

ICS SEMINAR SERIES 2024

The Curatorial Function in Asia

14 March 2024 | 11:30am - 1:00pm

Room: EZ.G.22 Parramatta South Campus

Abstract

The curator has become a pivotal figure in contemporary art: public-facing, prodigiously mobile and styled 'independent', this tastemaker is perhaps the chief author of art's now global circulation, seemingly more influential than the leading artists. Yet their role receives little serious analysis. In this talk, I make a case for historicising the curatorial function, drawing on critical theory and observations made over twenty years living and working in Asia. I argue that the curator's rise should be understood in light of local, national and regional contingencies. With the ongoing proliferation of museums and big transnational exhibitions in this region, the practical and discursive norms of curation remain diverse, yet they differ sharply from Euro-American models vis á vis both intellectual scope (e.g., the balance between authorial and administrative dimensions of the job) and structural determinants like the relationship to patrons, publics and state power. Is there a discernibly 'Asian' history of curation? And what might such a history tell us about a larger, global contemporaneity?

Biography

David Teh is a writer, curator and Associate Professor at the National University of Singapore. His research spans art history, critical and cultural theory, with an emphasis on Southeast Asian modern and contemporary art. His curatorial projects have included *Unreal Asia* (55. Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen, 2009), *Video Vortex #7* (Yogyakarta, 2011), *TRANSMISSION* (Jim Thompson Art Center, Bangkok, 2014), *Misfits: Pages from a Loose-leaf Modernity* (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2017) and *Returns*, a project for the 12th Gwangju Biennale in 2018. Most recently, he co-curated the 17th Istanbul Biennial (2022) with Ute Meta Bauer and Amar Kanwar. David's writings have appeared in *Third Text*, *Afterall*, *ARTMargins*, *Theory Culture & Society* and *Artforum*. His book *Thai Art: Currencies of the Contemporary* was published in 2017 by MIT Press, and he was co-editor (with David Morris) of *Artist-to-Artist: Independent Art Festivals in Chiang Mai 1992-98* (2018) for *Afterall's* *Exhibition Histories* series.

Presenter: David Teh

Discussant: Cecelia Cmielewski

Chair: Ned Rossiter

**NEXT SEMINAR:
21 MARCH**