



FOREWORD

A year from the outbreak of the novel corona virus, unprecedented shifts arising from the global pandemic have affected spheres of everyday life as commercial enterprises and the art world alike have to find new ways of working, relating, making meaning, and maintaining relevance.

The exhibition *In Our Best Interests: Afro-Southeast Asian Affinities during a Cold War* is ADM Gallery's contribution to the initiative, Proposals for Novel Ways of Being, which brings together 12 exhibitions and programmes featuring the artistic community's collective response to COVID-19. It is also one of the means of some of Singapore's arts and educational institutions to support artistic production during a time of uncertainty, through the collaborative efforts of various museums, art centres, and independent spaces. Emerging from this series of projects are issues, both immediate and far-reaching, ranging from themes of isolation, the impact on both everyday and marginal communities, the ensuing shifts in modes of art-making, and other repercussions, to name a few.

In Our Best Interests is unique in that it is a research-led exhibition conceived before the launch of the initiative. Curators Kathleen Ditzig and Carlos Quijon, Jr's inquiry into political endeavours that envision redefined territories of agency and autonomy in a post-imperial world seeks to draw out connections of mutual aspirations between Africa and Southeast Asia. The show highlights a different vein of collaboration in geopolitical terms, touching on the Maphilindo project of the 1960s as well as other pivotal events in the politics of the region that reveal how dialogue and exchange can thrive across cultural contexts despite limitations, and the complexities embedded within the schematics of solidarity and alliance.

The selection of artworks by Fyerool Darma, bani haykal, Ariko S. Ikehara, Eisa Jocson, Simon Soon (in collaboration with Munirah Mansoor), Vuth Lyno, Ming Wong, and Yee I-Lann provide a perspective, and manner of negotiation, with some of the underlying issues surrounding geopolitical contestations and the occlusion of histories related to this body of research.

As part of one of ADM Gallery's exhibition programming mission which presents contemporary art with research in the domain of the humanities and technology, the ADM Gallery is proud to present *In Our Best Interests* and contribute to the supporting of curatorial practices. The ADM Gallery would like to thank the curators and all participating artists of the exhibition, as well as National Gallery Singapore and Singapore Art Museum for spearheading the Novel Ways initiative, and KONNECT ASEAN and Silverlens Gallery for their support of the show.

Michelle Ho
Gallery Director

In Our Best Interests: Afro-Southeast Asian Affinities during a Cold War

In Our Best Interests: Afro-Southeast Asian Affinities during a Cold War expands the current discourses that shape the history and legacy of Afro-Asian solidarity by proposing Southeast Asia as a discursive and historical framework. Spread across two galleries, the exhibition presents contemporary artworks and archival materials that manifest shared imaginaries of global solidarities and regional affinities, and interrogates the historical contingencies that shaped these ideas and movements. In this conceptualisation, Southeast Asia becomes an exceptional coordinate that unravels claims to transregional solidarity within the expanded context of anti-colonial and anti-racist projects of world-making during the Cold War.

Two trajectories orient the course of the exhibition: the geopolitical and the geopoetic. On the one hand, the exhibition is attentive to how gestures of solidarity are situated within the material and cultural politics of the Cold War and its more insidious implications. Looking at lesser known aspects of Southeast Asian regional history, the exhibition problematises the pragmatic conditions of solidarity and regional history in this particular milieu. On the other, the exhibition allows more fictive and poetic imaginations to flourish and makes space for agentive interventions to become legible. These trajectories interweave, mesh, and simultaneously disclose the limits of solidarity while refusing a total disavowal of the agency inherent in dreaming beyond and through geography and politics.

In the first gallery, works by Yee I-Lann, Fyerool Darma, Simon Soon and Munirah Mansoor, and Ming Wong are presented, deploying logics of solidarity to interrogate their own terms. In both the works of Fyerool Darma and Simon Soon in collaboration with Munirah Mansoor, an iconographic repertoire

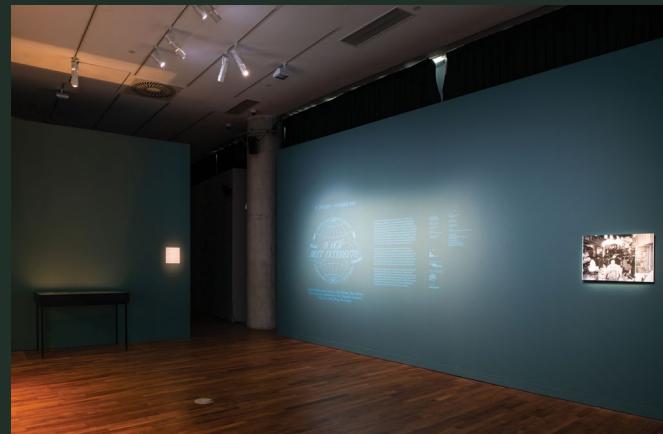
translates into shared grammars of imagination and speculation. The flags in Darma's *Flags for the Failed 1963 Maphilindo Confederation* (2021) and the series of *papan soerih* in Soon's *Papan Soerih Perhimpoenan Orang Melayoe* (2020) foreground the persistence of the faith in visual motifs to speak to, and to a greater extent constitute, a community based on the recognition of these languages.

Yee's mat and map reclaim the capacities of world- and community-building. Whereas in *Dusun Karaoke Mat: Ahaid zou noh doiti* (2020), it is song, space, and the labours of the land's people that engender affinities to place, in *Borneo Heart* (2021) it is place that animates affective structures of solidarity and community. By situating Borneo at the centre of the map and allowing the map to be bought and to circulate, the coordinates of belonging is also complicated and allowed to proliferate. The valences of iconography, place, and labour in crafting solidarities is also deployed in Wong's video-poem titled *Sumu Jappo / 手拉手 / Hand in Hand* (2019). In Wong's work however, these valences index disingenuous forms of influence made durable through Chinese aid. The difficult and uneasy aspects of ideas about solidarity that Wong addresses in this work is furthermore refracted by the works in the second gallery and its adjacent atrium.

The archival material and reproductions presented across the two galleries of the exhibition string the artworks and research projects into a loose historical constellation that covers the 1950s to 1990s and its contemporary resonances. Whereas the first gallery unpacks the affinities of Afro-Southeast Asia through Maphilindo (a proposed alliance comprising of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines from 1963), the second gallery focuses on broader historical trajectories of Afro-Southeast Asian affinities that stretch from the Cold War into the present. These affinities historically link Ariko S. Ikebara's *Sketches of Teryua Ar(t)chive* (2021), an artwork and community archive that unpacks the evolution of a 'black' district in

Okinawa that flourished in light of American Occupation; to bani haykal's "We are not satisfied to make noise" (2020) that considers Jazz as a medium of American cultural diplomacy associated with African American identity; to Vuth Lyno's three channel video 25 (2019) featuring interviews with the bi-racial children of African soldiers left behind by the United Nations Transitory Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC)'s peacekeeping project in 1992-1993; and to Eisa Jocson's *Passion of Darna* (2019) which uses a Tagalog cover of African American R&B artist Karyn White's song "I am not a superwoman" that speaks to the struggles of the contemporary Filipino domestic worker.

The interdependence of the pragmatic gesture and the poetic imagination in ideations of Afro-Southeast Asian solidarity is nowhere more apparent in this exhibition than the recurrence of song or music across the galleries. Music emerges simultaneously as an ideological tool framed by state propaganda and cultural diplomacy as well as a weapon of resistance through the voice of the marginalised and the minority. In bani's critique of Jazz to Jocson's redeployment of an R&B romantic ballad performed by an African American artist as anthem for the Filipino domestic worker, who becomes the face of the global subaltern, to Yee's weaving of karaoke-resistance-folk songs onto a communal mat, and finally to the Chinese and African folk songs sung in Mandarin by Senegalese students as part of a Mandarin speaking competition that form the soundtrack of Wong's video-poem; we see the refracted cultural resonances of postcolonial struggles carried in lyrics or music. They form an abstraction of a collective voice, a poetics of solidarity that continue to persist, offering hope despite a history of dreams that failed or were left unfulfilled.



Perspectives of Afro-Southeast Asian Affinities

To explicate the geopolitical and geopoetic lines of inquiry pursued in the exhibition, this publication not only presents the artworks and a selection of the archival material presented in *In Our Best Interests* but also offers two interdependent threads based on the geopolitics of Maphilindo and the long geopolitical history of colour by which one can navigate the exhibition.



The Colours of World-Making: Afro-Southeast Asian Affinities during a Cold War

“In Our Best Interests,” the title of the exhibition, is a quote from an encounter that the African American journalist Carl T. Rowan had with the Philippine Senator Claro M. Recto in 1954. Reporting it in his book *The Pitiful and the Proud* (1956), Rowan writes:

[Senator Recto] argued for the Philippines’ participation in the Asian-African conference, because “it is in the best interest of the Philippines to identify with Asians.” He talk[ed] of the need for a “solidarity with Asians” and welcome Africans into that circle.¹

From 1954 to 1955, Rowan traveled through India, Pakistan, and Southeast Asia as part of a cultural programme developed by the United States (US) State Department. He had lectured on journalism, spoken to presidents, cultural producers, and intellectuals, and attended the 1955 Bandung Conference.²

¹ Carl Thomas Rowan, *The Pitiful and the Proud* (New York: Random House, 1956), 376.

² The conference held in Indonesia from 18 to 24 April 1955 hosted 29 nations of Asia and Africa, and was described by Indonesian President Sukarno as “the first intercontinental conference of coloured peoples in the history of mankind.” The conference had sought to decrease polarisation between the two ideological poles of the Cold War.

The Cold War, the post World War II (WWII) competition for hegemony of the world between the then two atomic superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union had brought Rowan to the Philippines.³ As part of its cultural offensive, one of the key critiques that the Soviet Union levelled against the US was its policies of racial segregation. To counter this, the US State Department sent abroad African American cultural diplomats like Rowan, who was one of the most visible African American journalist in the US and known for his reportage of the Civil Rights movement, to evidence the achievements of African Americans and show that democracy enabled their work while building a cordial relation with new African and Asian nations.

