

From Tradition to Modernity

In his published lecture, *Road to Nowhere*, the preeminent historian of modern Southeast Asian art T.K.Sabapathy recalls his early encounters with standard textbooks on Southeast Asian art and culture, finding that most have focused squarely on traditional art and architecture.⁰¹ He observes, of Philip Rawson's classic *The Art of Southeast Asia* (1967), that modern art is given a mere two paragraphs of reflection at the close of the book with mention of only one modern artist, the revered Indonesian painter Affandi.⁰² Besides this exceedingly brief textual reference to modern art of the region is the inclusion of only one modern art reproduction on the very last page, referencing Affandi himself: a "Self-portrait by Affandi" from 1947, left without further context or explanation except for the caption text, which declares Affandi to be "modern Indonesia's best-known painter." This is the only hint of the wider array of artistic modernities in Southeast Asia, which have their genesis as far back as the late 19th century (notably, despite being revised and republished in the 1990s, Rawson's history of art remains unchanged and thoroughly outdated in this respect). Perhaps, as Sabapathy implies, this condition (not confined to Rawson) stems from the inability to articulate the connections between the traditional and the modern but also from unease at the challenge of coming to terms with modern art emerging from Southeast Asian contexts which overlap and intersect with artistic forms of Euro-American colonial inheritance—art which demands a questioning of notions of authenticity and encourages visions of multiple modernities and worlds of art-making with shared influences and connectivities, yet also marked by Southeast Asian difference.

With the vital emergence of contemporary Southeast Asian art on the international landscape at the close of the 20th century, two long-standing impasses are finally surmounted: first, that locales such as Southeast Asia, once imagined as peripheral to the project of modernity and thus perpetually and exclusively marked by supposedly unchanging practices of tradition, are finally recognized as significant contexts of modern and contemporary art production; and, second, recognition that culturally cognate, and similar but different, processes and practices of modernization, occurring in the West and elsewhere, activate different manifestations of modern and contemporary art. By this reckoning, the notion of "tradition" can no longer be regarded simply as antithetical to modernity but must be seen, rather, as a constitutive part of what forges such modernity. In this vein, "contemporary art" must acknowledge the plural and manifold artistic practices of people the world over and recognize that the "traditional" may exist contiguously and even find presence in contemporary art and life.⁰³ Thus, contemporary Southeast Asian art

offers the potential for pushing the parameters of contemporary art more generally (the means by which we define it, including its modes, media, styles and conditions of reception, among other formalist and affective considerations of aesthetics) so as to encompass those kinds of living "folk" or "traditional" art that are less readily translatable into pre-existing frames of "internationalist" avant-garde art practices with their Euro-American inheritances and biases. As the Philippine art historian Alice Guillermo has observed, the prevailing internationalism of the 1990s often "privileged forms and styles deriving from the West and marginalized the vital arts of the region by sustaining the academic distinction between 'fine arts' and 'applied' or 'folk arts,' thereby making 'fine arts' an elite and exclusive preserve set apart from the arts of the people."⁰⁴ Moreover, as Sanento Yuliman observed in theorizing modern art development in Indonesia, "avant-garde" tendencies might also be seen to coexist alongside the traditional, revealing a different set of discourses for modernist development within Southeast Asia. As Jim Supangkat also suggests,

— Indonesia's modernist discourse did not include the rejection of tradition.... In Indonesia, modernism developed without tension alongside many other kinds of art that remained within a traditional framework.⁰⁵

The belated acknowledgement of Asia's "living" artistic cultures occurs after a largely exclusive, Orientalist interest in premodern forms of Asian art such as Buddhist and Hindu stone carvings from Japan and Indonesia, traditional wooden masks and puppets from Malaya, Chinese ink woodcuts and calligraphic paintings, embroidered textiles of South and Southeast Asia, and ukiyo-e prints from the Edo and Meiji periods of Japan. Through the historical prevalence of these representations, "Asian art" has become anchored to a traditional past that continues to govern popular notions about "authentic" Asian cultures. In particular, Asia comes to signify the "primitive," the "barbaric," the "spiritual," the "timeless," and/or the "traditional." By contrast, artistic movements of early modernity in the West regularly appropriated art styles and forms from Asian and other cultures⁰⁶—culminating in Western modern art styles such as Chinoiserie and Japonisme, and in art influenced by Japanese traditions of ukiyo-e, for instance. However, if the West acknowledged its ultimate sources for these as foreign, it concurrently—and problematically—claimed exclusive originality and authorship in the subsequent application of these foreign influences in generating artistic modernity: that is, in creating and advancing the new field of *modern art*.

As the art historian Geeta Kapur remarked of the situation in tracing modern art currents for India, "Non-Western nations, though struggling with the

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T.K. Sabapathy, *Road to Nowhere: The Quick Rise and the Long Fall of Art History in Singapore* (Singapore: Art Gallery at the National Institute of Education, 2010), 1–2. See also T.K. Sabapathy, "Continuity: The Shapes of Time," in *4th ASEAN Art Exhibition of Painting and Photography: Current Approaches in the Art of the ASEAN Region*, ed. Organising Committee ASEAN (Singapore: ASEAN 1985), n.p.

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For more on Affandi, see the essays in Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, *Modern Artists I: Affandi*, exh. cat. (Fukuoka: Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, 1999).

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Nicholas Thomas has made compelling arguments for renewed definitions of "contemporary art" against the contemporary Pacific art context. See Thomas, "Contemporary Art and the Limits of Globalisation," in *The Second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, ed. Queensland Art Gallery, exh. cat. (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 1996), 17–18; and Thomas, "Our History is Written in Our Mats: Reflections on Contemporary Art, Globalisation and History," in *The 5th Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, ed. Lynne Seear and Suhanya Raffel, exh. cat. (South Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2006), 24–31.

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Alice G. Guillermo, "The Importance of Local Cultural Influences in 'Southern' Contemporary Art and Their Contribution to International Contemporary Art Development," in *Seminar Proceedings: "Unity in Diversity in International Art," Jakarta, April 29–30, 1995* (Jakarta: 1995), 39. The "Unity in Diversity in International Art" seminar was held in conjunction with "The Contemporary Art of the Non-Aligned Countries Exhibition," Jakarta, April 28–June 30, 1995.

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Jim Supangkat, "Multiculturalism/ Multimodernism," in Apinan Poshyananda et al., *Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions*, exh. cat. (New York: Asia Society Galleries & Sydney: Fine Arts Press, 1996), 74. Regarding localized theories of modern art for Indonesia, see also the writings of the late Sanento Yuliman, collected in *Dua Seni Rupa: Sepilihan Tulisan Sanento Yuliman*, ed. Asikin Hasan (Jakarta: Yayasan Kalam, 2001). Counter to the story of Western art history, Yuliman theorizes Indonesian modern art development as a nonlinear narrative, entangled in multiple cultural systems, and therefore also characterized by diverse material culture.

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Outside Asia, other well-known examples are the influence of African arts (beginning with Cubism); and the flat technique of those such as Gauguin and Matisse deriving from Asia-Pacific aesthetic traditions.

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Geeta Kapur, "Contemporary Cultural Practice: Some Polemical Categories," in *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Society*, ed. Rasheed Araeen, Sean Cubitt and Ziauddin Sardar (London & New York: Continuum, 2002), 19.

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On the subject/histories of modern Asian and especially Southeast Asian art, see: *Modernity and Beyond: Themes in Southeast Asian Art*, ed. T.K. Sabapathy, exh. cat. (Singapore: Singapore Art Museum, 1996); John Clark, *Modern Asian Art* (Sydney: Craftsman House G+B Arts International, 1998); Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2000); Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992); Alice G. Guillermo, "The History of Modern Art in the Philippines," in *Asian Modernism: Diverse Development in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand*, ed. Furuichi Yasuko and Nakamoto Kazumi, exh. cat. (Tokyo: Japan Foundation Asia Center, 1995), 224–231; Redza Piyadasa, "Modernist and Post-Modernist Developments in Malaysian Art in the Post-Independence Period," in *Modernity in Asian Art*, ed. John Clark (Sydney: Wild Peony, 1993), 169–181; Piyadasa, "Modern Malaysian Art, 1945–1991: A Historical Overview," in *Tradition and Change: Contemporary Art of Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Caroline Turner (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993), 58–71; T.K. Sabapathy and Redza Piyadasa, *Modern Artists of Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Education Malaysia, 1983); Kwok Kian Chow, *Channels & Confluences: A History of Singapore Art* (Singapore: Singapore Art Museum, 1996); the collected writings of Sanento Yuliman in *Dua Seni Rupa* (Jakarta, 2001); Jim Supangkat, "The Emergence of Indonesian Modernism and its Background," in *Asian Modernism: Diverse Development in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand*, 204–13; Jim Supangkat, *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond*, exh. cat. (Jakarta: Indonesia Fine Arts Foundation, 1997); Astri Wright, *Soul, Spirit, and Mountain: Preoccupations of Contemporary Indonesian Painters* (Kuala Lumpur & New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Claire Holt's groundbreaking book *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967) is an important precedent to the aforementioned modern Indonesian art scholarship, recognizing the emergence of modern art practices in a changing Indonesian society, as is Kusnadi's study of the development of "fine art" in Indonesia, *Seni Rupa Indonesia dan Pembinaannya* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1978). See also various essays in Turner, *Tradition and Change*.

