, Seoul National University, Seoul, 2013). Lives and works in Seoul.

### Pi Li

Sigg Senior Curator, M+

Born in Wuhan, China, 1974. Received M.A. (Art History) in 2000 and Ph.D. (Art Theory) in 2009 from the Department of Art History, Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. Works as an art critic and curator. Assistant curator for the Chinese Pavilion for the 25th São Paulo Biennale (2002) and 4th Shanghai Biennale (2002). Other curatorial projects include, "Star of Hope," (Qingdao Sculpture Museum, Shandong, 2000), "Under Construction: New Dimensions of Asian Art," (Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery / The Japan Foundation Forum, Tokyo, 2002), "China Power Station," (Serpentine Gallery, London, 2006), and "Overstep: Shen Yi Elsie & Lei Benben Works," (Siemens Home Appliance Art Space, Beijing, 2011). Currently Sigg Senior Curator for M+ scheduled to open in 2018. Lives and works in Hong Kong.

### Yu Jin Seng

Senior Curator, National Gallery Singapore

Born in Singapore, 1979. Received M.A. (History) from the National University of Singapore, and enrolled in the Ph.D. course at the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne since 2014. Chief curator of the Southeast Asia Gallery at the National Art Gallery, Singapore in 2010. Current position since 2014. Curatorial projects include, "From Words to Pictures: Art During the Emergency," (Singapore Art Museum, Singapore, 2007) and the 4th Singapore Biennale (co-curator, 2013). Publications include "Artistic Expressions in Fine Art," (*Malay Heritage of Singapore*, Suntree Media Pte., Ltd., 2011), and "Mapping Art in Southeast Asia," (*Institution for the Future*, Centre for Chinese Contemporary Arts, 2012). Lives and works in Singapore.

### Simon Soon

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Art History and Film Studies, University of Sydney

Born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1983. Publications include "An Empty Canvas on which Many Shadows Have Already Fallen," (*New Malaysian Essays 3*, Matahari Books, 2010) and "Spatio-Temporal Currency: The

Kalachakra Sand Mandala as Cultural Object in Performance," (*Modern Art Asia*, issue 12, Enzo Arts and Publishing Ltd., 2012). Participated in symposia such as "Southeast Asia Graduate Students Conference," (Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 2012), "Sites of Construction: Exhibition and the Making of Recent Art History in Asia," (Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong, 2013), and "Singapore Biennale 2013 Symposium," (Singapore Art Museum, Singapore, 2014). Lives and works in Sydney.

### Suzuki Katsuo

Curator, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

Born in Tokyo, Japan, 1968. Received M.A. (Art History) from the University of Tokyo. Has worked at current museum since 1998, specializing in Japanese and Western modern and contemporary art. Curatorial projects include "Brazil: Body Nostalgia" (2004), "Okinawa Prisms: 1872–2008" (2008), and "Experimental Ground 1950s" (2012) at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo. Participated in symposia including, "In Search of a New Narrative of Postwar Japanese Art: What Becomes Visible through the Exhibitions at the Two Modern Art Museums in New York and Tokyo," (National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, The Japan Foundation, 2012). Lives and works in Tokyo.

### Adele Tan

Curator, National Gallery Singapore

Received Ph.D. (Art History) from the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. Specializing in Southeast Asian and Chinese contemporary art. Publications include, "Lee Wen and the Untaming of Yves Klein: Art and the Iterative Force," (*PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, vol. 32, no. 2, The MIT Press, 2010) and "Return of the Exhibition: 12th Istanbul Biennial," (*Eyeline*, no. 76, Eyeline Publishing Ltd., 2012). Lives and works in Singapore.