Senator Recto on the other hand was the leader of the “Filipino-first” movement that was critical of US “neo-colonialism.” He advocated for neutrality in Philippine foreign relations and for economic independence from the US. In Southeast Asia, the Cold War was anything but cold as the region became a stage for a number of proxy conflicts informed by US aggressive foreign policy of ‘containing’ communism, resisting ‘left-nationalism’ and actively intervening into newly formed postcolonial states through aid or covert intervention, as we’ve come to learn in recent years about Indonesia’s communist purge in 1965.⁴ Domestic politics in the Philippines was dogged by its foreign policy and in particular, its relation to the US. Recto expressed to Rowan his worry that Filipinos were being called “American tools in the Asian countries.” Recto thought that Asian and racial pride were going to “become so strong no Asian will be able to stand the cries of ‘tool of the West’ or ‘traitor to your race.’” For Recto, an affinity to Asia and by extension Africa, was in the best interest of the Philippines as it would propel it away from the neocolonial clutches of the US.



The exhibition’s title mobilises this anecdote to speak to the historical negotiation and specifically the best interests that informed the formation of solidarity in the anti-colonial projects of the early Cold War. Moreover, this story reminds us how unstable identities like being “Asian” were and how the historical milieu of the Bandung Conference was not a vocabulary of the imagined community of the nation-state but rather one of broader horizons, a vista of breaking with a colonial past and present that could be encapsulated by the person, community or by affinity rather than by citizenship.

While the Cold War has often been thought of as an international war, it is more productive to think of it as a background condition. Recent scholarship on the Cold War in Southeast Asia has emphasised regional and local forces drawing on outside actors such as the US for their own ideological and material purposes rather than superpowers manipulating allies and proxies.⁵

Given this, why was race or rather the rhetorics of it so prominent in the discussion between Recto and Rowan? Race figured prominently into the complex historical dynamics of solidarity against the backdrop of the Cold War in part because overcoming (neo-)colonialism was inherently a project of world-making. Adom Getachew’s book *Worldmaking after Empire* (2019), which in part inspired this exhibition, argues that decolonisation was a project of reordering the world with a more egalitarian world order and that anti-colonial nationalism, rather than being about nation-states was about world-making.⁶ Self-determination was not achievable through the sovereignty of single states but through a re-ordering of the former ‘white’ imperial world because international

³ Typically dated from 1945 to 1991, the Cold War was experienced differently through out the world. The Cold War in Southeast Asia is ear marked from 1948 to the late 1970s.

⁴ See Vincent Bevins, *Jakarta Method: Washington’s Anticommunist Crusade and the Mass Murder Program That Shaped Our World* (New York: Public Affairs, 2021).

⁵ Karl Hack and Geoff Wade, “The origins of the Southeast Asian Cold War,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40, no. 3 (2009): 443.

⁶ Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

relations before WWII was determined by “race subjection,” another term for imperialism.⁷ In effect, the world that was being unmade was a world under the hegemony of whiteness.

In 1900 at the meeting of the Pan-African Congress in London, W. E. B. Du Bois, the African American historian diagnosed the problem of the 20th century as that of the “color line,” what he defines as “the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.” By 1910, though, Du Bois noted that “the discovery of personal whiteness” was a subjective identification that crossed national borders and shaped global politics. Whiteness as much as it was a racial vocabulary was not wholly about ethnicity. DuBois stated emphatically: “Whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen.”⁸

As Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds note in *Drawing the Global Colour Line* (2008), whiteness was a defensive if not defiant position that responded to the “rising power of...the black and yellow races”⁹ that accompanied the mass immigration of empire. In rationalising the suppression of these races, ‘White countries’ prided themselves as having ‘ascendant democratic politics’ and a unique genius for self-government.

Whites ruled and the coloured races were ruled. It was this transnational whiteness of the 19th and 20th century that inspired international movements of resistance, such as pan-African and pan-Asian alliances that directly fed into the Bandung Conference in 1955

and which is a spectral concept (and not ethnicity) that haunts this exhibition and the contemporary art works that it presents. If whiteness was imperial power, how could colour be re-conceptualised as postcolonial power and thus bring about a more equal world?

For Getachew, the way postcolonial states believed they could do this was through regional federations and pan-African imaginations. The region was a necessary strategy of overcoming the postcolonial predicament of unequal power by creating larger, more diverse domestic markets, organising collective development plans and ensuring recognition of self-determination. Her observations, as the exhibition gestures at, might be productively applied to imaginations of Southeast Asia. The region, whether Africa or Southeast Asia, as a configuration of solidarity created new political and economic linkages between postcolonial states. These linkages would erode the influence of Cold War and imperial frameworks that subordinated postcolonial states on the international stage.

By the period of the 1950s and 1960s, which this exhibition partially focuses on, anti-racism was effectively also anti-colonialism and the postcolonial states that sort to re-make the world intentionally employed vocabularies of anti-racism to form more expansive solidarities that could connect Africa and Southeast Asia, as regions joined by the shared project of overcoming their histories and present realities of colonialism. As Rowan describes his initial reaction to Southeast Asia: “Southeast Asia is mankind aroused, trying to shake off the shackles of a long and unloved past.”¹⁰ Rhetorics of colour and the pursuit of solidarity in Bandung or through Afro-Southeast Asian affinities becomes a cipher in the pursuit of the best interests of these new nations—a new international order.

⁷ Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 1.

⁸ As quoted in Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-2.

From the anecdote it quotes to the archival material and artworks on display, *In Our Best Interests* in part focuses on the resonances of the Cultural Cold War, the “cultural diplomacy between the blocs, and within them, in areas outside what is ostensibly the direct state and governmental ambit, whether in the field of high culture (literature, the arts, music) or popular culture (television, pop and rock music, films).”¹¹ Through this lens, the exhibition focuses on the creation of translocal communities and minorities that were the material byproducts of the aspirations of Afro-Asian and Afro-Southeast Asian solidarities and the endeavour during the Cold War to birth a fairer world of ‘colour.’

However, the artworks in this exhibition are not historical illustrations, rather they are interlocutors of this history, speaking to the contemporary resonances and personal impressions that these global dreams have made and complicating the different historical turns in which colour and identity have been employed to serve different interests.

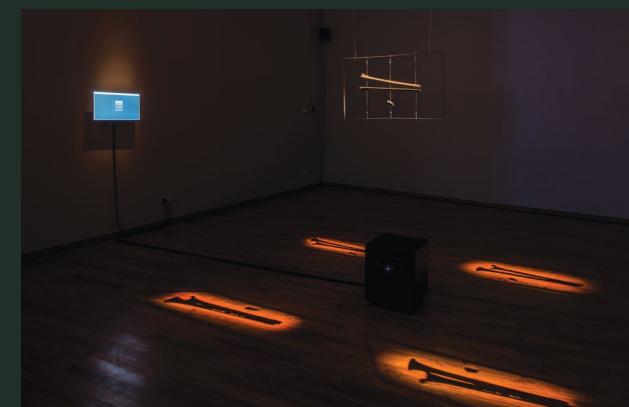
While Ariko S. Ikebara’s *Sketches of Teruya Ar(t)chive* illustrates possibilities of an ideal post-racial communities that emerged in the shadow of American occupation built by individuals, Vuth Lyno’s 25 speaks to the personal price paid for the United Nations’s ‘progressive’ world-making.

Ming Wong’s ethnographic film *Sunu Jappo / 手拉手 / Hand in Hand* (2019) unpacks the stakes of Senghor’s Museum of Black Civilisations finally being built because of Chinese aid in 2018.

Eisa Jocson’s *Passion of Darna* reframes the appropriation of African American R&B artist Karyn’s White “I am not a superwoman” ballad to articulate the struggles of the contemporary Filipino

domestic worker. Reading this work against the other material in the exhibition, one can see a speculative link that binds the migrant worker to the historical affective identities of colour and struggle.

Through the displayed artworks, the exhibition attends to the cultural consciousness that arose out of the interplay of big histories of states and the small histories of an individual life speaking to the ‘best interests’ that colour how we find, dream, and sing of solidarity today.



¹¹ Patrick Major and Rana Mitter, “Culture,” in *Palgrave Advances in Cold War History*, ed. Saki R. Dockrill and Gearing Hughes (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 240-1.

Compelling Coordinates: Maphilindo and Afro-Southeast Asia Geopoetics



After a trip to the United States for the memorial of John F. Kennedy in December 1963, Philippine president Diosdado Macapagal visited Libya, Tanganyika (part of present-day Tanzania), Madagascar, and Kenya. It was a trip motivated by diplomacy and goodwill to the newly sovereign states, and a strategy to field for votes should the Philippine claim to Sabah prosper in the tribunal of the United Nations. Addressing the necessity of the trip, Macapagal remarks: “The African continent, like Asia itself, has long been a large fact in the geography of the World, but it is only in more recent times that the human implications of its geographic fact is beginning to be acknowledged as of political significance.”¹ Furthermore, he explains: “Yet between ours and the societies of the rest of Asia and of Africa are obvious common givens of historical circumstances. This, and the present situation of our political status is compelling enough, on our part, to make common cause and collaborate on general schemes with societies and peoples beyond the national geography.”²

Salient in Macapagal’s imagination is a geopoetic urgency that interrogates the factuality of both Africa and Asia—as coherently imagined geographies and fixed entities that share “common givens of historical circumstances.” In nominating this urgency as geopoetic, we take note of how it opens up the relationship between Africa and Asia to poetic interventions shaped by place and circumstance. In Macapagal’s explanation, geography is granted political significance as it is animated by “human implications” and a

recognition that in the context of this moment during the Cold War, the present situation of Asia becomes “compelling enough...to make common cause and collaborate on general schemes” with people beyond the ambit of the nation.

We start by parsing this sentiment in order to elaborate an imaginative latitude for reconfiguring the current discourses that shape the history and legacy of Afro-Asian solidarity, formalised in the 1955 Bandung Conference, by way of Southeast Asia regionalism. Macapagal is a crucial figure in this narrative, a history that troubles the typical tenors that have shaped how we understand ideas of solidarity and sovereign self-determination. In this conceptualisation, Southeast Asia becomes an exceptional coordinate that unravels claims to transregional solidarity and speculates upon the possibilities of a post-imperial world order.

