

CCA

CENTRE for
CONTEMPORARY
ART

A research centre of Nanyang Technological University

GLOBAL
ART INITIATIVE

GUGGENHEIM
UBS
MAP

NO COUNTRY

CONTEMPORARY ART FOR
SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA



10 May–20 July 2014

Centre for Contemporary Art, Singapore

A Cultural
Engagement



TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

An abstract map of South and Southeast Asia, rendered in a vibrant color gradient from green on the left to orange and red on the right. The map is composed of numerous overlapping, semi-transparent polygonal shapes that create a textured, layered effect. The text is overlaid on the left side of the map.

NO COUNTRY

CONTEMPORARY ART FOR
SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE



NOTE TO TEACHERS

This Resource Guide focuses on seven artists whose work is included in *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia*, the inaugural exhibition of the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative. *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia* provides an opportunity for students to learn how contemporary artists address the issues and concerns of our time.

This guide suggests techniques for exploring both the visual arts and other areas of a humanities curriculum. The guide is also available online at guggenheim.org/artscurriculum with images that can be downloaded or projected in the classroom. The images may be used for educational purposes only and are not licensed for commercial applications of any kind.

Before bringing your class to the Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), we invite you to visit the exhibition, read the guide, and decide which aspects of the exhibition are most relevant to your students. For more information on scheduling a visit for your students, please visit gillmanbarracks.com/cca.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia is the inaugural exhibition of the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative, a multi-year collaboration that will chart creative activity and contemporary art in three geographic regions—South and Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East and North Africa.

Curated by June Yap, Guggenheim UBS MAP Curator, South and Southeast Asia, the exhibition features 19 works including mixed-media pieces, paintings, photographs, sculptures and videos by 16 artists and artist collectives from 11 countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, the United Kingdom and Vietnam. Through these works, *No Country* invites audiences to engage with some of the most challenging and inventive artists in South and Southeast Asia today.

The exhibition title draws from the opening line of W.B. Yeats's poem "Sailing to Byzantium" (1928), later adopted by Cormac McCarthy for his novel *No Country for Old Men* (2005). *No Country* presents South and Southeast Asia in terms of transformation and trace, charting patterns of historical and contemporary influence within and beyond the region itself.

With a narrative stretching back to ancient kingdoms and empires (the region now comprises more than 15 nations), *No Country* seeks to reflect upon exchanges and relationships within and between South and Southeast Asian nation-states, on the overall status of the nation-state today, and on the pressures and effects of globalization and colonialism.

According to curator June Yap, "There is a tremendous diversity of artistic practice in South and Southeast Asia, and certainly more artists and artworks than any single project can accommodate. In this exhibition, the intention is to present the range of aesthetic developments and subjects of interest to contemporary artists, and to challenge the privileging of nation and national narrative as a basis for understanding them. Accompanied by programs for engagement with different local audiences, *No Country* is more than an exhibition; it is a platform for discussion and exchange."

The artworks are grouped according to four themes: "reflection and encounter," "intersections and dualities," "diversities and divisions," and the "desire for unity and community." *No Country* presents artworks that challenge and explore the region's historical ambiguities, territories both psychic and literal, individual subjectivities, and political, economic, and aesthetic negotiations.

ABOUT SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

The nation-states of South and Southeast Asia are relatively young, having emerged from colonial resistance, intra-national division, and economic and political necessity. Yet culturally, the region is marked by intertwined histories and shared social, religious, and cultural practices. These continue to surface in spite of economic and political pressures to define identity through distinctness. The region is also one of the most diverse areas in the world. This diversity is manifest in numerous forms, including differing economic regimes, degrees of development, geographical features, cultural forms, and uneven income levels.

Southeast Asian countries include Brunei, Myanmar (formerly known as Burma), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. South Asia is comprised of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. However, the United Nations notes that the “assignment of countries or areas to specific groupings is for statistical convenience and does not imply any assumption regarding political or other affiliation of countries or territories.”

Geographically, South Asia and Southeast Asia are vast and diverse, and have been at the crossroads of many influences. Indian traders brought ancient Hinduism to Cambodia. The Hindus who settled in Bali mixed their religion with local animism to create a unique sect. Seafaring Arab merchants imported Islam to coastal areas of Malaysia and Indonesia. In Vietnam, the only Southeast Asian nation to fall directly under the control of past Chinese empires, China’s cultural influence

remains powerful. From the late 1400s onward, Europeans imported Western culture to cities such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Penang, and Malacca; the European colonial imprint is still visible in the architecture and cuisine of most countries in the region. Many religious beliefs are represented, including the teachings of Buddhism, the deities of Christianity and Hinduism, and the precepts of Islam.

Mixed with ancient spiritual practices is the frenetic buzz of modernity. Cosmopolitan cities such as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Mumbai are already major urban hubs, while up-and-coming cities such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), and Bangalore are emerging as metropolises with features that intertwine current global economic and political forces with earlier forms of governance. In terms of culture, business, and fashion, the major urban centers in the regions are comparable to many European and American cities.

South and Southeast Asia are experiencing the long-term impact of global forces. Modernization has produced substantial gains in such areas as life expectancy and education, but has also spread dislocation and division. As the region’s economies grow, the environment suffers from pollution and natural resources are savagely exploited. In this transition, people and economies are shifting from an era of European colonial subjugation, built on plantation and colonized forms of labor, to twenty-first-century capital expansion and new forms of work in a differently constituted global economic landscape.

VINCENT LEONG

b. 1979, KUALA LUMPUR

The work of Vincent Leong (b.1978) comments on Malaysia's complex history and diverse composition. Over the centuries, original Malays have mingled with immigrants from the Arab world, India, China, Thailand, Indonesia, and Europe, integrating cultures into a collaged national identity. While the co-mingling of cultures may suggest a tolerant society, ethnic loyalties remain strong and undeniable tensions contradict the notion of a unified Malaysian identity. The ethnic and cultural differences within Malaysia have created both cultural richness and conflict, and remain a sensitive topic that manifests in political, religious, and economic logics.