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See John Clark, "Open and Closed Discourses of Modernity in Asian Art," in Clark, *Modernity in Asian Art*, 1–17.

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Sabapathy, *Road to Nowhere*.

processes of modernization, are excluded from claiming modernism. Or they are seen as incidental to it.⁰⁷ In seeking to redress this imbalance, in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, key historians of modern Asian art forged new, vital platforms and frameworks for recognizing Asia's modern art histories. They dedicated their work to correcting anachronistic perceptions of Asian art and asserting the unique and manifold developments of modernity and modernism across the Asian region.⁰⁸ Since the emergence of their important contributions to the field of Asian art history, modernity in art has been recast not as an exclusively Western idea or phenomenon but one which is also born out of and influenced by Asian cultural currents.

With respect to writing that has been produced by art historians, curators, critics, and art writers from the region, T.K. Sabapathy, Redza Piyadasa, Sanento Yuliman, Jim Supangkat, Apinan Poshyananda, Emmanuel Torres and Alice Guillermo are among a formative group of first-generation scholars who have paved the way for rigorous scholarly meditation on modern Southeast Asian art. Theirs were pioneering attempts to activate and inspire new methods and perspectives, reflecting especially these scholars' own locales, but some also considering the region as a whole. Importantly, a key objective of this pioneering generation of local writers was to excavate the suppressed or ignored art histories of indigenous modernisms throughout the region so as to develop a locally informed art scholarship, on Southeast Asian terms. Their efforts challenged the lack of attention in (Euro-American) art history to the specific existence and conditions of modernity and modern art in Southeast Asia.⁰⁹ As much as this challenge responded to Euro-American dominance, it was also, as Sabapathy argues in *Road to Nowhere*, directed at local agencies within Southeast Asia itself who retain their own stereotypical visions of modern art and its Euro-American histories and thus remain resistant to understanding the relevance and significance of establishing art-history training programs in Southeast Asia.¹⁰ The "Nanyang" (South China Seas or Southern Seas) artistic style, for instance, was articulated for modern Southeast Asian art-historical discourse by Piyadasa and Sabapathy in the 1970s, subsequent to the work of the art critic Koh Cheng Foo.¹¹ In their articulations, Piyadasa and Sabapathy recall the significant role played by the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (founded in 1938 in British Malaya) in the formation of a particular and localized development of modern art within the region and one with relevance to and for the region. With respect to our present-day thinking on contemporary art, by foregrounding these currents of modern art history within the region, we perforce reconfigure our encounters with contemporary Southeast Asian art over a longer localized art history, even as it is in dialogue with international art beyond the region. Thus, modernisms within Southeast Asia are

revealed to be not the mere mimicking of European or American modernizing projects, but unique in their own various manifestations. Moreover, they gain currency as a potentially influential force in shaping Euro-American modernisms.

In asserting the specific development of modern art in Thailand, Poshyananda argues that "to understand Thai art it is necessary to trace the stages and layers throughout which modernism in the Thai context developed and dispersed."¹² Similarly, in his seminal book, *Modern Asian Art*, pioneering art historian John Clark points to the existence of localized histories of modern art in Asia that trace contextual trajectories of modernization and should not be viewed as a simple transfer of "Euramerican" modernities but are, rather, "parallel modernities."¹³ In his tracking of the genealogies of modern Asian art, Clark theorizes a world of "parallel modernities" based on internal or "endogenous" forces at play with external or "exogenous" demands and models. In his subsequent scholarship Clark takes this further, proposing comparative models for studying Asian art intraregionally and on Asian terms.¹⁴ Clark delineates parallel modernities not merely between Euramerica and Asia but also between Asian societies themselves. This intraregional platform, which is the practice of "Asia as method," enables comparisons of parallel modernities across Asia itself. By contrast, Supangkat advances the idea of "multi modernisms" to describe Asia-based modernisms that might have initially been influenced by Euro-American models of modernism but were subsequently transformed within and by their local Asian contexts in non-synchronous developments.¹⁵ This sees the decentering of a hegemonic modernism through its application to multiple, localized contexts.

As has been famously argued by Edward Said and taken up by others,¹⁶ the idea of the "progress" of Western civilization underpins the Orientalist construction of the West's positional superiority, hence its Western-centric version of the history of modernity. While Western master-narratives such as these have since been problematized and largely discredited, there are some areas in which the continuing dominance of Euro-American paradigms may be witnessed. For Clark, this is registered, for instance, in the uneven positioning which occurs in discussions of modern and contemporary Asian art that rely exclusively on Euro-America and valorize discursive terms that originate there,¹⁷ thereby perpetuating the myth of Euro-American modernity as the primary and therefore universal model for understanding developments of modern and contemporary art in non-Euro-American locales.¹⁸

As Wang Hui argues in tracing the "West's" construction of "Asia" as an imagined cartography different from Europe's, "The question of Asia's modernity must eventually deal with the relationship between Asia and European colonialism and modern capitalism."¹⁹ Drawing on Miyazaki Ichisada's

scholarship on the Song dynasty, Wang asks:

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If the political, economic and cultural features of “Asian Modernity” appeared as early as the tenth or the eleventh century—three or four centuries earlier than the appearance of comparable features in Europe—were the historical development of these two worlds parallel or associated? ²⁰

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Wang foregrounds the early networks of trade, migration, infrastructure building and artistic and cultural exchange forged between Europe and Asia in order to make a compelling argument for their intermeshed histories of modernity.

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Indeed, Western-centric narratives of modernity often erroneously assume a simple transfer or reproduction of modernities in Southeast Asia in the mimetic image of the West, especially following colonial encounter. Anne McClintock has argued, with regard to the use of postcolonial theory, that the continuation of scholarship based on a dialogue between colonizer and colonized simply replicates the hegemonic position of the West on such matters. ²¹ Similarly, in formulating local histories of art, insisting on a supposedly *postcolonial* moment might only serve to reassert colonialism as a primary point of reference for developments in Southeast Asian art. By contrast, Susie Lingham sees a need to acknowledge the “seductions” of the colonial past in the present:

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That South East Asia navigates its direction, en route to “identity” and “national identities,” through constant reference to the historical and mythical West as its “North” is inevitable. It bears the scars, the traces of the events that precipitated the cultural evolution over centuries of colonization. Let us say that it is one symptom of a shared colonial experience to be magnetized around an enchantment of desired influence, because the colonized imagination is a seduced one. ²²

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While admitting the continuing entanglements of historical colonialisms, Lingham also points to precolonial influences and their part in present-day cultural transformations in Southeast Asia:

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But prior to Western colonization, South East Asia was under the influence of other Asian immigrant and imperial cultures, religion and philosophical thought. Western colonial rule did not efface these earlier marks of influence. The heritage of the region is rich and varied, accruing over time and gradually, strata by strata, translated, transposed, rediscovered and assimilated into a still evolving “selfness.” ²³

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Through the process of retracing the contingent construction of Asia and the West as mutually

dependent cartographic imaginaries, we are prompted to reorient our conceptions of world history and review the established story of modernity. By recalling the world processes and cultures that have permeated each other in shaping modernity across the world, and by acknowledging that modernity is not an exclusively Euro-American project but the result of myriad cultural interactions, we participate in the project of “provincializing” Euro-America. ²⁴ The Euro-American metahistory of modernity and modern art is thereby unsettled and must admit the reality of multiple contributions to modernity that are the historical consequence of cultural alignments and contingencies.

Precedents of the Southeast Asian Contemporary

The pioneering work of earlier-generation historians of modern Asian art not only carves a space for the documentation of modern art practice in Asia and draws attention to its distinctiveness, but also indicates that today’s art practices to be found across Asia have art-historical precedents of their own, with continuities and relations to local pasts—for all their concurrent inheritances from and affinities with Euro-American currents of contemporary art practice. As Sabapathy argues, this suggests that modern Asian art (“the traditions of the new”) does not emerge from a vacuum, but is the result of historical continuities, relational discourses which “do not respect neat, cultural, historical, artistic boundaries and territories.” ²⁵ (It is precisely these continuities of histories that Piyadasa brings into view in his artwork,

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Piyadasa cites Koh Cheng Foo’s (aka “Ma-Ke”) art criticism as an important influence in popularizing art in Singapore. His was the first book on Malayan art, written in Chinese, and used as a core text for the Nanyang Academy of Art teaching curriculum. See Redza Piyadasa, “The Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts,” in *Pameran retrospektif pelukis-pelukis Nanyang*, ed. Muzium Seni Negara Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur: Muzium Seni Negara Malaysia, 1979), 31.

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See Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand*, 28–29.