In prospecting a shift from Afro-Asia to Afro-Southeast Asia, the exhibition *In Our Best Interests: Afro-Southeast Asian Affinities during a Cold War* constellates a different set of contexts that redefine how we have come to understand the terms of transregional solidarity. Considering the altered citations³ of Southeast Asia regionalism, the exhibition posits Maphilindo (an amalgamation of then Malaya, Philippines, and Indonesia), an imagination of Southeast Asia regionalism based on a pan-Malayan ethnos, as a way to map out certain coordinates and trajectories that elaborate on the complex dynamics of solidarity in the context of Cold War politics. Maphilindo situates solidarity well within the multiple interfacings of neo-colonial entanglements of sovereignty and an imagination of a post-Cold War world order by way of the United Nations, both of which unfold here in the context of a compelling geopoetic imagination of pan-Malayan worldmaking.



¹ Diosdado Macapagal, “Report on United States and Africa Trip,” in *Fullness of Freedom: Speeches and Statements of President Diosdado Macapagal*, vol. IV (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1965), 162.

³ See Prasenjit Duara, *Asia Redux: Conceptualizing a Region for Our Times* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).

The aspiration for solidarity is set against more pragmatic concerns of sovereign self-determination, diplomacy, enduring trappings of colonial and imperial relations, and even the traumatic experience of war. Surely, the milieu of the Cold War exposes the limits of the optimism that inheres in discourses of solidarity. However, there is also the same tendency to skim over the complexity of these contexts in favor of more pessimistic interpretations. The exhibition points us away from idealisations and simple dismissals of Afro-Asian solidarity and towards disperse alignments structured by anticolonial and antiracist interventions that elaborate a “common cause” between Africa and Southeast Asia. Writing about the specificities of the relationship of Africa and Southeast Asia in 1965, ten years after the Bandung conference, for example, American social scientist Fred R. von der Mehden argues that “[a]side from Indonesia, relations between Africa and Southeast Asia remain sparse, sporadic and unspectacular.”⁴ He discovers that it is only within the United Nations that constant interaction between the two regions was most apparent. He explains that “[w]ithin the U.N. there has been a mutual interest expressed in the regional problems of the respective areas”:

African delegates spoke, but did not always vote unanimously, on Southeast Asian issues such as the West Irian and Malaysian issues. At the same time Southeast Asian states have spoken in support of the independence of the former French North African colonies and have entered the debate on the Congo. Southeast Asian governments have also sent troops to Africa on U.N. peace-keeping missions in the Congo and Gaza strip. However, no special relationship appears to have emerged between Southeast Asia and the new African states other than one based on the fact that they are all “underdeveloped states” with certain common problems.⁵

This account by von der Mehden is important in foregrounding the fraught nature of the affinities that the exhibition extrapolates upon. This is further fleshed out by an exchange between African American writer Richard Wright and local intellectuals in Indonesia during his visit for the Bandung Conference. While most accounts of the Afro-Asian conference in Bandung focus on the aspirational rhetorics of Third World international solidarity, Dutch Indonesian writer Beb Vuyk’s account offers a more intimate account of Wright’s visit. Written in 1960, it is also one of the few accounts written about Bandung that has been by a woman. She narrates a series of exchanges between Indonesian intellectuals and Wright that evoke a sense of unease particularly about ideas of colour and colonialism. While Wright sees in the discourse of colour a surefooted source of solidarity, the group of Indonesian intellectuals identify “shared colonial past as a tie stronger than color.” An exchange between Indonesian novelist Mochtar Lubis and Wright proves compelling in this regard:

[Wright] went quiet for a moment, and then said, “What do you think is the most important fact of this century, from a historical point of view?”

“The liberation of the colonies,” answered Mochtar without hesitation.

...

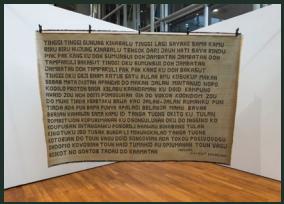
“Mochtar, do you think the shared colonial past is a tie stronger than color?” I asked.

“Of course. The peoples of Asia and Africa have all been colonized in one way or another. They all gained their freedom in the same period, and they all have the same problems to solve.”⁶



⁴ Fred R. von der Mehden, “Southeast Asian Relations with Africa,” *Asian Survey* 5, no. 7 (July 1965): 349.

What Vuyk's essay captures is the complexity of the colonial experience outside what Wright would discern as the "color curtain," or what Vuyk describes as the writer's "black-and-white view of the world."⁷ The essay captures the limits of this racialism as rubric of solidarity, especially in the context of Southeast Asia, wherein what becomes the simplistic monochrome of Wright's worldview is refracted by a history of colonialism that knows no sympathy to colour.



Indeed, the history and legacy of Afro-Asian solidarity would require sensitive and competent framings as its coordinates are specified. The history of Maphilindo, for one, would be imagined differently from the perspective of the national history of the Philippines, will definitely be different from how someone from Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, or Sabah would imagine it. This history will definitely be understood differently by someone from Congo or Uganda or Madagascar. For Macapagal, Maphilindo might be a productive way to consolidate regional influence, but for the people of Sabah it might be a history of armed border conflict or annexation. We yield from this approach a truly postcolonial history, wherein the colonial implications are not marvellously resolved but instead are continuously engaged with.

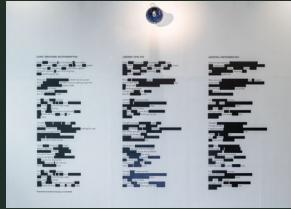
Established in July 1963, Maphilindo plays out the promise of regional solidarity imagined in Bandung. Filipino diplomat and Bandung delegate Carlos P. Romulo traces the continuity from Bandung to Maphilindo as one of the "effort of the emergent countries of Asia and Africa to come to a formulation of their common cause was eloquently expressed."⁸ Within the framework of this exhibition, Afro-Asian connection finds a sharper articulation and assumes a more refractory capacity in Maphilindo. As Romulo argues: "The significance of Maphilindo is that it

opens the actuality of closer relations between nations of Malayan origin. Through this process of greater interaction and political consultations (musjawarah) the device of colonial interests of fomenting discord is checked: the national awareness of each country actually will feed on the fact of mutual interest..."⁹ For him, the confederation articulates the "actuality of a united world" shaped by "a new intellectual relation" needed to reconfigure the "outmoded...observations of the past colonial strategies and motivations in the politics of Asia."¹⁰

The early 1960s saw the consolidation of discourses on Malayan solidarity. Borneo assumes a crucial role in this milieu as it plays out the limits and excesses of this configuration in relation to how issues of regionality and region-formation are framed. Sabah, in particular, becomes a site of confrontation meshed in diplomatic relations and mired in armed antagonisms: in 1962, the Philippines staked its claims to the territory against British colonial power which led to a meeting between the two states in 1963 in London; in 1963, armed conflict sparked in Sabah led by "freedom fighters" encouraged by Indonesian state propaganda against the establishment of Malaysia, branding it as a British neo-colonial ploy and with Indonesia empowering their armed offensive via covert military aid.¹¹ This armed conflict and propaganda was enshrined in Indonesian President Sukarno's policy of *Konfrontasi*, which aimed to forestall, if not prevent, the formation of Malaysia. In January to February 1964, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew traveled to 17 African states to explain the formation of Malaysia and its conflict with Indonesia. These itineraries point to how Africa becomes a crucial coordinate in the unravelling of the Cold War's bipolar world order.

⁷ Ibid., 808.

⁸ Carlos P. Romulo, "From Bandung to Maphilindo," in *Mission to Asia: The Dialogue Begins* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1964), 98.



The aspirations of Maphilindo and its eventual collapse under the weight of Cold War politics elaborate on these complexities. While Maphilindo optimistically staked Malayan exceptionalism and a Third World politics that attempted to reconfigure Cold War world order, it was faced by diplomatic shortcomings, armed violence, and border conflicts, thus proving to be short-lived. While the confederation allowed for regional alignments and the consolidation of regional political power, anxieties brought about by the threat of communism on one hand, and neo-colonial implications rendered the organisation especially precarious.

The exhibition inaugurates this particular moment in Southeast Asia regionalism as a framework in mapping out the intricate entanglement of diplomacy, neo-colonialism, and sovereign self-determination to interrogate the legacies of the Afro-Asia movement and the discourses of inter- and transregional solidarity. In the theater of Cold War politics, how does one foreground the compelling imaginations of agency, affinity, solidarity, while simultaneously taking into account the insidious instrumentalisations of the imperial world order, which remained durable in this climate of self-determination and sovereign empowerment? How would reconsidering the coordinates of solidarity bring us to more vital trajectories of agency, shared grammars of self-determination, and more sympathetic urgencies with which to reconsider the history of solidarity, keen on refusing both the complete foreclosure of a local, geopoetic agency and intelligence, nor the total disavowal of neo-colonial entanglements and how they substantially altered the Southeast Asian lifeworld and the way it relates to other articulations of regionalisms?

By simultaneously problematising the limits of solidarity and accounting for the persistence of its aspirations, the exhibition highlights these imaginations' fictive and contingent nature. In doing so, we foreground how agencies become geopoetic and elude becoming mere instrument or implication. From masonic rituals and iconographies that create communities, a map and a mat that reconfigure and reclaim how affinities are imagined, fabrications that imagine contemporary articulations of Maphilindo, to archival materials that speak to history and speculation, the works of the artists in this exhibition play out the complexity of ideas of solidarity in this exemplary milieu.

