

# **MAHASSA Hong Kong Syllabus**

## **August 12-21, 2019**

The Dhaka Art Summit, Institute for Comparative Modernities (ICM) at Cornell University, and Asia Art Archive, with support from the Getty Foundation's Connecting Art Histories initiative, launch a new research project entitled Modern Art Histories in and across Africa, South and Southeast Asia (MAHASSA). The project brings together a team of leading international faculty and emerging scholars to investigate parallel and intersecting developments in the cultural histories of modern Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

These regions have been shaped by shared institutional and intellectual developments during the twentieth century, including the rise of modern art practices associated with the withdrawal of colonialism and the consolidation of nationalism, the founding of institutions such as the art school and the museum, and increasing exchange with international metropolitan centers via travel and the movement of ideas through publications and exhibitions. Viewing them in terms of statist and national art histories obscures their analysis in a comparative framework. By contrast, this program emphasizes a connected and contextualized approach to better understand both common developments as well as divergent trajectories.

By integrating presentations by participants with core faculty lectures, the program is envisioned as a reciprocal process of learning exchange. Presentations will also take place at peer institutions in Hong Kong and Bangladesh, as well as at the Dhaka Art Summit. Field trips such as collection, museum, and modernist architecture visits and guest lectures will be organized during both the Hong Kong and Dhaka sessions.

The Hong Kong curriculum will focus on methodologies, while introducing specific histories through core and ancillary faculty seminars. Working closely with host and partner, Asia Art Archive, several themes will be explored in depth from a conceptual and a practical approach.

Unless otherwise noted, meetings will be at A Space, Asia Art Archive (10/F, Hollywood Center, 233 Hollywood Road, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong). Morning sessions 12-16 August will take place 10:00am-1:00pm. Meanwhile, in order to accommodate all participants, presentations 19-21 August are scheduled for 9:15am-1:00pm.

**Please prepare well in advance, by carefully reading all assigned texts before arriving in Hong Kong.**

**Readings are available in PDF:**

[https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1UkZLxVdx-t\\_TOsu9nwiang7mfkWXk2fd](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1UkZLxVdx-t_TOsu9nwiang7mfkWXk2fd)

## Day 0 (Sunday 8/11)

Arrive in Hong Kong

## Day 1 (Monday 8/12)

10AM-1PM Iftikhar Dadi, Introductions & seminar

### ***Frameworks for Modern Art***

#### Primary Readings:

- Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1-16, 20-27 [skip the sub-section "The Stage of Modernity," pp. 16-20].
- Andreas Huyssen, "Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World," *New German Critique*, 34, no. 1 (2007): 189–207.
- Elizabeth Harney, "The Densities of Modernism," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 475–503.
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History," in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 27-30 (excerpt).

#### Additional Readings:

- Charles Harrison, "Modernism," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard. Shiff, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 188-201.
- Raymond Williams, "When Was Modernism?" and "Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism," in *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989), 31-35, 37-48.
- Jimmie Durham, "A Friend of Mine Said That Art Is a European Invention," in *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, ed. Jean Fisher (London: Kala Press in association with the Institute of International Visual Arts, 1994), excerpts.

## 2PM-5PM John Tain and AAA Staff

### ***Asia Art Archive Overview and Introduction***

#### Readings:

- Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 1-15.
- Rasheed Araeen and Chen Kuan-hsing, "Conversation between Rasheed Araeen and Chen Kuan-hsing," in *Mapping Asia*, eds. Claire Hsu and Chantal Wong (Hong Kong: Asia Art Archive, 2014), 36-61.
- Claire Hsu and Chantal Wong, "Building Asia Art Archive," *Ideas* 10 July 2017,  
<https://aaa.org.hk/en/ideas/ideas/building-asia-art-archive/type/conversations>

## Day 2 (Tuesday 8/13)

10AM-1PM Elizabeth Giorgis seminar

### ***African Modernism***

This seminar will cover three broad topics:

1. Conceptualizing African Modernism
2. Exhibitions as critical sites
3. Challenges of writing an African art history

### Readings:

- Chika Okeke-Agulu, *Postcolonial Modernism: Art and Decolonization in Twentieth-Century Nigeria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 1-17.
- Okwui Enwezor and Chika Okeke-Agulu, *Contemporary African Art since 1980* (Bologna: Damiani, 2009), 10-17.
- Okwui Enwezor, ed., *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994* (Munich: Prestel, 2001), 10-16.
- Susan Vogel, *ART/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections* (New York: Museum for African Art, 1988), 11-17.
- Okwui Enwezor, "Topographies of Critical Practice: Exhibition as Place and Site," *The Exhibitionist*, no. 2 (June 2010): 46-52.