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Clark, *Modern Asian Art*. Specifically, Clark characterizes this through patterns of “open” and “closed” discourses of modernity. See Clark, “Open and Closed Discourses.”

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Clark, *Asian Modernities: Chinese and Thai Art Compared, 1980 to 1999* (Sydney: Power Publications, 2010).

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Jim Supangkat, “Contemporary Art: What/When/Where,” in Queensland Art Gallery, *The Second Asia-Pacific Triennial*, 26–28.

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Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978). Said’s highly influential arguments in this book concern the Occident’s construction of the Orient as an oppositional image: that is, a reflection of the Occident itself. In this sense, the Occident’s treatment of the Orient, especially in colonial projects, is a phantasmic projection of the Occident’s own construction of the Orient.

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See Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, 290.

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For a comparative perspective, see James Elkins, *Chinese Landscape Painting as Western Art History* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), which, using Chinese landscape painting as an example, argues for the purported universal institutionalization of Western art history across different cultural contexts.

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Wang Hui, “Imagining Asia: A Genealogical Analysis,” in *Edges of the Earth: Migration of Contemporary Asian Art and Regional Politics*, ed. Xu Jiang, trans. Gao Jin (Hangzhou: China Academy of Art, 2003), 381.

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Wang Hui, “Imagining Asia,” 381.

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Anne McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Post-Colonialism,’” *Social Text* 31/32 (Spring 1992): 1–15.

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Susie Lingham, “The Crisis of Context: What Holds Heterogeneities Together,” in *Text and Subtext: Contemporary Art and Asian Woman*, ed. Binghui Huangfu (Singapore: Earl Lu Gallery, 2000), 164.

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Ibid.

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See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

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T.K. Sabapathy, “Continuity,” n.p.

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See Supangkat's discussions of contemporary Indonesian art within "post-avant-garde" currents in the section "Contemporary Art, Development Beyond the 1970s," in Supangkat, *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond*, 64–89.

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Ahmad Mashadi, "Southeast Asian Art During the 1970s," in *Telah Terbit (Out Now): Southeast Asian Contemporary Art Practices During the 1960s to 1990s*, exh. cat. (Singapore: Singapore Art Museum, 2007), 14–24.

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Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa, *Towards a Mystical Reality: A Document of Jointly Initiated Experiences by Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa*, exh. cat. (Kuala Lumpur: 1974), 1–31.

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See Cecily Briggs and T.K. Sabapathy, *Cheo Chai-Hiang: Thoughts and Processes (Rethinking the Singapore River)* (Singapore: Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and Singapore Art Museum, 2000).

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See T.K. Sabapathy, "Contemporary Art in Singapore: An Introduction," in Turner, *Tradition and Change*, 83–92.

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See Raymundo R. Albano, "Installations: A Case for Hangings," in *ASEAN Art Exhibition: Third ASEAN Exhibition of Painting and Photography 1984*, ed. ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1984), n.p. (originally published in *Philippine Art Supplement 2*, no. 1 [1981]: 2–3); Julie Ewington, "Five Elements: An Abbreviated Account of Installation Art in South-East Asia," *Art and Asia Pacific 2*, no. 1 (1995): 108–115. [See also pp. 35–39 of this volume.]

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See Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002); and *Altermodern: Tate Triennial*, ed. Bourriaud, exh. cat. (London: Tate Publishing, 2009).

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On this, see, for instance, FX Harsono's discussion in 1993 of the type of socially engaged art installation which emerges from the Indonesian social context: "The resulting art installation is known as participative art. In this type of art, the participation of the public is vital." FX Harsono, "The Installation as the Language of Social Concern," in *The First Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art: Identity, Tradition and Change: Contemporary Art of the Asia Pacific Region (QAG, Queensland Cultural Centre, South Bank, Brisbane, 17–20 September 1993)* (conference paper, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 1993): n.p. For broader regional discussions of this, see also Iola Lenzi, "Negotiating Home, History and Nation," and Tan Boon Hui, "Four Propositions: Looking at Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia," in *Negotiating Home History and Nation: Two Decades of Contemporary Art in Southeast Asia 1991–2011*, ed. Iola Lenzi, exh. cat. (Singapore: Singapore Art Museum, 2011), 8–28; 29–38.

Entry Points, of 1978.)

In the context of Southeast Asian art history itself, selected art practices of the 1970s might more accurately offer specific instances of the initial ruptures or tensions with modernist art traditions (aligned to national art histories) and a turn to experimental, "postmodern," or even "post-avant-garde"²⁶ ventures into the *contemporary*. In his exhibition "Telah Terbit" (2006), the Singapore-based curator Ahmad Mashadi traced the local currents of contemporary art in Southeast Asia to seminal artists of the 1960s and 1970s.²⁷ Indeed, during this period significant artists dared to break new ground in their local art contexts, including: Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa of Malaysia (with their joint conceptual-art exhibition project of 1974, "Towards a Mystical Reality"), advancing Eastern philosophies as a basis for art practice in Asia;²⁸ the Kaisahan Group of the Philippines (established in 1976), with their particular brand of social-realist styles promoting a Philippine nationalism in art; the radical artforms introduced by the *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru* (New Art Movement) in Indonesia (1975–79), which expressed urgent social concerns at a time of political repression under Suharto's *Orde Baru* or New Order government (1965–98); in Singapore, Cheo Chai-Hiang, with his experimental conceptual art practices (of the mid-1970s),²⁹ and Tang DaWu's innovative installation and performance art practices addressing environmental and social concerns (from the late 1970s);³⁰ and, in Thailand, the activist art groups Dharma Art Group (1971) and Artists' Front (1974) were influential, both emerging from the Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art in Bangkok and engaged in experimental art practices driven by political protest. In examining art practices of this earlier period, the genres of installation, conceptual and performance art, often presumed to be indices of internationalist contemporary art practice marked by Euro-American art traditions, must also be seen as emerging in dialogue with their own local contexts and social concerns, some arguing for even deeper and long-standing Southeast Asian cultural influences in cultivating such art, including Filipino sculptural traditions and the Indonesian performing-arts traditions of *wayang kulit* theater and puppetry.³¹ While the art of Rirkrit Tiravanija—often linked to the Thai context—has been given prominence in the early 21st century as part of a wider international engagement in "relational aesthetics,"³² we should not overlook prior regional currents of differently configured, "socially engaged," "participatory art"-inclined practices situated in Southeast Asia itself, which stem from the 1960s and 1970s, but by the 1990s coincide with wider international interest in similar kinds of contemporary artforms.³³ Importantly also, as Patrick Flores has discussed, in this earlier context of the 1960s and 1970s, the instrumental hybrid figure of the Southeast Asian "artist-curator"³⁴ also emerges, with important future consequences for the future exhibition of contemporary Southeast

Asian art in the decades to follow, especially against a backdrop of rising Asian curators with increasing presence in international exhibitions.³⁵ Significantly, Flores regards this regional pattern of professional turning—from artist to curator—as one current marking an emblematic shift from "the modern" to "the contemporary" in Southeast Asia.³⁶

Importantly, however, as I have previously intimated, the contemporary art of Southeast Asia is not always a "break" with modernity following a chronology of avant-garde developments, but finds overlap with and oppositionality to modernity in its concurrent constitution and existence in Southeast Asian contexts. In other words, modern art may coexist alongside contemporary art in Southeast Asia, as elsewhere.³⁷ As the Malaysia-based artist Wong Hoy Cheong observed in the context of an ASEAN COCI conference in 1989,

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In the West, modern necessarily precedes contemporary. And modern or modernism refers to a period, a sensibility essentially different from that of the past, the classical period. In our context, both words are not that clearly differentiated chronologically... For us, contemporary art is a reaction to modernism while contemporary art in the West is a result of modernism.³⁸

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Similarly, Indonesian art critics have also pointed to the different meaning and changeable utility of the term "contemporary art" when applied in the Indonesian context.³⁹ Sumartono observes a difference in "the popular use of the term [contemporary art] to signify both modern and alternative art, which are seen as one and the same thing" against a view of contemporary art as, more specifically, "alternative art": that is, a "counter to modern art" referencing "installations, happening and performance art pieces" in particular.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Asmudjo Jono Irianto encourages a view of contemporary Indonesian art through a paradigm of "postmodern art" that need not refer to a modern art narrative that came before it. For Irianto, this opens the way for engaging with contemporary Indonesian art now as an immediate presence while the narrative of modern Indonesian art continues to be probed and defined. It also provides a means of "positioning Indonesian contemporary art in the larger constellation of the international art world."⁴¹

Supangkat, on the other hand, demarcates a clearer beginning for contemporary art in Indonesia stemming from significant changes in the Indonesian art scene in the 1970s:⁴² more precisely, this is underlined by a tension between modernism (and its formalist avant-garde impulse) and artists' renewed commitment to representing Indonesia's "social context" or "cultural identity." After the so-called depoliticization of art from the late 1960s following the alleged communist coup attempt and the anti-communist mass killings in

