

IMAGE NOTATIONS



Cover

He may have become a far-right internet meme in the West, but Pepe the Frog's image is being rehabilitated in Hong Kong where democracy protesters have embraced him as an irreverent symbol of their resistance. Throughout the days of protests rocking the international finance hub, banners featuring the cartoon frog and stuffed toys of the amphibian have become ubiquitous, providing much-needed moments of levity as the violence escalates... Pepe's embrace by Hongkongers is the latest bizarre twist in the fate of a cartoon character who went from relative internet obscurity to international notoriety. But it also shows how popular digital trends can mean very different things depending on where you live in the world.

Alt-right appropriation:

Created in 2005 by American artist Matt Furie as a "chill frog-dude", Pepe became an internet meme within online forums. During Donald Trump's election campaign he was embraced by the alt-right and white nationalist corners of the internet, leading Furie to pronounce his original creation dead in 2017. But in Hong Kong and China, Pepe never had those connotations and was instead known as the "sad frog". The character became especially popular earlier this year when he appeared within downloadable WhatsApp sticker packs which users add to messages. When huge pro-democracy rallies broke out in June, young Hong Kongers were already ping-pong stickers to each other. But new protest-themed variations of Pepe quickly emerged, transforming him into a pro-democracy Everyman. Soon Pepe was being graffiti'd onto pavements, plastered across protest "Lennon Walls", even painted on finger-nails... "Because we have the masks on our faces, we have to express our feelings in other ways," explained Dennis, a 26-year-old physics graduate who has set up an Instagram account that gathers the new Pepe memes. Yet Pepe's new appeal also lies in his flexibility, Dennis said.

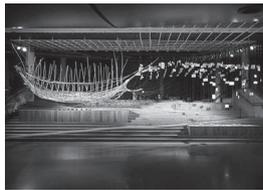
Pepe v Popo:

In Hong Kong, he is no longer just mainland China's "sad" frog meme. Instead, he is a defiant expression of the frustration many Hong Kongers feel under China's rule and its Beijing-loyalist local leaders. "My own definition is that Pepe is for the people, in contrast to the 'Popo'—the police—who are not," he said. Protesters are increasingly aware of Pepe's inadvertent connection to the far right. When *The New York Times* ran an article in August on the controversial character's adoption in Hong Kong, it sparked an extensive debate on the online forums and social media platforms used to organise the protests. Would continuing to use their much-loved icon harm their cause? A consensus appeared to emerge. Hong Kong's Pepe was a distinctly local meme. And if his notoriety in the West would help keep international attention focused on the protest movement, so be it. Creator Matt Furie appeared to signal his support for Pepe's new role, writing in an email to a protester: "This is great news! Pepe for the People!"; <https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/10/03/hong-kong-protesters-transform-alt-right-pepe-frog-pro-democracy-symbol/>



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Map of Southeast Asia and Australia as it was known to European mapmakers in 1803



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Zai Kuning, *Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge*, 2015

Image courtesy the artist

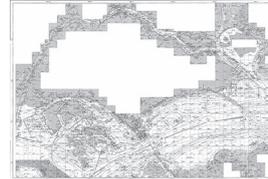
Delving into the history of the pre-Islamic Melayu world, I discovered the empire of Srivijaya (7-13th century), which began with a wealthy, ambitious and visionary Malay king, Dapunta Hyang Jayanasa, who aspired to conquer Southeast Asia. It is said that King Dapunta, with 20,000 men, began his conquest in year 684 to acquire wealth, power and 'magic power' in a journey called Siddhayaatra. In time, the Straits of Malacca, the Sunda Straits, the South China Sea, the Java Sea and the Karimata Straits all came under his control... The almost mythical accounts of Dapunta and his conquest were fascinating to me. How many ships did they build to carry 20,000 men? How did they navigate the complicated and often treacherous geography of a region containing thousands of islands? How could this piece of history vanish and become completely forgotten? I began to wonder and imagine a 7th century Malay Buddhist/animistic world where ships were vessels seeking power, fortune and magic power, each vessel both a house of knowledge and a dungeon of death and torture. Zai Kuning, abstract for *Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge*, The Esplanade, Singapore 2015



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Lee Wen, *Untitled (Raffles)*, 2000
Image courtesy the artist

From the Artists Investigating Monuments Project, June 2000. Concept: build a platform of equal height and as close as possible to the statue of the Raffles Landing Site, invite audiences and passers-by to go up onto the platform and look at the statue, take photographs and interview those who go up to the platform asking them their feeling of looking at Raffles from a different perspective; Lee Wen; <http://leewen.republicofdaydreams.com/aim-raffles.html>



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Charles Lim, *Seas State 8: The Grid* (detail) (2014)

Image courtesy the artist

In the various maritime maps produced between the 19th century to the present day, Singapore has changed from 'Singapore Island' to 'Singapore' reminding us that the contact zones between land and sea continue to evolve.