While at first glance Leong's set of photographs *Keeping Up with the Abdullahs* appears to be from an earlier era, it was produced in 2012, and digitally "aged" to suggest a historical origin. The shots mimic turn-of-the-twentieth-century photographic portraits of the Malay royal family that typically include traditional dress and conspicuous parasols. Leong, however, substitutes Chinese and Indian families for Malay royalty. To those born in Malaysia, the symbolism here is clear, and the artist's statement on otherness and discrimination will resonate.

Leong ponders: "Am I Chinese? But I've never been to China and I don't know how to speak Chinese. Or am I Malaysian? Oh no, I'm Christian and Indian." But his cynicism is mixed with optimism for the future: "I think there's hope. If there isn't, I wouldn't have spent all this time, money, and energy making these works."

Leong emphasizes the Malaysian predicament by titling his work *Keeping Up with the Abdullahs*, a playful twist on the well-known idiom "keeping up with the Joneses." The final flourish of the artist's political and cultural critique is a small plaque on the frame of each photograph that pegs the figures depicted as conclusively "Malaysian" in the languages of Chinese and Tamil, the caption written in an all-embracing Arabic Jawi script.

The artist's political commentaries suggest his perspectives on contemporary Malaysia through a mixture of nostalgia and humor that also illustrates Leong's understanding of himself and his culture. "I used to think that this was a really boring subject," he admits, "but you cannot escape it. At the end of the day, all your ideas come from your own personal identity."



▲
Keeping Up with the Abdullahs I, 2012

Digital chromogenic print in artist's frame
Edition 2/8
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Guggenheim UBS MAP Purchase Fund 2012.151

Photo: Kristopher McKay © Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York



VIEW + DISCUSS

Show: *Keeping Up with the Abdullahs I and II*

Look carefully at Vincent Leong's *Keeping Up with the Abdullahs I and II*. Although he has created these works using digital technology, what characteristics suggest that they might be from a significantly earlier period? How has the artist achieved the feel of an aged historical photograph? What clues has he included to let us know that these are actually contemporary works?

Do these photographs remind you of any you have seen? What is familiar about them? Where have you seen similar images?

Leong's work references a historical photograph of the First Durbar (Conference of Rulers) held in Malaya (now Malaysia) in 1897. The council was assembled under the British colonial regime and was comprised of Malay rulers and governors whose main responsibility was to elect the king. Compare Leong's work with the vintage photo. What similarities do you see? What differences? How does seeing this historical photograph affect your reading of Leong's work?

◀ *Keeping Up with the Abdullahs II*, 2012

Digital chromogenic print in artist's frame
Edition 2/8
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Guggenheim UBS MAP Purchase Fund
2012.152

Photo: Kristopher McKay © Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York



FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

The Malays are predominantly Muslim, and the name Abdullah (meaning "God's servant") is one of the most common names in the Islamic world. It is also the family name of influential Malaysians including a recent Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Leong uses the name Abdullah to signify social, economic, and political aspiration.

Long before the reality television show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, the phrase "keeping up with the Joneses" referred to using one's neighbors' material possessions as a benchmark for social status. To fail to "keep up with the Joneses" is to reveal one's socioeconomic or cultural inadequacy. While the phrase was coined years ago, it's perhaps more relevant now than ever. Have a classroom discussion focusing on the pressures that your students perceive to "keep up."

Make a class portrait. Research online the way class photos are typically composed. What characteristics do they have in common? Ask the class to collaborate on creating a unique class portrait. Brainstorm a list of attributes that you would like to project, then devise a strategy aimed at producing that result.

- What type of clothing will be worn?
- What poses and relationships will be depicted?
- What setting and lighting will you choose?
- What angle or point of view best reflects your collective vision?
- What props will you use?

Once the photo is taken it can be further altered and customized using digital programs such as Photoshop and Instagram.

In the 1970s, the Malaysian government implemented policies that were designed to favor Bumiputra, the native people of Malaysia, by creating educational and occupational opportunities and defusing inter-ethnic tension. While these policies have succeeded in creating a significant urban Malay middle class, some analysts have noted a backlash of resentment from excluded groups, in particular the sizeable Chinese and Indian Malaysian minorities. As of 2009, Bumiputra laws still stand, but many Malaysians argue that they are unfair and racist. In your classroom, debate this issue as it applies to both Malaysia and to affirmative action rulings in the United States. Is favoring one group of citizens within a nation ever justified and if so, under what circumstances? Can you think of any examples closer to home?

SHILPA GUPTA

b. 1976, MUMBAI

The end of British rule in India on August 17, 1947, saw the creation of the Radcliffe Line, an attempt to divide a 175,000-square-mile territory populated by 88 million people into India and the newly created nation-state of Pakistan. Pakistan was to become a Muslim homeland, while the new India would become a secular state with a Hindu majority. The resulting transfer of millions of people across new borders saw unprecedented violence. Many were slaughtered, others died of starvation and exhaustion, and multitudes were afflicted by diseases typically suffered by undernourished refugees. An estimated one million people perished.

Since independence, the two countries have fought three major wars and one undeclared war, and have been involved in numerous skirmishes and standoffs. In an effort to curb terrorism, illegal migration, smuggling, trespassing, cattle-lifting, trafficking of drugs and arms, and other such activities, many miles of fencing and floodlighting have been installed along the Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Pakistan boundaries. In 2011, the *Economist* dubbed the latter “The World’s Most Dangerous Border.”

Artist Shilpa Gupta (b.1976), who lives and works in Mumbai, asks: “Can you imagine fencing a border?” In response to her country’s tense political situation, she has made a hand-wound ball of thread encased in a vitrine. The work addresses threat, fear, and religious prejudice via an elegant, poetic sculptural form. As updated in 2007, the Indo-Pakistan border is 1,188 1/2 miles long. Alluding to this vast distance through the application of a 14.9-to-1 ratio, Gupta has wound eighty miles of thread into an egg-shaped ball. This inert mass stands in contrast to the volatile border itself.



