

Ushiroshōji Masahiro

I was here from a little before noon and since I haven't got a full grasp of the whole framework of the discussions I may not be able to offer much effective comments. Nevertheless, I think it is very meaningful that the museums of Korea, Singapore, and Japan are planning to co-organize an exhibition, and this kind of seminar has been held to discuss the various issue raised here.

10 years ago, I had the opportunity of working in the "Cubism in Asia" exhibition too. Then there was also the "Realism in Asian Art" exhibition, a sequel to that exhibition, which traveled to only Korea and Singapore, excluding Japan.

In the past, the "wealthy Japanese" would use its abundant funds to have exhibitions of Asian art for the Japanese public. That had been the case in the past and we were criticized for it. At the time, I was really sensing the weakening presence of Japan in the Asian framework, exemplified in its absence in the "Realism in Asian Art" exhibition. In that sense, I have high hopes for this project.

I had been involved in visiting Southeast Asia during the end of 1970s and also in the 1980s for various exhibition projects, and I think that was around the time when I first encountered the use of the phrase "Third World" in a positive light, which was in the Philippines, I think. It may have also been used self-deprecatingly, but either way, I was hesitant to use the word "Third World" when I spoke about the countries in Southeast Asia. But, as Suzuki-san suggested, "Third World" can now be used in a productive manner or in a positive sense which make me feel that, maybe, times have changed, or maybe we or Japan has now become part of the Third World, I don't know. But my question is somewhat related to what Lee-san mentioned earlier, which is: how would other countries in Asia see Japan, when we, the Japanese, use the word "Third World" to describe ourselves. I am a bit concerned that we have to be very careful in this issue.

Hayashi Michio

Suzuki-san, any thoughts?

Suzuki Katsuo

From the late 1960s to the '70s, there was a frequent use of the term "Third World" in Japanese journalism; the term appeared especially frequently in expressions of left-wing ideologies. At that time, everyone was aware that Japan is *not* the Third World. Despite this, the Japanese people had developed a certain fantasy for the Third World revolution precisely because we had been searching for a new way of constructing relationships with other Asian countries, taking into consideration of the fact that Japan *was* the colonizing party and looking back on the history of Japan in that role. I'd like to point out that through this, Japan was trying to look for a way to re-read the "Third World" concept. But to clarify, I'm not suggesting any optimism by saying, "Japan *is* the 'Third World'" or that "Japan can form a solidary relationship with Asia." I'd like to just point that out so that I'm not misunderstood.

Hayashi Michio

Are there any other questions from the floor?

Lee Mina

It is true that it was probably in the 1970s when members of the Black Tent and various other marginalized artist groups, who had a certain role in society, actively traveled widely not only to Asia but also to Europe and the United States and formed their own networks. But I think this was only possible because the time had come where they could connect and form "artificial" networks as a group. This is related to the diagram Hayashi-san showed earlier, but probably such networks did not need to be formed artificially in the 1950s and '60s; there must have been a close connection among the people. The reason behind this, for instance, is when we also include Taiwan, Korea, or even India into the scope, there were quite a number of Japanese who were born and lived in Taiwan or Korea. Even when they came back to Japan in 1945, they still kept in touch despite the fact that diplomatic relations hadn't yet been resumed. I think Mr. Navin Rawanchaikul held a small exhibition for the Yokohama Triennale showing letter exchanges between an Indian living in Japan since the 1930s, I believe, which had survived. So in Japan too, there are foreigners who have stayed since the pre-war, and their communities or networks were very strong and tight.

These types of networks were between individual people; not artificial. It was something that was based on their everyday lives. So in a sense it is difficult, perhaps, to capture such a network within our framework of art history. Perhaps it was a different phase: if you compare the relationships during the 1950s, '60s and post-70s, the relationship itself among the people in Asian countries was

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very different. So when you say networks “started,” I feel that maybe you are misunderstanding it. Especially because no one here actually knows what happened in the 1950s and ‘60s.

Just the other day, I met Kim Byungki, a Korean artist based in Los Angeles and born in 1916 in Pyongyang, Korea. He is 98 years old and is still an active artist. There will be a large retrospective exhibition at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea from this December. But he literally is a walking dictionary. He came to Japan in the 1930s for study-abroad and his memories from back then and the present are totally connected. He can speak on endlessly, saying “what is the point of Murakami Haruki publishing this in 2002?”

So in this seminar and the discussions so far, you have all bracketed the 1950s and ‘60s, but for Mr. Kim, for a living human, there is absolutely no severance there. So I think we need to be aware of the dangers of framing the periods we have not contemporaneously experienced with theories and concepts. I feel this especially when we look at it from the artists’ perspectives. There are so many intelligent people discussing here today, so things seem very clear now. But, and this is what I think Mr. Ushiroshōji is similarly feeling, I think there are issues that are left behind on the reverse side of these discussions, and I think it is important to keep these issues in our minds.

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The Encroachment of Capitalism and Globalism:  
Co-optation and Identity Politics

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[Hayashi Michio](#)

I think you pointed out a very important issue. I agree with you, Lee-san, about the various cultural networks, which started since the 1970s, have *somewhat* of an artificial sense. I wanted to address it in my presentation as a phenomenon of the “age of simulacra.” That is, within the cultural dynamics from the 1970s and into the 1980s, “Asia” itself was being represented as an “exotic” and enchanting location in the various cultural representations in Japan. Even Japan itself became an exotic place. In the DISCOVER JAPAN campaign, the catchphrase on the second line was, in fact, “Exotic Japan.” In other words, Japan was re-symbolicized or re-edited as an object of consumption. It was under this kind of condition or circumstance where various contacts with the rest of Asia developed. For instance, GODIEGO, the music group, emerged whose songs about Asia (the Silk Road etc.) were a major hit. And it was from the 1980s that the Japanese music industry spread to Asia. So I don’t think we can neglect the question of capitalism when talking about these issues.

However, I can’t remember if there was a reference to “peer-to-peer” connections earlier, but I don’t think it is just a question of music bands having concerts overseas and becoming popular. When artist groups like the Black Tent, or Takahashi Yūji for that matter, went abroad and made direct contact with local individuals in various places in Asia, I have an inkling suspicion that there must have been *something* going on which cannot be reduced to the effects of capitalism, commercial success, or spectacle. So I think we need to trace those various phenomena, and I believe that Suzuki-san is thinking along a similar line.