From Charles Lim Yi Yong, *Sea State* (catalogue), Singapore Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2015



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Titarubi, *History Repeats Itself*, 2016

Image courtesy the artist

History Repeats Itself is a meditation on the history of power, seeking to make visible the legacies of colonial conquest in Southeast Asia. The burnt-out ships in this installation recall the ominous appearance of European armadas during the early centuries of European colonialism. At the same time they make reference to the burning of ships in Indonesia by the Dutch East India Company in an attempt to seize control of the lucrative spice trade. Standing atop the charred ships are shadowy, cloaked figures. Their robes are made of gold-plated nutmeg, a spice once worth its weight in gold, over which countless wars were fought. Their rich sheen suggests grandiosity and pomp, and their hollowness conjures the illusoriness of riches and power: at its heart, empty. They are spectres from the past, a dark mirror to our present. 2016 Singapore Biennale, *An Atlas of Mirrors* short guide.

In Banda Islands, the only place then in the world where nutmeg was grown, nutmeg, mace and other spices were seen by Europeans as valuable as gold... The Dutch East India Company burned Indonesian ships in order to control the spice trade. Nutmeg was a Dutch monopoly for almost 200 years. *The Jakarta Post*; <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2017/01/20/an-odyssey-with-your-future-self-singapore-art-biennale-2016.html>



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Top:
Toni Kanwa, *Cosmology of Life*, 2013
Image courtesy the artist
Moving on to a serene state, Toni Kanwa and his usual approach of working went into meditative states at every carving of his tiny sculptures. He believes that all his being lies in the power of a Higher Spirit; <https://www.tonikanwa.info/a-b-o-u-t>
Bottom:
Eko Prawoto, *Wormhole*, 2013
Image courtesy the artist
Indonesian architect Eko Prawoto's 'wormhole' punctuates Singapore's cityscape by pitching three conical bamboo structures on the lawn of the National Museum of Singapore. Aesthetically, the walk-in sculpture simulates the contours of a mountain range, which are native to Indonesia, but quite uncommon to Singapore. Indonesian folklore regards mountains as an axis mediating between the earth and the heavens, an idea that influences the artwork's namesake; a wormhole is the hypothetical opening in the galaxy, which would allow for time and space travel; <https://www.designboom.com/art/eko-prawoto-pitches-wormhole-with-conical-bamboo-structures-11-01-2013/>



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Svay Sareth, *Toy (Churning of the Sea of Milk)*, 2013
Image courtesy the artist, SA SA BASSAC, Phnom Penh and ANRDT, Berlin
Svay Sareth's works in sculpture, installation and durational performance are made using materials and processes intentionally associated with war—metals, uniforms, camouflage and actions requiring great endurance. While his critical and cathartic practice is rooted in an autobiography of war and resistance, he refuses both historical particularity and voyeurism on violence. Rather, his works traverse both present and historical moments, drawing on processes of survival and adventure, and ideas of power and futility. More recently, Svay confronts the idea that "the present is also a dangerous time" through the appropriation and dramatisation of public monuments that hint at contentious political histories; http://sasabassac.com/artists/svaysareth/svay_about.htm



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Qiu Zhijie, *One Has to Wander through All the Outer Worlds to Reach the Innermost Shrine at the End*, 2016
Image courtesy the artist



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Aspinwall House, Fort Kochi
Photo courtesy the Kochi Biennale Foundation



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Top:
Simon Fujiwara, *Welcome To The Hotel Munber*, 2011 (installation 2013 *Singapore Biennale*)
Fujiwara's architectural installation is intended to resemble a hotel bar during Franco-era Spain. Originally, he planned to write an erotic novel featuring his parents (who owned a hotel during this period), with his father as the homosexual protagonist. Instead, Fujiwara—known for incorporating architecture, performance art, and storytelling into his works—used that concept to create an imitation of the bar in the hotel his parents owned, with sexual objects hidden around the room. Gay pornography, castanets arranged to resemble testicles, and wine barrels with fake fingers pointing out of them adorn the 'bar'. First, a sign warning [Singapore Art Museum] visitors of the installation's "sexual nature" was hung up before the entrance to Fujiwara's exhibit area. Then, without asking or consulting with Fujiwara, the museum staff removed all of the erotica

featured in the work. Without these pieces, the piece has been rendered "meaningless, almost a tribute to Franco in the end," as the artist put it. Although Singapore is thought to be one of the most progressive countries in Asia, this incident suggests that there is still resistance to free expression. The erotic objects were left in the exhibit for the first two weeks of the *Biennale*... This piece, along with other works, have been displayed in their original incarnations in other museums worldwide, including the Tate Museum in London, England and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, Japan; [http://www.wiki.nca.org/Welcometo_The_Hotel_Munber_\(installation\)](http://www.wiki.nca.org/Welcometo_The_Hotel_Munber_(installation))
Bottom:

S. Chandrasekaran, *Unwalked Boundaries*, 2016
Image courtesy the artist
Building on Chandrasekaran's exploration of body and identity, this installation—in the form of "an intention to walk"—focuses on the thousands of Indian convicts who, from 1825 to 1873, were transported to Singapore and served their sentence as manual labourers... point[ing] to the artist's intended role as embodied conscience, highlighting the awkward gaps in Singapore history where the convicts' contributions have been long overlooked. 2016 *Singapore Biennale* Shortguide



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Sue Williamson, *One Hundred and Nineteen Deeds of Sale*, 2018
Image courtesy the artist
Few details are on record of the history of people enslaved in India and brought on the ships of the Dutch East India Company to work at the Cape Town Castle and the Company Gardens in the 17th century... Sue Williamson has inscribed this scant information in black ink on to cotton working shirts and lengths of cloth sent from India in a recollection of the original journey; <https://www.sue-williamson.com/one-hundred-and-nineteen-deeds-of-s>



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Gigi Scaria, *Chronicle of the Shores Foretold*, 2014
Image courtesy the artist
[an] installation that draws together multiple histories and mythologies of labour, religion and maritime trade that lie entwined on the coastline it stands on... Scaria in this work orchestrates a confrontation between several overlapping episodes from Malabar's history, such as the arrival of not just traders, but transformative cultural influences such as Islam and Christianity to its shores via the sea; <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/chronicle-of-the-shores-foretold/hgG98GRmuVFSIQ>



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Zai Kuning, *Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge*, 2017 (installation view, Venice Biennale 2017)
Image courtesy the artist



Page 69
Ryan Villamael, *Locus Amoenus*, 2016
Image courtesy the artist
Latin for a "pleasant place", the phrase *Locus Amoenus* also evokes the notion of an escape into an ideal landscape. In this instance, the pastoral paradise has been sited within a house of glass – the greenhouse – an engineered Eden for flora uprooted from its native soil. Indeed, Villamael's 'greenhouse' houses unusual foliage: intricate cut-outs created from archaic and contemporary Philippine maps. Coalescing notions of nature and nurture, culture and the cultivated, the work probes the imaging of the Philippines' fraught history as the country that endured the longest colonial rule in Southeast Asia. Collapsing multiple realities, the installation is cut from maps that have two sides – a semiotic layering that conjoins the historical with the present-day. Creeping down from the ceiling, the *Monstera deliciosa* looks to colonise its climate-controlled space in the museum. It is situated in the Singapore Art Museum in the only space where a section of the original colonial building façade from 1852 is still visible. 2016 Singapore Biennale, *An Atlas of Mirrors* short guide



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Vanghoua Anthony Vue, *Hard Hat Devi(l)- (n)ation #3*, 2017-18
Image courtesy the artist



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Charles Lim, *SEA STATE 4: Line in the Chart* (photographic still), 2008
Image courtesy the artist
SEA STATE 4: line in the chart (2008) derives from an image of a sea wall, complete with a sign warning 'No entry, restricted zone' in three of the four official languages (English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil) of Singapore, which Lim discovered at the northeast border of Singapore. Intriguingly, one of the things that Lim's research reveals is that the limits of Singapore's sovereign waters, unmarked on maps, are much harder to trace than those of the port authority. Mark Rappolt, 'Charles Lim: SEA STATE'; https://artreview.com/features/summer_2015_ara_feature_charles_lim/



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Vanghoua Anthony Vue, *Present-past-patterns*, 2019
Installation view 2019 Singapore Biennale
Image courtesy the artist



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Heri Dono, *Smiling Angels from the Sky*, 2018
Image courtesy the artist
...represents a universal symbol of hope for the future. Heri Dono; <https://www.facebook.com/KochiMuzirisBiennale/posts/indonesian-artist-heri-dono-tells-us-about-his-work-smiling-angels-from-the-sky-/2356397801050719/>



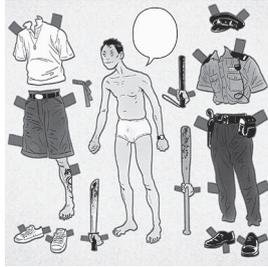
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Bo Wang and Pan Lu, *Many Undulating Things* (video stills), 2019
Images courtesy the artists
The film begins and ends in a shopping centre in Hong Kong. We carefully observe the smooth movement of the escalators, the constant flow of people that never stops: as if this gigantic complex could concentrate the circulation of the entire city, or even, the entire country. From there, it will be more a tale about concrete, enormous port warehouses, overpopulated tower blocks, the fragments of still recent colonialism... Through the history of urban changes, we witness the profound social transformation of this territory that is constantly swinging between the East and the West. Hong Kong thus emerges, like an archetypal space of many other cities of globalised capitalism. *Many Undulating Things* offers a complex reflection on the relationships between landscape, nature, urbanisation and society... A political poem. Elena López Riera; <https://www.visionsdureel.ch/en/2019/film/many-undulating-things-1>