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Nyai

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Hospital Kuala Lumpur

Malaya



Fyerool Darma
(featuring Efund, tatteredemalion, Fridip
and Exoducks from reddit r/vexxilology)
Flags for the failed 1963 Maphilindo Confederation
2020

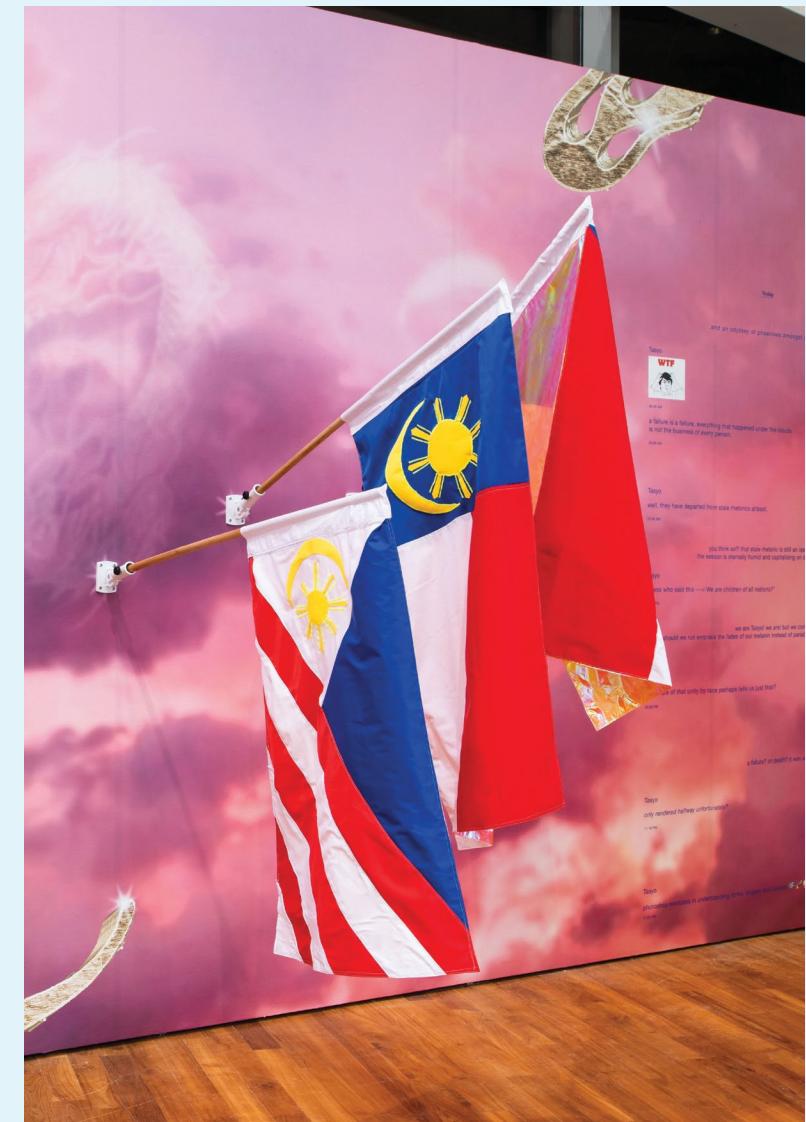
Artist textiles, thread, wood, aluminium, and vinyl on wall
Variable Dimensions

Three flags are triumphantly presented in this installation alongside a text that narrates an imagined text message exchange between the fictional character Don Anastacio (from Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*, 1887) and Nyai Ontosoroh (from Ananta Pramoedya's *Bumi Manusia*, 1980)

Each flag is a different imagination of national representation of Maphilindo that Fyerool found on the internet. Each flag is "fan art" imagined by an amateur artist with a utopian imagination of this short-lived solidarity between Malaysia, and the Philippines, and Indonesia, which officially lasted a month in 1963 and fell apart with Indonesian President Sukarno's policy of *Konfrontasi*.

Konfrontasi (1963–1966) was the stance adopted by Sukarno in relation to his opposition to the formation of the Federation of Malaysia consisting of Singapore, Malaya, Sarawak, and North Borneo (Sabah). This involved an openly hostile take against Malaysia's independence seeing it as a British neo-colonial ploy involving a diplomatic forestalling of the formation of the Federation within the context of Maphilindo negotiations and an unceasing military offensive in the frontier of Northern Borneo and covert military aid to Borneo "freedom fighters." Maphilindo is generally viewed as an idealistic, failed dream for a pan-Malayan Southeast Asian regionalism.

Fyerool critically gestures towards the limitations and lapses of a historical idealism mobilised to address contemporary disenfranchisement. Why does the internet warrior of today wistfully return to this failed dream through the creation of flags and markers of sovereignty? Fyerool's selection of flags, which he painstakingly sews together to manifest the labouring over of this ideal, speaks to the contemporary resonance and muddling of this history. The seemingly celebratory presentation of the flags ironically asks the question, what do people remember of Maphilindo, and perhaps, the more implicit and important question, why does this contentious history continue to resonate.





Friday, 22 July 2020

Tasyo
ideas wither Nyai
osses

Nyai O.
unlike death tasyo, it lingers like the scent of a burning clove
06:00 AM

only with time, the scent returns
06:00 AM

Tasyo

06:00 AM

linger, dormant, dead or never existed?

I was drifting amidst this cloud, and found this...



Nyai O.

06:00 AM

Nyai O.
06:00 AM



Today

Nyai O.

and an odyssey of phoenixes amongst others gathered from that failure
06:00 AM



06:00 AM

a failure is a failure, everything that happened under the clouds
is not the business of every person.
06:00 AM

Nyai O.

interwoven
07:00 AM

Tasyo
well, they have departed from stale rhetorics atlast.
07:09 AM

Nyai O.

you think so?! that stale rhetoric is still an issue even more relevant in this time,
the season is eternally humid and capitalising on differences only feeds the piranhas!
12:10 PM

Tasyo
Guess who said this -->'We are children of all nations?'
01:43 PM

Nyai O.

we are Tasyo! we are! but we constantly skid through the problems,
should we not embrace the fades of our melanin instead of parading our differences as a currency?
02:02 PM

Tasyo
the failure of that unity by race perhaps tells us just that?
08:08 PM

Nyai O.

a failure? or death? it was an idea, an aspiration nonetheless!
10:11 PM

Tasyo
only rendered halfway unfortunately?
11:18 PM

Nyai O.

what are these flags for them?
11:30 PM

Tasyo
photoshop exercises in understanding forms, shapes and colours 🌈😊😊😊
11:58 PM

Nyai O.

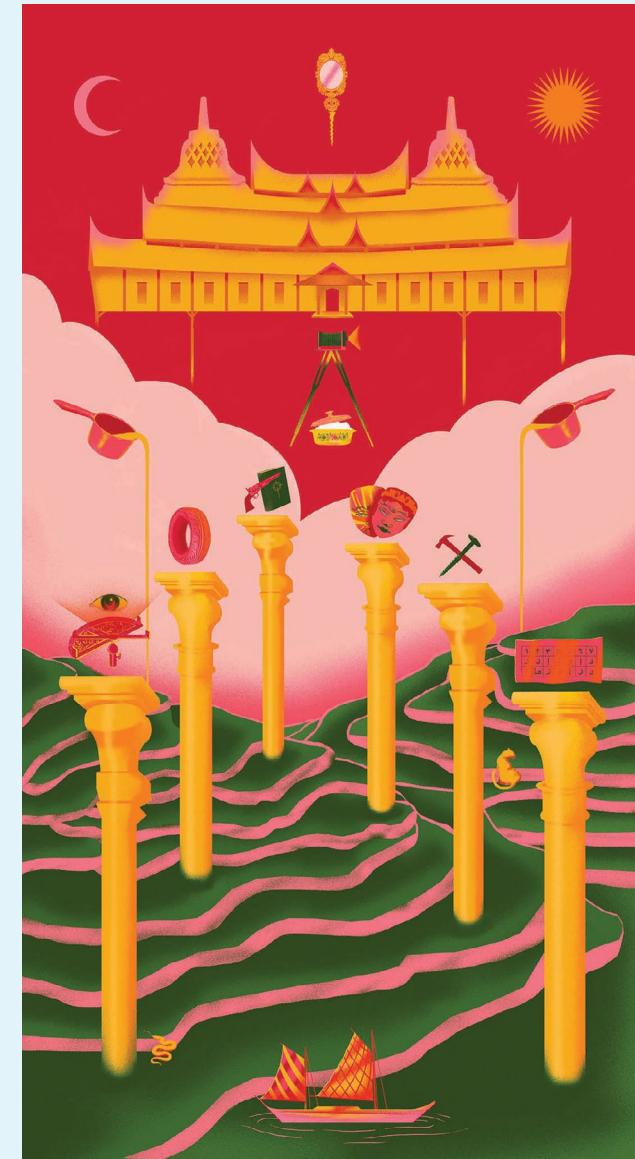
Simon Soon (in collaboration with Munirah Mansoor)
Papan Soerih Perhimpoenan
Orang Melayoe
2021

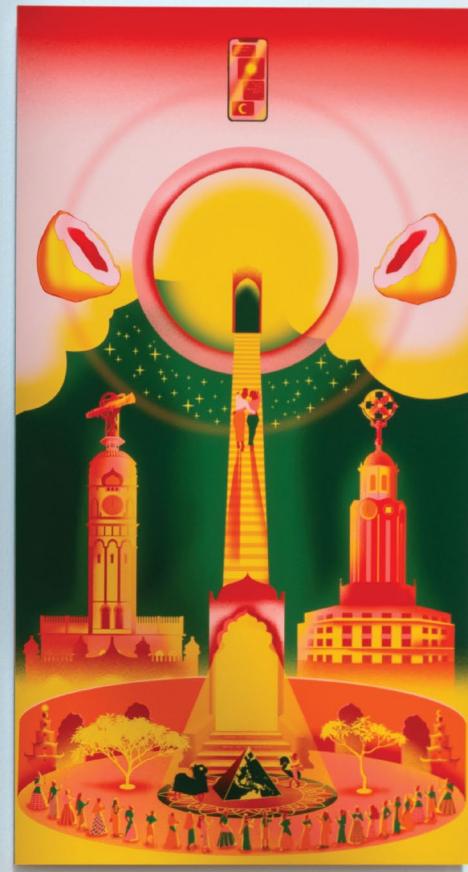
Digital print on paper
3 panels of 45cm x 84.1cm

The *Papan Soerih* are illustrations of the various symbols and emblems that make up the three grades in this exercise to reimagine an archive of the *Perhimpoenan Orang Melayoe*, founded sometime in the early 1930s by Wenceslao Q. Vinzons as a masonic organisation following from a speech that he delivered on 12 February 1932 at the 20th Annual Oratorical Contest of the College of Law, University of Philippines. In his speech he appealed for a Pan-Malayan unity that spans the Malay Archipelago and the Pacific islands, arguing, “when we in the vision of United State work in concert to adopt a common language and overcome our frailties, so that by our renewed racial vitality we may give birth to a new nationalism, that of Malaysia redeemed.”