## Seminar Program

## DAY 1

September 30 (Tues)

18:00 – 18:05

Opening Address by the Organizer

18:05 – 18:50

Keynote Speech

Suzuki Katsuo

Curator, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

**Imagining Cultural Solidarity in Asia Now**

18:50 – 19:30

Discussion (Q/A)

## DAY 2

October 1 (Wed)

**SESSION I | In the Case of East Asia**

10:00 – 10:05

Opening comment for Session 1 by  
Moderator: Suzuki Katsuo

10:05 – 10:35

Presentation

Pi Li

Sigg Senior Curator, M+

**Right is Wrong: Chinese Art before 1989**

10:35 – 11:05

Presentation 2

Park Hyesung

Curator, National Museum of Modern and  
Contemporary Art, Korea**Boundary Riders of Korean Art in  
1960s–1970s**

11:05 – 11:15 | Break

11:15 – 11:45

Presentation 3

Lai Ying-ying

Professor, Graduate School of Arts Management and  
Cultural Policy, National Taiwan University of Arts**Art into Action: Taiwanese Activists from  
1960s to 1980s**

11:45 – 12:15

Presentation 4

Hayashi Michio

Professor, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Sophia University

**Cultural Rebellion:****Japan from the 1960s to the 1980s**

12:15 – 13:30 | Lunch

**SESSION II | In the Case of Southeast Asia**

13:30 – 13:35

Opening comment for Session 2 by  
Moderator: Hayashi Michio

13:35 – 14:05

Presentation 1

Yu Jin Seng

Senior Curator, National Gallery Singapore

**Competing Notions of the "Avant-garde"  
through Exhibitionary Discourses in Post-War  
Southeast Asia from the 1950s to 1970s**

14:05 – 14:35

Presentation 2

Prapon Kumjiam

Head of the Art Center, Center of Academic Resources,  
Chulalongkorn University**Magpie Modernity in Thai Art**

14:35 – 15:05

Presentation 3

Simon Soon

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Art History and Film Studies,  
University of Sydney**Malaysia: A Cultural Rebellion**

15:05 – 15:15 | Break

15:15 – 15:45

Presentation 4

Patrick D. Flores

Professor, Art Studies Department, University of the Philippines  
Diliman**"Suddenly Turning Visible":  
Art as Experiment and Pedagogy in the  
Philippines**

15:45 – 16:15

(Presentation)

Presentation paper is not included

Adele Tan

Curator, National Gallery Singapore

**Spectres of Marx in the Margins of Art:  
"Left-learning" in the Singapore theatre of  
Kuo Pao Kun and the Thai film *Tongpan***

16:15 – 16:45

Presentation 5

Nguyen Trinh Thi

Video Artist

**Re-Reading History through Recycling  
Old Films**

16:45 – 17:00 | Break

17:00 – 18:15

Discussion

18:15 – 18:30 | Wrap-up

## DAY 3

October 2 (Thurs)

**SESSION III | Plenary Discussion**

10:00 – 10:05

Opening comments and  
Discussion Points by  
Moderator: Hayashi Michio

10:05 – 13:00

Discussion

Cultural Rebellion in Asia 1960–1989

Day 1

=

Keynote Speech

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Suzuki Katsuo  
Imagining Cultural Solidarity in Asia Now

# Imagining Cultural Solidarity in Asia Now

Suzuki Katsuo

Curator, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

0

## Introduction

Good evening. Before beginning, I would first like to thank everyone for assembling here in Tokyo for this seminar.

Still searching for connections that transcend national frameworks, we researchers from across Asia are only just beginning the project of collaboratively developing a new historical vision. This international seminar, “Cultural Rebellion in Asia 1960–1989,” has been conceived as the basic research platform for an eventual exhibition project. However, for the time being, I think it is better for us to keep an open mind, and explore all the possibilities for comparative research without fixating on the exhibition as such.

Instead of those who were active in art during the period in question, the participants here all belong to the generations that followed. Without direct experience of that time, we must respond with acute sensitivity when considering the events of this turbulent period in Asia—and all the more so when dealing with other countries’ histories. Yet, although this may come across as a contradiction of the previous statement, we cannot achieve truly exciting comparative research without jumping across different contexts. What we are tasked with is a conscientious and yet bold discovery of new reference points for the period, which even those who were involved in it could not imagine.