1965–66,⁴³ a new generation of Indonesian artists increasingly sought to recuperate the social significance of art. In this sense, for Supangkat, who nods to Klaus Honnef's scholarship, contemporary art is postmodern and post-avant-garde and (at least for Indonesia of the 1970s) emerges from a "questioning of the tradition of modern (Western) thinking and its domination, discussions of diversity, differences, plurality, localness, traditions of 'the other.'"⁴⁴ It is also, for Supangkat, necessarily related to the development of modern art in Indonesia, and to the acknowledgement of modernism as a plural development in the world.⁴⁵ Notably, while Supangkat underlines the socio-political significance of "contemporary art," he is also careful to recognize the essentializing capacity of the socio-political in distinguishing non-Western contemporary art from Western art. In the context of the seminal exhibition "Contemporary Art of the Non-Aligned Countries," held in Jakarta in 1995, Supangkat remarked:

A perception that places too much emphasis on the socio-political content of artwork when observing the creations of Third World artists will inevitably return to the domination of the Euro-American perception.... Whereas there was once a distinction made between "modern society" and "traditional societies" using progress as parameter, now the division is that of "developed societies" and "not-yet-developed societies" using democracy as parameter.⁴⁶

In other words, Supangkat draws attention to the "potential that the analyses of [cultural and socio-political] difference will be trapped in elaborating otherness."⁴⁷ In his catalogue essay for the exhibition, he observed the responses of outside audiences:

After seeing the works exhibited, after analyzing them, after judging them, most curators, critics and art historians who have been involved in international art events came to the question: Is this contemporary art? ... For them the works were difficult to identify. Are they modern art works, do they show Modernist principles, are they [a] continuous development of traditional arts?⁴⁸

The social dimension of contemporary art is also registered by Ismail Zain in observing the application of the word "contemporary" to describe Malaysian art. In his review of the 1998 Californian exhibition "Contemporary Paintings of Malaysia," Zain highlights how a lack of curatorial agency in foregrounding the specific relevance of the term "contemporary" to the Malaysian context can lead to misleading generalizations and misperceptions on the part of outside audiences:

The usage of the term "contemporary" in art or culture varies considerably from its lexical

meanings. In art or culture, the term implicitly imposes unto itself, most crucially, a notion of currency. In essence, it is a societal state ... it is not a measure of linear time but of space, ... a zone in which impinging new values within a society are beginning to manifest themselves as conceptually and contextually relevant.⁴⁹

As with Piyadasa's concern to recognize Malaysian art's temporal and spatial dimensions, Zain discerns a new consciousness by artists of the socially situated contexts of art production and reception in Malaysia which is, in turn, reflected in art itself from the late 1980s.

Indeed, "the contemporary" in Southeast Asia is a developing field of diverse and contesting manifestations.⁵⁰ Historically, the "modern" and the "contemporary," as well as the "postmodern," have often been used synonymously in Southeast Asia. Accordingly, a neat periodization can never fully capture the currents and temperament of contemporary Southeast Asian art, at least for now. Nevertheless, the chosen period and art practices central to this book aim to register a more forceful coalescence and converging pursuit of "contemporary art" endeavor by artists from across the region more broadly, even as it remains an ongoing and differentiated project, characterized by the specific coordinates of individual artists' localities in Southeast Asia and beyond. This notion

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Patrick D. Flores, *Past Peripheral: Curation in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Museum, National University of Singapore, 2008); and Flores, "Position Papers: Turns in Tropics: Artist-Curator," in *The 7th Gwangju Biennale: Annual Report: A Year in Exhibitions*, ed. Okwui Enwezor (Gwangju: Gwangju Biennale Foundation, 2008), 262–285.

35

Among the most renowned Asian curators of international profile are Hou Hanru, Fumio Nanjo, Apinan Poshyananda and, more recently, Flores himself. Interestingly, Poshyananda and Flores perform the hybrid capacity of art historian–curator.

36

Notably, Flores examines four artists-turned-curators working in the Southeast Asian context at this time: Raymundo Albano (the Philippines, 1947–1985); Redza Piyadasa (Malaysia, 1939–2007); Apinan Poshyananda (Thailand, lives in Bangkok); and Jim Supangkat (Indonesia, lives in Bandung). See Flores, "Turns in Tropics," 262–285.

37

The German art historian Hans Belting argues that the history of art as a linear narrative of sequential development in periods of art style has come to a close. See Belting, *The End of the History of Art?*, trans. Christopher S. Wood (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

38

Wong Hoy Cheong, "Contradictions and Fallacies in Search of a Voice: Contemporary Art in Post-Colonial Culture," in *First ASEAN Symposium on Aesthetics: Proceedings of Symposium Held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, National Art Gallery, October 24–27 1989*, ed. ASEAN COCI and Balai Seni Lukis Negara (Kuala Lumpur: ASEAN COCI, 1989), 118.

39

See the essays in Jim Supangkat, Sumartono, Asmudjo Jono Irianto, Rizki A. Zaelani and M. Dwi Mariantio, *Outlet: Yogyakarta Within the Contemporary Indonesian Art Scene* (Yogyakarta: Cemeti Art Foundation, 2001).

40

Sumartono, "The Role of Power in Contemporary Yogyakarta Art," in Supangkat et al., *Outlet*, 17.

41

Asmudjo Jono Irianto, "Tradition and the Socio-Political Context in Contemporary Yogyakarta Art of the 1990s," in Supangkat et al., *Outlet*, 72.

42

Supangkat traces the emergence of "contemporary art" in Indonesia in relation to changed socio-political and art-historical conditions for the production of art, which serve to distinguish contemporary art from the modern art currents before it. See Supangkat, "Contemporary Art, Development Beyond the 1970s."

43

Ibid., 64–89.

44

Ibid., 65.

45

See Jim Supangkat, "Introduction: Contemporary Art of the South," in *Contemporary Art of the Non-Aligned Countries: Unity in Diversity in International Art: Post-Event Catalogue*, ed. Edi Sedyawati, A.D. Pirus, Jim Supangkat and T.K. Sabapathy, exh. cat. (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, Project for Development of Cultural Media, Directorate General for Culture, Dept. of Education and Culture, 1997), 20–31.

46

Ibid., 23.

47

Ibid., 24.

48

Ibid., 21–22.

49

Ismail Mohd Zain, "Malaysian paintings: Lack of focus spoils exhibition in California," *New Straits Times*, June 12, 1988.

50

On the complicated task of defining "contemporary art" in Southeast Asia, see Patrick D. Flores, "Presence and Passage: Conditions of Possibilities in Contemporary Asian Art," in "Aesthetics and/as Globalization," special issue of *International Yearbook of Aesthetics* 8 (2004): 43–57; Supangkat, "Contemporary Art, Development Beyond the 1970s," 64–89; Supangkat, "Contemporary Art: What/When/Where"; Supangkat et al., *Outlet*; Lee Weng Choy, "The Distance Between Us/Comparative Contemporaries/Criticism as Symptom and Performance," in *Knowledge + Dialogue + Exchange: Remapping Cultural Globalisms from the South*, ed. Nicholas Tsoutas (Sydney: Artspace, 2005), 51–65; "Comparative Contemporaries: A Web Anthology Project," Asia Art Archive, accessed October 10, 2012, <http://www.aaa.org.hk/Programme/Details/290>; and "The And: An Expanded Questionnaire on the Contemporary," *Field Notes*, no. 1 (June 2012), hosted by Asia Art Archive, accessed June 7, 2012, <http://www.aaa.org.hk/FieldNotes/Details/1167>.

51

See the range of essays on this in *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Caroline Turner (Canberra: Pandanus, 2005).

52

For a more extensive account of this rivalry, see Helena Spanjaard, "The Controversy Between the Academies of Bandung and Yogyakarta," in *Modernity in Asian Art*, 85–104.

53

See, for instance, Kenneth M. George's work related to this, including "The Cultural Politics of Modern and Contemporary Islamic Art in Southeast Asia," in *Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asian Art: An Anthology*, ed. Nora A. Taylor and Boreth Ly (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2012), 53–67.

54

The "new art history" refers broadly to the changes in the institutionalization and practice of art history that have occurred since the 1970s, which seek to acknowledge the "social history of art history," especially concerning issues of gender, class and race. See Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001).

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As a means of alleviating this situation, a web anthology focusing on contemporary art writing in Southeast Asia has been developed by Lee Weng Choy as part of the Asia Art Archive's "Comparative Contemporaries: A Web Anthology Project." See "Comparative Contemporaries: A Web Anthology Project," hosted by Asia Art Archive, accessed October 10, 2012, <http://comparative.aaa.org.hk>; and Lee Weng Choy, "Position paper on 'Comparative Contemporaries,'" Asia Art Archive, accessed October 10, 2012, <http://www.aaa.org.hk/Programme/Details/290>. Furthermore, as I was completing the manuscript for this book, a rare collection of essays focusing on Southeast Asian art was published—Nora A. ↗

of a gathering density in contemporary Southeast Asian art has been confirmed since the 1990s by its parallel institutionalization (museum collections and art exhibitions, art writing and scholarship) and commercialization (interest by art markets and private collectors), as well as by the concurrent development of contemporary art and its histories worldwide.