### **2PM-7PM Visit to CHAT & Chungking Mansions**

[CHAT](#) (Center for Heritage, Arts and Textiles, The Mills, 45, Pak Tin Par St, Tsuen Wan, Hong Kong)

[Chungking Mansions](#) (36-44 Nathan Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong)

### **Day 3 (Wednesday 8/14)**

#### **10AM-1PM Sanjukta Sunderason seminar**

#### ***The Nation and the Everyday: Politics of Modernism in 20<sup>th</sup> century India***

This introductory seminar on Indian modernism will focus on the question of "artistic style" in twentieth-century India to show the complex ways in which nationalism and modernism interacted; how history and memory operated via not only experience and the content of art but through artistic selections of form and style; and how modern art became a critical site for the negotiations of self and society in the post-colony. The seminar will also cover the themes of art schools and pedagogy, histories and historiography of modernity in Indian art.

#### Primary Readings:

- Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Visualizing the Nation: The Iconography of a 'National Art' in Modern India," *Journal of Art and Ideas*, 27-28 (1995): 7-40.
- Partha Mitter, "Naturalists in the Age of Modernism: The Regional Expressions of Academic Naturalism," in *Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 123-162.

#### Additional Readings:

- Sanjukta Sunderason, "Making art modern: re-visiting artistic modernism in South Asia," in *Modern Makeovers: Handbook of Modernity in South Asia*, ed. Saurabh Dube (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 245-261.

### **2PM-5PM: Sneha Ragavan & Chương-Đài Võ presentation**

#### ***South and Southeast Asia Archives***

#### Readings:

- Gulammohammed Sheikh, "The Backdrop," in *Contemporary Art in Baroda*, ed. Gulammohammed Sheikh (New Delhi: Tulika, 1997), 15-51.

### **Day 4 (Thursday 8/15)**

#### **10AM-1PM Simon Soon seminar**

## **Modernism in Southeast Asia**

The geographical and cultural integrity of Southeast Asia is a much more recent invention compared to that of South Asia, Africa, and East Asia. Area studies scholars often attribute the unit's origin to the demarcation of the region as a theatre during the Second World War, which over the course of the cold-war consolidated into its current geo-political formation. Modernity and the artistic responses it engenders therefore preceded this regional categorization. What then do we make of this disjuncture?

We have by now inherited a tradition of writing and exhibiting of modern art with a tendency to simulate a fiction of coherence, whether its integrity is national/regional/international. Of late, new momentums are pushing for the critical assessment of past methods, explore new approaches and possibly discover new materials. The seminar begins with short talk centered on how my interest in non-academic and often idiosyncratic forms of scholarship that have nudged me towards a more elastic understanding of modernism. An essay of mine is included in the reading to provide you with a sense what came out of this inquiry.

- Simon Soon, "Fabric and the Fabrication of a Queer Narrative: The Batik Paintings of Patrick Ng Kah Onn," *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* 38 (August 2015).  
<http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue38/soon.html>

Thinking through modernism has also spurred me in new directions – ranging from clock-wearing buraq paintings, to the life of a woman architect in Malaya, a decolonial history of batik, terminologies of art in the Malay language, as well as a police report on secret societies. More importantly, it reins me back to pay attention to form in my undisciplined tendency to explore social energies [to paraphrase Lucy Lippard] that are not yet recognized as art or aesthetic.

The ensuing discussion will focus on the porous boundaries, promiscuous borrowings, sisterly bonds/resentments that connects approaches in art history to methods and concepts that have gained currency in cognate fields of study. Drawing on the strengths of participants who have applied to the Southeast Asian category, the discussion is centered on teasing out how diverse research cultures in the region and in the study of Southeast Asia abroad (academic, cultural institution, independent, outlying) have interacted, crippled or enabled possibilities in new approaches to the study of modernism. Participants are also encouraged to read the following texts:

- Marian Pastor Roces, "Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art: Words." *Eyeline* 22/23 (1993), 46-48.
- Ashley Thompson, "Bodily Remains," in *Engendering the Buddhist State: Territory, Sovereignty and Sexual Difference in the Inventions of Angkor* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 111-144.
- James Francis Warren, "Passing Over: Some Reflections on the Writing and Teaching of Southeast Asian Modern History," in *Pirates, Prostitutes and Pullers: Explorations in the Ethno- and Social History of Southeast Asia* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2008), 1-25.

