

PROGRAMME SYMPOSIUM: *RETURN AND REPATRIATION*

Sunday 16 September,
12:00 – 16:45

TIME SCHEDULE

12:00. Panel: *'Return' & Repatriation*. Chaired by Panggah Ardiyansyah, with contributions by Erika Tan, Ong Jo-Lene, Wim Manuhutu.

12:00: Presentation Panggah Ardiyansyah: *Artefact, Representations, and Afterlives: Collecting and Returning An Ancient Statue*

12:20: Presentation Erika Tan: *'What if', Repatriating The Object With No Shadow*

12:40: Presentation Ong Jo-Lene: *One Extended Present — Strangely Split*

13:00: Q&A, with Wim Manuhutu as discussant, moderated by Panggah Ardiyansyah

13:30: Lunch break

14:30: Presentation Sau Bin Yap: *In the Mood for Collaboration/Corroboration*

14:50: Poetry performance / Artist Talk Sung Tieu: *Inferiority Complex III*

15:30: In Conversation & Q/A with Sau Bin Yap, Sung Tieu and Annie Jael Kwan

16:00: Presentation Dr. Eva Bentcheva: *Chasing Spectres and Remnants: Historical Research as Artistic Practice in Southeast Asia*

16:20: In Conversation & Q/A with Eva Bentcheva and Noel Ed De Leon

16:45: Program ends

12:00 – Panel *'Return' and Repatriation*

Chaired by Panggah Ardiyansyah, with Wim Manuhutu as discussant

Questions pertaining to diaspora of Indonesian objects collected in the Netherlands often led to the discussion on repatriation. But if we were to return these objects, how can we define their 'homeland' when identity politics and cultural biography already confuse geographical boundaries? So could alternative modes of interrogation for the previously marginalised colonial narrative clarify the imagining of this supposed homeland? The term is even more elusive when faced with the diverse trajectories of post-colonial communities, whom tellingly give meaning and value to the objects, but whose own sense of return is often complex and conflicted.

The panel will seek answers to these questions by first looking at the historical context of collections – now deemed as representatives of Indonesian material culture – were shaped by particular practices from colonial figures and institutions. Since the knowledge of collecting can be both memorised and forgotten, this discussion will give insights on how these contested objects are being canonised into the formation of national heritage in both countries, albeit their diasporic and transnationalism natures. Then these issues of the ‘return’ and by implication, the desire for ‘homeland’, imaginary or not, are extended into a discussion of transnational identity, and migrations, in an age of increasingly anxious border negotiations.

**12:00 – Presentation: *Artefact, Representations, and Afterlives: Collecting and Returning An Ancient Statue*
– Panggha Ardiyansyah**

The presence of Dutch in the regions of Indonesia for more than three centuries arguably brought long exposure to cultural exchange and interaction, owing much to the dynamic relation between colonial powers and indigenous communities. Objects were traded, gifted, taken, and collected in opposite directions through differentiating aims and appropriations. Those ended up in museum collections, mostly in Batavia and Leiden, were to be probe into, described, and examined, to construct the knowledge about past and present inhabitants of the islands. Focusing much to the majestic past of Java, the objects and their embedded values were often projected at the colonial exhibitions from the late 19th century as the pride of Dutch empire. On the other hand, the rise of nationalist movement at the turn of 20th centuries were incepted by those educated natives born from Dutch education system. Knowledge of the past presented at schools were quick to be subverted for deep rooting and spiritual aspiration to the nation of Indonesia.

By tracking the trajectory of a specific object – the Singasari Prajnaparamita – Ardiyansyah will talk about the entanglement of identity, cultural patrimony, (trans)nationalism, and heritage. The image was supposedly taken from 13th-century Singasari Temple at East Java in 1818 and subsequently sent into the Netherlands in 1822. Once adored as the most beautiful statue ever produced by Javanese soil at Museum Volkenkunde Leiden, it was repatriated to Indonesia as part of return agreement in 1978. It is now being presented as the masterpiece of National Museum in Jakarta.