While not much is known about the *Perhimpoenan Orang Melayoe*, surviving accounts spoke of the organisation drawing inspiration from freemasonry and even elected a ‘Sumatran prince’ as its vice president. The *Perhimpoenan* also adopted the Malay language as the ceremonial language for all its rituals. Inspired by masonic tracing boards, each of the three *papan soerih* corresponds to a rank in the graded hierarchies of the *Perhimpoenan*. Meant to be read from the right to left like a jawi manuscript, they serve as teaching aids during the initiation rituals of the *Perhimpoenan*, taking the postulant on a journey of cultural discovery and political awakening.

Like masonic tracing boards, they contain symbols and concepts related to the Vinzon’s vision, serving as object lessons to help impart esoteric knowledge. Drawn primarily from art historical and visual cultural references of the Malay world, the tracing board imagines a mnemosyne atlas of ‘*Melayoe*,’ exploring not only its cosmopolitan resources but also offering a new gendered reading into these resources as they are reassembled into a new body of occult knowledge.





Yee I-Lann
Borneo Heart
2021

Off-set print, printed at
Sabah State Government Printers
59.4cm x 84.1cm

Borneo Heart is a poster map of the world that literally places Borneo at the center of Southeast Asian regionalism and world-making. The early 1960s saw the consolidation of discourses on Malayan solidarity, with the formalization of Maphilindo, a short-lived confederation of then Malaya, the Philippines, and Indonesia based on a pan-Malayan ethnos. Borneo assumes a central role in this milieu, as it plays out the limits and excesses of this configuration in relation to discourses of sovereignty, neo-colonialism, and communism, and how these frame issues of regionality and region-formation.

Sabah, in particular, becomes a site of confrontation that deployed diplomacy and armed conflict: In 1962, the Philippines staked its claims to the territory against the British colonial power which led to a meeting between the two states in 1963 in London wherein both states framed the issue of Sabah within diplomatic relations and the impinging threat of communism in the region. In 1963, armed conflict sparked in Sabah led by “freedom fighters” encouraged by Indonesian state propaganda against the establishment of Malaysia branding it as a British neo-colonial ploy and empowering their armed offensive via covert military aid.

This armed conflict and propaganda is enshrined in Indonesian President Sukarno’s policy of *Konfrontasi*, which aimed to forestall, if not prevent, the formation of Malaysia. *Borneo Heart* speaks to this history and the centrality of Borneo in Cold War Southeast Asian regionalism. While ADM gallery is not a commercial art gallery, the poster is available for sale because its sale is an important conceptual aspect of the work intended by the artist. As a commodity, the circulation of the work gestures at the economic stakes that define how narratives and images can disseminate, if not proliferate.

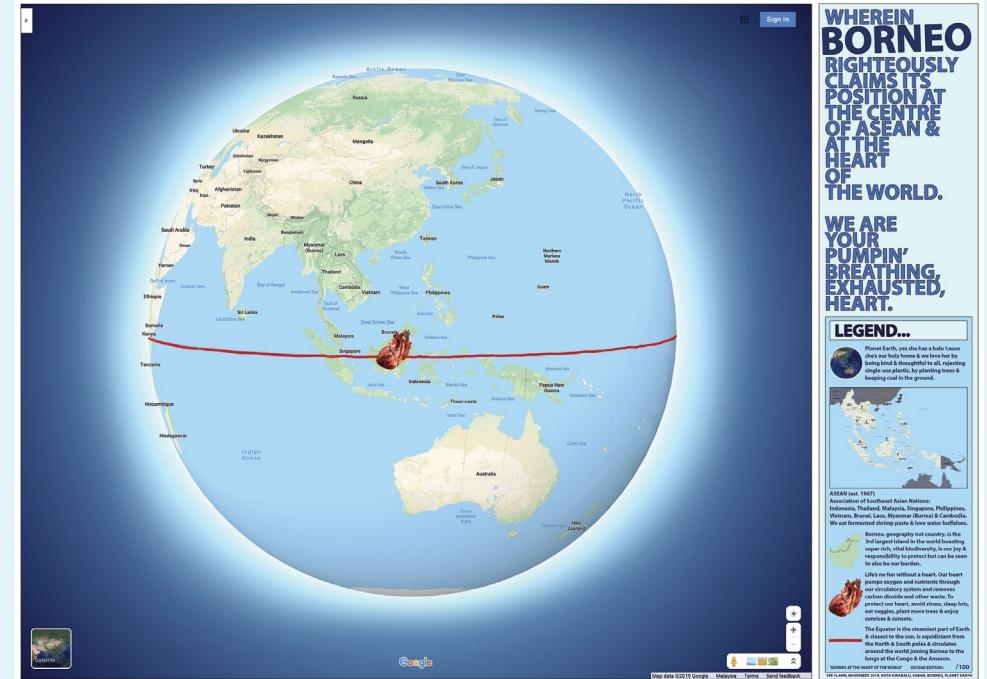


Image courtesy of the artist

Yee I-Lann
(with weaving by Lili Naming, Siat Yanau and
Shahrizan Bin Juin at Kampung Dangulad, Keningau, Sabah
in tribute to popular songs by Sabahan lyricists)

*Dusun Karaoke Mat:
Ahaid zou noh doiti*
2020

Split bamboo pus, black natural 'Kayu uber' dye, matt sealant
221cm x 317.5cm



Yee I-Lann with weaving by Lili Naming, Siat Yanau and Shahrizan Bin Juin at
Kampung Dangulad, Keningau, Sabah in tribute to popular songs by Sabahan lyricists

Dusun Karaoke Mat: Ahaid zou noh doiti is a collaboration between Yee and indigenous weavers in Sabah, a northern Borneo state in Malaysia. It is made by the Dusun and Murut communities from Keningau, an interior district known for rebellion against colonial rule and resistance to join the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 in light of their ambition for self-rule and independence. The woven mat called *tikar* in Malay, *tikam* (Kadazan), *galum* (Dusun Liwan), *apin* (Murut) is a functional egalitarian object that enables people to commune. When laid out, the *tikar* becomes a place for social gatherings; when hung, it becomes a object that functions like a billboard, recounting the histories and narratives of a community. *Dusun Karaoke Mat: Ahaid zou noh doiti* gathers lyrics from Kadazan Dusun popular songs which are woven together using bamboo pus into a mat. Yee has lamented that although she has lost the Kadazan language of her grandmother's tongue through the political manipulations of the Federal nation-state, these songs act as populist resistance anthems and as linguistic portals or mnemonic triggers to an aural tone she considers part of her genetic memory.

The mat in *Dusun Karaoke Mat: Ahaid zou noh doiti* materializes a communal mode of meaning-making by way of the locally cultivated craft, the artisans that continue this tradition, on the one hand; and, the vitality and the poetic constitution of senses of community by way of popular media, on the other.

Ming Wong

Sunu Jappo / 手拉手 / Hand in Hand

2019

Single channel video, costume made of printed fabric,
transcriptions of speech by the Chinese President
14:36 min

Sunu Jappo / 手拉手 / Hand in Hand is a video-poem that sees the artist take on the persona of a cultural ambassador revisiting the sites of Sino-Senegalese ‘friendship’ built with China aid.

Inspired by the 2018 opening of the Museum of Black Civilisations, Wong organised a research trip with the Chinese curators Xia Yanguo from Beijing and Enoch Cheng from Hong Kong to Senegal under the auspices of Goethe Institute’s project ‘Migration Narratives in East and Southeast Asia’ in 2018/2019. The museum, a symbol of decolonisation and of Black identity was first proposed by the poet Leopold Sedar Senghor, who served as the first president of Senegal (1960 - 1980), as part of his vision of a postcolonial pan-Africanism. While Senghor believed that culture was at the heart of development, his museum was only accomplished 50 years later with China’s aid.

While recalling the form of televised trips by cultural delegates between Africa and Southeast Asia (as presented in this exhibition), Wong’s video, unlike such political performances, is reflexive of its ‘anthropological’ gaze and the position of a Chinese cultural ambassador surveying a client state and ‘Other’ culture.

Wong describes the video as “a tribute to Trinh T. Minh-ha’s positioning against the colonising gaze: “I do not intend to speak about; just speak nearby”. Trinh T. Minh-ha made her first film, *Reassemblage* (1982), in Senegal.

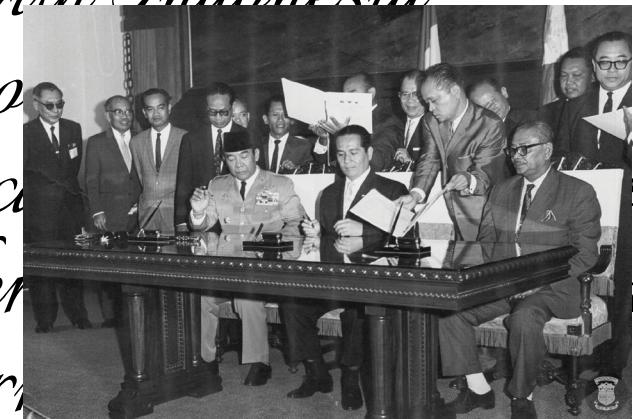
Unscripted and made without any explicit narrative, the video is constructed from fragments of sounds and images that Wong collected with the two curators. The video’s soundtrack of a Senegalese student’s Chinese speech competition, Wong’s camera capturing a banner that states the museum “re-reads the past in consideration of new configurations”, and children rushing to shake Wong’s hand are all chance encounters that constitute the video.