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David Chan, *The Great East Indiaman*, 2016
Image courtesy the artist
Commingle fact and fiction, *The Great East Indiaman* revisits Sir Stamford Raffles' landing in 1819, which led to the founding of modern Singapore. In place of the triumphant European male protagonist, the artist recasts the narrative as a fantastical tale of a mythical, now-extinct species of whale that brought Raffles to these shores. In this invented folklore, the whale species called the 'East Indiaman' was domesticated as man's marine beast of burden... The work, sited on the front lawn of the National Museum of Singapore, also recalls the skeleton of an Indian fin whale that was once the highlight of the museum; <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-great-east-indiaman/XAF9n9WPHGmjag>



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Shooshie Sulaiman, *Rumah Sulaiman di belakang kedai Ah Guat*, 2011, site specific installation
2011 Singapore Biennale
Image courtesy the artist



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Top:
Image sourced from https://ia801009.us.archive.org/4/items/HongKongProtests2019_posters_02/EAJXACYUcAAaVXT.jpg
... one of the many examples completing the online-offline creative cycle that has been fueling the Hong Kong protests. Drawing references from popular culture and fine art, these creative outputs first propagate the ideologies of the protests in the digital realm. They are dispersed via social media, encrypted messaging platform Telegram and Apple's bluetooth-enabled AirDrop. Then they cross into reality, ending up as protest art objects or performative protests in the streets, turning public spaces into a canvas or an art gallery. Images of streets that are full of these creations travel back to cyberspace and are spread further via social media. "The transformation of public space itself is art," Him Lo, an artist and curator from Hong Kong, tells me during a panel discussion in Hong Kong titled "Visual Art in Public Space". "We have more imagination of public space, taking the chance to transform space into place." "This movement requires a great deal of creative power in order to sustain, and the emergence of artistic creativity during this process is natural. These creative outputs are embedded in the collective action and empowering the movement." Professor Francis Lee, Director of the School of Journalism and Communication at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, tells BBC Culture. The strategy of 'be water', inspired by Hong Kong kung-fu icon Bruce Lee's famous philosophical quote, is the fundamental principle of the protests—which come and go. Unlike the city's past political demonstrations, such as the Umbrella Movement in 2014, where protesters led by political leaders occupied specific sites for 79 days, the current movement does not operate on a singular model, Professor Lee explains. "It has to constantly evolve and there is always something new." And speaking during the "Visual Art in Public Space" panel, Hong Kong artist Kacey Wong, best-known for his protest art, said that due to the mobile nature of the protests, art attached to the protests also has to be mobile. Digitally-made works fit the bill. Protest art, illustrations, animated shorts and publicity posters by anonymous creatives have gone viral, such as those inspired by Japanese anime and an iconic work by an anonymous artist called Harcourt Romanticist that references

Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*. Together with works by professionals such as Hong Kong artist Justin Wong and Badiucao, a Chinese political artist living in Australia, these creative outputs ended up as physical objects attached to Lennon Walls. Vivienne Chow: <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20191211-the-powerful-images-of-hong-kongs-protests>

Bottom:
In Hong Kong, political art has taken on a distinct style, from design to distribution. Banners are not just plastered onto main roads—they are sent directly to residents via Bluetooth and Wi-Fi almost immediately after they are created. The graphics serve multiple purposes; some advertise upcoming protest marches, others contain subversive criticism of the authorities and many encourage unity and stamina. A key theme of protesters' posters is the ability to "be water", a phrase inspired by martial arts icon Bruce Lee that encourages fluidity and adaptability to any situation. This is in stark contrast to the 2014 protests, which remained in one area of the city as protesters set up camp against the authorities. This poster was distributed on Telegram by an unknown artist; <https://globalnewznetwork.com/be-water-hong-kong-protest-mantra-influences-how-art-is-designed-and-distributed/>



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Tadasu Takamine, *Anti-thesis: Gazing up at the endless blue // stained forever by its color // I have ceased to be myself*, 2019
Image courtesy the artist



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Nodoka Odawara, *[(1946-1948)]*, 2011-19
Image courtesy the artist
Both sculptor and researcher, Odawara Nodoka deploys art and writing to critically engage with the topic of Japanese sculpture, specifically during the beginning of the modern period and the Second World War. Her work goes beyond dealing with sculpture as an artistic genre, bringing to the fore the underlying issues of Japan's modern and contemporary history. The trajectory of public sculpture closely reflects the shifting of eras and of society. Attesting to this are the arrow-shaped pillar that once marked the epicenter of the atomic bomb's explosion in Nagasaki, the statues of soldiers and the monument formerly known as the Hakkō Ichū Tower erected during the war, as well as the proliferation of statues of female nudes in the post-war period; <https://aichitriennale.jp/en/artwork/T02b.html>