[Lee Mina](#)

I think what is significantly different with the “peer-to-peer” relations since the 1970s, compared to the relations to the past, is that it has continued to the present. Even I am familiar with these connections. And those connections and activities, by Takahashi Yūji as you mentioned, has and still continues to have tremendous effect on the present; and this is not only a domestic phenomenon but a more expansive and continuous one. I think that is one difference, a significant difference from the period before 1970, and so I feel that it’s important to discuss this in depth.

It really has a lot to do with what Patrick was alluding to earlier; of how to conceive of these not from a geographical standpoint, but from a different one. I think these connections I raised now may be a useful element in thinking about this.

[Suzuki Katsuo](#)

I think these movements of making networks of the theatrical or musical groups were on the verge of being co-opted by capitalism at that time. So I understand what you are saying, Lee-san, but I think the 1970s was really the brink point of either creating alternative spaces or being absorbed into the capitalist system.

Hayashi Michio

This question of capitalism facilitating the exchange of people, information, or travel around the globe, all those things always accompany this ambivalence, I think. Creating networks and “peer-to-peer” communication could just end up being or creating another spectacle of facile relational art.

Ultimately, if I oversimplify the story, when this concept of relational art became really important in the 1990s and afterwards, relation itself was in many cases commodified, don’t you think? No offense to the curators, but going to triennales and biennales, making contacts with people, enjoying your time there, and then coming back is a form of leisure or tourism. This is paying money to buy a fictional, virtual relationship with other local cultures or people and so on. You consume it, but then, when you come back, nothing changes.

So how can we overcome this dilemma of the relationship itself being commodified or an object of consumption?

Yu Jin Seng

A quick response to defend that before it falls apart. I think a lot of this sense of criticality that emerged in the 1970s, which Suzuki-san was talking about, wasn’t simply about developing relationships or networks. I think there was a desire to evoke action. So it wasn’t just something to talk about; there was a real, concrete desire to evoke social change through action which could be seen in the works of the artists, in what they wrote and said. So I don’t think it’s as frivolous as something we can pack up and go home, I think.

Lai Ying-ying

In forms of art, what is the outcome of cultural rebellion? I really agree with both Ms. Choi and Yu Jin. When we talk about “cultural rebellion,” I’ve been thinking what kind of imagination were the people, the artists, holding? What kind of utopia or truths were they seeking? What were the gaps missing in reality? What were their reactions to the dominant authority, political, and social taboos? For the whole day we have had wonderful presentations, but in each country, the situation, the political and cultural climates are all so different. So I still need more time to reflect on these things. But, I think if we can try to find some universal value for the artists—maybe they are working hard to change their lives or to change the society—we can find out what they are trying to go against in their forms of rebellion or resistance.

That’s what I tried to present in my presentation today: what the artists were trying to do in their productions, *because* they are artists and *because* art is the final result of their reaction to the world. And it’s the reaction of their rebellion against culture. So maybe this is one answer for cultural rebellion. Art works, projects, or performances are the final outcome created by artists that help us to re-examine the time they witnessed and meditated.

Pi Li

To follow up on Yu Jin’s part on cultural rebellion in the 1970s and how the networks worked: we should really be careful about another kind of self-projection to the outer world. For example, during the 1960s and the ’70s, the Japanese Communist Party, the left-wing, projected themselves onto the revolution in China.

Also I will give another example as a feedback for Simon’s question about the animation in China. If we really want to go that far, animation in China during the Communist Party period is quite interesting because there was a lot of avant-garde art in Shanghai during the 1930s. After the liberation in 1949, they got jobs in the Shanghai Animation Film Factory, which had already undergone nationalization, and they did lots of quite avant-garde, experimental works, such as using ink to make animation and so on.

And then, during the 1970s, the Japanese film director Miyazaki Hayao, who admired this kind of achievement of Chinese animation, thought it would be good to show how these kinds of socialist productions were produced. So he went to China in the 1980s with the intent of using them for the post-production of his own animation films. But when he actually went to China, he was so disappointed because China at that time was in the period of marketing economy and so on, so people didn’t do that anymore. So Miyazaki was quite left-wing, and you can see how this kind of culture is projected onto other things. That’s another layer of our discussion I think.

Hayashi Michio

Going back to Prof. Lai’s question, “what kind of image can we have for the future,” I think, is an

interesting and difficult question. In my personal opinion and in the case of Japan, I described it as the “age of revolution” being displaced by the “age of identity politics.” So, to me, artists who were actively engaging in rebellious practices in Japan, or other countries too maybe, were not really trying to change society as a totality. They may have, in fact, been simply trying to create a space where they can live and sustain their activities, and by doing so, they were changing the fabric of society. That’s something I see in their practices. It’s not like they have a “totalist” vision of a society to aspire for; their practices were rather a resistance against the present social system that was really oppressive to their activities. So they felt the need to make fissures and cracks in society to create this small space where they could sustain themselves. I think that could be a very meaningful platform to connect with other platforms of other parts of the world.

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Lai Ying-ying

Also, museums can be forms of dominant authority for artists. I’d like to comment on the definition of the “museum” because eventually this project is going to be realized in a museum. Whether rebellion can be embraced or can be celebrated in a museum. The establishment of the art museum in Taiwan certainly provides an open forum for artists; it serves not only for the public but also for the contemporary artists to present and argue for their ideas. The development of art museums in Taiwan, as the dominant system, has been constantly challenged by artists. Most of the major art museums in Taiwan are funded by public sectors. Museums were highly regarded as temples housing treasures, but artists also believe that they provide an open stage for them. If the museum operation goes wrong, artists protest, claiming their rights and demands in front of the museum. In Taiwan, the museum’s functions are constantly challenged by the artists.

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Hayashi Michio

That’s how museums should be. Unfortunately we have to wrap up the discussion maybe in a couple of minutes. But if there is anyone in the observers’ seat who wants to ask a final question, please.

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Kataoka Mami

Just a quick question. I just wanted to hear from some of you what “1989” means to you. Because the term is ending at 1989 so from the Western sense it’s of course the end of the Cold War and the year of the “Magiciens de la Terre” exhibition. But for each of you or in your own countries, what does it mean?