- Vincente L. Rafael, "Becoming Rey Ileto: Language, History, and Autobiography," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, 62 no. 1 (2014): 115-132.

The South Asian participants are invited to select one or two texts to form the basis of discussion with the broader seminar cohort for a conversation about modernism – and may concern with issues about disciplinary framing, methods, gaps in knowledge, biases, theories, etc. The purpose is to consolidate how our collective intellectual constellations across Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia (and East Asia) could contribute to new scholarship on modernism.

## **2PM-5PM Alan Chan, Jane Debevoise, & Anthony Yung workshop**

### ***Oral History and the archive***

#### Reading:

- Tim Griffith, "Method Acting: The Artist-Interviewer Conversation," *Art Journal* 64 no. 3 (Sept. 2005): 70-77.

#### Reference Reading:

- Introduction to *Materials of the Future: Documenting Contemporary Chinese Art from 1980-1990* [AAA project]  
<http://www.china1980s.org/en/about.aspx>
- 1987 Out of Context (Hong Kong) Research Project page  
<https://aaa.org.hk/en/collection/search/archive/out-of-context-research-project-1987-out-of-context-hong-kong>
- *Oral History Interview Guidebook* (National Heritage Board, Singapore):  
[https://www.nhb.gov.sg/-/media/nhb/files/resources/oral-history-interview-guidebook\\_content.pdf?la=en](https://www.nhb.gov.sg/-/media/nhb/files/resources/oral-history-interview-guidebook_content.pdf?la=en)

## **Day 5 (Friday 8/16)**

### **10AM-1PM Ming Tiampo seminar**

#### ***Multiple, Intersecting, and Comparative Modernisms (Part I Comparison and Cultural Mercantilism)***

This seminar will build upon the previous seminars on Ethiopian, African, South Asian and South-East Asian modernisms to reflect upon how global modernisms are narrated in North Atlantic museums. In particular, this session examines how efforts to globalize museums have mostly resulted in displays that remain Eurocentric. This seminar considers two critical frameworks for examining "global" exhibitions through case studies: Comparison and Cultural Mercantilism.

**READINGS:** Please pay attention to page numbers, as where possible, I have given you full PDFs of the materials so that you can continue further study on your own if you are interested.

#### Exhibition Case Studies:

*Magiciens de la terre* (Centre Pompidou, 1989)  
*Multiple Modernities* (Centre Pompidou, 2013)

- Rasheed Araeen, "Our Bauhaus Others' Mudhouse," *Third Text* 6 (Spring 1989): 3-16.
- Catherine Grenier, "An Upside-Down World?" in *Multiple Modernities*, ed. Catherine Grenier (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2013), 15-31.

Theoretical readings:

- Susan Stanford Friedman, "Why not compare?" in *Comparison*, eds. Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 34-45.
- Ming Tiampo, "Cultural Mercantilism: Modernism's Means of Production," in *Globalization and Contemporary Art*, ed. Jonathan Harris (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 212-225.

**2PM-5PM Amara Antilla, Diana Campbell, David Morris, & Michelle Wong workshop**

***Exhibition Histories***

Students will be asked to come to the session prepared. Further details will be provided separately.

Primary Readings:

- Diana Campbell Betancourt, "Entry Points: Reconsidering the Asian Art Biennale with Syed Jahangir," *Post* (25 May 2017)  
[https://post.at.moma.org/content\\_items/992-entry-points-reconsidering-the-asian-art-biennale-with-syed-jahangir](https://post.at.moma.org/content_items/992-entry-points-reconsidering-the-asian-art-biennale-with-syed-jahangir)
- Charles Esche, "Making Art Global: a Good Place or a No Place?" in *Making Art Global (Part 1): the Third Havana Biennial 1989*, ed. Rachel Weiss (London: Afterall, 2011), 8-13.
- *Sites of Construction: Exhibitions and the Making of Recent Art History in Asia*, special issue of *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* 13, no. 2 (March/April 2014), 8-9, 40-41, 70-71, 103-104.

Additional Readings:

- Catalogues for *Asian Art Biennale* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy), 1981, 1983, 1986, 1989. [Browse]
- Michael Ann Holly, "What is Research in Art History, Anyway?" in *What Is Research in the Visual Arts? Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, eds. Michael Ann Holly & Marquard Smith (Yale University Press, 2009), 3-12.
- Michelle Wong, "Circulating Abstraction: Exhibiting Hong Kong in Manila, 1961-1982" in *Ambitious Alignments: New Histories of Southeast Asian Art, 1945-1990*, eds. Stephen Whiteman, Sarena Abdullah, Yvonne Low and Phoebe Scott (University of Sydney, Power Publications and National Gallery Singapore: 2018), 107-130.