VIEW + DISCUSS

Show: 1:14.9

Without revealing the artist's motivation, tell students the title of the work and ask them to discuss what they see.

What questions do they have about the work?

Brainstorm a list of questions generated by students. What information do they feel they need to know in order to appreciate and understand the work?

Share with students the artist's motivation, either by reading or distributing copies of the text above. How does knowing the artist's motivation change the perception of the work?

According to Gupta, her process is fragile. "I think of it as creating pathways to the viewer," she writes. "The viewer may choose to walk along the path. I would like for the viewer to absorb it and then leave it open-ended. It is almost not possible for anything to have identical meaning. I would not ask for it. But what is possible is some amount of overlap in emotion." What meanings and emotional responses do you think Gupta is hoping to elicit? Do you think she has been successful?



1:14.9, 2011–2012

Polyester thread,
wood, glass, and brass,
64 3/16 x 22 x 20 inches
(163 x 55.9 x 50.8 cm),
A.P. 1/2, edition of 3
Solomon R.
Guggenheim
Museum, New York,
Guggenheim UBS
MAP Purchase Fund
2012.148

Photo: Kristopher
McKay © Solomon R.
Guggenheim Museum,
New York

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

Since the dawn of human civilization, people have felt a fundamental need to divide the world into territories. The original divisions were often based on the availability of agricultural land, or the influence of a group over the surrounding area.

Some borders, such as interstate borders, are open and unguarded. Others are partially or fully controlled, and may be crossed legally only at designated checkpoints. Borders can be an issue of national importance, driving citizens and their governments to anger and even war. The need for new resources such as food, water, and oil to support a growing population often tests the strength of claims and boundaries.

Invite students to describe what geographic borders they have seen. For example, how is the entrance to Singapore or your home country marked? What about within the country or city? Encourage students to discuss why borders have developed and what factors determine whether they are peaceful or contentious.

Metaphors are most frequently encountered as literary figures of speech in which one word is used in place of another to suggest a likeness between them. Metaphor provides a means by which we can connect together objects and events that appear to be disparate and unconnected to elicit a poetic effect. Gupta provides us with a visual metaphor by asserting a comparison between the heavily reinforced Indo-Pakistani border and a ball of thread.

Think about an issue that is important to you. For example, you may be passionate about halting climate change, eradicating disease, or putting a stop to the polluting of our oceans. First, consider all the usual ways you might call attention to this issue, such as making a poster, writing an article, or joining a like-minded group. Then consider ways that you might call attention to your issue *metaphorically*. What are the essential qualities of the issue that you want to convey? Is there a way in which you might create an object that expresses some of these qualities through metaphor?

To get a better understanding of the border dispute that Gupta refers to, this interactive map allows you to view the various territorial claims from each country's perspective. Go to: economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/05/indian_pakistani_and_chinese_border_disputes.



TAYEBA BEGUM LIPI

b. 1969, GAIBANDHA, BANGLADESH

Tayeba Begum Lipi was born in 1969 in Gaibandha, Bangladesh. Although she originally planned to be a journalist, in the mid 1980s she decided to pursue art, majoring in drawing and painting at the University of Dhaka. Despite changing her career trajectory, Lipi retains a journalist's interest in societal issues and uses installation, painting, printmaking, and video to comment on themes including the politics of gender and female identity.

Addressing societal contradictions, Lipi focuses on the importance of questioning the sexual stereotypes that dominate women's lives in Bangladesh and beyond. Inspired by the strong women of her childhood, her work questions the representation and roles of women, particularly in Bangladesh, where historical and religious expectations continue to determine what is permissible.

In *Love Bed*, Lipi transforms a place of comfort and relaxation into one of danger and threat. The razor blades that recur in her recent works not only represent violence, but are also a personal reference to a tool used in

the delivery of babies when other medical support is lacking. Printed on the blades is the Bengali name *Balaka*, denoting a company that manufactures this Bangladeshi product. Lipi, coming from a large family, associates the strength of the steel blades with the tenacity that she observed among the women around her as she was growing up. Defying the odds, they were optimistic and kept their families and communities together. Lipi's work resists easily read binary opposites. As a symbol, the razor blade is shown to have both positive and negative potential.

In addition to her work as an artist, Lipi also seeks to encourage social engagement with art, promoting workshops where both the public and other artists can interact with one another. In 2002, she co-founded, with her husband and several other artists, Britto Arts Trust, Bangladesh's first artist-run alternative arts association, dedicated to organizing exhibitions, encouraging international dialogue and exchange, and providing support to the country's artists through funding, residencies and workshop.



Love Bed, 2012

Stainless steel, 31 1/4 x
72 3/4 x 87 inches (79.4
x 184.8 x 221 cm)
Solomon R.
Guggenheim
Museum, New York,
Guggenheim UBS
MAP Purchase Fund
2012.153

Photo: Kristopher
McKay © Solomon R.
Guggenheim Museum,
New York

VIEW + DISCUSS

Show: *Love Bed*

Before showing *Love Bed* to your class, ask each student to create a list of five to ten words that they associate with their own bed. Once their individual lists are complete, create a collaborative list of all the words that were generated. Highlight the words that appeared most frequently.

Have students create another list of words that describe their response to Lipi's *Love Bed*. Compare the two lists. Discuss the methods by which Lipi has created a work that challenges our usual associations with this common object.

Lipi has used razor blades in the construction of many of her recent sculptures. Visit the artist's website Tayebalipi.com to view her other works. For the artist, the razor blade has multiple associations. Have students create their own list of words that they associate with this object. Ask students, if you were to suggest another object for Lipi to create using razor blades as a medium, what would you suggest and why?