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Hayashi Michio

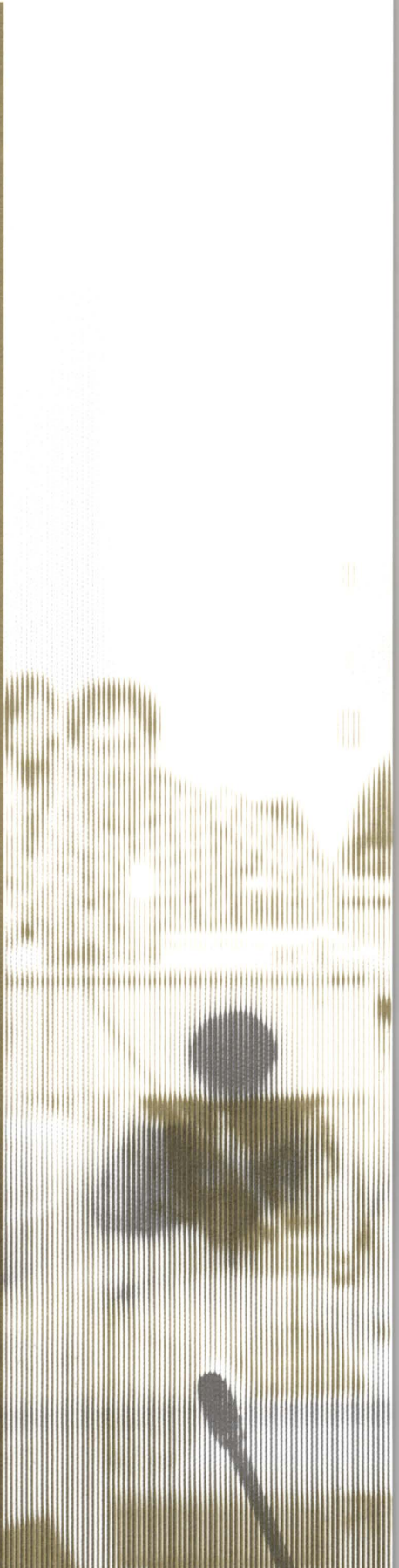
That is a loaded question which I don’t think we have enough time for. So maybe we can open the discussion tomorrow with it.

On that note we’re going to wrap up today’s session. Thank you to all the panelists and observers.

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Organizer

We’d also like to thank everyone for bearing with us for so long. We look forward to seeing some of you again tomorrow. Thank you.

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Discussion to Continue to Following Day



Discussion of Sessions I and II



History of Aesthetics of Theater

1971

11

1971

Cultural Rebellion in Asia 1960–1989

## Day 3

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### Session III Plenary Discussion

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Moderator  
Hayashi Michio

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Through discussions on the preceding presentations, the notion(s) of “cultural rebellion” in Asia and the prospect for a possible exhibition will be further examined.

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**Organizer**

Good morning. Welcome to the third day of this international seminar. We have a number of topics that came up in yesterday's presentations and discussion so we'd like to discuss them first. Carrying on from yesterday, the moderator will be Prof. Hayashi.

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**Hayashi Michio**

Good morning, everyone. I hope you all had a good evening and are well-rested. Kataoka-san posed a question last night for us to start today's session, but I'd like to say a few things before we go into that.

This morning we have a couple of hours to further discuss the issues that were raised yesterday. Toward the end, I'm hoping that we can exchange more concrete ideas about how to ultimately structure this into an exhibition format. Obviously, though, this kind of discussion will go into multiple directions, and yesterday I had a feeling that we spent too much time on abstract theoretical ideas. So today, we should also discuss factual problems and questions. In that regard, I really encourage you all to ask each other questions for this session; since we have heard each other's presentations and also have the papers, please feel free to raise them.

Having said that, I would like to begin with the question that was posed last night, the question about 1989: what is the meaning of the year "1989" to each of you, and each of our respective countries; what is the meaning of the end of the Cold War for each cultural, national, or regional context? Thinking about that, of course, may lead to other questions such as the impact of the Vietnam War and the relationship between communism and rebellious practices etc. Furthermore, it also necessarily raises the question of the periodization of this proposed exhibition plan: is "1960" a good starting point to think about all this? Should we include earlier decades, from the 1950s or not? That could be another question. But for now, let's start with the "1989" question.

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**The Year 1989 as a Threshold in the Asian Arts**

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**Prapon Kumjijim**

So I did a *little* homework; 1989 was a particularly optimistic time for Thailand. The end of the Cold War brought at least *political* optimism, as well as marketable opportunity. At that time General Chatchai Choonhavan became the first elected Prime Minister after 12 years of dictatorship, and, since the Cold War was over, he turned our neighboring enemies into a potential marketplace. Subsequently, Thailand saw a *rapid* rise in the economy, up to 13% between 1988 and when another coup took him down in 1991.

So 1989 was a particularly optimistic time; for example, the Vice President of the United States visited Thailand during that time. I would say, internationally, the only tarnish that later became quite a significant one was Thailand's relationship with Saudi Arabia. This is still fairly big news as to what exactly is the truth, because the blue diamond was stolen from a Saudi prince which was followed by the assassination of the Saudi police in Bangkok. So there's that kind of sensitive topic with the Middle East. The Thai workforce for the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, took the brunt of this incident; a huge workforce of Thai nationals was ejected from Saudi Arabia. And that sentiment kind of continued throughout the Middle Eastern region.

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**Hayashi Michio**

Is that incident, the stealing of this blue diamond, related to the 1989 end-of-the-Cold-War context? Or was this just a coincidence?

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**Prapon Kumjijim**

There're several theories, but if we base it on hard evidence, I think, it could possibly be just random. Although, if we tie it up to this potential of the Third World ideology, I think it has some significance because it eradicated certain potential good will, and the potential networking with the Middle East was heavily tarnished during that time. Those are my two main points on 1989.

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**Hayashi Michio**

In your presentation, Prof. Kumjijim, I think you mentioned that there was a rebellious movement in the 1970s which had a sympathetic attitude toward communism. How did those artists respond to





this political climate change of 1989 and the end of the Cold War?

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[Prapon Kumjijm](#)

Quite a few artists had left Thailand; quite a few cultural movers or influencers migrated to the West and took refuge during that time. So they were, to my understanding, beginning to return around the early 1990s, especially the performance art group, if I remember correctly.