To set the stage for the seminar, in the first half of this short keynote speech I will address two aspects of the issues related to

the overall framework of our research. In the latter half, I will introduce specific examples for considering how the idea of “Asia” was perceived in the art of Japan of the 1960s and ’70s, which I hope will link to the discussions that follow over the coming days.

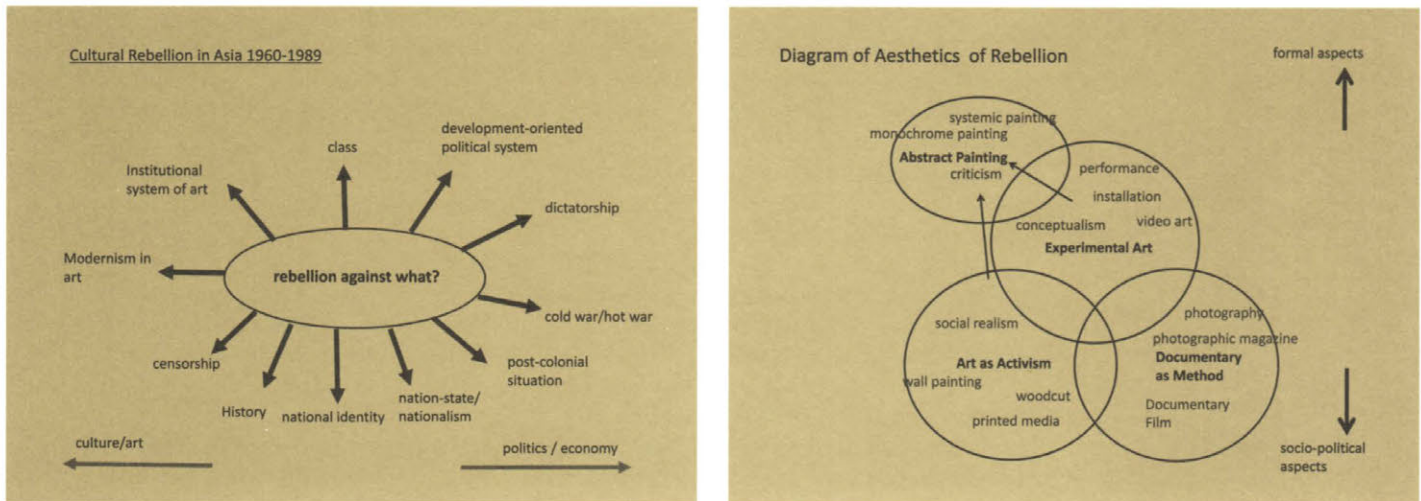
1

## A Diagram of the Aesthetics of Rebellion

Following the “Cubism in Asia” exhibition held in Japan, Korea, and Singapore from 2005 to 2006, this collaborative project is conceived as an opportunity for transnational comparative art research in Asia. The theme on this occasion addresses the differing aspects of “rebellion” and “resistances” attempted by the art of this turbulent period in Asia, which span from the 1960s to the ’80s. [fig. 01](#)

If we agree that issues related to ethnic independence and national construction were a common theme of art in Asia in the 1950s, then what the artists of the period from 1960 to 1989 confronted was their fundamental skepticism about modernization. Initially, the goal for the developing nations of Asia was surely the achievement of a modern society rooted in the liberty, equality, and peace that the West could not realize. Nevertheless, through both internal and external resistance and intervention, in many cases those dreams fell by the wayside. This period, 1960 to 1989, was the time in Asia for reflection on that agonizing history, as well as for new attempts to rebuild the platform for social change.