**Day 6 (Saturday 8/17)**

**Public Program: *Chungking Global***

**11AM Part 1: Screening of *Many Undulating Things* (dir. Bo Wang and Pan Lu, 2019)**

JC Cube, Tai Kwun, Centre for Heritage and Arts (10 Hollywood Rd, Central)

Screening of excerpt from *Many Undulating Things*, followed by a conversation with Bo Wang, Pan Lu, and Simon Soon

### **12:30PM Part 2: Panel Discussion on Chungking Mansions**

Artists' Book Library, Tai Kwun Contemporary (Room 03-206, Barrack Block)  
Panel with Roberto Castillo, Innocent Mutanga, Eunice Seng, and Ming Tiampo.

Moderator: Alice Jim.

This two-part program takes as its hinge Chungking Mansions, a building in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong, made famous by Wong Kar Wai's *Chungking Express* (1994). Chungking Mansions' remarkably diverse population and status as a key business hub between Asia and Africa has led anthropologist Gordon Mathews to posit it as an alternate paradigm for the study of globalization. The first section features a screening of an excerpt from Bo Wang and Pan Lu's collaboration *Many Undulating Things* (2019). The film's third chapter, "Ferro Vitreous," presents the contemporary state of Chungking Mansions in all its social and architectural complexities. Described as a political poem, the film concentrates on the circulatory system of Hong Kong, ultimately taking it as an archetype for other cities of globalized capitalism. In the second part, panel speakers from the fields of art and architectural history, anthropology, and cultural studies discuss Chungking Mansions—from its beginnings in 1961 as a luxury residential development in Tsim Sha Tsui, to its current status as a centre of "low-end globalization."

#### Readings:

- Gordon Matthew, "Chungking Mansions: A Centre of 'Low-End' Globalization," *Ethnology* 46, no. 2 (2007): 169-83.
- Laurent Gutierrez and Valerie Portefaix, "Chungking City," in *HK Lab 2: An Exploration of Hong Kong Interior Spaces* (Hong Kong: MAP Book Publishers, 2005), 198-215.

### **3:30PM Visit to Para Site and Oil Street Art Space**

[Para Site](#) (22/F, Wing Wah Industrial Building, 677 King's Rd, Quarry Bay)

[Oil Street Art Space](#) (12 Oil Street, North Point, Hong Kong)

## **Day 7 (Sunday 8/18)**

### **11AM-1PM Visit to M+**

[M+](#) (Art Park, West Kowloon, Hong Kong)

### **2:30PM-5:30PM Sanjukta Sunderason and Simon Soon seminar**

***Power of the Image: Art and Political Cultures in 20<sup>th</sup> Century India and Southeast Asia***

This seminar will take a historical look at how the printed or painted image both participated in and generated political power in colonial and post-colonial India and countries in Southeast Asia. In this jointly taught seminar, we will address what "power" means in the field of visual production; how that power has been used by partisans of various ideologies historically; and how the question of the nation

becomes entangled in such power in complex ways. In the seminar we will also reach up to contemporary Dalit visual culture, a reading that are in dialogue with twentieth century popular political art in India. Arguably, we might also want to consider how engagement with contemporary Dalit visual culture might have important bearings on political artistic expressions in Southeast Asia as well. The seminar will cover themes of gender, race, class, and caste, as embedded in popular culture. In addition, the seminar will also ask how our reading of art and political cultures of India and Southeast Asia might contribute to a different understanding of Euro-American social art history.

#### Primary Readings:

- Christopher Pinney, "The Politics of Popular Images: From Cow Protection to M. K. Gandhi," in *"Photos of the Gods": The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 105-145.
- Sanjukta Sunderason, "As Agitator and Organiser: Chittaprosad and Art for the Communist Party of India, 1941-48," *Object*, No. 13 (2011), 76-95.
- Kevin Chua, "Courbet after Sudjojono," *Art History* 41, no. 2 (2018): 293-317.
- Patrick Flores, "Social Realism: The Turns of a Term in the Philippines," *Afterall Journal* 34 (Autumn/Winter 2013): 62-75.

#### Additional Readings:

- Rahul Dev, "Framing Affect: Visual Representation of Dalits." *PhiN-Beiheft* 13 (2017): 198-219. (Special issue on "Distance and/or Close-up: Visuality, Community and Affect in Representations of History.")