While Wong’s video illustrates the negotiation of gazes and performances that underlie cultural diplomacy, Wong’s cultural ambassador is also a cipher gesturing at the historical trajectories that are being re-mobilised today. Beyond being home to the Museum of Black Civilisations, Senegal was the first West African country to join the Chinese government’s One Belt One Road Initiative and the first stop for President Xi Jinping’s tour of Africa in 2018.



Image courtesy of the artist

Two trips to Africa in the 1960s elaborate on possible trajectories for Afro-Southeast Asian affinities: Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal's trip in December 1963, after his visit to the United States to meet John F. Kennedy, to field for votes should be raised to the level of the United Nations; Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's visit to 17 African countries in January 1964 for the Malaysian Mission to gauge work about the status of Singapore, the formation of Malaysia, and its conflict with Indonesia. Motivated by diplomatic strategy, the two important role the newly sovereign African states in unravelling of a post-imperial world order of equally sovereign states (here in the form of the United Nations) would be decisive in issues of international concern.



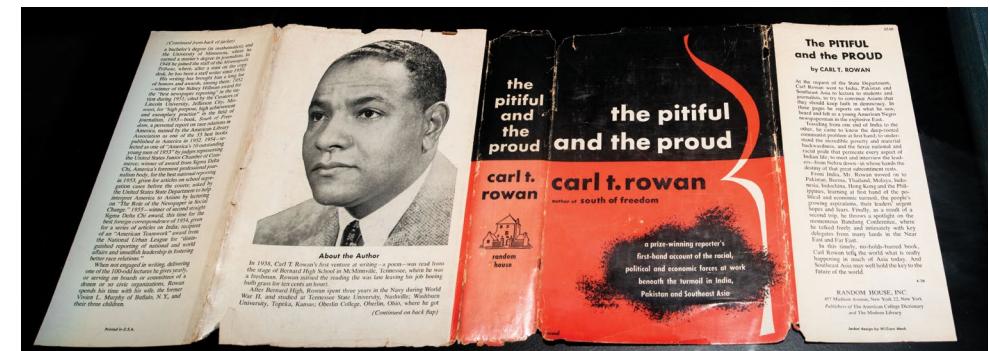
Portrait of Huey Newton,
Black Panther Party's founder
and Minister of Defense,
seated on a peacock chair
1967
Reproduction
45.7cm x 30.5cm



The Peacock chair, also known as the Manila chair, is a single-seat chair with an oversized backrest that resembles a fully fanned peacock's tail. It is made of rattan, a pliable reed harvested from a palm indigenous to the Malay world. It is woven into baskets and chairs, mostly as furniture for export. At some point it was known as "manila," after the Philippine capital where perhaps most of rattan furniture comes from. One account historicizes the production of the chair within the penitentiary system of the Philippines with jailed criminals being tasked to weave home furnishings. In this iconic portrait taken in 1967, Black Panther Party founder and Minister of Defense Huey Newton is seen seated on a Peacock chair. The Black Panther Party is an anti-police brutality political organization led by African American students and founded in 1966 in Oakland. He is framed on either side by what annotators have identified as "traditional African shields." There is a zebra carpet on the floor. In his right hand he holds a rifle, on his left is a spear. The chair resembles a throne, his gait regal, the objects surrounding him evoking power and violence. The Peacock chair participates in this iconography that recalls conventional representations of African culture—at once regal and unfamiliar, exotic.

The Cold War was defined by a competition between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union and their competing ideologies of communism and democracy. After World War II and in light of the civil rights movement in the US in the 1950s, one of the key critiques that the Soviet Union leveled against the US was its policies of racial segregation. To counter this narrative, the State department mobilized African American artists, musicians, journalists, and cultural producers through cultural exchange programmes as diplomats of American democracy. One of these individuals was the journalist, Carl T. Rowan, who would later work for the Kennedy and Lyndon-Johnson presidencies, and would in 1964 become the first African American director of the United States Information Agency, the administrators of American Cold War cultural diplomacy. In 1954 and 1955, Rowan would travel through Southeast Asia meeting cultural producers and nation-builders and attend the Bandung Conference of 1955.

Book Jacket, *The Pitiful and the Proud*
Carl T. Rowan
1956
Random House, New York





Africa Understands Malaysia

Photo News

Thursday, 27 February 1964, No 120

Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection,

Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Accession No. PO2615/2001

50cm x 33.3cm

From 21 January to 27 February 1964, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, having been selected by Malaysia's Prime Minister, Tengku Abdul Rahman, led a 12-member delegation comprising Chief Ministers of Sarawak and Sabah and other ministers on the Malaysia Mission to Africa. They visited 17 African states (including Egypt, Tunisia, Mali, Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanganyika and Madagascar) to explain the formation of Malaysia and its conflict with Indonesia. Maphilindo was in part based on a critique of the formation of Malaysia being a neocolonial British ploy. The Malaysia Mission evidenced the importance of the affirmation of African nations of Malaysia's federation-building project. As the poster *Africa Understands Malaysia* notes the trip was successful in turning African states such as Algeria and Mali to Malaysia's side. The poster notes the different words of support offered by African nations.

The year 1963 was an exceptional moment for the consolidation of discourses surrounding pan-Malayan political imaginations. In January 1963, Philippine Vice President Emmanuel Pelaez went to London and met with officials of the United Kingdom to discuss claims to Sabah, which was then part of the British colony. In August 1963, Maphilindo, a pan-Malayan confederation composed of then Malaya, the Philippines, and Indonesia, was formalized. The confederation proved short-lived as Indonesian President Sukarno rallied against the establishment of the Federation of Malaysia, which for him was a strategic neo-colonial ploy by the British to ensure their influence in the region. In December 1963, after a trip to the United States for the memorial of John F. Kennedy, Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal visited Libya, Tanganyika (part of present day Tanzania), Madagascar, and Kenya as a gesture of goodwill and a strategy to field for votes should the Philippine claim to Sabah prosper in the tribunal of the United Nations. These moments sketch out the intricate entanglements of claims to pan-Malayan solidarity in the context of neo-colonial anxieties and geopolitical pressures.

Indonesian President Sukarno, Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal, and Federation of Malaya Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman at the formalization of Maphilindo on 5 August 1963, held at the Juan Luna Hall of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila
Courtesy of the Official Gazette and the National Library of the Philippines



"Mochtar, do you think the shared colonial past is a tie stronger than color?" I asked.

The significance of Maphilindo is that it opens the actuality of closer relations between nations of Malayan origin. Through this process of greater interaction and political consultations (musyawarah) the device of colonial interests of fomenting discord is checked: the national awareness of each country actually will feed on the fact of mutual interest, association and contact and that kind of knowledge that will enrich the lives of the youth of our countries.

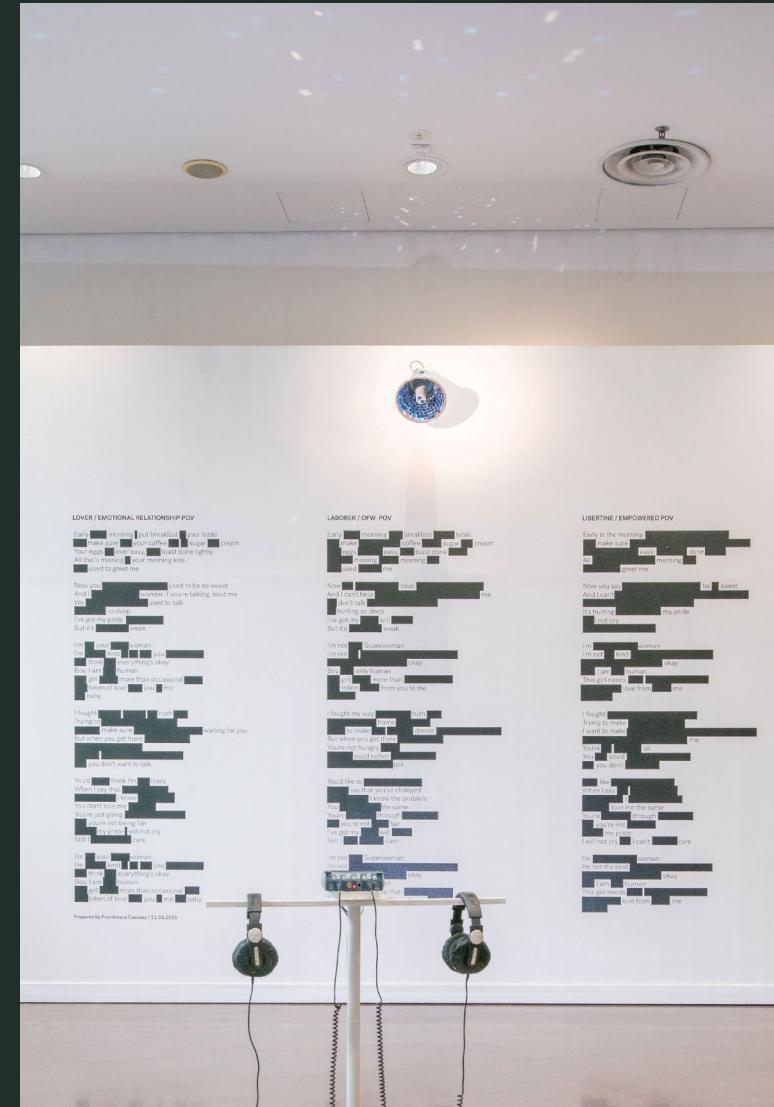
No special relationship appears to have emerged between Southeast Asia and the new African states other than one based on the fact that they are all "underdeveloped states" with certain common problems.

Maphilindo: Afro-Asian or Anglo-American?