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[Hayashi Michio](#)

So they migrated in order to avoid arrest?

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[Prapon Kumjijm](#)

That was the claim. Persecution is potentially worse than arrest, I think; that kind of systematic persecution. That's the fear, much more than the physical arrest itself. That idea of self-censorship is something that still continues today. Our censorship law is over 80 years old.

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[Hayashi Michio](#)

That law is still in effect?

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[Prapon Kumjijm](#)

Very much so. I guess the big problem right now is the *lèse-majesté* because it's a draconian law against the majesty. Unfortunately it can be used as a political mudslinging tool to generate hate crimes and hate speech. That works both ways; for those who are for and those who are against that law. So, it's still a continuing mess.

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[Hayashi Michio](#)

I see, thank you. Maybe we should move onto another speaker for the 1989 issue. Pi Li, I think 1989 was a big deal for China.

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[Pi Li](#)

Yes, 1989 is a very important year for China. First and foremost, the students' protest in Tiananmen Square. As I wrote in my paper, however, the 1989 students' protest was not just in that year; it extended from 1979, to '83 and '87, and finally to '89. Nevertheless 1989 was the important, critical time also because of the end of the Cold War, the closure of the Cold War system. So the government rather took more strict action and students were killed in Tiananmen Square on the night of June 4. So far, nobody has claimed responsibility, and no one has apologized. So that tragic memory has not been forgotten; every year even now, in Hong Kong or in Beijing, on June 4, there're still big events in remembrance of that incident. That's the one thing.

The second, again as I wrote in paper, was the "China/Avant-Garde" exhibition in China in February 1989. So, the exhibition was in February and the Tiananmen Square incident was in June. Lots of these kinds of accidents totally changed the arts; it really was kind of a turn toward the anti-human. Like we see later on, you have cynical realism and the political, they really doubted this kind of humanist sentiment.

Also, after 1989 the government took measures to rapidly reform the economy of China. So, now, the whole social issue had changed. So after 1989 and the end of the Cold War, what we call the "post-Cold War situation," these certain changes brought Chinese contemporary art to the attention of the international world; the "China/Avant-Garde" exhibition, I just mentioned, of 1989 or the inclusion of Chinese artists in the Venice Biennale in 1993, for instance. So the international society was very attentive to that.

This type of wide attention also changed art production in China, which soon followed with openings of foreign exhibitions and galleries and the entrance of overseas collectors. These were completely new situations and environments for the Chinese art community in the 1990s, and still has a huge impact today.

After 1989, the "Magiciens de la Terre" exhibition was also still very important because there were three Chinese artists exhibited in that show, Huang Yongping, Gu Dexing and Yang Jiechang who then met artists like Nam June Paik and those kind of artists. Later, Huang Yongping and Yang Jiechang decided to stay in France and information from abroad was channeled back. So after 1989, I would say, we saw the whole, new generation of globalization, the first international communication among the non-Western countries. I think that's pretty important for us actually.

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Adele Tan

Can I just add a small footnote because there is a kind of inadvertent repercussion, I suppose, of the Tiananmen Square incident. In 2009, the *Tank Man Tango*, a dance by the Australian artist, Deborah Kelly, was conducted at the Substation in Singapore which was incidentally founded by Kuo Pao Kun. Although it hasn't been proven, apparently, they went ahead with the *Tank Man Tango* event without permission, and, *because* of this, people have made the link that the Substation has since kind of lost its long-term license to operate without needing to submit scripts to the Censorship Board. So clearly there's something to be said about the memory or commemorating the memory of the event of Tiananmen in a small space like Singapore.

So, I think, there is some symbolic capital in the Tiananmen Square incident itself. Of course, our strongman, Lee Kuan Yew, has always supported the actions of Deng Xiaoping in sending the troops out to the Square. But in terms of Singapore, I don't think 1989 made such a huge impact as much as 1987, when they had the Operation Spectrum, a crackdown on a supposed Marxist conspiracy which were made out of mostly people associated with the Catholic Church. So there's a sense of yoking church and revolution together.

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Hayashi Michio

I think one of the missions of this project is to somehow find a way to sustain the historical memories and maintain the resistance against historical amnesia. What happened in Japan really, as I said in discussing DISCOVER JAPAN, was that what should be discovered was, in fact, concealed by the new "discovery" of Japan. Against this general tendency for collective amnesia, we should find a way to sustain these meaningful memories for the present.

Going back to you, Pi Li, your talk this time is obviously about the 1960s and '70s; it is before 1989. On the other hand, Suzuki-san, you set up 1989 as the end of this era or climate of cultural rebellion. So, is it correct to say that you're seeing a continuity rather than discontinuity between the 1960s, '70s, '80s and after 1989?

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Suzuki Katsuo

Yes, that's right.

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Pi Li

That is also on the beginning period of my topic. In the previous discourse, many people saw groups such as the Stars Group as kind of the first rebellion and the beginning of contemporary art. However, in my recent study of the No Name Group, we can already see such clear acts of resistance there in 1974. Actually the whole group had very strong, clear agendas of what they wanted to do. That's one thing.

In the meantime, though, as I continued my research, I needed to find out where their

information and resources came from, and also how they came to learn these things, because most of the catalogues had already been burned.

So, I found that they had some connections with Japanese art. Since they couldn't go to school, they attended night schools whose founders are two female artists who studied in Japan in the 1930s.

Another thing is, I also did some research in Shanghai on animation film. So during the 1930s in China, there was the very strong movement called the Storm Society (決瀾社) which was the first modern art movement inspired by Cubism.

So where did these artists go? Some of them escaped to Taiwan, like Li Zhongsheng and some stayed in China. Despite the fact that they didn't have much public influence, they still had their students so they could transmit this kind of information. In the '70s, even in Shanghai, there were still some underground activities which were quite strong, especially ink and abstraction. Also artists such as Lin Fengmian studied in France, and Guan Liang studied in Japan. So this kind of modernism can be considered a continuation from that.

So these underground activities suddenly come into being at the end of the 1970s and become modernist. So I think there's still some connection between the 1930s modernism and the 1970s underground arts. That's the second.