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

Love Bed highlights how an artist's choice of medium can impact the meaning of and response to a work of art. Try to imagine or sketch a bed created from only bricks, cotton balls or toothpicks. How might that change the impact and meaning of the work?

Artists have used every conceivable medium to create art including pollen, blocks of chocolate, and spools of colored thread. Make your own sculpture from an atypical material that has personal and multiple meanings for you. How does your choice of material add to the meaning of the work?

Most people would view the razor blades in Lipi's work as signifiers of danger and violence, but the artist also views these objects as symbols of strength and self-reliance. Choose an object that might have a number of both positive and negative connotations. Create a list of all the possible associations. For example, an apple can represent knowledge and sustenance as well as temptation and evil.

Lipi's homeland of Bangladesh has a turbulent political history that ranges across the war of independence from Pakistan in the 1970s and the military dictatorship of the 1980s, government corruption, widespread poverty, and overcrowding. Divide students into working groups and ask each group to research more about the country's culture, economy, geography, history, and politics. Each group should report back to the class. How does learning more about Bangladesh inform student responses to Lipi's work?

Sopheap Pich was born in 1971 in the agricultural town of Battambang, Cambodia. In 1979, when the Vietnamese invasion led to the ousting of the brutal Communist regime known as the Khmer Rouge, he fled with his family to Thailand, spending four years in refugee camps before migrating to the United States. Pich remembers traveling vast distances on foot and witnessing the devastation of war—broken bodies, ravaged landscapes, abandoned artillery, and ruined buildings.

Pich went on to study painting in the United States, earning a BFA from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (1995), and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1999). In 2002, memories of his childhood and a desire to reconnect with his previous life and landscape, drew the artist back to Cambodia. It was here that he turned his attention to sculpture. In 2005, Pich gave up painting altogether in favor of making three-dimensional objects from indigenous sources, using a traditional weaving technique.

In *Morning Glory* (2011), the common plant is rendered at monumental scale. Considered a weed by gardeners, it is a plant that is generally regarded as unexceptional. It is at once attractive and a possible nuisance. Also known as water spinach or swamp cabbage, it is popularly served as a green vegetable, especially in East and Southeast Asian cuisines. During the Khmer Rouge regime, it was valued by Cambodians as a source of nourishment and saved countless lives at a time when millions were threatened by the prospect of starvation.

Pich's work synthesizes the contemporary artistic methods he studied in the U.S. with his current life in Cambodia. Through the use of rattan and bamboo, materials familiar from Khmer rural life and craft (they are used to make everyday functional objects such as baskets and fish traps), Pich's approach bridges the aesthetic and material gulfs between the two. By transforming the rigid bamboo stalks into a malleable substance, Pich treats the material like a line, making a drawing in space. Repurposing these basic components of Cambodian life, he instills the country's shared experience with renewed life.¹

SOPHEAP PICH

b. 1971, BATTAMBANG, CAMBODIA



Morning Glory, 2011

Rattan, bamboo, wire,
plywood, and steel,
17 feet, 6 inches x 103
inches x 74 inches
(533.4 x 261.6 x 188 cm)
installation view
Solomon R.
Guggenheim
Museum, New York,
Guggenheim UBS
MAP Purchase Fund
2013.3

Courtesy Tyler Rollins
Fine Art, New York



VIEW + DISCUSS

Show: *Morning Glory*

Before projecting *Morning Glory*, have your class brainstorm a list of qualities that they usually associate with sculpture. You may want to tack up or project a few images of well-known sculptures as examples. When the list is complete, show *Morning Glory*. How many of the words on the list can be applied to Pich's work? Now brainstorm a list of words that describe Pich's work. Discuss the advantages and possible disadvantages of his approach.

Ask students to imagine that the artist, Sopheap Pich was scheduled to visit their classroom. Brainstorm a list of questions you would want to ask him. What more would you like to know about *Morning Glory*? View the two-minute slide show *Cambodian Rattan: The Sculpture of Sopheap Pich* at metmuseum.org/en/exhibitions/listings/2013/sopheap-pich. How many questions can be answered after watching this brief slideshow?

Sopheap Pich titled his sculpture *Morning Glory*. Without revealing this, ask students what the work reminds them of, and what they would call it. Have students look at some photos of the common flower to which the title refers or, if possible, have them examine the plant. How does Pich's work resemble its subject? How does it depart from it?

Pich was educated in the U.S. where he studied contemporary art theory and approaches to making art, but he also wanted his work to connect to his Cambodian childhood and native culture. How does *Morning Glory* synthesize these two influences?

The morning glory flower is significant to Pich. It is tenacious and graceful, and was a source of sustenance for his people during a very difficult time. If you were to choose a form, manufactured or natural, that has meaning to you, what would it be and why?

In the slideshow, Pich and his studio assistants bring one of his sculptures outside, placing it in the Cambodian landscape. Where do you think would be the perfect place to install *Morning Glory*. Why?

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

Basket weaving is one of the most widely distributed crafts in the history of human civilization. The oldest known baskets have been carbon dated to between ten thousand and twelve thousand years old. Pich adapts this traditional craft to the production of enormous sculptures, but you can get a basic understanding of the weaving process yourself by trying some smaller, simpler projects. Paper weaving, building simple looms, and creating small baskets can provide insight into this ancient but still relevant global practice. For more information, see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/basket_weaving.

Much of Pich's childhood was lived under the brutal Khmer Rouge, which ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. This regime was notorious for orchestrating the Cambodian Genocide that caused the deaths of thousands from famine, disease, forced labor, executions, and purges. The Khmer Rouge targeted selected groups that they believed were enemies of the state and murdered many who they perceived as artists or intellectuals—even those who happened to display stereotypical signs of learning, such as glasses.