### **Day 8 (Monday 8/19)**

#### **9:15AM-1PM Participant Presentations**

#### **2PM-4PM Elizabeth Giorgis seminar**

#### ***African art (continued from 8/13)***

#### Readings:

- Salah M. Hassan, "The Darkest Africa Syndrome and the Idea of Africa: Notes Toward a Global Vision of Africa and Its Modernist Practice," in *Diaspora Memory Place: David Hammons, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Pamela Z* (Munich: Prestel, 2008), 130-135.
- Elizabeth W. Giorgis, *Modernist Art in Ethiopia* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019). Introduction and Chapter Four: "Revolutionary Motherland or Death," 1-24, 184-246.
- Achille Mbembe, "The Aesthetics of Vulgarity" in *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 102-133.

### **7PM Public Program: Curating Place: A Conversation across Complex Geographies**

Louis Koo Cinema, Hong Kong Arts Centre (2 Harbour Rd, Wan Chai)

Panelists: Elizabeth Giorgis, Marie H  l  ne Pereira, Diana Campbell, Iftikhar Dadi, Inti Guerrero. Moderator: John Tain

This panel, featuring faculty from the [MAHASSA program](#) and other invited guests, explores how working with art can expand and undo inherited understandings of geography and borders. Drawing on their own experiences with projects in a variety of formats—including exhibitions and programs for museums, biennials, and galleries—and working from various vantage points, the speakers discuss their curatorial research, ideas and intersections with decolonial methodologies.

## **Day 9 (Tuesday 8/20)**

**9:15AM-1:00PM Participant Presentations**

**2PM-4PM Ming Tiampo seminar**

***Multiple, Intersecting, and Comparative Modernisms (Part II Worlding and Relational Comparison)***

This seminar builds upon the previous seminar that critiqued comparison and cultural mercantilism as two modes of presenting “global” modernism within Eurocentric art historical paradigms. This session suggests the importance of fundamentally reimagining our theoretical and epistemological practices and presents two new theoretical frameworks (Worlding and Relational Comparison) through exhibition case studies.

**READINGS:** Full PDFs of the materials are available, so that you can continue further study on your own if you are interested.

### Exhibition Case Studies:

*Views from Tokyo/Sao Paulo* (Tate Modern, 2016)

*Past Disquiet* (Sursock Museum, 2018)

- <https://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern/display/materials-and-objects/view-tokyo-between-man-and-matter>
- <https://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern/display/artist-and-society/view-sao-paulo-abstract-and-society>
- Kristine Khouri and Rasha Salti, *Past Disquiet* pamphlet.

### Theoretical Readings:

- Ming Tiampo, “Originality, Universality, and other Modernist Myths: A Response to the 2007 Stone Summer Theory Institute Seminars,” in *Globalization and Art*, eds. James Elkins, Alice S. Kim and Zhivka Valiavicharska (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 166-170.
- Pheng Cheah, “Introduction,” *What is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), focus on 5-19.
- Shu-mei Shih, “Comparison as Relation,” *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*, eds. Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 79-98 (Excerpt).

## **Conversation with Cosmin Costinas & Doryun Chong**

**4:30PM A Space, Asia Art Archive**

Doryun Chong is Deputy Director and Chief Curator at M+; Cosmin Costinas is Executive Director and Curator at Para Site. This conversation will be an occasion for MAHASSA participants to discuss with each of them about their views on their institutions—their missions and goals, as well as current and future projects.

## **Day 10 (Wednesday 8/21)**

**9:15AM-1PM: Participant Presentations**

**2PM: Iftikhar Dadi seminar and concluding session**

***Crafts and Decorative Arts***

### Primary Readings:

- Abigail S. McGowan, “‘All That Is Rare, Characteristic or Beautiful’ Design and the Defense of Tradition in Colonial India, 1851-1903,” *Journal of Material Culture* 10, no. 3 (November 1, 2005): 263-287.
- Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007), selections (focus on pp. 9-37).
- Moustafa Bayoumi, “Shadows and Light: Colonial Modernity and the *Grande Mosquée* of Paris,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 13, no. 2 (2000): 267-292.
- Shelly Errington, “Nationalizing the Pre-Columbian Past in Mexico and the United States,” in *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 161-187.

### Additional Readings:

- Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 41-58.
- Roger Benjamin, “Advancing the Indigenous Decorative Arts,” in *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 191-219.