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FX Harsono, *Gazing on collective memory*, 2016
Image courtesy the artist
Gazing on collective memory is a poignant installation referring to the tragic history of the Chinese in Indonesia. The seemingly fragile work consists of a cluster of spindly wooden stands that support memorabilia including photographic portraits, delicate porcelain offering bowls and school books. Hundreds of electric candles hover over this assemblage, casting a warm golden light and alluding to the resilience of individuals and communities who are damaged by, but survive, a brutal history. The end of Suharto's New Order enabled the emergence of a genuinely democratic political system in Indonesia, but Harsono has continued to advocate for a truer version of history so that younger generations might learn from the failures of the past to create a more inclusive society for all Indonesians. National Gallery of Australia *Contemporary Worlds: Indonesia* media kit



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Tita Salina, *1001st Island—the most sustainable island in Archipelago*, 2015
Image courtesy the artist
In Tita Salina's practice, intervention, installation and moving image come together in response to site-specific issues that have global resonance. *1001st island—the most sustainable island in Archipelago* explores transnational issues of community disenfranchisement, environmental pollution and government corruption as they manifest within the Indonesian government's grand plan for the restoration and redevelopment of Jakarta Bay. Long plagued with a legion of environmental issues, Jakarta Bay and its environs are impacted by extreme pollution, the reduction of important fishing stocks, and rapid land sinkage due to groundwater extraction that provides drinking water for Jakarta's 10 million inhabitants. Combined with the threat of rising sea levels, these problems jeopardise communities of small-scale fishermen and coastal traders who live on and around the bay... To create *1001st island*, Salina collaborated with local fishermen from one of the threatened communities to collect some of the plastic rubbish that plagues the bay. Wrapped in a fishing net to construct an artificial island, it was then dragged behind a fishing boat into the bay and released to become the 1001st island in the chain of islands north of Jakarta known as the Thousand Islands. Ironically, due to plastic's longevity and because it floats on water, the island is almost indestructible. National Gallery of Australia *Contemporary Worlds: Indonesia* media kit



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Top:
Robert Montgomery, *The Strange New Music of the Crying Song*, 2012 Installation view Aspinwall House
Image courtesy the artist

Bottom:
Subodh Gupta, *What Does The Vessel Contain That The River Does Not*, 2012
Image courtesy the artist

What does the vat contain that is not in the river? What does the room encompass that is not in the city? This world is the vat, and the heart the running stream, this world the room, and the heart the city of wonders. Excerpt from 'The Sufi Path of Love'.
Through his use of found, commonplace objects, [Subodh Gupta] explores cultural dislocation prevalent in an era of shifting powers, as well as personal histories. [The work] evokes the conflicting feelings of belonging and displacement, movement and stability, and explores the liminal space between these states of being. Inspired by the work of the 13th century Persian poet Rumi, *What does the vessel contain...* is a traditional fishing boat... filled from bow to stern with chairs, beds, window frames, fishing nets, plastic jars, cans, an old radio, cooking pots and pans, suitcases and a bicycle. The ancient Sufi philosophy embedded in Rumi's poetry speaks eloquently about the idea of the microcosm—the containing of an entire universe within the human soul. With this large-scale work, Gupta too creates a microcosm containing one person's entire existence, bundled together and crammed into a vessel which appears as if it is about to set sail. For the artist, this boat ceases to be just a simple mode of transportation, but has evolved into an extension of the greater paradigm of survival, sustenance and livelihood; <https://www.hauserwirth.com/hauser-wirth-exhibitions/4674-subodh-gupta-what-does-the-vessel-contain-that-the-river-does-not>



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A poster designed in the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda style. It reads "Living in a time of chaos, we have grave responsibility. Unite for Hong Kong's destiny, fight the battle for the defence of liberty." Image sourced from <https://international.thenewsens.com/feature/hkantielab/123058>



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Posters and artworks from the 2019 Hong Kong protests sourced from <https://boingboing.net/2019/09/05/the-art-of-protest.html> and <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/hong-kong-s-cultural-workers-hits-streets-in-protest> In Hong Kong, the ongoing protest movement immortalises its political action in real time through art... Artists disseminate this work anonymously from all over the world on the encrypted messaging app Telegram... Art and politics are uniquely linked in the city, reinforcing the youth-driven struggle against human rights abuses; https://hyperallergic.com/535273/the-viral-artwork-emerging-from-hong-kongs-protests/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=D010620&utm_content=D010620+CID_888198d021bc0d17f58b6cc02bda74da&utm_source=HyperallergicNewsletter