12:20 – Presentation: ‘What if’, Repatriating The Object With No Shadow
– Erika Tan

Discussing the work on display in the gallery, *The ‘Forgotten’ Weaver (Netherlands 2018)*, the artist will attempt to weave together several disparate threads which together form the fabric of her on-going project *Repatriating The Object With No Shadow*. Bringing together ideas around history, archives, collections and desires for return, the work focuses on the figure of a minor historical figure, produced as spectre, as witness, as agent provocateur. The question of mediums, as messages, left as code within the pattern of the cloth, both performance score and cultural emblems. Is the forgotten weaver the stuff of matter, or the gesture of agency? The ‘return’ in this work of Halimah Binti Abdulla, the-1924-EmpireExhibition-weaver-who-died-whilst-demonstrating-her-craft implicates the artist (Tan), cultural institutions and their collection (museums), art canons (histories and nation building) and questions of home (status).



Erika Tan - APA JIKA, the mis-placed comma (I, II, III). Image courtesy the artist.

12:40 – Presentation: One Extended Present – Strangely Split
– Ong Jo-Lene

For this panel, Jo-Lene will focus on the P.A. Regnault collection in her research on how The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and National Gallery Singapore make sense of the historical legacies of coloniality and modernity. Regnault was a Dutch art collector and industrialist with paint factories in Indonesia, then Netherlands Dutch East Indies. The display and eventual accessioning of the collection played a key role in Stedelijk’s early years of ‘becoming modern.’ Its major group of Chagalls are prominently displayed in the new Stedelijk BASE permanent exhibit. From 1935 - 1940, Regnault organised annual exhibitions of his collection in the Bataviasche Kunstkring in Jakarta. This period is

noted in NGS exhibition's timeline. It has a subsidiary effect in framing the responses of Indonesian artists to the cultural authority of that time. Even as what counts as 'modern' had its origins in Europe, the term gained different kinds of currency as it transacted across the world.

**14:30 – Presentation: *In the Mood for Collaboration/Corroboration*
– Sau Bin Yap**

Extending from references used in his work in *UnAuthorised Medium*, Sau Bin will speak briefly on collaborative practice, art collective and other initiatives active in Kuala Lumpur.

**14:50 – Poetry performance/ Artist Talk: *Inferiority Complex III*
– Sung Tieu**

Inferiority complex, a state in which one persistently doubts one's own self-worth. It is thought to drive afflicted individuals to either overcompensate, resulting in a ravenous drive for perfection and over-achievement, or a dull sense of inadequacy and helplessness. Tieu's performance investigates the relationship we might have with our selves and our culture as something that is based on the socially familiar as well as the identity of the other; observing the bastardised and despotically twisted ways we flagrantly experience cultural hierarchies and marginalization in the art world, while at the same time practising forms of resistance from within it.

Drawing from her own archive of poetry and works, Tieu will present a live performance and an accompanying artist talk of relating projects. The artist talk will focus on the use of fictional narratives throughout Tieu's practice and its relationship to new identity formation within the artist's oeuvre.

**16:00 – Presentation: *Chasing Spectres and Remnants: Historical Research as Artistic Practice in Southeast Asia*
– Dr. Eva Bentcheva**

Despite recent curatorial interest in Southeast Asia as a site of historical connectivity (Patrick Flores, *Ties of History*, 2018-19), artists have long been engaged in critical investigations of historical 'ties' in the post-independence period. This talk presents the case studies of a number of artists from across the region, including Erika Tan, Noel Ed De Leon, Amy Lee Sanford, and a number of the artists featured in *UnAuthorised Medium*, who have risen to the challenge of addressing historical amnesia, erasures, and omissions. I will investigate how the notion of 'artistic research' may be understood via their use of archival research, assemblage and re-enactment. In light of their works, I propose an understanding of 'artistic research' in the Southeast Asian context as a continuing negotiation of 'spectres' (fragmentary accounts and lapses in memory), and 'remnants' (material objects with uncertain provenances, and fragmentary documentation).