Enemies of the People is a documentary project by a Cambodian journalist who sought to answer the question, "Why did nearly two million people die in the 'killing fields'?" Much of the film is in Cambodian with English subtitles, and many scenes are quite intense. Lesson plans and teacher resources to guide learning and discussion about the Khmer Rouge and their brutal regime are available at pbs.org/pov/enemies/lesson_plan.php.

The organization Teaching Tolerance (teachingtolerance.org) encourages educators to talk with their students about genocide and plan lessons that reveal its structure, analyse international responses to genocide, and provide space for students to read or listen to the testimony of survivors in the hope that they will learn about this difficult subject and acquire the tools necessary to take an active role in preventing it. April has been chosen as Genocide Prevention Month since the Holocaust, Rwandan, Bosnian, Armenian, and Cambodian genocides are all commemorated during this time. For suggested lessons go to tolerance.org/blog/protecting-future-genocide.

¹ Adapted from an essay by June Yap. guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/31325

►
Places of Rebirth,
2009

Oil on canvas, triptych,
7 feet, 2 1/2 inches x 23
feet, 7 1/2 inches
(219.7 x 720.1 cm)
Solomon R.
Guggenheim
Museum, New York,
Guggenheim UBS
MAP Purchase Fund
2012.159

© Navin Rawanchaikul
and Navin Production
Co., Ltd



NAVIN RAWANCHAIKUL

b. 1971, CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

Born in 1971 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, Navin Rawanchaikul seeks ways to connect art with the lives of everyday people. *Places of Rebirth* is motivated by the artist's journey back to his family's homeland. Although born and raised in Thailand, Rawanchaikul's family emigrated from India in 1947. On his return, he interviewed Indian immigrants of his parent's generation who now live in his hometown of Chiang Mai, attempting to understand their journey of coming to Thailand and making a new home. Their stories support the contention that globalization has brought rapid and ongoing changes that constantly remake geographies and the people who inhabit them, cultivating a notion of home which no longer has a fixed location. The artist describes his own complicated childhood, from growing up in Thailand and being perceived as an outsider to coming to terms with his Indian descent and using it as his motivation for creating art.

Painted in the style of a typical Indian "Bollywood" movie poster, *Places of Rebirth* deals with the artist's background as a son of the Hindu-Punjabi diaspora and his cross-border, cross-cultural heritage. It blends generational images of Rawanchaikul's family and relatives with people he encountered in Pakistan, alongside historical images from the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan when his family migrated to Thailand. These portraits of

a community's passing through time and place are bridged through the imaginary journey of a local Thai taxi (*tuk-tuk*) transporting the artist and his Japanese family across the border of India and Pakistan. Spiced with a humorous critique of India and Pakistan's relationship, the narrative presents a re-reading of personal history while raising questions of nation and identity in today's world.

According to Rawanchaikul, this project is rooted in retelling stories from the past to his young daughter Mari. "I think about what it is like for her to grow up as half an outsider in Japan. Thinking about the future of my child also makes me think about how I grew up and who my ancestors are." Rawanchaikul spent his childhood trying to be Thai alone, and finds himself repeating his parents' advice to his daughter, who has faced teasing for her ambiguous identity: "Be yourself and respect your roots." Mari appears in her father's paintings and sculptures, often imagined in places significant to their family history. With the inclusion a handwritten letter to his daughter *Places of Rebirth* presents an intimate look into family relationships. This more personal contribution seeks to inform his daughter about her own mixed Thai-Indian and Japanese heritage.



FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

Rawanchaikul has said that after hearing the stories of Partition during his first trip to Pakistan, he understood why his family disliked talking about those times.³ The 1947 partition of India and Pakistan prompted one of the largest population movements in recorded history; an estimated one million people perished and twelve million became homeless.⁴

Ask students to research this historic event and find out what events precipitated Partition. Have a class discussion about what they learned. What were the different political positions of Indians prior to Partition? What were Partition's immediate effects? And what repercussions has it had over the decades? There are many articles that consider what might have happened if Partition had not been enacted. Do students think there may have been alternatives to ease tensions other than creating separate nations for Hindus and Muslims?

In *Places of Rebirth*, Rawanchaikul has generated an extended family tree culled from family photos, news reports, and personally significant places. At the center top are the words "An Odyssey of Life." What would you include in an odyssey (a long and eventful journey) of your life?

Create your own "Odyssey of Life" collage that includes:

- Family photos both current and past (be sure not to destroy original photos—photocopy or re-photograph them for use in your collage).
- Images of places that are important to you and your family
- News reports that relate to your family history
- Writings such as names, slogans, and headlines

On an 11 x 17-inch sheet of illustration board, experiment with various possible arrangements of these materials. When you feel you have created a composition that best expresses your family history, secure the images with glue. If possible, make a color photocopy of your collage that will "knit" all the images together. This project can also be accomplished digitally by scanning images and then using Adobe Photoshop to layer and compose their odyssey.

An artist who travels frequently, Rawanchaikul keeps in touch with his daughter Mari through long handwritten letters that chronicle his research and revelations about his family history. In one letter he writes, "let me tell you again what my mom taught [me] . . . , she said, "be yourself and proud of your roots"⁵

Interview an older family member to find out more about your family's history. What did you learn that you did not previously know about your roots?

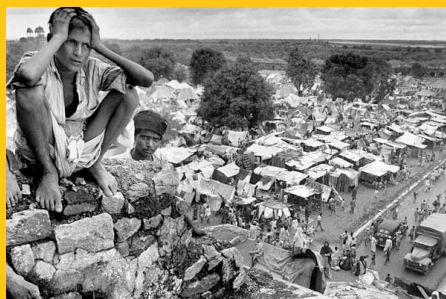
To get a better sense of Rawanchaikul's family history view his video *A Tale of Two Cities* at youtube.com/watch?v=PWR3QW5QtRw&feature=plcp. This ten-minute video includes images of Rawanchaikul, members of his family, and glimpses into the process he uses to explore his history and make his work.