Image 1: The artist Harcourt Romancist applies [his] imagery to Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, with a protestor at the center waving a black Bauhinia flag. On the right, a figure in a yellow raincoat faces away from the viewer with hood drawn in homage to the first death of the movement, a banner-hanging protestor who fell off of scaffolding in June. The adaptation quickly went viral and appeared in public displays across the city

Image 2: Since sovereignty of the former British colony reverted to China in 1997, the *bauhinia blakeana*, or Hong Kong orchid tree, was incorporated onto the territory's new flag... Social media users are posting pictures of wilted or bloodied bauhinia flowers to express solidarity with protesters in Hong Kong
Images 3, 4, 5: <https://boingboing.net/2019/09/05/the-art-of-protest.html>



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Protesters storming into Hong Kong's legislative chamber painting slogans such as "No to China extradition", "Release the martyrs" and "Carrie Lam step down" on the walls, while others put up a colonial era Hong Kong flag. Image sourced from <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2019/07/155a8456b306-hong-kong-protesters-scuffle-with-police-on-1997-handover-anniv.html>



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Bo Wang and Pan Lu, *Miasma, Plants, Export Paintings* (video stills), 2017

Images courtesy the artists

The devastating tropical climate created strong fear and anxiety in the British troops who stationed at Hong Kong after the Opium Wars. The 19th century myth of Miasma, the bad air, related epidemic diseases with air, environment and race, which later helped to consolidate the vertical segregation on Hong Kong island. Acclimatisation efforts were made in pace with expansions of the British Botanic Empire, a global network of scientific researches of plants, which circulated not only botanic specimens but also images created for the purpose of study. In the particular case of Canton in South China, local commercial artists were commissioned to make plant paintings. This work examines the peculiar dynamics between imperialism, scientific research, race and the right to look in 19th century Canton; <http://www.bo-wang.net/miasma.html>

Artist and film director Bo Wang's practice delves deep into socio-cultural discourses, engaging nuanced subjects, such as how images, symbols, and spectacles function in a society; urban spaces and their transformations; the meaning of "community" and discourses on postcolonialism. His essay films examine history and contemporary reality with acute theoretical awareness and humor, uncovering connections that weave together new narratives. In collaboration with Pan Lu, researcher and writer whose interests coalesce around the topic of cultural and cross-cultural analysis of various textual forms, Bo Wang's 28-minute essay film *Miasma, Plants, Export Paintings* investigates the intertwining histories of 19th-century colonialism. The underlying historical narratives in the film include John Reeves of the East India Company searching for draughtsmen in Canton, the popularisation of Chinese painting among European upper-class men, the British occupation of Hong Kong, and the 1894 plague outbreak. The work revolves around the Western myth of the miasma, a toxic fume believed to envelop tropical regions like Hong Kong. The consequent vertical segregation of Hong Kong situated British colonists on higher elevations from which they cast their exoticising gaze upon the "primitive" Orientals, who were believed to be more resistant to miasma. Exported paintings from China furthered the fetishisation of the Orient, while later photos documenting the plague epidemic, attributed to Asians' lack of hygiene, embodied a scientific gaze that discerned their technological backwardness. Asians, as the object of the gaze, were defined by images circulated by the colonists, which ultimately helped construct a reality where everything falls into a single, Eurocentric synchronising metric. The film offers a re-examination of such a worldview, once considered to be absolute and immortal; https://fifth.urabiennale.ru/en/painter/pan_lu_bo_wang/

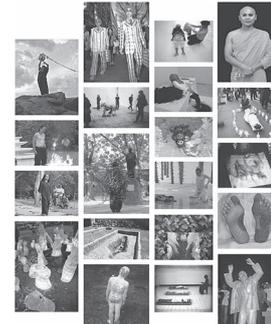


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Bo Wang and Pan Lu, *Many Undulating Things* (video still), 2019

Image courtesy the artists

The film begins and ends in a shopping centre in Hong Kong. We carefully observe the smooth movement of the escalators, the constant flow of people that never stops, the musical fountain that presides over the centre of the internal courtyard, as if this gigantic complex could concentrate the circulation of the entire city, or even, the entire country. From there, it will be more a tale about concrete, enormous port warehouses, glazed galleries built for universal exhibitions, overpopulated tower blocks, the fragments of still recent colonialism... Through the history of urban changes, we witness the profound social transformation of this territory that is constantly swinging between the East and the West. Hong Kong thus emerges, like an archetypal space of many other cities of globalised capitalism. *Many Undulating Things* offers a complex reflection on the relationships between landscape, nature, urbanisation and society. Thanks to its exhaustive approach, the film questions the function of cities in the development of the capitalist system; <http://www.bo-wang.net/mut.html>