The third thing I'd like to add, is that even *within* this kind of government and commission works, there were still exceptions. For example, the very famous ink painter, Shi Lu was put in jail during the whole Cultural Revolution. We saw some very radical practices, similar to Expressionism, in how he painted with ink in the late 1950s. So I just feel that during the 1960s and '70s, there were still many things happening in China.

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Hayashi Michio

This information network—how people became aware of the other possibilities—is a very, very important question, just as Ms. Park mentioned about the Informel movement and all those things. Japanese and Korean artists actually shared the same information, reacted and used those different sources.

But what is really ironic is that this information network is established and based on the tragic memory of colonialism. Japan invaded and occupied China and Korea, and this kind of cultural network was created after the political domination. That's really an ironic thing that we need to be aware of in planning this exhibition.

Speaking of 1989, I think Pi Li's comments are very interesting, and I am curious, Prof. Lai, what happened in Taiwan in relation to China?

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Lai Ying-ying

I think it's very important to indicate a certain period that we are going to discuss, but when we talk about a specific year, sometimes it's also very dangerous since we are trying to cover a large region, from Southeast to Northeast Asia. So instead of pinning down a particular year of political or cultural importance, I would like to suggest having different decades—from the 1960s to the '80s, for instance. The reason is that the most crucial year for Taiwan, first, of course, is 1949 when the KMT (Kuomintang, National People's Party) government moved over to Taiwan. That was also the year when they announced the martial law. The whole operation system changed suddenly from the colonized Taiwan to the KMT-controlled Taiwan. There was censorship, political control, and imprisonment of many Taiwanese and some newly immigrant Chinese from Mainland China. Many people were killed and imprisoned for years in the name of Communism. We call the period from the late 1940s to '60s as the time of "White Terrorism." Then in 1987, the KMT government lifted the martial law, which again marked a critical year. So for the Taiwanese situation, it seems that 1987 is more important politically than the year 1989.

Culturally, however, the 1980s actually is the decade in which Taiwan somehow started to enjoy some form of democracy or economic prosperity. Lots of students, who had studied abroad, actually returned to Taiwan in the 1980s and started to teach in universities or work for art institutions. I personally went back to Taiwan in 1984, and started working for the first modern art museum in Taiwan.

So that means the 1980s is really a time when international communication and cultural exchanges flourished. The Council of Cultural Affairs was set up in 1981 too, advocating the government's engagement in the arts and cultures. So for Taiwan, culturally, 1989 doesn't really ring a bell. For Taiwan, I would rather say, 1987 or even 1980s was significant. So instead of having a specific year, maybe trying to cover decades can be a better idea.

[Hayashi Michio](#)

I see. There is no connection between the 1987 crackdown of the communist conspiracy in Singapore and Taiwan, is there?

[Adele Tan](#)



[Adele Tan](#)

No. I completely agree with that sense of the 1980s being a kind of new beginning of sorts. I think in Singapore too, there was more active interest in arts policy, the National Arts Council, and Kuo Pao Kun got his cultural medallion in 1989. There was this sense of “how to redo theater.” For Kuo Pao Kun, he was really interested in finding a new means of making theater or making performance that was attuned to the ground situation in Singapore, the multi-linguistic realities of Singapore. So his plays ended up not having the same kind of didactic, social realist mode. Instead, he was looking at techniques and the methodology of writing these different tongues into the structure of playmaking. So that guided a lot of reflection of what it is to be in Singapore without just doing the same mimetic representational style.

[Hayashi Michio](#)

Going back to Taiwan, Prof. Lai, I’m curious that you mentioned in your presentation the kind of avant-garde artists who were associated with magazines, like *Theater* and *Echo*. What happened to those people in the 1980s?

[Lai Ying-ying](#)

The group first started with a small number of people who were from different fields such as art, design, photography, literature, and experimental films. The *Theater* magazine was discontinued in 1968 because some members went abroad to pursue further study or better career opportunities. From the 1970s, many of them committed themselves to the movie industry, and became directors, producers, photographers etc.

Huang Hua-cheng, for instance, was invited and moved to Hong Kong and worked for the very famous Shaw Brothers for a couple of years. However, he returned to Taiwan to venture into the advertising business. So in a way, the artists might have been trained as artists, but they crossed disciplines into other fields of profession, such as movie, TV programs, graphic design, advertisement, etc. They expanded their territory, and that is why I use the term “Complex art” to try to embrace the versatile artists working in various different fields. It’s not only painting or sculpture, but it’s really the belief and attitude in art that eventually started a cultural revolution in a developing society from the 1960s.

[Hayashi Michio](#)

So did these artists go abroad to look for other opportunities because of the situation in Taiwan? Was it really hard for them to stay in Taiwan, and is that why they left?

[Lai Ying-ying](#)



[Lai Ying-ying](#)

It was very much the situation for the Taiwanese after World War II. As you can see, there was the martial law and then we had tragic incidents like the 228 massacre and White Terrorism. So people were really terrified and living under the shadow of the authority; under the controlling power and system of the government.

So regardless of their background, whether from China or Taiwan, if they had the slightest opportunity to go abroad, they did. It was not until the late 1970s and ’80s, after the people survived from the sad incidents, that the society regained its energy and opened up again. With the open atmosphere of the society and the booming economy, many artists returned to Taiwan recognizing a better possibility for careers from the 1980s. Also, the economic prosperity meant that the art market also started to flourish, so many artists were invited to come back to Taiwan for exhibitions.

[Hayashi Michio](#)

I briefly asked Pi Li informally about that just yesterday. So there was no interaction between Chinese and Taiwanese artists through *Theater* and *Echo* and other connections?

[Pi Li](#)

There were some. The first connection, I think, would be in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For example, the very famous Chinese writers Hualing Nieh Engle ran this kind of writing campus in Ohio University, in the United States. The Chinese artist, Ai Qing, the father of Ai Weiwei, was also

there. He met his classmates or friends, like Xiao Qing and Liu Kuosung there.

Later, Xiao Qing and Liu Kuosung visited China and brought back all kinds of information about contemporary and modern ink. So that's the first contact, in 1979 to 1981. Also to add as an extension, Wu Guanzhong met Zhao Wuji in Paris on his way to his show in London in 1979. So Wu Guanzhong, Zhao Wuji, and Zhu Dequn were all classmates in Hangzhou. I think that from 1987 to 1993 is kind of the important period in relation to 1989.