Eisa Jocson
(with The Filipino Superwoman Band)
Passion of Darna
2019

Mixed media installation consisting of speaker horn,
sound, and vinyl on wall

Passion of Darna is a text and soundscape installation comprising one moment in the work of Jocson as part of The Filipino Superwoman Band. The work involves a Public Announcement speaker horn embellished to recall a disco ball that plays the titular *Pasyon of Darna*. The *pasyon* is a popular form of religious song that narrates the suffering of Jesus Christ, typically sung during Lent. In Jocson and The Filipino Superwoman Band's recreation, the *pasyon* interweaves with the figure of Darna, the local counterpart of the female superheroine figure Superwoman by way of the 1980s ballad *Superwoman* by African-American R&B singer Karyn White, a Tagalog cover of which was popularized by Filipina singer Jenine Desiderio in the 1990s titled "Hindi ako si Darna (I am not Superwoman)." Sung by a female persona, the song narrates the everyday contexts of feminized labor within a domestic partnership. By superimposing the two texts and interweaving the Judeo-Christian ur-text with this popular ballad, the performance relocates the suffering of the canonical figure of Christianity within the intimacies of everyday feminized labor, the same labor that defines the currency of the Overseas Filipino Worker—majority of whom are employed as caretakers and domestic helpers—that has become a major driver of the economy of the Philippines. A series of blackout texts based on the lyrics of White's song facet this narrative and open it to a number of perspectives through which feminized labor is foregrounded.



bani haykal

“We’re not satisfied with just making a noise.”

2021

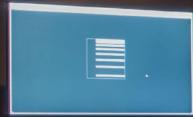
Mixed media installation comprising of a 3D-printed clarinet
and a multi-channel audio installation
Variable Dimensions

Based on bani's research into the history and affect of the Cultural Cold War through jazz in Southeast Asia, "*We're not satisfied with just making a noise.*" is inspired by a performance on 27 December 1956 in Singapore by Benny Goodman, an American jazz clarinetist and bandleader known as the "King of Swing" who led racially integrated jazz groups. The title of the artwork is from a response Goodman gave when he was asked why his repertoire did not contain Rock n' Roll music.

Prior to Goodman's arrival in Singapore, he sent a replica of his clarinet to Runme Shaw as a show of appreciation to the members of the Musician's Union of Singapore. For bani the clarinet was not only a symbol of friendship but also of the Cold War, which was in part defined by an anti-communist perogative of American foreign policy. American policy makers began to appropriate black cultural products like jazz to make the argument that American democracy enabled creativity and to play down American racism. The US State Department arranged the travel of African American Jazz 'diplomats' like Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington. Such cultural programmes were important for American diplomacy of the 1950s in Southeast Asia, where a wave of independence and solidarity movements were informed by anti-colonialism and anti-racism.

Bani identifies the clarinet as an exceptional jazz instrument that becomes an object of disruption. Characterised as the most dynamic and sounding the most human, the clarinet is capable of not only producing loud, piercing tones, but also gentle, mellow, and soothing sounds. Represented through a 3-D printed replica, Goodman's clarinet is deconstructed and presented in this installation suspended in a grey soundscape that is an abstraction of the old Badminton Hall where Goodman gave his performance. Bani's research into American jazz diplomacy points to the duplicitous history of jazz being mobilized as an ideological instrument of anti-communism used to bring people into a 'Free World' empire of American democracy and capitalism. Thus, his work can be read as a critical homage to the innocuous sounds of empire and the everyday humanity and idealism (associated with both race and music) that were deployed to geopolitical ends.





Ariko S. Ikehara

Sketches of Teruya Ar(t)chive

2020

Mixed media installation featuring 3 maps,
photographs and projection
Variable Dimensions

This installation is based on *Sketches of Teruya* (January-March 2020), an exhibition that Ikehara developed and presented for Koza X MiXtopia Research Center, an independent art and research space she opened in Teruya, Okinawa. It features updated maps of Teruya, a district in Okinawa that thrived economically after World War II in the shadow of the American Occupation of Okinawa (1945-1972).

Functioning as both artwork and archive, Ikehara's maps are a form of "miXtory," a term she uses to describe her methodology of weaving together the meta-narratives of history, personal stories, and the gaps or questions that emerge between history and memory. Ikehara describes this interplay in the map as performative, referring to the map as "an object that solicits the viewer into action [by] filling the gap of what is missing on the map, and translating the personal miXtory into material forms, i.e.,[turning] object, event, performance into an archive."

Teruya represented three economic zones, which were active for more than twenty-three years after the American occupation from 1952 to 1976: Honmachi Dori, a shopping district; Koza Ichiba, a market district; and the Black District, a bar and entertainment district. The latter district served African-American soldiers in the military. During this time, Teruya's mixed racial, ethnic, cultural, language and national geography also included people who were Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Italians, Indians, Koreans, Filipinos, and the children of mixed-racial ethnicities.

Post-war economic opportunities offered to foreigners in constructing the American military bases and other business ventures drew a diverse range of people to Teruya. Through their will to survive and thrive, they created what Ikehara describes as a postwar economic miracle. They created, in her words, "a community in which everyone had a chance of making, creating and imagining how to live in the company of others while negotiating difference."

Ikehara grew up in Teruya and some of the locations on the map are based on her memories, interviews and what she calls *yuntakuviews* (*yuntaku* translates to "chatting" in Okinawan).

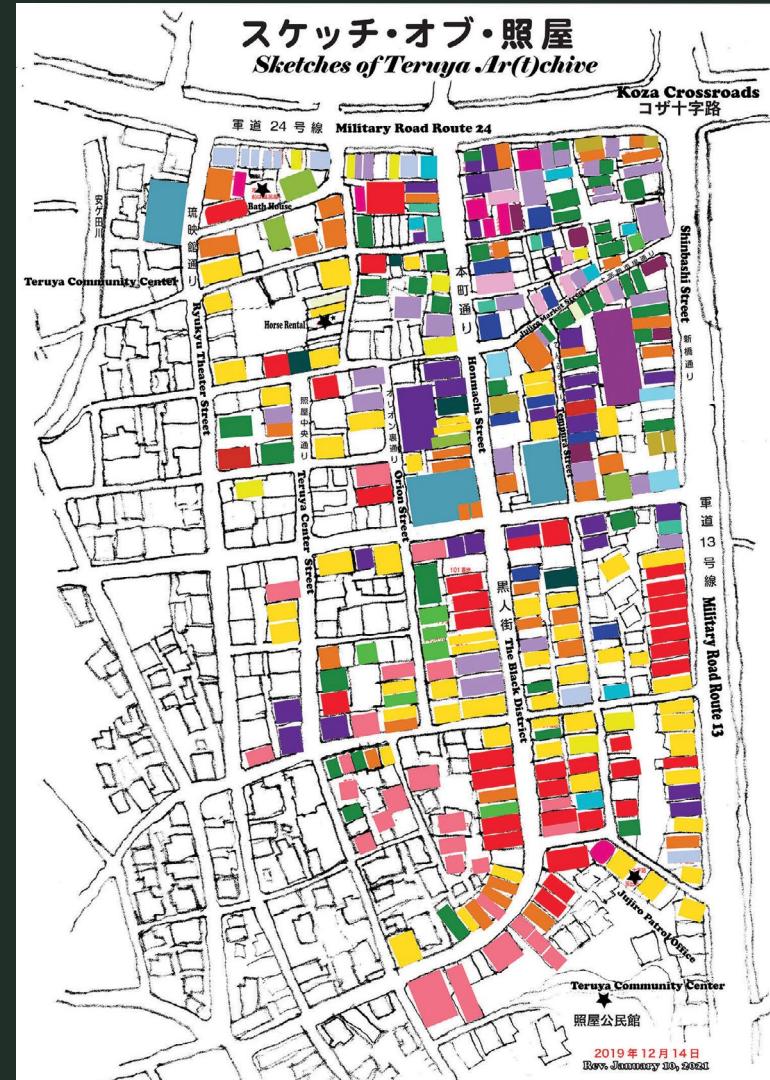


Image courtesy of the artist



MAP A&E: Sankoma Grocery and Translation Service (early 1950s)

Husband translated love letters.

Private Collection

Vuth Lyno

25
2018

Three-channel video with sound

32:07 min

25 is a three-channel video that looks at the legacy of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), 1991-1992, a UN peacemaking project in the country. At the time, UNTAC was the largest peacekeeping mission of the UN and was deemed its most successful. For 25, Vuth talked to three individuals whose fathers were part of the UN mission. Upon the completion of the UNTAC mission, UN peacekeepers went back to their respective countries, leaving behind their children with local women. In Vuth's account: "The project started from when I learned about biological children of UNTAC peacekeepers who now live here in Cambodia. many of these children do not have fathers as their fathers went back to their respective home countries. Several I met are of African descent." Twenty five years later, three of these children met and shared their experiences, contemplating on how UNTAC has affected their lives. The work unravels aspects of the aspirations of an international South-South imaginary by introducing into the picture the voices of individuals who had to live through the mundane violence inflected upon a generation of interracial children left behind by the supposedly utopian project of peacekeeping.



ARTISTS

Fyerool Darma

Fyerool Darma continues to live and work in Singapore. His object and material experimentations are based on an extensive visual vocabulary drawn from popular culture, literature, the archives, the Internet and his own life. His work has been presented in group exhibitions such as *As the West Slept*, Silver Art Projects; *Transient Museum of a Thousand Conversations: LIR* at ISCP (International Studio and Curatorial Program), both in New York, United States; *Lost and found: Imagining new worlds*, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (all in 2019) and *An Atlas of Mirrors*, Singapore Biennale (2016), and his long-term project *After Ballads*, NUS Museum, Singapore (2017-18). He was Artist-in-Residence (1 October 2019 – 28 April 2020) at NTU - Centre of Contemporary Arts where he presented *Vivarium (wiiflow w/ l4if but t4k£ o'forms, ❤)* at the Centre's Vitrine.

bani haykal

As an artist, composer and musician, bani considers music (making / processes) as material and his projects investigate modes of interfacing and interaction with feedback/ feedforward mechanisms. He is a member of b-quartet. Manifestations of his research culminate into works of various forms encompassing installation, poetry and performance. In his capacity as a collaborator and a soloist, bani has participated in festivals including MeCA Festival (Japan), Wiener Festwochen (Vienna), Media/Art Kitchen (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Japan), Liquid Architecture and Singapore International Festival of Arts (Singapore) among others. His current work frames encryption as a process and basis for human-machine intimacy by navigating interfaces such as a QWERTY keyboard as mediums of interactivity.