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Tang Da Wu, *They Poach the Rhino, Chop Off His Horn and Make This Drink* (1989)

Image courtesy the artist

Tang Da Wu staged *They Poach the Rhino, Chop Off His Horn and Make This Drink* at the National Museum Art Gallery and the Singapore Zoo in 1989. This powerful work brought together installation, performance, ritualistic elements from traditional Chinese culture, as well as contemporary social commentary. The piece can be read as a critique of consumerism's role in destroying nature. It refers to the Chinese myth about the medicinal properties of the rhinoceros horn, and the resultant indiscriminate poaching and near-extinction of the rhinoceros. Tang installed a sculpture of a huge rhinoceros without a horn, surrounded by empty drink bottles in a spiral arrangement. He built an altar beside the missing horn and performed ritualistic gestures that signified mourning and grief for the animal's death. Tang went on to use an axe to destroy the spiral pattern created by the bottles, suggesting its slaughter. National Gallery Singapore media release, *Awakenings: Art in Society in Asia 1960s-1990s*

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"... to run this piece we would need to do something a bit unorthodox with images of both Performance Art and 'performative contemporary art'... the point being that visually, one can hardly tell them apart, i.e., iconographical art history won't help us explain why/how some of them progressed into global circulation and thrived there while others washed their hands of international contemporaneity and remained 'Southeast Asian'... A kind of wallpaper composed of contiguous thumbnails, looking almost like a Google image search for 'SEA art body 90s'... some works suggesting the political valence of performance; some standing for not-yet-canonised SEA activity; and some that mark the more recent 'performative' vogue." David Teh's suggestions for images to accompany his text, emails, August 2019. Reproduced on these pages are works by Lee Wen, Vasan Sitthiket, Navin Rawanchaikul, Sutee Kunavichayanont, Dadang Christanto, Tran Luong, Araya Rasdjamearnsook, The Propeller Group, House of Natural Fiber, Korakrit Arunanonchai, Khvay Samnang, Roberto Villanueva, Michael Shaowanasai, Arahmaiani and others, as well as documentation from the Chiang Mai Social Installation and *Womanifesto* festivals. In 1995, an informal gathering of women artists, writers and activists in Bangkok put together a feminist art exhibition, *Tradesexion*. Calling themselves *Womanifesto*, this collective went on to organise biennial events that aimed to increase women artists' visibility. It was the first feminist collective of its kind in the region, seeking to strengthen links between women artists regionally and internationally. See Varsha Nair, 'Womanifesto: a biennial art exchange in Thailand', *Southeast of Now* 3:1, 2019; <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/721050> Images courtesy the artists



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Kim Seo-kyung and Kim Eun-sung, *Statue of a Girl of Peace*, 2011

Image courtesy the artists

In an ironic turn of events, the organisers of the 2019 Aichi Triennale in Japan have closed down *After "Freedom of Expression?"* an exhibition tracing the history of censored artwork in Japan...

[the *Japan Times*]... points to political pressure following a statement by mayor of Nagoya Takashi Kawamura, in which he demanded the closure of an exhibition which "tramples on Japanese people's feelings". *Statue of a Girl of Peace* by Korean artists Kim Seo-kyung and Kim Eun-sung was made in reference to the Korean women who were sexually enslaved by the Japanese Imperial Army during the Second World War—euphemistically called "comfort women". The sculpture depicts a teenage girl sat on a chair, with clenched fists and a bird on her shoulder, and the original version was made in 2011 to mark the 1,000th Wednesday demonstration in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, demanding a sincere apology and compensation from the Japanese government for the surviving victims and their descendants. Since then, other versions of the statue have been placed around the country and internationally, including at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum where a member of staff destroyed a miniature version of the work, claiming it violated the museum's policies. The exhibition's curators have contested the Triennale's decision to close down the show, saying it constituted "the most significant censorship case in the post-war Japan era", while over 70 artists participating in the Triennale have penned a letter to the organisers denouncing 'menacing acts and intimidation', and insisting that the show remain open... Tensions around the subject of comfort women have escalated amid strained diplomatic relations between Japan's rightwing Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who refused to renew an apology to the victims, and South Korea's leftwing government. In 2015, former Korean Prime Minister Park Geun-hye agreed for a foundation to be set up for the victims which would be funded by Japan, a settlement which was widely decried as unsatisfactory. On 5 July of this year, South Korea officially dissolved the US\$8.8 million foundation amid ongoing disputes over reconciliation; https://artreview.com/news/news_6_aug_2019_aichi_triennale_censorship/ The life-size statue of the seated girl, who is 160 centimeters tall, is a throwback to the women's childhoods when they were forced into wartime sexual servitude. Clad in *hanbok*, the traditional Korean dress popularly worn at that time, the girl's hair is roughly cut to ear length, symbolising the deprivation of the women's right to self-determination. Cast under the young girl is a mosaic shadow of an old woman, a representation of the comfort women's fragmented and shadowed lives, as well as the suffering they had from their childhoods all the way to now as elderly women. At the heart of the mosaic of black gravel sits a fluttering white butterfly, exuding hope for the victims' reincarnation into a better world... The girl's quest for freedom and peace is embodied in a small bird perched on her shoulder, which also plays the role of spiritually linking surviving victims to those who already passed away; <http://www.koreatimesus.com/deciphering-symbolism-of-girl-statue/>