There are other series of events which are quite important, too. For Korea, Roh Taewoo won the first presidential election in 1987; Ronald Reagan gave his speech in front of the Berlin Wall, asking Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall;" then in 1988, in Poland, the workers union gained power. So I think there are a series of important events from 1987, 1992, and also 1993.

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Park Hyesung



Park Hyesung

As Pi Li said, yes, the first presidential election was conducted. But he still came from the army. And, as you know, we had the Seoul Olympics in 1988, and after that, just as Japan experienced economic prosperity after the Tokyo Olympics, Korea had a similar situation. Despite this economic growth, politically it was still very restricted and was not so democratic; there were so many demonstrations and rallies, for which many were punished. In fact, our new museum, the Seoul gallery of the present-day National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, is built on the spot where the information center was during the dictators' period, which actually was initially a hospital during the Japanese occupation. So it has experienced the long history of colonization, decolonization, post-colonization etc. over the years.

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Hayashi Michio

Do you acknowledge that in your building? Is there some kind of explanation about the history of the building?

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Park Hyesung



Hayashi Michio

Yes. So I think it is very meaningful that we have this kind of museum on the political site. In relation to culture, the story is a little different. Minjung art, the art for the public or for the working class, had taken root since the late 1970s and it was booming during the 1980s.

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Choi Eunju

Allow me to explain, because I've experienced all kinds of situations in Korean contemporary art, including Minjung art. Minjung art or "People's art" in Korea occurred in the late 1970s, and the movement was constructed by several groups all of which made announcements about their art to the public. In 1995, our museum organized a very special exhibition titled, "15 Years of Minjung Art" held at the Gwacheon gallery. After the exhibition, many people and artists told me, "People's art in Korea is diminishing after the exhibition." That means, the artists lost their logic and purpose for the public, for the movement, and for the ideological concepts. So, after the exhibition, they took up other logics, such as environmental movement, feminism, ecological movement and so on. I think that is a very important aspect to understand Korean People's art.

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Hayashi Michio

So in the Korean context, therefore, unlike the Chinese context, what I'm sensing is a kind of disjunction, maybe, from the 1960s, '70s to the '80s; there is kind of a break between the end of the 1970s and the '80s. As I understood it, Minjung art was critical of the previous generations of rebellious artists. So what is the connection between them? Is my understanding correct? I'm pretty sure Minjung artists were critical about so-called "monochrome painters" in the 1960s and '70s. But what was their relationship to the AG group and these new conceptual and performance-oriented artists?

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Park Hyesung

This is just *my* opinion, not a Korean artists' opinion. I agree with Pi Li's view, because he wanted to focus on the early movement of the 1970s, not the Stars Group. I am in the similar position. Not all Minjung artists criticized the AG group because Minjung artists wanted to use media which were familiar to the public. So they chose traditional woodcut print. I think, maybe, they were influenced by the Russian woodcut movement, as I recall them having a style that was similar to Socialist Realism. But, in fact, they are not really realists in their point of views or styles. Their attitudes, I think, made it realism.

So their weak point is that communication could take place only with works that used media

which were easy for the public to understand which, in turn, had the revolutionary possibility for social change. But artists of the 1960s and '70s, I think, chose different media—even though the public could not understand their intention or as easily at that time—in the hopes of opening their closed eyes. As time passed, however, some Minjung artists and critics recognized that aspect. The early movement of 1960s and '70s has something special: the potential to change social and aesthetic attitudes.

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[Choi Eunju](#)

So I think Minjung art in Korea in the 1980s presented a certain socio-political revolution especially if we think about it in terms of the Gwangju crisis and military dictatorship. Previously, some of the Korean Minjung art artists worked on figuration, whether it be human figures, landscape or even hyperrealism. Although I initially thought that figuration could not capture the meaning of the public or of the movement, the Gwangju crisis and military dictatorship stimulated artists who had potential attitude about the public.

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[Hayashi Michio](#)

With all these kinds of movements that we are discussing today, it really is a shame that we don't have a representative from Indonesia. Could Yu Jin, Simon or Patrick possibly fill us in a little on the Indonesian situation?

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[Patrick Flores](#)

I think what was important in Yogyakarta was the opening of the Cemeti Gallery in 1988. I think it is 1988, if I'm not mistaken. So I think Cemeti was an important platform for Indonesian contemporary art. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Ushiroshōji stated in one of his recollections that it was his visit to Cemeti that changed his outlook of Asian contemporary art. It was like a profound moment for Mr. Ushiroshōji when he visited Yogyakarta at that time.

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[Hayashi Michio](#)

Could you explain a little more about Cemeti?

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[Patrick Flores](#)

Cemeti is an artist-initiated space founded by a couple, Nindityo Adipurnomo, an Indonesian artist, and Mella Jaarsma, a Dutch artist who has lived in Indonesia for quite a while. It's like an alternative art space and one of the pioneers in the region which was founded in 1988. It released a catalogue, like a retrospective, of all of its efforts after 10 years. In 1998, they published a book on Cemeti after 10 years of its activities. So the establishment of Cemeti is an important moment, I think, if 1989 is the year to be discussed.

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[Yu Jin Seng](#)

To add, I think Cemeti was a site of resistance in Indonesia, in Yogyakarta. One of the most important exhibitions was "Slot in the Box," which took up the issue about Indonesian politics; Indonesia at that time had three political parties that you could vote for, but no matter which party you chose, it didn't make a difference on the president-elect because all the three parties had, ultimately, already decided on a particular president. So there was a performance by FX Harsono that really brought all these issues to the front where he created a work with three slots for you to place your vote, but it all goes into one box in the end. He did this performance during the week of the Indonesian election where there are several days in which one cannot engage in any political activities; so it is like a cooling-off period. However, he did this performance during that particular cooling-off week, which was, I think, a really powerful political gesture of resistance.

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[Hayashi Michio](#)

So there was a danger of him being arrested?

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[Yu Jin Seng](#)

Absolutely, he could have been.

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[Hayashi Michio](#)

Ushiroshōji-san, Patrick had mentioned you earlier, so if you'd like to share a little about your experiences, please.