In art, too, there was a reconsideration of attitudes that sought validation in the West,



and in place of the modernist myth of autonomy, art was now pursued as a form of social critique. Therefore, concepts of art were revised in relation to each country's historical and social context, and new channels of communication for connecting with the everyday lives of the people were explored. Through the 1970s and '80s, this qualitative change in art proceeded in tandem with the rise of pro-democracy movements responding to the political powers that had prohibited freedom of speech. The history of struggle by the people of Asia to win their own public space on the basis of unflinching bargaining power is a precious intellectual resource for those of us living today.

The objective of this project is to share such past practices of "rebellion" as a means for questioning the present and future, while discovering new connections in the combined regional framework of East and Southeast Asia. Rather than insisting upon a unified Asia, the creation of an inter-Asian history should deepen mutual recognition within the rich diversity of the region, and discover multiple new historical reference points that facilitate a critical reinterpretation of the world. In other words, this project itself must exercise criticality as a form of "cultural rebellion" in the present.

The first thing that comes to mind for maintaining a transnational perspective in approaching the diverse artistic movements of the period in question is the attempt in Europe and the United States over the past decade or so to create a "global art history." This involves an analytic method in which categories that emerged in Europe and the United States since the 1960s, such as "Pop art," "Land art,"

and "Conceptual art," are forced upon non-Western contexts. Essentially, this is a methodology that evaluates differences with Western movements, while extrapolating models based on visual analogies that are contingent upon Western concepts. Admittedly, as a cognitive frame for the comparative research of complex phenomena, this approach has a certain degree of effectiveness.

However, we can also point out drawbacks to this methodology. Conceived and refined in the Western context, these categories are themselves highly historical products, leaving unresolved the original question of whether or not they are effective in the analysis of non-Western art. Moreover, as long as one adopts this analytic method, it is impossible to consider local conditions where multiple expressive practices exist in relation to each other, both in symbiosis and in antagonism. It is also difficult to foreground flows of exchange in the Asian region.

In our project, I would like to try taking a different approach. In placing emphasis on understanding the internal logic and motivations that produce each mode of expression in their local contexts, we can focus not only on the formal qualities but also on the social and political significance such expression carries in sorting, or organizing, them. If we do so, I believe that we will be able to comprehensively grasp the mutual relations between multiple, coexisting styles, as well as the ramifications of the "rebellions" they have generated.

From this line of thought, I have come up with the following categories for apprehending the art of Asia during the period in question.<sup>Fig. 011</sup>

Fig. 010  
Aspects of Cultural Rebellion in Asia  
1960-1989  
—  
Fig. 011  
Diagram of Aesthetics of Rebellion

111

Wu Hung and Christopher Phillips, *Between Past and Future: New Chinese Photography and Video* (New York: International Center of Photography, Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, 2004), pp. 12–16.

### 1 | Abstract Painting

Having developed under the overwhelming influence of Art Informel and Abstract Expressionism, abstract painting in Asia initially expressed opposition to prevailing modes of naturalistic painting. However, within a short period, it overran the art world, and began to assume institutional authority.

So-called “Eastern thought” was often used as a critical standard for evaluating such paintings, which gained authenticity in the narratives of national identity in each country’s art history. On the other hand, viewed from the perspective of the aesthetic conflicts of the Cold War, abstract painting was also a style that embodied the ideology of “freedom” in the West, in particular the United States. Considered from the position with social change as its goal, formalism that eliminates narrative from painting is criticized for being apolitical and conformist.

### 2 | Experimental Art

This marks the appearance of a mode of expression that breaks away from the existing system of painting and sculpture to incorporate diverse media—from photography and video to installation and performance—in an essential critique of academicized modern art.

Transcending the boundaries between art and the everyday, high and low culture, and different genres, this art questions the roots of the system of art derived from the West, attempting all manner of conceptual or formal experimentation. Broadly speaking, it can be divided between tendencies toward anti-illusionism on the one hand, and the employment of semiotic approaches on the other.