What we may more confidently discern as a characteristic of contemporary Southeast Asian art is its reevaluation of established modernisms in the region and a reconsideration of the significance, purpose and means of art practice for rapidly changing Southeast Asian societies.⁵¹ Dominant concerns of early contemporary art practice include the questioning of "internationalism" as a hegemonic framework for art practice, particularly in its preoccupation with the fashionable styles of abstraction and formalism, a consequent turn to social and political contexts, and an insistence on reflexivity as part of the very constitution of art. What becomes clear in undertaking art-historical inquiry into the region's art is that the range of contemporary Southeast Asian art during the period concerned should also be viewed against the tremendous political, economic, social and cultural change across the Southeast Asian region itself and in the light of its shifting local art histories.

As Southeast Asia underwent the massive political changes that accompany decolonization and struggles for independence, along with the global politics of the Second World War and the rise of communism, art in Southeast Asia reflected a multitude of antinomies and intersections about the proposed course for art development in the region. By the 1960s and 1970s, as students returned from art institutions in Europe and the USA, a turn to "internationalism" and "formalism" saw the dominance of abstract and conceptual, non-figurative artforms. However, this trend provoked a backlash by the late 1980s from other artists concerned to communicate the local socio-political realities of Southeast Asia through realist representation. The infamous rivalry between the Bandung and Yogyakarta art schools in Indonesia from the mid-1960s through to the late 1970s exemplifies this. While the Bandung art school promoted abstractionism as the cutting edge of art in Indonesia, and in line with international trends, the Yogyakarta art school promoted social themes in art through figurative forms that sought to reflect the realities of Indonesian society.⁵² But a re-examination of that history reveals that the situation is further complicated by abstract forms whose contexts were not the West but were inspired by local spiritual and religious traditions, seen especially in Islamic-inspired paintings of the time.⁵³ Coinciding with developments in the "new art history"⁵⁴ and a renewed engagement with the international art world, by the 1990s the social contextualization of art had become the dominant point of interpretative entry into contemporary Southeast Asian art. The

decorative and geometric tendencies of abstract painters lost favor within the currents of international art practice, while forms of installation and performance art gained popularity, particularly with their addressing of local traditions and indigeneity within these internationally accessible forms. Enmeshed in the worldly circuits of international art in the 1990s, Southeast Asian art found itself being "rediscovered" by new audiences outside Southeast Asia with generally scant knowledge of the region and its existing modern and contemporary art and the developing art histories associated with them. While it gained global visibility as a valid area of contemporary art practice, it was also acutely mindful of doing so on its own terms, in tension with the hegemonic Euro-American exhibitionary gaze and its exoticizing lens.

Thus, the cultural tensions implicit in the modern art histories of Southeast Asia carry through into the latter half of the 20th century, with debates about contemporary Southeast Asian art reflecting the overlaps, intersections and antinomies of local and worldly concerns, form as opposed to content, art in contrast to craft, social-realist and abstract or conceptual concerns, and colonial and indigenous inheritances. Path-breaking artists of the 1960s and 1970s, with interests in experimental performance and in conceptual and installation art, opened new avenues for rethinking these tensions and the values and modes of art-making for postcolonial Southeast Asian societies. In so doing, they challenged hegemonic aesthetic codes and conventions, often explicitly questioning the production of art itself and its relevance for Southeast Asian societies. Accompanying this was the introduction of new themes expressed in art reflecting the changing Southeast Asian social landscape: issues of politics, gender, religion, the environment, urbanism, social inequality, violence, capitalism and commercialism were conveyed through a return to figurative and narrative forms. As already mentioned, others pursued more abstract geometric and decorative styles to reflect spiritual or religious tendencies and/or aesthetic concerns.

A more recent generation of scholars and art writers from the region, whose work concentrates more on the contemporary art that has emerged there since the 1990s, includes Patrick Flores, Marian Pastor Roces, Claudette May V. Datuin, Dwi Marianto, Sumartono, Asmudjo Jono Irianto, Hendro Wiyanto, Rizki A. Zaelani, Agung Hujatnikajennong, Ahmad Mashadi, Lee Weng Choy, Susie Lingham, Ray Langenbach and Niranjana Rajah. In many ways, their writing is a mandate from the pioneering work of the earlier generation. Across both generations, the history of modern and contemporary Southeast Asian art has been accorded its own trajectory and its own methods, rather than being sited as an adjunct to the art practices and histories of China or India, or as a mere derivative of Portuguese, Dutch, English, American or other colonial influences.

As with the earlier generation, more recent writing has tended to be undertaken by locals commenting on their respective national art contexts. Other than the important work of this collection of individuals, there has been a relative lack of sustained and vigorous scholarly attention to Southeast Asian art (whether nationally or regionally), and while there is now a significant accumulation of writing, it largely remains scattered and sporadic, hence little referenced and studied as part of a continuing discourse for Southeast Asian art.⁵⁵ Much extant writing takes the form of light exhibition reviews and reportage, with in-depth exhibition catalogue essays by “curator–art historians” also a regular outlet; more recently, we see a gradual increase in art criticism within the frame of scholarly international art journals. Lee cites “the persistent lack of support for art publications and the consistent lack of interest from the mainstream media in reporting seriously on the arts” as key reasons for this situation.⁵⁶ Against this backdrop, a number of committed individuals dedicated to promoting the art of the region have recently harnessed the liberating potential of the Internet to activate a freely available space for public art discussion and the dissemination of art writing, and a handful of Southeast Asia-based art-focused publishers have emerged.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, as Sabapathy and Clark have cautioned, we must not dismiss the substantial and important body of art-historical writing which has paved the way for a developing contemporary art history for the region. There is sometimes “historical amnesia”⁵⁸ when addressing contemporary art from the region, displaced from its historical modern-art contexts so as to support new ideological or political positions of one kind or another. Writing about *contemporary* art has occurred almost simultaneously with the documentation of modern art histories of the region, reflecting the overlap of the modern and the contemporary in Southeast Asia. It is perhaps because of this situation of concurrent art currents that, insofar as art-historical documentation is concerned, contemporary art has often continued to be positioned within national frameworks that are the legacy of modern Southeast Asian art histories with their connection to the modern colonial institutionalization of art throughout much of the region but also the anti-colonial nationalist movements. The vexed issue we are forced to address here is how to distinguish a differentiated field of contemporary art which, on the one hand, allows us to situate contemporary art within a longer legacy of local modernisms which emerges in the context of colonial and postcolonial nation-building, and, on the other, to recognize those instances of contemporary art that are born out of an oppositionality and intended rupture with modernism and which at the same time find strong resonance in the new “global-art” context of the late 20th century. But there is also a third stream we might distinguish, which is the combined effect

of these dual currents, whereby Southeast Asian *modernities* might actually be regarded as a concurrent, vital and contingent force in the ongoing constitution of the Southeast Asian *contemporary*. This bears deep implications for a larger universal project of “contemporary art” history, challenging the neat chronological narrative of changing avant-gardes with its basis in Euro-American histories of art. It demands a much more differentiated art-historical field for understanding contemporary art as a practice with relevance for the world but which at the same time retains very specific socio-historical and locative conditions of production.

A Changing Region, in a Changing World

The beginning date for this enquiry—“after 1990”—indicates the enormous socio-political shifts occurring internationally at this time, reflected in the “art world” itself with its postmodern turn to non-Western contemporary art practices and a shift from Euro-America to “Other” localities once considered peripheral to the project of contemporary art. Prior to the 1990s, there was scant art-historical, curatorial or market interest in earlier forms of contemporary art practice from Southeast Asia. Instead, only first- and second-generation modernists and “traditional” artists from Southeast Asia were given attention and, as I have previously intimated, often to suggest a mimetic influence of Euro-American modernism on the development of modern art in Southeast Asia, or, in the case of the traditionalists, to reify exotic artistic traditions. The influence of conservative governments and national galleries in Southeast Asia itself was also a determining factor in the suppression of contemporary art and the elevation of modern and traditional arts, not least because of contemporary art’s potential for symbolic and actual political radicalism.⁵⁹

By the early 1990s, however, externally based art curators, collectors and institutional officials began to circumvent the direction of government institutions by travelling to Southeast Asia to meet contemporary artists independently;⁶⁰ this has much to do with the subsequent international publicity granted to artists with more progressive or politically sensitive orientations, who would otherwise have had to devote their ingenuity to evading the net cast for artists by conservative government institutions. This period marks an unprecedented degree of energetic engagement with contemporary Southeast Asian art in international exhibition contexts, particularly in Japan (exhibitions undertaken by the Fukuoka Art Museum/Fukuoka Asian Art Museum and the Japan Foundation), as well as in Australia (the Brisbane-based Queensland Art Gallery).