[Ushiroshōji Masahiro](#)

I think that Prof. Flores is talking about the time I worked with the Japan Foundation ASEAN Culture Center and Fukuoka Art Museum for the “New Art from Southeast Asia 1992” exhibition. Japanese art critics and curators traveled to conduct research between 1991 and 1992 for this exhibition. That was when we visited Cemeti. I felt that their connections and activities really created a major opportunity for us to be able to identify the new directions and developments, which were happening at that time in Indonesia and also across all of Southeast Asia. And I wrote about that in the Cemeti’s 10th anniversary catalogue. So to be specific, it wasn’t 1988 to 1989 that I visited the Cemeti, but rather a little bit later.

[Hayashi Michio](#)

Thank you. So continuing on the 1989 end of the Cold War issue, who hasn’t spoken? Patrick?

[Patrick Flores](#)

In the Philippines it’s not exactly the year 1989, but there were early years of a post-authoritarian scene, after Marcos left in 1986. So it might be important to point that out; that the so-called People Power Revolution in the Philippines preceded or antedated the events, I think, in Poland or Eastern Europe that led up to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. It’s like the Velvet Revolution, I think, and the Solidarity Movement in Poland came after 1986, if I’m not mistaken. So it all started in 1986.

At the same time, though, after 1986 and by 1989, we also felt that the promise of 1986 was slowly being betrayed. We had faith in the democratic space that was opened up after the fall of Marcos, but what actually happened was that the old oligarchy, which Marcos wanted to suppress, returned to power through the new president who belonged to that old oligarchy that opposed Marcos.

The communist leaders were also released after 1986 and then there was a brief period of this euphoria for democracy. But that space became increasingly limited in the years to come. I think it was around this time that Corazon Aquino, the successor of Marcos, declared an all-out war against all insurgents. So there was this abrupt shift from the democratic space to an all-out war, and she encouraged paramilitary groups like local militias in the countryside. So it deteriorated. She was also besieged by all sorts of coups; coup d’état was also very prevalent at this time in the history of the country.

In terms of the art scene, however, there was an effort to decentralize cultural policy, which, during the Marcos period, was concentrated in Imelda Marcos’s Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP). So CCP was remodeled or reprogrammed to become less elitist creating outreach projects, more like people-oriented efforts in keeping with the promise of the People Power.

The Metropolitan Museum of Manila, which was established to organize international exhibitions, changed its focus and had a slogan, “Art for all.” So it became very populist; from the modernism of Arturo Luz of the 1970s, it shifted to a more populist trend—with a bilingual education program and more accessible exhibitions because it was largely focused on modern art during the Marcos period.

It was also during this time that a new binarism tended to characterize the art scene: there was a strong conceptualist movement inspired by Roberto Chabet on the one hand, and the continuation of Social Realism from the 1970s on the other. So there was this divide, and it seemed like contemporary art was governed by this divide; either you were a conceptualist or you were carrying on with the social realist aesthetic. So it was very strong binarism until maybe the mid-1990s.

So this was a legacy of the 1970s that persisted through the 1980s. But 1989 was a post-authoritarian scene, which meant there was euphoria on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a feeling of betrayal.

[Hayashi Michio](#)

In this post-1986 situation, you mentioned a kind of dispersal of political powers, cultural centers, and also the emergence of local militia and activities. I’m not really familiar with the Filipino political situation but if I may ask, were the local militia groups, in any way, connected to the extremist leftist ideology or were they more right-wing?

[Patrick Flores](#)

No, they were against the left. They were anti-communists that the government encouraged as part of a low-intensity conflict program of the CIA. So they were like paramilitary and were equipped with arms.

[Hayashi Michio](#)

So they're really like the militia group in the United States.

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[Patrick Flores](#)

Yes, they were. They were also overly religious; almost like the fundamentalists. So, they had strange rituals, parading heads—they beheaded some of the victims and they would parade the decapitated heads around town or scoop out the brain. So there were some really extremist groups in the countryside. And there is a film that documented that: Lino Broka's *Orapronobis*, I think, in 1988 or 1989. It talked about the failure of the People Power; the afterlife of the People Power, which was a failure.

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[Hayashi Michio](#)

That's the title of the documentary film?

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[Patrick Flores](#)

Yes, *Orapronobis*. It is Latin for "pray for us." It was by a social realist filmmaker who was very influential in the 1970s.

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[Hayashi Michio](#)

I see. What about the Vietnam War? Was the anti-Vietnam War movement active in the Philippines during the 1960s or '70s?

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[Patrick Flores](#)

I think it was part of the general youth protest movement. Or should I say, it radicalized the youth sector. And the youth sector became the nucleus of the leftist movement, and later the Communist Party and the National Democratic Front.

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[Hayashi Michio](#)

I ask this because in Japan there are so many radical art practitioners who are more or less connected to the new leftist ideologies and they were really critical of the Vietnam War and the American intervention into Vietnam etc. So I wondered what the situation was in the Philippines.

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[Patrick Flores](#)

I think Lyndon Johnson—was it? When he visited Manila, he was met with the youth protesters with the slogan, "Lyndon Johnson, how many children did you kill today?" So the youth movement was very strong and developed into a communist party.

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[Hayashi Michio](#)

Thi, could you maybe follow-up on that? Including the question about 1989.

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[Nguyen Trinh Thi](#)

Sure. For Vietnam, really, the destiny of the country since the 1950s has always been so tied up with the up-and-down of the Cold War. So, obviously when the Cold War ended in the late 1980s, this also completely changed everything in Vietnam. It also marked the beginning of opening Vietnam to the world.

For three decades [prior to 1989], Vietnam was really in isolation and had relationships with only Eastern Europe or the Socialist Bloc. As I discussed yesterday about the movements in the 1950s and onwards, these artists had to work underground without ever being recognized, being able to publish or exhibit anything. So in the late 1980s, finally after three decades, they were brought back into their respective artists', writers', and musicians' associations and started to be able to publish works. Moreover, from the late 1980s there started to be solo exhibitions for the first time, because before that, in the past decades, there were never solo exhibitions. They were always state-sponsored or collective group exhibitions because in a socialist country you're not supposed to have solo exhibitions.

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[Yu Jin Seng](#)

Also Bui Xuan Phai's solo exhibition at the Salon Natasha. Did it start in 1983?



[Patrick Flores](#)



[Yu Jin Seng](#)



[Nguyen Trinh Thi](#)

No, I thought it was later.

[Yu Jin Seng](#)

He had his first solo show in the 1980s, didn't he?