It is possible to point out the resemblance between this art and Western movements such as Pop art, Minimal art, Conceptual art, Video art, and Happenings, but this is not entirely a matter of artists directly receiving knowledge of Western art through study abroad, or through the media, as there are also cases in which an artist has independently arrived at a similar mode of expression through their own logic.

### 3 | Art as Activism

From the late 1960s through the ’70s, as student-led democracy movements spread across Asia, there was a rediscovery of the political role of art that commits to real situations. The activities of artist groups with manifestos, like “Kaisahan (Solidarity)” in the Philippines and “The Artists’ Front” in Thailand, as well as the broader movement behind “Minjung art (People’s art)” in Korea, all advanced

the idea of an “art for the people,” while criticizing modernist art’s seclusion from society. They produced highly critical works satirizing authoritarian politics and the contradictions of capitalist society.

Generally, they employed realist modes of expression, but they referenced a broad range of precedents from traditional craft to Mexican mural painting and photo collage. Going so far as to take their works out into the streets, they were distinguished by the search to create a new public space.

### 4 | Documentary as Method

With the exception of Japan, independent documentary films did not appear in Asia until the 1980s. During a time when freedom of expression was restricted, the people had no chance to actively produce their own films. There were only news and propaganda movies produced and distributed by the state. However, the situation was different in the case of photography, which had a deep amateur base. In China, the first Tiananmen Square incident took place on April 5, 1976, involving clashes between citizens and authorities which sparked when wreathes set out in mourning for Zhou Enlai were removed from the square. The amateur cameramen who documented this event secretly built up their own network, planning to make a publication that would preserve these photographs as a form of collective memory.

Ironically, their planned publication was co-opted by the state, and released in 1979 as the photobook *People’s Mourning*. However, the amateur photographers, calling for the transformation of awareness and sensibility through photography, were one step ahead, and, in April of the same year, they held an unauthorized photo exhibition at the Zhongshan Sun Wen Memorial Park in Beijing, titled “Nature, Society and Man.”<sup>111</sup> These documents of the ordinary lives of the people that had been suppressed during the Cultural Revolution period corresponded with the gathering momentum for the reclamation of political agency, and powerfully resonated with the mood of the time. We can infer that in other countries, as well, during periods when democracy movements were on the rise, documentary as a means for social critique produced similar practices.

Certainly, these categories are not strictly defined, but they may be of assistance in visualizing the relations between coexisting styles. In reality, there are many works that straddle multiple fields. And, indeed, I have

presented this diagram in order to focus attention on those areas where such fields overlap. For example, "Activism" is usually immediately associated with "Social Realism," but if we look at the internal logic of such works, they may also overlap with "Documentary" or "Experimental Art."

## 2

### Changes in the Cold War Structure and the Discourse of the "Third World"

Another issue we must address is how to determine a vantage point for comprehensively grasping the regions of "East Asia" and "Southeast Asia."

To date, when studying the art history of Asia on a "regional" level, it has been customary to distinguish between "East Asia" and "Southeast Asia." There is, of course, a historical necessity to this, but in thinking about Asia during the period 1960 to 1989 from a transnational perspective, it is perhaps better to seek out underlying connections between the two, such as the overseas Chinese network, or the communist party networks that existed prior to the illegalization of communism. We could also find connections between the participating nations of the Bandung Conference, countries that host American military facilities, countries that sent soldiers to the Vietnam War, or even by considering the advance into Asia of Japanese conglomerates transcending national borders; these channels of circulation for people, things, and information can produce an alternative map of Asia.

What is of particular importance here is an understanding of the complex Cold War structures peculiar to Asia. The Cold War in Asia is often represented as a bipolar structure split by the anti-communist defense line of American strategy in Asia, but it goes without saying that this view of the Cold War is warped by the American perspective. There are no doubt intentional exclusions here. These include, firstly, the existence of China, and, secondly, the Leftist intellectual networks, as well as the ideology of Third Worldism, that bridged socialist and capitalist blocs.