Alongside these developments, the privileging of Western modernism came to be vehemently contested; art historians and curators increasingly sought to revise the Western bias of modern art history so as to also reflect the intercultural exchanges

Taylor and Boreth Ly, ed., *Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asian Art* (2012)—which makes another important contribution in this regard; a collection of essays on Indonesian fine art has been edited by Bambang Bujono and Wicaksono Adi, entitled *Seni Rupa Indonesia: Dalam Kritik dan Esai* (Jakarta: Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, 2012); and the first of an important four-volume collection of historical materials on developments in the visual arts in Malaysia has been published in *Narratives in Malaysian Art: Volume 1: Imagining Identities*, ed. Nur Hanim Khairuddin and Beverly Yong (Kuala Lumpur: RogueArt, 2012).

56

Lee Weng Choy, “Position paper on ‘Comparative Contemporaries.’”

57

For instance, *C-Arts: Asian Contemporary Art and Culture* magazine (since 2007, online and print), *Ctrl+P: Journal for Contemporary Art* (online since 2006), and SEARCH (Southeast Asia Art Resource Channel, online since 2011) established by RogueArt (established in 2011, RogueArt is also dedicated to hard-copy publishing of modern and contemporary Southeast Asian art materials). The English-language print magazine *sentAp!* was founded in 2005 in Malaysia to encourage wider art criticism on Southeast Asian art. The journal *FOCAS: Forum on Contemporary Art & Society* (2000–07) offered critical essays on Southeast Asian art and culture. At the national level, *javafred.net* has been a long-standing electronic database for Indonesian art, while more recently the Indonesian Visual Art Archive (established 1995, formerly Cemeti Art Foundation) offers both an online and a physical space for documentation and discussion of contemporary Indonesian art; the journal *Pananaw* (since 1996) is dedicated to the development of discourses around “Philippine Visual Art”; SingaporeArt.org is an online, nonprofit art research archive for Singapore art (1999). Other journals which have come and gone but remain important documents of contemporary Southeast Asian art include *Vehicle* (Singapore); *Transit and Art Manila Quarterly* (the Philippines); and *Art Corridor* and *Tanpa Tajuk* (Malaysia).

58

See Clark, “The Contemporary,” in *Modern Asian Art*, esp. 283–284.

59

For instance, Ray Langenbach notes that officials from such government ministries and national galleries often selected artists from their own generation for international exhibitions. See Langenbach, “Performing the Singapore State 1988–1995” (doctoral dissertation, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney, 2003), 186.

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Nonetheless, for exhibitions such as APT 1–3, contacts in government institutions remained a crucial springboard to further scouting of artists, particularly through the cultural embassies of individual countries (especially Australian diplomatic missions in these countries) and public education institutions (public universities and art schools.)

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See Emmanuel Torres's observations on the artistic and social climate at this time in relation to Southeast Asian art in the international sphere, in Emmanuel Torres, "Internationality: Towards a New Internationalism," *Art and Asia Pacific* 1, no. 1 (1993): 42–49.

62

See "Asian Century," Wikipedia, accessed September 25, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_Century.

63

Affandi was included in the São Paulo Biennial (established 1951) in 1956, the Venice Biennale (established 1895) in 1954, and the first Biennale of Sydney in 1973. Significantly, the Triennale-India included a larger gathering of Southeast Asian artists from its first edition in 1968 (Burma, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam). Similarly, also included in the first Biennale of Sydney alongside Affandi were Joseph Tan of Malaysia, Solomon Saprid of the Philippines, and Sawasdi Tantisuk of Thailand. Established in 1984, the Havana Biennial has included Southeast Asian artists since 1986 (including the Philippines-born artists Lani Maestro in 1986 and Roberto Feleo in 1989). The Venice Biennale included the Philippines for the first time in 1962, with participation by José Tanig Joya and Napoleón Isabelo Veloso Abueva.

which have shaped modern art and to acknowledge its unique trajectories of development in non-Euro-American societies such as those of Asia; and the "art world" showed an increased engagement with Asian artists, a heightened exposure of contemporary Asian art on the international arts scene, and a turn in international curatorial practice to a postmodern politics of "inclusion" rather than "exclusion."⁶¹ So, too, the late 1990s and the 2000s saw the establishment and dramatic proliferation of Asia-based biennales and triennales as well as unprecedented growth in Asian art markets, the latter a consequence of new Asian economic prosperity, a rising Asian middle class and the new cultural capital attached to Asian art.

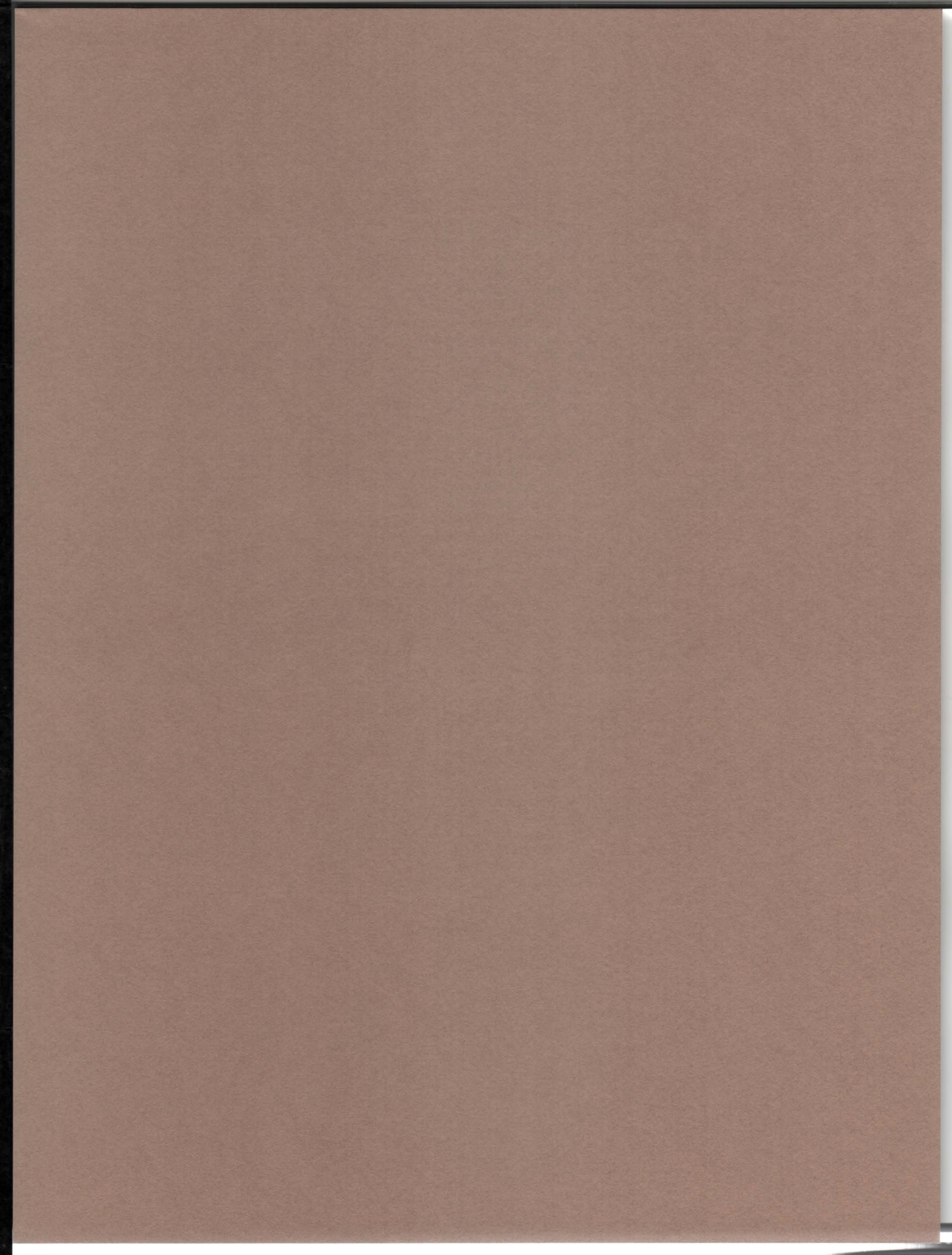
Certainly, strengthening economies in Asia during the mid-to-late 20th century also helped to bring renewed global attention to the region, with Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asia all experiencing phenomenal economic growth in this period. In the 2000s, following the earlier opening of its economy to the world, China became an economic and political force to be reckoned with, as did the next most populous country in the world, India. By the beginning of the 21st century, China's art market had overtaken that of the USA, and it became impossible to ignore the significance of Asia and Asian art to the world, with some heralding the 21st century as "the Asian Century."⁶² The combined new might of China and India has no doubt again unsettled any presumed Euro-American economic but also cultural authority in the global landscape, including the sphere of art.