VIEW + DISCUSS

Show: *Places of Rebirth*

This complex painting is more than 23 feet long. Examine it carefully and create a list of all the things you notice.

Places of Rebirth includes images of the artist and his family as well as people and places culled from news reports, historical events, and events from the artist's imagination. Find examples of each. For example, Rawanchaikul included a rendering of a 1947 photograph by American documentary photographer Margaret Bourke-White that shows a young refugee contemplating his future.²



For this work Rawanchaikul chose an approach that suggests the style of Bollywood movie posters. Look online for examples of these posters and list the attributes that *Places of Rebirth* has in common with them. Are there also ways that this work differs from such an advertisement?

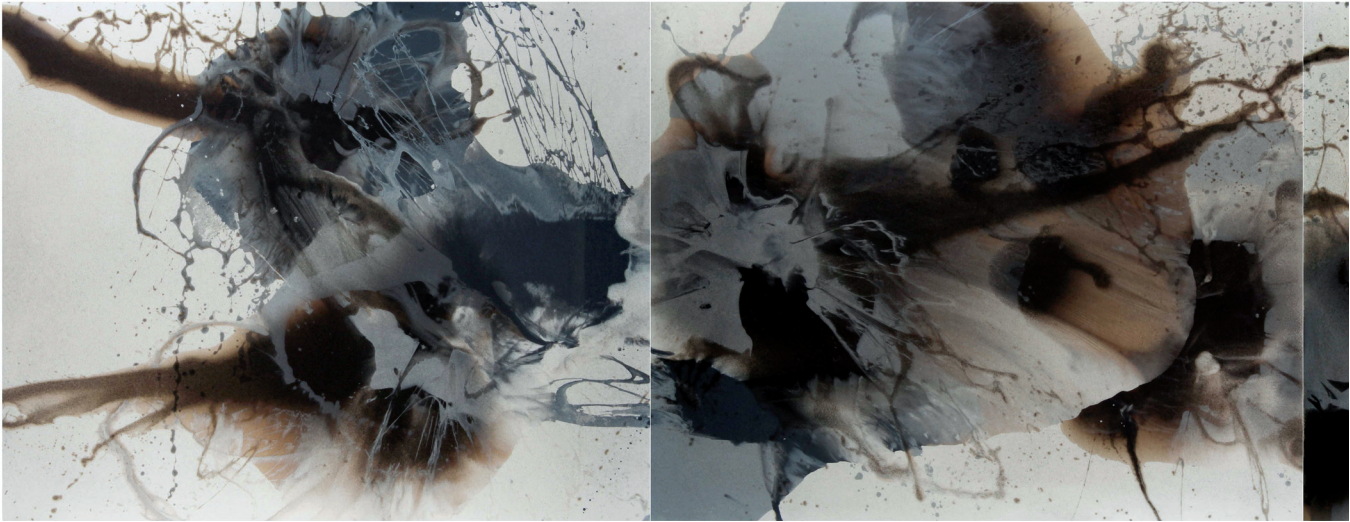
Rawanchaikul has titled his work *Places of Rebirth*. How might this title relate to the mural he has made?

² "With the tragic legacy of an uncertain future, a young refugee sits on the walls of Purana Qila, transformed into a vast refugee camp in Delhi." http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/pop_ups/06/south_asia_india0s_partition/html/8.stm

³ <http://creativeeye.wordpress.com/2011/11/08/rohit-arya-reviews-places-of-rebirth-navin-jatak/>

⁴ Richard Symonds, *The Making of Pakistan* (London, Faber and Faber, 1950), p. 74.

⁵ Letter dated January 22, 2010.



ARIN DWIHARTANTO SUNARYO

b. 1978, BANDUNG, INDONESIA

Born in 1978, Arin Dwi Hartanto Sunaryo lives and works in his boyhood home of Bandung, Indonesia, where he went to school and learned to paint. He later studied art at Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design in London. Arin's approach to painting evolved from an interest in experimenting with unconventional materials and processes.

Arin's approach sprang from his reconsideration of whether using oil paints and brushes was the only way to make paintings. Abandoning this time-honored technique, he began to experiment with liquefied pigments, directing them across the canvas using the movement of his whole body and allowing them to flow freely. While the process was satisfying, the layered oil paints took too long to dry on the canvas, and he began to look for other solutions.⁶ By accident, he discovered resin.

Resin held many of the properties Arin was looking for, allowing him to create extremely smooth and glossy colored surfaces. The direction and extent of its flow were unpredictable. Exploiting the element of chance allowed spontaneity, intuition, and accident to become part of his creative vocabulary.⁷ He never knew what the end result would be, and found that volatility exciting. Once the resin hardened, it could be peeled off its base and

Arin, finding the layer closest to the flat bottom of the canvas on which it had been poured the most interesting, "flipped" the support so that the previously hidden shapes it had produced became visible.

Another event would prompt change in Arin's work. In 2010, a series of volcanic eruptions occurred at Mount Merapi, an active volcano near Yogyakarta, Indonesia, one of the world's most densely populated areas. These eruptions caused over 350 deaths and many more injuries including severe burns and respiratory damage. In excess of 350,000 people living in the danger zone were evacuated, and local authorities struggled under the burden of caring for the injured and displaced.⁸ Mt. Merapi is only a few hundred miles from Arin's home, and the devastating eruption shocked and saddened him. He traveled to Yogyakarta to gather and preserve the ash that he would use in paintings commemorating the disaster; *Volcanic Ash Series #4* is one such work. Rendered in gradations of a single color, it conveys a sense of the artist's empathetic response to the disaster, the addition of the ashes constituting a powerful emotional component.