Consider this painting, made collaboratively, in 1961, by the Chinese artists Wu Biduan and Jin Shangyi. The title is *Chairman Mao Standing with People of Asia, Africa and Latin America*. The concept of the "Third World" was established at the Bandung Conference of 1955, when the participants announced that, with polarization escalating

between the United States and Soviet Union in the years since World War II, they would pursue a third line that belonged to neither camps. Many members of this Third World were emerging nations that had only just established independence from colonial rule by the West. They leapt onto the world stage as a new, international, political order calling for mutual solidarity and opposition to colonialism.

This painting communicates China's view of itself as playing a central role in the formation of the Third World. And it seems that from the 1950s to the '70s, there was, in fact, an intellectual movement in China to translate literature from across the Third World. Oddly, a kimono-clad Japanese woman is depicted in a central position, and, what's more, standing next to Mao Zedong. However, while the other figures are shown holding hands and casually linked together, the woman alone has her hands folded before her, appearing more like an outside observer. Perhaps this is meant to represent Japan's ambiguous position at Bandung as both participant and former colonizer.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon wrote, "the Third World today faces Europe like a colossal mass whose aim should be to try to resolve the problems to which Europe has not been able to find the answers."<sup>19</sup> As this quote powerfully expresses, the idealization of the Third World was a project for world change that would overcome the limitations and contradictions of Western modernity to realize an even more elevated modernity. Transcending the frameworks of ideology and nation, this provided a contemporaneous image of a resolute solidarity that could create horizontal connections across the globe.

On top of this, the shock of the Cultural Revolution, which began in 1966, had repercussions the world over. The destructive actions of the "Red Guard," who sought to correct their corrupted society, inspired a world youth rebellion—although this was more as an image than as reality. We can imagine, given the relative proximity, that the influence on Asia was significant. Formed in Thailand in 1974, the Artists' Front was a group that promoted the creation of an art for the people, in opposition to Western modernism and its accompanying art. It is said that the members of this group fervently read two books: the translation of Mao Zedong's speech at the Forum on Literature and Art in Yan'an, and the treatise *Art for Life: Art for the People*, written by Chit Phumisak, the poet and icon of the Thai democracy movement.<sup>20</sup> Maoism

<sup>19</sup> Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967), p.253.

<sup>20</sup> Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.160.



even infiltrated the student movement in the Philippines.

Tsurumi Yoshiyuki, a member of the Japanese citizens' movement *Betonamu ni heiwa wo! Shimin rengō* (Citizens' Alliance for Peace for Vietnam), recalls how, on a visit to Hong Kong in the 1970s, he was surprised to find a bookstore carrying copies of Mao's *Red Book* translated into some 30 different languages. One must be wary of overstating the case, but certainly there was a latent Third World network that functioned in reality.

I will next consider the reasons for why artistic rebellions occurred simultaneously across Asia in the 1970s. This is the effect of a qualitative shift in the Cold War structure in Asia: the impact of the sudden reconciliation in U.S.–China relations brought about by the 1971 announcement of the Nixon Doctrine, followed by Nixon's visit to China in 1972. This was the end of the Cold War which prioritized ideological opposition.

One of the central figures of "Inter-Asian Cultural Studies," Chen Kuan-hsing asserts that, dominated by the overwhelming ideology of "anti-communism-pro-Americanism," the Asian Cold War structure "produced an image of the communists as evil." As a result, "being antigovernment was equivalent to being communist," which, Chen concludes, became "the historical reason why the suppression of grass-roots democratic movements" was supported. <sup>14</sup>

The Indonesian art historian Jim Supangkat has also sought in such anti-communist ideology the reasons behind the de-politicization of Indonesian art in the late 1960s. Following the massacre of communists in Indonesia sparked by the September 30 incident of 1965, artist groups affiliated with the communist party disappeared, and, Supangkat writes, "many artists [tried] hard to avoid political activities and political impressions in their works." <sup>15</sup>