With regard to Southeast Asia in particular, there was very little participation by Southeast Asian artists in international exhibitions prior to the 1990s. However, earlier if often limited exposure of modern Southeast Asian art occurred in exhibitions including the São Paulo Biennial, the Venice Biennale, the Triennale-India, the Biennale of Sydney and the Havana Biennial, notably with the Indonesian painter Affandi a frequent participant.⁶³ Large-scale exposure of modern and contemporary Southeast Asian art did not occur until the late 1980s with the Fukuoka Asian Art Show series in Japan, and not until the early to mid-1990s did contemporary Southeast Asian art receive significant Euro-American and Asia-Pacific exposure

with the international exhibitions the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT, from 1993), "Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions" (1996–98), and "Cities on the Move" (1997–2000). While not including Southeast Asian art, the 1989 exhibition "Magiciens de la terre" is now commonly cited as a watershed in the international exhibition of contemporary art for its conscious positioning of multivalent, coexisting forms of "contemporary" art practice from different cultures of the world and for engaging with issues of globalism in art exhibitions.

Thus, it was from the early 1990s that contemporary "Southeast Asian" art first gained significant international visibility as part of a broader global interest in the contemporary art of Asia. While the art of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Indian artists dominated most contemporary "Asian" art selections, there was a steady rise in international art exhibitions that included art by Southeast Asian artists. Indeed, a number of Southeast Asian artists are now among the most prominent Asian artists internationally (such as Heri Dono, Navin Rawanchaikul, Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, the late Montien Boonma, and Rirkrit Tiravanija). However, international group exhibitions focusing exclusively on contemporary art by Southeast Asian artists remain fewer in number and the art of Southeast Asian artists often continues to be subsumed under the broader rubric of "Asia" in many Asia-focused exhibitions. Significant exceptions to this are found in the exhibiting and collecting practices of the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (FAAM, Fukuoka, Japan), Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA, Brisbane, Australia), and Singapore Art Museum (SAM, Singapore), unrivalled for their attention to Southeast Asia. Besides the important work of these institutions, in the past two to three decades Southeast Asian art has been gathering momentum, as scholars, curators and critics, mostly from or based in the region, draw increasing attention to the region's art.

In exploring contemporary Southeast Asian art and its representation, *Reworlding Art History* traces a formative stage in the development of Southeast Asian art history. It responds to the vital presence of "contemporary art" in Southeast Asia, but also in the global context, where invocations of the region's past offer powerful interventions into the rootless and disorienting tendencies of global art.



Afterword

Although the idea of compiling an anthology of texts on art in Southeast Asia had long been under consideration, we were always held back by reservations about the politics inherent in entrusting someone to make editorial decisions based on some overarching principle. But social conditions change so quickly. With the rising importance of building knowledge both in Southeast Asia and beyond, and in light of the Japan Foundation's engagement in Asian art so far—especially in terms of relations between Japan and Southeast Asia—we set to work on this third issue of *Art Studies* motivated by a sense of responsibility to create a “document” that future generations could reference.

Meeting at every opportunity, guest editors Patrick D. Flores and Kajiya Kenji established the direction of the anthology in reflection of discourses both in Southeast Asia and in Japan. Continuing their discussions over email, they eventually selected 15 key texts for inclusion here. We acknowledge that this is hardly a definitive number, but our intent was to choose texts that would be indispensable to this moment. It is our hope that, when read in tandem with the experiences and reflections of art practitioners in the region collected in *Art Studies* vol. 2, these texts will allow for a more three-dimensional image of the era. We look forward to the frank opinions and comments of our readers.

Over the year spent preparing this anthology, the texts were reviewed multiple times not only by our guest editors but also by the translators, starting with Hirayoshi Yukihiro. Throughout the entire process, we received tremendous support from Hoashi Aki and Kurokawa Ran, while the work of Andrew Maerke, who joined the team as our English editor, was also essential. I would like to express my thanks to all here.

I would like to conclude with the words of the Japanese art critic Nakahara Yūsuke (1931–2011), who was speaking as a commentator at the symposium organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center in 1997, “Asian Contemporary Art Reconsidered”:

—
In my way of thinking, “Asian art” is not a valid concept. Of course, there are works of art made by artists living in the countries that are part of the region known as Asia.... There are reasons, though, for wanting to say, or wanting to have others say, that it does exist.⁰¹
—

It has already been 20 years since the symposium. Perhaps now “Asian art” could be replaced with “Southeast Asian art.” We remain constantly aware of the prudent and level-headed caution in Nakahara’s statement about the violence that hides beneath the surface of words like “conviviality,” “collaboration” or “network.” And for all the more reason, we believe we still have much to contribute going forward.

Furuichi Yasuko

Art Coordinator
The Japan Foundation Asia Center

01

Symposium: “Asian Contemporary Art Reconsidered” Report (Tokyo: Japan Foundation Asia Center, 1998), 187.

Art
Studies

03

東南アジア美術の歴史を形づくる

Shaping the History of Art in Southeast Asia

企画・監修

パトリック・D・フローレス
加治屋健司

執筆

T・K・サババシー
ジョン・クラーク
後小路雅弘
建島哲
ジュリー・エウイントン
塩田純一
アビナン・ポーサーナン
酒井直樹
アフマド・マシャディ
キャロライン・ターナー
パトリック・D・フローレス
黒田雷見
デヴィッド・テ
ミシェル・アントワネット

The Japan Foundation Asia Center Art Studies 03について

国際交流基金アジアセンターは、東南アジア地域の美術交流の深化を目的に『The Japan Foundation Asia Center Art Studies』を刊行しています。

第1号は、アジアの60-80年代の前衛芸術運動の諸相を明かにするため、アジア各国の研究者を招聘して国際セミナーを実施し、『Cultural Rebellion in Asia 1960-1989』(2015年)としてまとめました。第2号は、90年代以降活発になったアジア太平洋地域の美術交流の動向をキュレーター、美術家、文化政策者の視点から検証し、『はじまりは90s: 東南アジア現代美術をつくる』(2016年)としてまとめました。

そして、第3号である本書は、第2号と対を成すもので、美術活動と連動して展開された同時代の東南アジア美術をめぐる言説とその流れを辿るべく、アジア太平洋地域の研究者、キュレーターによる論考15編を厳選し、『東南アジア美術の歴史を形づくる』としてまとめたものです。

国際交流基金が東南アジアとの美術交流に本格的に関わるようになるのは、1990年アセアン文化センターの設立以降です。時を同じくしてオーストラリアの美術館や専門家が国際展、調査・研究、学会会議を通じて東南アジアと深く関わるようになります。また1996年には東南アジア域内にシンガポール美術館が開館します。90年代を通じて徐々に整備された美術制度とアジア太平洋のネットワークは、90年代後半のIT技術の出現とともに多様な担い手と実践方法を獲得し増殖的に発展します。当初、域内の美術交流の萌芽はASEAN(東南アジア諸国連合)の結束を強化するための美術交流展として始まり、日本やオーストラリアなど周辺地域の継続的関与や、政治的な地域概念の「東南アジア」とも連動し、「東南アジア美術」という概念を形づくりつつあり、今日では、グローバル・アートの思潮を背景に、欧米の美術史家・批評家からも研究や批評の対象として捉えられています。

国際交流基金アジアセンターは、そのような状況を踏まえ、これまで東南アジア美術について語られてきた言説をまとめたアンソロジーの必要性を痛感し、本論文集を日英両言語で制作することにしました。所収した15編の論考は、30年以上にわたる期間に、各々の立ち位置からこの地域の美術動向に深く関わってきた方々の重要な論考で構成され、企画監修のパトリック・D・フローレス、加治屋健司両氏のイントロダクションと解説は各論考を的確に分析し、その意義を読者にわかりやすく伝えています。本論文集が、現在の美術史研究に寄与するとともに、まだ見ぬ将来の担い手の方々にも届き、役立つことを願っています。最後になりますが、本論文集に貴重な論考の再録をご快諾いただきました執筆者と出版社の皆さま、企画監修のパトリック・D・フローレス氏と加治屋健司氏、英文編集のアンドリュー・マークル氏と翻訳者の方々には、編集段階でひとのかたならぬご尽力とご協力をいただきました。ここに改めて厚く御礼申し上げます。

2017年3月
国際交流基金アジアセンター

凡例

本書に掲載した論考については、著者と発行元の承諾のもと掲載しており、編集の責任につきましては、国際交流基金アジアセンターにあります。

著者の所属・役職は、2017年2月現在のものです。

人名の日本語/英語表記については、アーティストネームとして定訳がある人物についてはそれを用い、定訳がない場合は、国際交流基金において統一しました。

中国人、韓国人、日本人については、姓+名の順となっています。

各論考の解説者は各文末の[]内に略号で示しました。

パトリック・D・フローレス [PF]

加治屋健司 [KK]

東南アジア美術の歴史を形づくる

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**Shaping the History of Art
in Southeast Asia**

