

LEADING CULTURAL THEORISTS GATHER TO EXPLORE THE QUESTIONS RAISED BY *NO COUNTRY: CONTEMPORARY ART FOR SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA*, AT ASIA SOCIETY HONG KONG CENTER UNTIL 16 FEBRUARY 2014

This weekend, leading scholars, curators and artists gathered at Asia Society Hong Kong Center for a cultural symposium, 'Continuous Horizons: Contemporary Art for Asia', to discuss how the complicated historical, political and social landscape of Asia is expressed through contemporary art. Drawing on the themes explored by the critically acclaimed exhibition, *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia*, the symposium forms part of the extensive public program being presented to accompany the inaugural touring exhibition of the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative, soon to conclude in Hong Kong.

Investigating the diversity of contemporary art practice in the region, the exhibition features recent work by 13 artists from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. *No Country* presents some of the most challenging and inventive voices in South and Southeast Asia today. The exhibition will be at Asia Society Hong Kong Center until 16 February 2014.

The esteemed speakers included; Pandit Chanrochanakit, Lecturer, Faculty of Political Science, Ramkhamhaeng University; Doryun Chong, Chief Curator, M+; Parul Dave-Mukherji, Dean, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; Chiara Formichi, Associate Director, Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong; Joel Kwong, Programme Director, Microwave International New Media Arts Festival; Firoz Mahmud, artist; Naoki Sakai, Professor, Japanese Literature and History, Cornell University; Ming Tiampo, Associate Professor of Art History, Carleton University; co-curator, Gutai: Splendid Playground (Guggenheim Museum, 2013); and June Yap, Guggenheim UBS MAP Curator, South and Southeast Asia.

On Sunday, Asia Society Hong Kong Center also presented 'In a grain of rice: Food and Culture for South and Southeast Asia', a food festival to explore the cultural significance of food for South and Southeast Asia from a variety of sociocultural anthropological perspectives. The program looked at eating as a social activity which reflects social and personal identity, and at food as a conduit bringing cultures together, a collective narrative about place and time, desire, satiety, heritage and changing traditions.

Visitors heard from artists, writers, culinary experts and scholars, including; Tony Cheng, CEO and Founder, Drawing Room Concepts; Sidney Cheung, Chairperson, Department of Anthropology, Chinese University of Hong Kong; Peter Cuong Franklin, Chef/Partner, Chôm Chôm; Rosa Paula "Rochie" Cuevas, Grain Quality and Nutrition Center, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI); Michael Leung, Founder and Creative Director, HK Honey; Yoshiko Nakano, Associate Professor, Department of Japanese Studies, University of Hong Kong; and Daisy Tam, Research Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Creative Writing Hong Kong Baptist University. The afternoon session included cooking demonstrations from renowned chefs including Andy Cheng, The Lobby Chef of The Peninsula Hong Kong, Tony Cheng, Peter Cuong Franklin and a Hakka tea cake demonstration by Tsoi Yuen Village residents.

Both events were part of the wide-ranging interactive public educational program, which has also included a series of events run by the artists, exploring key themes and questions raised in the exhibition.

Across the weekend and during the course of the exhibition, *No Country* has received praise from cultural opinion formers:

**Doryun Chong, Chief Curator, M+**

“Having seen the exhibition in New York, where it was great to see a group of artists who are not well-known in the West generally, it feels even more relevant here, as these countries are so near. It’s a very good exhibition, and it makes a connection between New York and Hong Kong – New York as an established arts center and Hong Kong as an emerging hub for contemporary art. Hopefully Asia Society can be that kind of magnet to look not only at different parts of Asia but also look to those more established metropolitan centers in the West.”

**Ming Tiampo, Associate Professor of Art History, Carleton University; co-curator, Gutai: Splendid Playground (Guggenheim Museum, 2013)**

“I think it’s wonderful. It is an extremely courageous show that is very relevant today.”

**Kate de Tilly, Director of 10 Chancery Lane Gallery**

With little knowledge internationally on the development of artists from Southeast Asia, it is particularly important that they are recognized and showcased by established institutions such as the Asia Society and the Guggenheim, who can give them critical attention and open a

dialogue around the world. Tuan Andrew Nguyen from Vietnam pairs popular culture and tragedy in his work *Enemy's Enemy: Monument to a Monument* showing poignantly just how wide a contrast exists between one side of the world and the other by incorporating self-burning of a monk with American culture of baseball. Similarly, Vandy Rattana's photo of Bomb craters in Cambodia that have now become the *Bomb Ponds* show how life continues after tragedy.