This kind of extreme, anti-communist ideology was suddenly wiped out with the reconciliation between the United States and China. For countries that were governed—not just in diplomacy but also in internal politics—through integration with the American anti-communist policy, the legitimacy of the nation itself was cast into doubt. In contrast, for the forces seeking democratization, this probably appeared to be a chance to overturn systems whose vulnerability had been exposed. In the background of the reclamation of politics and political activities by the Asian artists of the 1970s were the Cold War détente and the rifts in its accompanying anti-communist ideology. Even so, the

achievement of democratization in many countries would have to wait until the 1980s.

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Asia Viewed from Japan

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Finally, I will address the Japanese artists' awareness of Asia, as well as their individual approaches to "rebellion," in the hope that this will provide seeds for the discussions following from tomorrow onward.

1 | Tateishi Kōichi: Propaganda for Change

In 1966, the exhibition "*Sannin no nihon-jin ten* (*Sannin no gaka ni yoru sengo 20 nen*)," or, the "Three Japanese Exhibition (20 Years Post-War by Three Painters)," was held at Gallery Nippon in Tokyo. The three painters were Yamashita Kikuji, then in his 40s, Nakamura Hiroshi, who was in his 30s, and Tateishi Kōichi, who was in his 20s. All three had kept their distance from the "Informel Whirlwind," and had consistently continued making figurative paintings. It was in this exhibition that Tateishi presented a group of works suggesting a bird's-eye view of Japan's international relations in the post-war period.

In the work *Red Tiger Superexpress*, <sup>fig. 33</sup> from 1964, a mushroom cloud is depicted against a stark red sky. This was a response to the news of China's successful nuclear weapons tests of the same year. Only a few years removed from the Cuban Missile Crisis, the tests sent shockwaves across neighboring Japan. The highway along which the red tigers race, which we can assume crosses the East China Sea to reach Japan, is a parody of the former Japanese empire's dream for the South Manchuria Railway to extend across the continent. This can also be interpreted as an image of the Chinese counterattack against the historical amnesia of Japan which, without even attempting to make reparation for the Sino-Japanese War, immediately went on to enjoy the fruits of "post-war" prosperity. It was in 1972 that a restoration of diplomatic relations between Japan and China was completed.

Images of nuclear and hydrogen bombs recur also in the work *Great Farm Village* <sup>fig. 34</sup> from 1966. Standing in the foreground as a kind of guide to the pictorial space is the Alfred E. Neuman character from the American satirical comic *MAD* magazine, which Tateishi read obsessively. His left index finger indicates that the button of a nuclear missile launcher has been pressed. A pack of red locomotives bears down on the Japanese

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Chen Kuan-hsing, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 8.

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Jim Supangkat, "Contemporary Art in Indonesia, Development Beyond the 1970s," *Art in Southeast Asia 1997: Glimpses into the Future*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, The Japan Foundation Asia Center; Hiroshima: Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, 1997), p. 169.

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fig. 33

Tateishi Kōichi, *Red Tiger Superexpress*, 1964, oil on canvas, 130.3 x 162 cm

fig. 34

Tateishi Kōichi, *Great Farm Village*, 1966, oil on canvas, 60.5 x 73 cm

fig. 35

Tateishi Kōichi, *Samurai, the Watcher*, 1965, oil on canvas, 130.3 x 162 cm

islands from all sides. In the center flies an airplane carrying a portrait of Mao Zedong. The islands are already sinking under these threats, and from the Sea of Japan to the Pacific Ocean, the surrounding waters cascade into a vacuum like the Niagara Falls. The title "Great Farm Village" is of course taken from Mao Zedong's revolutionary theory of using farming communities as a base for encircling the urban centers. This suggests that the locomotives surrounding Japan could be the other countries of Asia, with China at their head.