Chapter 2 | Introduction

東南アジアにおける 近代的なものの諸契機 芸術、地域、美術史

＝
パトリック・D・フローレス

東南アジアについてのこのアンソロジーに含まれるテキストたちが担っているのは、ある危なっかしい地点をマーキングするという恐るべき責務である。その地点とは、西洋の規範あるいは植民地統治によって帝国が普遍化した規範への批判が不可欠となる地点だ。そうした規範が抱いた、矛盾を孕む野心の来世を生産的に思い描けるようにするためである。善かれ悪しかれ、そのような来世が熟考されるのは、近代的なものの限界のもとしてしかないのかもしれない。近代的なものこそが、抹消線を引かれながらも、この表象せよという圧力、読解可能性を確保するチャンスを生き永らえさせているのだから。表象する、批判するという企図そのものがまるごと再考しうようになるためには、まさにこの読解可能性に抵抗しなければならないのだが。近代性はこうしたことを希求しないわけにはいかない。想像不可能な暴力と官能的な進歩の約束の、両者の轍を超えて、別のどこかで生きなければならないのだとしたら。この近代的なものにはいかなる外部もないのかもしれない。あるのは内側の鱗状の重なり、いわば交差する内部だけ、つまり内面的な横断だけなのだ。近代なるものの批判は時宜を得ていると同時に時期外れであり、緊急事態であると同時に分断されており、急を要すると同時に遅れており、物事の真っ只中にいると同時につながりを失っている。近代とは絶望せずにはいられないようなものなのである。

この批判は、西洋と折り合いをつけることであると同時に、理想化し異国化し周縁化し地方化し国家化し国際化し地域化しグローバル化するオリエンタリズムの身振りを否定することでもある。また同時に、この否定を衝き動かすもの——理想的なもの、異国的なもの、周縁的なもの、地方的なもの、国家的なもの、国際的なもの、地域的なもの、グローバルなもの——は変容し、これらの同じ衝動が政治化し過激化する前提にもなる。この否定は最終的には、西洋的なものの限界を露呈させることができ、西洋的なもの自身ではないかもしれないものの生産のうちに巻き込む。そして、否定的な契機としてだけでなく、むしろ生産的な力に変容するものとして批判を利用する。

ひとつの地域としての東南アジアという概念それ自体が、この不安定な近代的なものの一実例である。地域としての東南アジアは、16世紀に始まる西洋の植民地戦略によってかなりの部分が形作られた。他と切り離された自律的な行為やオブジェとして芸術を捉え実践するようになったのは、植民地主義を通してのことであり、最終的にはそこから諸機関や諸様式が形成されたのであった。この形成にあたって鍵となった場はアートスクールで、そこで写実の技術を教えた教員たち生徒たちが、美術の生産者と享受者からなるアート・ワールドが成長しつつあるのに合わせて、そこの行為主体となるべく育てられ鍛えられたのである。植民地主義は、植民地が生まれ出るための諸条件を作り出したが、それと

パトリック・D・フローレス

フィリピン大学デリマン校美術学部教授、同大学付属ヴァルガス美術館キュレーター。シンガポール国立美術館客員キュレーターも務める。専門は東南アジアの近現代美術史。主な著書に『Painting History: Revisions in Philippine Colonial Art』(マニラ大学出版、1999年)、『Past Peripheral: Curation in Southeast Asia』(シンガポール国立大学美術館、2008年)などがある。2011年、ジョアン・キーと『Third Text』の現代東南アジア美術特集号を編集した。光州ビエンナーレ(2008年)の企画展に関わり、ヴェネチア・ビエンナーレのフィリピン館(2015年)のキュレーターも務める。グッゲンハイム美術館アジア部門やZKMの企画アドバイザーでもある。

同時にポスト植民地への道筋もつけた。ポスト植民地が予め形となって現れるのは、近代的であろうとする願い、つまり、植民地統治から解放され、国家や国民国家を希求する願いの中である。19世紀のそのような憧れは、初期近代世界が形作られゆく状況を整えた。そしてそれとともに、模倣を通した美的表現を学び、西洋の様式を習得し、理想化の批判を行い、西洋のパラダイムの翻訳を通して美術史への参入が行われたのである。植民地支配が存在しなかった場所では、近代性は、伝統を再発明する、また諸帝国の拡張によって布置を決定された、より広い世界の一部となることを予想するという形で顕在化された。国家や地域が近代的なものの指標と見なされる一方、近代的なものの種子は、他の場所にも撒かれていたかもしれない。つまり、さまざまな人々が関係性やコミュニティを形成する区画、道筋、交差点においてである。

このアンソロジーでは、近代的なものという問題系が、西洋的なもの、あるいは帝國的なものの複雑な媒介として、忍耐強く探究されていこう。そして近代的なものは、覇権的であったそのプロジェクトを批判するという新たな機能を与えられることになるだろう。近代的なものはそれゆえ、切断と再構築の複数のコードを帯びており、常に、一方で「出現の空間」の保証を提供しながら、他方で脱構築を約束する。この論争に満ちた過程において、芸術作品は複雑化する傾向にあり、その「知性」は媒介の元に重厚になるのだが、同時に、「展開する存在論」に直面して軽くなる。これこそが、T-Kサバパシーが一方に表現をおき他方に環境において、それらの間のつながりを検討する仕方なのである。それは、歴史意識を構築する相互作用であり、このように芸術を歴史のうちにあるものとして意識するのは前衛の兆候でもあるのだが、そうした意識は近代的なものの唯一の基盤と見なされるべきではない。しかしながらジョン・クラークは、近代的なものが「厳しい歴史的断絶」を及ぼしたことを主張し、「内部性」と「外側」が存在するような許容域が切り開かれたとする。この両者の溝が絶えず横断されるさまが、近代的なものの社会生活となる。私はこの同じ問題系に言及しているが、ただし交換と応酬という別のイデオロギアを通して、地方的なものと西洋的なものとの間の弁証法を乗り越えるような直観をそこに備給する。

酒井直樹はアジアを「過渡的な窮状」の領域にあるものとして喚起することで、同一性を文化的類型化の圧力から解放し、この状況をさらに複雑にすることに意欲的である。彼はアジアを歴史化された、対一形象化による同一化に置き換え、ポスト植民地性を「取り返しのつかない」植民地感情を構成するものと見なす。そのような感情無しには、いかなる「植民地統治に先行する何らかの起源的な同一性」も把握することも探ることもできないのだ。重層的で決定的であるらしいポスト・コロニアルの二元論を避ける

接触と関係性を理論化することが挑まれている。

時間の経過に伴い、近代的なものは自己批判を制度として導入したが、それは西洋のモデルに忠実であり続けるためだけになされたものであった。ヨーロッパと北米における様式的レパートリーとしてのモダニズムは近代性の特権的な模範となり、この技術をマーキングするものとして造形性と抽象化の才能を是認した。戦後の東南アジアの国民国家は、冷戦の圧力と、先進的経済へと変異し世界の新秩序に参入できるようになる必要に直面するに及んで、どんどんと独裁主義的になっていった。これらの諸力が近代的なものを再考し再生するための基礎を作ったのである。近代的なものに向こうに何が横たわっているのか？ それは芸術という遺産の終着点であろうか？ あるいは、モダン・アートの約束を越えたところに何かがあるのだろうか？ 70年代における転換が生じたのはこの時点においてであり、その転換はポスト・モダンあるいはコンテンポラリーと呼ばれてきた方法で近代的なものの来世を予め示していた。この独特な過程において重要な要素は、モダン・アートの諸制度を批判する、アーティスト主導の組織のマニフェスト、芸術実践を異なる仕方で想像する見通しについて、展覧会を組織しテキストを執筆するアーティスト=キュレーター存在である。形式と概念のいくつかの実験もまた、この時期に発生した。

東南アジアの現代美術シーンは堅固で、アーティスト、公衆、組織団体、批評家、キュレーター、画廊主、文化事業に携わる者、その他のアート・ワールドの行為主体、それぞれの実践によって活気づいている。90年代以降、政府と市場は投資として、現代美術が刻々と移り変わる世界の要求に対しより敏感であるように場を確保している。同時にアーティストたちも個別に、政府からも市場からも独立しているか、もしくはその制度のアジェンダと批判的な対話を行っているような行為のモデルや、コミュニティとの持続的な関わりを探求してきた。このような活気ある相互作用から生じているのは、時代の緊急課題へ応答しようとする芸術を生み出し循環させるコンテキストである。このように活動が高まった結果として、実践、関係、関与、そして応酬のさまざまな母型が発展を遂げてきたのであり、それは今も諸々の期待を試し続けているのである。美術界はますます間領域的になってきており、物体とイメージづくりの領域における試みとして、インスタレーション的またパフォーマンス的な身振り、ビデオや映画、そして前近代的ということになっているものしぶとく続いている工芸の伝統の諸側面と交差しようとしている。また、デジタル装置が引き起こした結束と同様に、ピアツーピアの水平的な提携を通した相互連結の様態が、芸術の理念と手触りの両方を容容させてきた。

東南アジアの現代美術の活気の前で、この地の芸術は国内において、地域を横断して、さらにはそれを超えて、関心と注目を生み出してきた。東南アジア芸術がこのような意識されているという