[Nguyen Trinh Thi](#)

Yes, that was the very first one. He was also a painter from this movement.

[Hayashi Michio](#)

One second. Natasha is...?

[Nguyen Trinh Thi](#)

Natasha Kraevskaia is the wife of Vu Dan Tan, one of the artists I mentioned yesterday. He was a little bit younger than the Nhan Van-Giai Pham generation but he was also one of the outsiders. So he never participated in official network.

Also, 1989 is a really significant year because at this point Vietnam was under increasing pressure from the West to pull out from Cambodia after 10 years. So in 1979, you could say that Vietnam liberalized Cambodia or from the Khmer Rouge. At first, maybe it was a good thing because the Vietnamese troops helped Cambodia to get rid of the Khmer Rouge, but the troops stayed making it like an occupying force. And they stayed until 1989; Vietnam finally had to pull out the troops in exchange of establishing diplomatic relationships with the West. So that is a very important year; it really opened up the relationship for Vietnam to the world.

From then on, Vietnam started to have diplomatic relations again with the United States and different countries started to establish embassies and set up ASEAN as well. So it was like an entirely new era. Although, it was also a strange situation because despite the fact that the government already opened up and set up this kind of relaxed policy to many artists in the last few years since 1987, because of events like the Tiananmen Square incident, in 1989 they stopped and revised the policies saying, "okay, maybe we have to be more careful here." So it kind of tighten up a little bit.

Economically it really became open to other countries and established relationships, but culturally the policies always fluctuated from open to closed, relaxed to tightened etc. It has been like that until today.

[Hayashi Michio](#)

So Vietnamese artists began to interact with artists of other countries after 1989?

[Nguyen Trinh Thi](#)

Yes. I think 1991 was the first international exhibition outside of Vietnam, in Hong Kong.

[Hayashi Michio](#)

On Vietnamese art?

[Nguyen Trinh Thi](#)

Yes, that is the first one. So they showed different works from different generations, including Bui Xuan Phai and Nguyen Tu Nghiem from the Nhan Van-Giai Pham period, also Vu Dan Tan from a later period, and there is a generation called American-Vietnam War generation. So all kinds of different representatives.

[Adele Tan](#)

I have a quick question for Thi. Because of Vietnam's participation or intervention in Cambodia with the Khmer Rouge, China subsequently attacked Vietnam in order to punish its involvement which, I think, led to a Sino-Vietnamese split. So were there any repercussions on the cultural front or artistic front?

[Nguyen Trinh Thi](#)

With China? Yes, Vietnam has a very special relationship with China; a kind of love-hate relationship. During the Cold War too, because Vietnam was like a puppet, in a way, that had to dance in between Russia and China. So sometimes Vietnam was very close to China and then sometimes it



[Nguyen Trinh Thi](#)

was opposite. If Vietnam became closer to the Soviet Union, then China would really hate that.

So the 1979 situation was really like a triad between China, Vietnam, and Cambodia. So China actually supported the Khmer Rouge to position herself against Vietnam. In fact, they came to the south of Vietnam with troops and helped Cambodia to reclaim their land back from southern Vietnam. Vietnam, then, retaliated by extraditing a lot of Chinese from Chinatown in Saigon and deported them back to China, despite the fact that they had already lived there for generations.

To continue, then the Chinese government started a border war with Vietnam which ended up being quite a large war. It was hidden from the public, they didn't say anything about it, but now information started to come out and it was revealed that many people died during that war. I don't know how many, but a lot.

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Adele Tan

I'm interested in the Khmer Rouge period too, because it seems like the complicity of ASEAN supporting and propping up, by actions or non-actions, the Khmer Rouge was because it was afraid of the communist scourge from Vietnam. So there were these trading blocs. So inadvertently ASEAN stood by China in order to stave off Vietnam.

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Hayashi Michio

The question of ASEAN's position and the issue of religion or the metaphysical is something I also wanted to ask. But maybe we could go into that later if we have time.

Yu Jin and Simon haven't shared their ideas on 1989. So let's take a break after that. Yu Jin, if you please.

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Yu Jin Seng

Let me talk briefly about Indonesia first since we don't have an Indonesian representative here. In Indonesia in the 1980s, I think what would be interesting is to shift a little from theater and take a look at the domain of literature. There was a big kind of discussion about *sastra kontekstual* in Bahasa Indonesia; in English it's called "contextual literature" which was very dominant at the time. It came out in the 1980s by Arief Budiman. So there was discussion about contextual literature as a *re-politicization* of literature. Because in the 1970s there was a *de-politicization* of art, literature, culture and so on in Indonesia under the new order, under Suharto.

So in the 1980s, people like Arief Budiman moved away from the realm of literature to talk about *contextual* literature as a way to return literature to the social level, to be socially engaged, to talk about "context," be it social, political contexts. And there was this shift from the 1970s whereby literature was very much about formalist experimentation; so they experimented with sound and other very formalist aspects of literature. So the 1980s was a resistance against that through *sastra kontekstual* in Indonesia, which is in a way an interesting entry point to talk about all domains of cultural production in Indonesia, including artistic production as well; we see the formation of Cemeti which we talked about earlier, too. So there was a desire for *re-politicization* or the desire to be more socially engaged in the 1980s.

Regarding Singapore, I think what is important is also the establishment of the Artists Village in 1988. And one of the important performances by Tang Da Wu actually was at the Lorong Gambas space which was a farm that they transformed into an artist's space. He actually responded to the Tiananmen Square incident, which I believe was probably the first ever response to the incident by a Singaporean. He performed using a wheelbarrow to symbolize the tank, which ultimately ran over him and he was crushed under it. If I remember correctly, he did that performance in 1990 at the Artists Village in Singapore.

So the establishment of the Artists Village in 1988 kind of opened up alternative practices in Singapore. So that was really significant because then it pushed practices towards the performative, the installative, to deal with socio-political issues as well in Singapore. So I think 1988 was really a significant year, even when we look at Cemeti also in 1988.

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Hayashi Michio

Thank you. Simon?

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Simon Soon

The only thing I could perhaps flag about Malaysia is that during the 1980s there was this sort of Islamic movement following the 1979 Iran Revolution. However, I must admit, when you spurred us to think about 1989, I felt I really don't know that particular year very well. I was perhaps a little