Referencing the adaptation of Kurosawa Akira's *Yōjimbō* into a Western film, the figure of the samurai depicted in 1965's *Samurai, the Watcher* [fig. 03](#) is that of the character Sanjurō, as portrayed by Mifune Toshirō, but shown overlooking the American West from a great rock. Sanjurō is assessing the prospects of two rival factions bent on conflict. Overlooking the scene from the top of a sand dune is also the *MAD* magazine boy. From the left of the composition marches in one faction, of either Chinese or communists, carrying a Mao Zedong banner. From the right enter members of the Ku Klux Klan, the American white supremacist organization. The Civil Rights Act was finally enacted in the United States in 1964, but in response there was an explosion of violence against blacks by the KKK. Tateishi depicts the opposition between the United States and China not as a collision of Cold War ideologies, but rather as the racial opposition between the white and Asian peoples. Or, perhaps this is a representation of the Vietnam War as proxy war between the United States and China. And the time for Sanjurō the samurai–Japan–to decide which side to support is fast approaching.

In 1964, the same year that the *shinkansen* bullet train began operations, Tateishi and Nakamura established the *Kankō Geijutsu Kenkyūjō* (Sightseeing Art Institute), holding their "*Rojō hokō ten*" ("Promenading-on-the-Street" exhibition) by parading their paintings around the environs of Tokyo station during the morning rush hour. This was a guerilla-style action intended to blur the lines between art and everyday life. Viewing modernism as the descent into "private art," Tateishi attempted to revive the social significance of painting by inventing new channels for communication with viewers.

Making full use of popular symbols that anybody could recognize, he conceived of painting as a medium for visual circulation that would stimulate the creative reading of the world. That "legibility" appears also in the



mural movement, but what is important is the way it functions as a kind of open text without becoming a tool for mass-education. In the sense that it provided material for the dialogue required by the masses, Tateishi's painting could be called a kind of creative propaganda. I am sure rethinking concepts of propaganda will be an important issue in the context of Asia's culture of rebellion.

## 2 | Akasegawa Genpei: Media Hijacking

Having begun his career at the same time as Tateishi, Akasegawa Genpei spent the latter half of the 1960s embroiled in the "*Sen-en satsu saiban*" (Thousand-yen Note Trial), during which time he shifted his practice to the realm of newspapers and magazines, establishing a unique style of what could be called "parody journalism." Adding essays to his caricature-style illustrations, he presented a cynical view of the social climate, agitating readers through the employment of sly rhetoric. Feigning journalism in order to infiltrate the mainstream media, he saw himself as a dangerous element quietly plotting the hijacking of the pages of newspapers and magazines.

In July 1970, Akasegawa published the first issue of his own media entity, *Sakura Gahō* (Sakura Illustrated), as an insert in the *Asahi Journal*, which enjoyed a broad readership from the late 1960s through to the '70s. Adhering to newspaper format, the pages of this insert were marked with the date, reflecting a sense of topicality in its production. Even if the student-led social protest movement had lost some of the vigor it had applied to issues such as the 1970 renewal of the Japan–U.S. Security Treaty, opposition to the Vietnam War, negotiations for the reversion of Okinawa from the U.S. administration, and disputes with university authorities, it was still simmering in the background.

In *Sakura Gahō* no.19 (published December 13, 1970), [fig.06](#) a squadron of B-52 bombers is depicted screaming across the airspace above a residential area of rickety wooden houses. With its many American bases, Japan reaped the benefits of the special demands of logistical support for the Vietnam War. And in U.S.-administered Okinawa, the B-52s were constantly setting off to, and returning from, sorties to Vietnam. Through the media, the image of the massive, black B-52 bomber taking off from Japanese soil achieved broad recognition. But in Akasegawa's illustration, the B-52s are not setting off on a bombing run. Instead, they are making a recycling service announcement for the people on the ground, offering to exchange tissues rolls for

fig.06

Akasegawa Genpei, *Sakura Gahō*  
no.19, December 13, 1970