**Volcanic Ash Series #4,
2012**

Volcanic ash and pigmented resin, mounted on panel, triptych, 4 feet, 9 1/2 inches x 17 feet, 11 3/8 inches (146 x 547 cm)
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Guggenheim UBS MAP Purchase Fund 2012.161

© Arin Dwiwartanto Sunaryo

VIEW + DISCUSS

Show: *Volcanic Ash Series #4*

Ask each student to create a list of at least ten words that come to mind when they look at this work. Create a cumulative list of all the listed words and determine which were mentioned most often. Students may then like to create several alternative titles for this work based on the words they have chosen to describe it.

How do students think this work was made? Describe a step-by-step process that the artist might have used to achieve this result, then watch a short video, Arin Dwiwartanto Sunaryo on *Materials and Process*, at www.guggenheim.org/video/arin-dwiwartanto-sunaryo-on-materials-and-process. How is Arin's actual process similar to or different from what you imagined?

In making *Volcanic Ash Series #4*, Arin used volcanic ash from the 2010 eruption of Mount Merapi, an event that devastated a part of his homeland, causing hundreds of deaths, thousands of injuries, and widespread loss of property. How does this knowledge color your interpretation of the painting?

By incorporating actual volcanic ash and capturing the activity of the volcano, Arin stretches the definition of landscape painting. In what ways does this work meet your own criteria for what a landscape should be? In what ways does it challenge these imagined requirements?

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

Arin has continued to experiment with various materials and process to achieve the effects he wants. Are there alternative materials and processes that you would like to experiment with? Make a list of non-traditional materials that might be used in the creation of art. (Make sure that the materials you select are non-toxic and safe to use.) Document your experiments using notes and photographs. Some materials may work better than you expected, while others may disappoint. Share what you have learned with your classmates—along with your most and least successful experiments.

Volcanic Ash Series #4 includes both planned and unplanned elements, and Arin needed to structure its creation while allowing for chance occurrences. Think about making a work of art that requires the most stringent control. What material would you use? How might you go about it? Then envision how you would make a work that allows for the maximum amount of chance occurrence. What medium might you use? What would be your creative role? How might you balance these two approaches—chance and intention—when working in some other discipline?

Indonesia is an archipelago, a country comprised of approximately 17,508 islands. With more than 238 million people, Indonesia is also the world's fourth most populous nation. Arin lives on the island of Java. With 135 million people, Java is the world's most populous island, and one of the most densely-populated places on the globe. Through research, learn more about Indonesia, its history, and its current place in the world. Share with the other students what struck you most about what you learned.

Mount Merapi (literally “mountain of fire”) is the most active volcano in Indonesia. It has erupted at least sixty-eight times since 1548. Recent eruptions occurred in 1994, 2006, and most recently in 2010. On the Internet, there are many arresting images of the devastation that was caused by the 2010 eruption. But Mount Merapi is not the only active volcano in Indonesia—its geography is dominated by volcanoes, serving as a vivid reminder that our planet is geologically active. Learn more about the science of volcanoes at mnh.si.edu/earth/, the website of the National Museum of Natural History.

⁶ See Carla Bianpoen, “Arin Dwiwartanto’s Artistic Exploration,” *Jakarta Post*, March 1, 2012. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/03/01/arin-dwiwartanto-s-artistic-exploration.html>.

⁷ http://www.artipoli.com/index.php?id=1009&action=details&kunstenaaars_id=35

⁸ http://wikitravel.org/en/Mount_Merapi

TANG DA WU

b. 1943, SINGAPORE

Tang Da Wu was born in 1943. Growing up, he disliked studying English and mathematics and was often scolded by his teachers. He preferred playing after school with neighborhood children, and also enjoyed drawing, gaining further confidence when his high-school paintings were accepted into art competitions.

In 1988, Tang co-founded the Artists Village, one of Singapore's first art colonies, with the aim of encouraging experimentation. Members of the Village were among the first non-traditional artists in Singapore, and also among the first to begin practicing installation and performance art. There, Tang has mentored younger artists and shared his knowledge of artistic developments in other parts of the world.

In addition to his work as an artist and activist, Tang teaches art education at the National Institute of Education (NIE). He has expressed great concern for the current state of education, having encountered numerous young adults who are afraid to give the "wrong answer," and who retreat from experimentation and innovation. He wonders how we can nurture a future generation to be fearless in their pursuit of knowledge and experience, and dreams of setting up a forum on art education to consider ways to support creativity.

Tang works in many mediums including drawing, installation, painting, performance and sculpture. In *Our Children*, he refers to a story from Chinese opera in Teochew, a region in South China from which his family hails. The story focuses on the virtue of respect for one's parents ("filial piety") and the importance of cultural values, and the artist's sculpture represents an abstracted baby goat kneeling beneath its

mother. The act of suckling is represented by a pitcher of milk that sits atop the steel-and-glass form.

In the Teochew parable, a young boy experiences a humbling moment of enlightenment at the sight of a kneeling baby goat being fed by its mother. In *Our Children*, the two figures, while seemingly stationary, are also in dynamic tension, and resemble Chinese characters, symbolizing the narrative in spare strokes and lines.

For Tang, aesthetic expression is not only representative, but also has the potential to provoke action and change. *Our Children* demonstrates Tang's skillful transfiguration of idea into form. He believes in the potential of the individual and the collective to effect social change, and through his art aims to nudge society toward a greater awareness of environmental and social issues.



VIEW + DISCUSS

Show: *Our Children*

What is your initial impression of this work?
What might it be about?

Recreate the gestures of the sculpture with your own body. How does it feel to be the larger animal? How does it feel to be the crouching smaller one?

Although Tang is showing us an abstract sculpture depicting a baby goat kneeling beneath its mother, he has titled the work *Our Children*. Knowing a bit about Tang's philosophy and life's work, what messages do you think he might want to convey?

Although Tang has pared down the bodies of his subjects to a series of lines, the relationship between them remains perceptible. Take some time to look carefully at the interaction between any two living things—fish in a tank, squirrels in the park, your own pets. You may want to make some quick drawings that capture different moments of interaction. Then, simplify those gestures into a series of intersecting lines by bending and connecting pipe cleaners to suggest the poses and relationships you have observed. When done, ask classmates to respond to your work. Are they able to sense the interaction you intended?