**Tony Cheng, CEO and Founder, Drawing Room Concepts**

"I absolutely love the exhibition at the Asia Society. They've sourced such high quality art from Southeast Asia to be showcased in this amazing exhibition. A piece that really struck me, because I remember the news and the scene so vividly, was the monk sacrificing himself to express his desire for freedom, on an American baseball bat - America being the lead advocate of democracy in the world. It was very creative and meaningful. It was an absolute-honor for me to see the artwork at Asia Society."

The Guggenheim, Asia Society Hong Kong Center and UBS share a mission to encourage cross-cultural dialogue about contemporary art and cultural practice. The education programme, which is a key element of the MAP Initiative, features an extensive and innovative series of customized programs, workshops, performances, and online initiatives. These will continue to offer inclusive learning opportunities for a diverse constituency of young people, families, and adults. Through a dynamic process of cultural and professional exchange, the direct involvement of artists, the creative integration of technology, and an extensive range of programs in the visual arts, the education program will provide a vital international intellectual forum.

**S. Alice Mong, Executive Director, Asia Society Hong Kong Center**

"We are delighted to be able to present such an interesting and varied program at the Center. We have collaborated closely with the Guggenheim and UBS to produce a wide-ranging, exciting and challenging series of events and workshops running alongside this exhibition. Our educational program is something we are very proud of and so it's a pleasure to see visitors enjoying the events and the exhibition."

**Chi-Won Yoon, CEO, UBS Asia Pacific**

"We are proud to support the extensive public program accompanying *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia*, in Hong Kong. The program, including the recent cultural symposium and food and culture festival, demonstrates the broad cultural significance of the themes explored in the exhibition. We are delighted that the exhibition has

received a positive response, and has provided a platform to promote diverse contemporary cultural practice in the dynamic South and Southeast Asian regions, internationally. The five-year Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative aims to foster professional and cultural exchange, bring contemporary art to a wider audience and extend the reach of our arts education programming.”

#### About Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative

Conceived to engage a range of audiences, including artists, curators, and educators, the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative seeks to stimulate dialogue and creative interaction both regionally and globally, fostering lasting relationships among institutions, artists, scholars, museumgoers, and online communities. Launched in April 2012, the program builds upon and reflects the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation’s distinguished history of internationalism and significantly increases the Guggenheim’s holdings of art from these dynamic communities.

#### About Asia Society Hong Kong Center

As one of the eleven centers of The Asia Society, Asia Society Hong Kong Center (the “Center”) was established in 1990 by a group of Hong Kong community leaders, led by Dr. the Hon. Lee Quo-Wei, the honorary chairman of Hang Seng Bank. As the leading regional knowledge-based platform for furthering the understanding of the countries and cultures of Asia and global issues that impact the region, Asia Society Hong Kong Center boasts extensive regional and international networks of leaders and scholars, and recognized expertise in business and policy, arts and culture, and educational programming for a wide range of audiences. In February 2012, the Hong Kong Center established its new permanent home in Admiralty, Hong Kong.

#### About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

Founded in 1937, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of art, primarily of the modern and contemporary periods, through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The Guggenheim network that began in the 1970s when the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, was joined by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, has since expanded to include the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (opened 1997), and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (currently in development). Looking to the future, the Guggenheim Foundation continues to forge international collaborations that take contemporary art, architecture, and design beyond

the walls of the museum. More information about the Foundation can be found at [guggenheim.org](http://guggenheim.org).

#### About UBS

UBS draws on its 150-year heritage to serve private, institutional, and corporate clients worldwide, as well as retail clients in Switzerland. Its business strategy is centered on its global wealth management businesses and its universal bank in Switzerland. Together with a client-focused Investment Bank and a Global Asset Management business, UBS will expand its wealth management franchise and drive further growth across the Group. UBS is present in all major financial centers worldwide. It has offices in more than 50 countries, with about 35% of its employees working in the Americas, 36% in Switzerland, 17% in the rest of Europe, the Middle East and Africa and 12% in Asia Pacific. UBS employs about 61,000 people around the world. Its shares are listed on the SIX Swiss Exchange and the New York Stock Exchange.

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#### Exhibition admission:

Adults (non-members): HK\$30

Seniors (aged 60 or above) and individuals with disabilities: HK\$15

Asia Society members, full-time students, and children (aged under 18): FREE

Hours: Tues–Sun, 11 am–5 pm; last Thursday of the month: 11 am–8 pm. Closed on Mondays and public holidays (Christmas Day, New Year’s Day, and the first two days of Chinese New Year)

Initiative Website [guggenheim.org/MAP](http://guggenheim.org/MAP)

Asia Society Hong Kong Center Website [asiasociety.org/hong-kong](http://asiasociety.org/hong-kong)

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For updates on the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative, follow [#GuggUBSMAP](https://twitter.com/GuggUBSMAP) on Twitter.

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