Ariko S. Ikehara

Ariko S. Ikehara is Director at Koza X MiXtopia Research Center in Okinawa. She earned her Ph.D. in Comparative Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, in 2016. She was a Postdoctoral Fellow at Osaka University (2017-19) and a Visiting Scholar in the Department of Gender and Women Studies at UC Berkeley (2016). Her peer-reviewed publications include “Champurū Text: Postwar Okinawan Writing,” in *Beyond American Occupation: Race and Agency in Okinawa, 1945-2015* (2017), and “Third Space as Decolonial Con/Text: Okinawa’s American Champurū,” in *Transnational Asia: An Online Interdisciplinary Journal 1-1* (Fall 2016). Since 1995, she has published essays and articles in Japanese about Teruya in Okinawan journals and local Okinawan newspapers. She is currently working on two book projects: a two-volume book manuscript in Japanese and English with the working title, *A Book of Teruya*, and a book manuscript in English with the working title *Okinawa’s MiXtopia: Teruya Soul MiXtory*, which is a choreographic study of Teruya.

Eisa Jocson

Eisa Jocson (b. 1986, Manila) is a contemporary choreographer and dancer from the Philippines. She was trained as a visual artist and has a background in ballet. Her works expose body politics in the service and entertainment industry as seen through the unique socioeconomic lens of the Philippines. She studies how the body moves and what conditions make it move—be it social mobility or movement out of Philippines through migrant work. In all her creations—from pole to macho dancing and hostess to Disney princess studies—capital is the driving force of movement pushing the indentured body into spatial geographies.

Recent works, including the triptych *Death of the Pole Dancer* (2011), *Macho Dancer* (2013) and *Host* (2015); and the two-part series *HAPPYLAND* (2017), have been shown in a number of exhibitions and have been part of contemporary performance festivals. Macho Dancer won the prestigious Zürcher Kantonalbank Acknowledgement Prize at the Zurich Theater Spektakel in 2013. The work for this exhibition is part of The Filipino Superwoman Band, a series of performances and installations that look into the affective labor of Overseas Filipino Musicians, commissioned for the 2019 Sharjah Biennale. Jocson is a recipient of the Cultural Centre of the Philippines 13 Artists Award in 2018. She received the 2019 Hugo Boss Asia Art Award.

Munirah Mansoor

Munirah Mansoor (b. 1994, Singapore) is a visual designer who is exploring areas of her cultural roots from a Malay-archipelago perspective. Her focus is on observing and rethinking historical stories after a personal revelation on what could have been or what have not been unearthed archeologically, which makes current narratives remain that as a myth. For her final university project she worked on *Hikayat Nusantara*, which imagines a legend from a non-fictional fact that all of the archipelago lands were once geographically united. She began working on relevant projects after joining Studio Vanessa Ban for a period, where she also assisted in designing the identity of the exhibition *As The West Slept* (2019).

ARTISTS

Simon Soon

Simon Soon (b. 1983) is an artist, art historian and curator based in Kuala Lumpur. He is a senior lecturer at the University of Malaya and a team member of Malaysia Design Archive. In his artistic practice, Simon extends his research into open-access knowledge sharing, digital sources for histories from below, and global flows in the art and visual cultures of Asia. His artworks have been exhibited at Dhaka Art Summit (Bangladesh), Para/Site (Hong Kong), and The Back Room (Malaysia). Simon works chiefly in collaboration. The design of the tracing boards for this exhibition emerges from a three-month long period of conversation, archive diving, and imagination between Soon and Munirah Mansoor on the visual history of the Malay world.

Vuth Lyno

Vuth Lyno (b. 1982, Phnom Penh) is an artist, curator and co-founding artistic director of Sa Sa Art Projects, a Phnom Penh's artist-run space initiated by Stiev Selapak collective. His artistic and curatorial practices are participatory in nature, exploring communal learning, experimentation, and sharing of multiple voices through exchanges. Vuth holds a Master of Art History from the State University of New York, Binghamton, New York, supported by a Fulbright Fellowship (2013-2015), and a Master of International Development from RMIT University, Melbourne supported by the Australian Endeavour Award (2008-2009).

As an artist, Vuth works with various media including sculpture, photography, sound, light, and video, usually resulting in an installation. He is particularly interested in the agency of human stories, materiality, and how the audience engages with them. His interest intersects micro histories, notions of community, place making, and production of social situations. He often involves project's participants in the production of meaning of the artwork.

Vuth has presented his artworks widely in Cambodia, regionally and internationally including at major exhibitions and festivals such as Asia Pacific Triennial, Biennale of Sydney, Singapore International Festival of Arts, and Gwangju Biennale. His artworks have been presented in institutions such as Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei; Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane; Metropolitan Museum of Manila; the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; the National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta; Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw; Guangdong Times Museum, Guangzhou; Osage Gallery, Hong Kong; and Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre.

Ming Wong

Born in Singapore and currently based in Berlin and Stockholm, Ming Wong is an interdisciplinary artist working with performance, video, and installation to unravel ideas of 'authenticity' and the 'other' with reference to the act of human performativity. Through a re-telling of world cinema and popular culture and re-readings of cultural artefacts from around the world, Wong's artistic research and practice explore the politics of representation and how culture, gender and identity are constructed, reproduced, and circulated.

His work has been shown in the Asian Art Biennale at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, 2019; Times Art Center Berlin, 2019; Cosmopolis #1.5, Chengdu, 2018; Busan Biennale, 2018; Dakar Biennale, 2018; Dhaka Art Summit, 2018; Para Site, Hong Kong 2018; SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, 2018; Centre National de la Danse, Paris, 2018; Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, 2017; The Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, 2017; Sydney Biennale, 2016 & 2010; Asia Pacific Triennial, 2015; Shanghai Biennale, 2014; Lyon Biennale, 2013; Singapore Biennale, 2011; Gwangju Biennale, 2010; Performa, New York, 2010. He has had solo exhibitions at ASAUKA (2019) and Shiseido Gallery (2013) in Tokyo; Passerelle Centre d'art contemporain, Brest (2016); UCCA, Beijing (2015); REDCAT, Los Angeles (2012).

He represented Singapore at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009 with the solo presentation *Life of Imitation*, which was awarded a special mention.

Yee I-Lann

Yee I-Lann (b. 1971, Kota Kinabalu) currently lives and works in Kota Kinabalu in the Malaysian Borneo state of Sabah. Her primarily photomedia-based practice engages with archipelagic Southeast Asia's turbulent history with works addressing issues of colonialism and neo-colonialism, power, and the impact of historic memory in social experience, often with particular focus on counter-narrative "histories from below." She employs a complex, multi-layered, visual vocabulary drawn from historical references, popular culture, archives, and everyday objects. She has in recent years started working collaboratively with sea-based and land-based communities and indigenous mediums in Sabah. She is a co-founding associate of *The Ricecooker Archives: Southeast Asian Rock 'n' Roll Treasury* with her partner Joe Kidd and has worked as a production designer in the Malaysian film industry. She is currently a Board member for Forever Sabah and Tambaruli Living Arts Center (TaLAC),

CURATORS

Kathleen Ditzig

Kathleen Ditzig is a curator and researcher based in Singapore. Her work unpacks the enduring legacies of the Cold War. It examines art as an exceptional site and system of speaking to power. She is a fellow of the research platform Modern Art Histories in and across Africa, South and Southeast Asia (MAHASSA), convened by the Getty Foundation's Connecting Art Histories project and a co-founder of offshoreart.co, a curatorial and research collective that examines contemporary flows of capital and art.

Her art historical research has been published in *Southeast of Now* (NUS Press, 2017) and presented at international academic conferences and platforms. Other than being featured in artist catalogues, her writing has been published by *Artforum*, OSMOS magazine, *Art Agenda*, *ArtReview Asia*, and *Flash Art*, and in books such as *Perhaps it is high Time for a Xeno-Architecture to Match* (Sternberg, 2018).

She recently curated *As The West Slept* (World Trade Center, 2019) as part of Performa 2019 and co-curated with Ute Meta Bauer the exhibition *Spring of Democracy* (2020) for the Gwangju Biennale Foundation.

Carlos Quijon, Jr

Carlos Quijon, Jr. (b. 1989) is an art historian, critic, and curator based in Manila. He is a fellow of the research platform Modern Art Histories in and across Africa, South and Southeast Asia (MAHASSA), convened by the Getty Foundation's Connecting Art Histories project. He writes exhibition reviews for *Artforum* and his research is part of the book *From a History of Exhibitions Towards a Future of Exhibition-Making* (Sternberg Press, 2019). He has published in *ArtReview Asia* (Singapore), *Art Monthly* (UK), Asia Art Archive's *Ideas* (HK), and *Trans Asia Photography Review* (US), among others. He is an alumnus of the Ateneo National Writers Workshop in Manila and the inaugural Para Site Workshops for Emerging Professionals in Hong Kong in 2015 and was a scholar participant of the symposium "How Institutions Think" hosted by LUMA Foundation in Arles in 2016. In 2017, he was a research resident in MMCA Seoul and a fellow of the Transcuratorial Academy both in Berlin and Mumbai. He curated *Courses of Action* in Hong Kong in 2019, *A will for prolific disclosures* in Manila and co-curated *Minor Infelicities* in Seoul in 2020.



The design for *In Our Best Interests* was inspired by state treaties and the adornments that affirmed the legitimacy of a document, representing an agreement between two states. It also recalls the design of stamps on commodities and items of international trade such as the design of 'Malayan' flour sacks from the 1950. These elements register in the references to palm leaves, wheat, and different boats—all of which could be from either Africa or Southeast Asia—that encircle a gridded globe. This speaks to the different trajectories and connections that could bring these regions together.

A deliberate design strategy in this exhibition was not to use black and white. Instead, a deep green that recalls the dense dark foliage of the jungle and the aquamarine blue of seawater were employed to speak to the shared tropical imaginary that connect the regions in popular culture.

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Image on page 36—Book display at National Library featuring books about
Africa, 29 October 1965, Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection,
courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Image on page 37—Indonesian President Sukarno, Philippine President
Diosdado Macapagal, and Federation of Malaya Prime Minister Tunku
Abdul Rahman at the formalization of Maphilindo on 5 August 1963,
held at the Juan Luna Hall of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila
Courtesy of the Official Gazette and the National Library of the Philippines