Our Children, 2012

Galvanized steel, glass,
and milk, three parts: 62
x 89 1/2 x 23 1/2, 26 1/4 x
44 1/2 x 12, and 8 1/2 x 3
1/8 inches (157.5 x 227.3 x
59.7 cm, 66.7 x 113 x 30.5
cm, and 21.6 x 7.9 x 7.9
cm), overall dimensions
vary with installation
Solomon R.
Guggenheim Museum,
New York, Guggenheim
UBS MAP Purchase
Fund 2012.147

Photo: Kristopher
McKay © Solomon R.
Guggenheim Museum,
New York

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

Tang has participated in numerous community and public art projects, workshops, and performances. He believes that an artist should introduce his experiences and perceptions to others, not with entertainment or decoration in mind, but in order to provoke thought. What do your students think is an artist's role and responsibility in society? Ask each student to write a paragraph that begins: "An artist should . . ." Have students share their writing and discuss the variety of ways that artists play a role in society.

Says Tang: "I want you to know my way of working. Play. Play is the most important part of my work. And when I grow up I still want to play." Tang believes that children should be encouraged to play and has challenged educators and parents to encourage play and creativity as ways of supporting the development of the whole child. Do you agree with this philosophy? What do you think can be learned in the process of playing?

In Confucian philosophy, *filial piety* is the virtue of showing respect for one's parents and ancestors. For six hundred years, Chinese children have learned how to respect their parents by reading a set of classic folktales called *The Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety*, including one story about a fourteen-year-old boy who strangled a tiger to save his father, and another that tells of a boy who offered himself as a human sacrifice to swarms of mosquitoes so his mother and father would not be bitten. Although filial piety is central to Chinese culture, it is less significant in a Western society that emphasizes the individual and self-determination over family ties and responsibilities.

Even in China, however, filial piety is a shifting concept. In 2011, the Chinese government released a new set of filial piety guidelines designed to encourage good behavior in the "modern era." The original text is full of heroic deeds performed by children on behalf of their parents; the modern version suggests more commonplace acts of kindness such as: "Teach your mother and father how to use the Internet," "Visit them as often as possible during the holidays," and even "Listen carefully to their stories." Add your own filial piety guidelines to these suggestions; what acts of kindness do you think would be most important to your elders?

RESOURCES

BOOKS

Kathleen M. Adams, *Everyday Life in Southeast Asia* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011).

Craig A. Lockard, *Southeast Asia in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Diane P. Mines and Sarah E. Lamb, *Everyday Life in South Asia*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010).

Milton Osborne, *Southeast Asia, An Introductory History*, 10th ed. (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2010).

M. C. Ricklefs, Bruce Lockhart, Albert Lau, and Portia Reyes, *A New History of Southeast Asia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

D. R. Sardesai, *Southeast Asia: Past and Present*, 6th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009).

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

“Cultures of the World,” 3rd ed. (Tarrytown, New York: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2012).

Titles in this series cover India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.

“Enchantment of the World,” (New York: Children’s Press).

Entries in this series include books on Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley, *Children Just Like Me* (New York: DK Publishing, 1995). An illustrated collection of profiles of children from around the world.

Douglas A. Phillips, *Southeast Asia (Modern World Cultures)* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2006).

“Visual Geography” series (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications). Titles in the series include books on Afghanistan, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

WEBSITES

Asia Society
asiasociety.org/education

Freer/Sackler, The Smithsonian’s Museums of Asian Art
asia.si.edu/explore/shahnama/default.asp

Visual Geography Series
vgsbooks.com

The Dynamic Earth @ National Museum of Natural History
Smithsonian Institution
mnh.si.edu/earth

Contemporary Miniatures, Education Resource, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art
qagoma.qld.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0004/107887/Contemporary_Miniatures_education_resource

Tayeba Begum Lipi
tayebalipi.com

Shilpa Gupta
shilpagupta.com

Sopheap Pich
trfineart.com/artists/sopheap-pich
guggenheim.org/guggenheim-foundation/collaborations/map/sseasia/artist/sopheap-pich

Cambodian Rattan: The Sculpture of Sopheap Pich:
metmuseum.org/en/exhibitions/listings/2013/sopheap-pich

Sunday at the Met: Cambodian Rattan Discussion: metmuseum.org/en/exhibitions/listings/2013/sopheap-pich?vid=23fe813f-aba2-4bae-aa87-010d59fcf5f7

Interview with Sopheap Pich: aaa.org.hk/Diaaologue/Details/639

Navin Rawanchaikul
navinproduction.com/home.php

MAP
guggenheim.org/guggenheim-foundation/collaborations/map#blogs
www.guggenheim.org/guggenheim-foundation/collaborations/map#artists

VOCABULARY

BOLLYWOOD

Refers to the Hindi-language motion-picture industry based in Mumbai, India. The word is a synthesis of *Bombay* (Mumbai), and *Hollywood*.

FILIAL PIETY

Reverence for one's parents, considered in Chinese ethics to be the prime virtue and the basis of all right human relations.

INSTALLATION ART

Art designed for a specific exhibition space. Its components are to be viewed as a single work of art.

KHMER ROUGE

Derives from the French word for red, and refers to the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). The Khmer Rouge seized power in 1976 and established a new Cambodian government. As one of the most violent regimes of the twentieth century, it was responsible for the deaths of approximately 1.7 million people by execution, starvation, and forced labor.

PERFORMANCE ART

Art that employs elements of movement, theater, cinema, music, and/or other forms of public expression, so as to act out concepts before an audience, usually in a choreographed fashion.



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No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia has been organised by the Centre for Contemporary Art, Singapore, in collaboration with the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, and is a cultural engagement of UBS.

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