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Ho Tzu Nyen, *Hotel Aporia*, 2019

Image courtesy the artist and Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong

The venue, Kirakutei, is a Japanese-style inn and restaurant that was popular from the Taisho up to the Showa period. It used to be crowded with workers in the sericultural industry before, with naval officers during, and with people from the auto industry after the war. Towards the end of the war, members of the Kamikaze Kusanagi Unit had a final dinner there before their suicide mission against the US Navy fleet at Okinawa. The characters appearing in *Hotel Aporia* include members of that special attack unit, a group of Kyoto School philosophers during wartime, and cultural workers (such as film director Ozu Yasujiro and animator Yokoyama Ryuichi) who were dispatched to the South Seas as members of a propaganda corps. The diverse lives and fates of these characters help us understand the multitude of forces, and the complex and often contradictory ideological and historical backdrops of those tumultuous years in which militant nationalism was inextricably intertwined with anti-modernism and promises of liberation. *Hotel Aporia* is the stage on which concealed histories are awakened. In this work, various conflicting contexts wavering between buried memories and forgotten records are pieced together, and layers of consciousness—including those who tragically lost their lives—unfold and find unexpected resonance. Here, historical facts appear in front of the visitor in the full force of their tragedy, yet everything woven in dazzling fiction, like a gathering of mysterious ghosts; <https://aichitriennale.jp/en/artwork/T04.html>



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Ho Tzu Nyen, *Hotel Aporia* (video still), 2019

Image courtesy the artist and Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong

Ho Tzu Nyen's artistic practice, which primarily includes film and multichannel installations, explores the construction of historical narratives through images and events such as documentary, theatre, art, philosophy, and archival materials. The layers of appropriated and original visual materials converge into complicated meditations on topics such as colonialism in his native Singapore, religion, and even abstract ruminations on concepts such as the cloud. Environments and site responsiveness are also important parts of his work, a recognition of the way a work's context can alter one's viewing experience; <https://www.artsy.net/artist/ho-tzu-nyen-he-zi-yan>



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Eko Nugroho, *Carnival Trap 2*, 2018

Image courtesy the artist

Belonging to a younger generation of artists who emerged post-*Reformasi*—known as generation 2000 or the Internet generation—Eko Nugroho witnessed the rapid social and political changes that followed the fall of Suharto's 32-year rule. Working primarily with popular culture imagery—street art, comic books and science fiction—seamlessly woven together with traditional Javanese motifs from *batik* and *wayang*, Nugroho has developed hybrid pop-figures that embody the attitude of this period... More recently, these figures have found new surfaces as the artist playfully experiments with different media—sculpture, embroidery, mural painting, contemporary wayang kulit performance and installation. Nugroho's multidisciplinary practice has grown from a central objective: to find public space, in any shape or form, to share his art...

Made of upcycled plastic debris collected in Yogyakarta, [*Carnival trap*] addresses Nugroho's concerns regarding Indonesia's plastic predicament that affects the entire archipelago. This not only situates the artist in a local conversation but is a comment on the wider global issues of waste management and land pollution. Conceptually, this work likens Indonesia's current political situation to a carnival, charged with colourful lights, roaring noise and a seemingly collective euphoria. National Gallery of Australia *Contemporary Worlds: Indonesia* media kit



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Tisna Sanjaya, *Seni penjernih dialog (Art as purifying dialogue)*, 2019

Image courtesy the artist

Senior Indonesian artist Tisna Sanjaya was a founding member of the 1980s Bandung-based art movement *Jeprut*—a Sundanese word for a unique regenerative force. *Jeprut* is analogous to a short-circuiting of the everyday, where existing conditions are broken by an exploding light, resulting in new energies and possibilities. During Suharto's reign, and together with his collaborators, Sanjaya staged performance-based 'happenings' of a tactically improvised and abstract nature. To shield the *jeprut* artists from government censure, works were performed and concluded quickly, existing only as ephemeral experience. Adopting the mantra "Say it (even if bitter), and then pray it", Sanjaya's works can be understood as art activism, publicly broadcast to local and global effect in the post-*Reformasi* era. National Gallery of Australia *Contemporary Worlds: Indonesia* media kit