

(1) “Post-socialist” Arts & Crafts in Southeast Asia: Examining the practices and politics of identity and heritage-making following market reform

(2) Convener: Emily Nguyen, PhD Candidate, Anthropology, Yale University

(3) A number of countries in Southeast Asia have entered into social, political, and economic contexts that scholars have described as emblematic of “post-” or “late-socialism.” In these nation states, the dynamics of free market capitalism intertwine with legacies of socialist (as well as, in some cases, colonial) experiments, to produce new sources of power and culture. Under these new economic conditions, socialist states and everyday citizens engage in the divergent and synergetic practices of making, celebrating, and politicizing national heritage through the arts and crafts, drawing upon socialist icons and discourses as well as the novel technologies and ideas introduced through global exchange. Post-socialist art-making and craft-making in Southeast Asia is shaped by both censorship as well as opportunity. New digital tools and social media have given rise to cross-cultural exchanges, new spaces for aesthetic experimentations, and creative techniques for circumventing the controlling gaze of the state. Countries within this new context that have seen strong colonial and socialist influences on culture and society are also undergoing a period of (re-)discovering and (re-)defining their national identities through state-supported projects of protecting and promoting national heritage and history. This panel intends to bring into dialogue the broader state-backed (and sometimes, multi-lateral, e.g. UNSECO) programs for defining national heritage through the arts and crafts with the diverse everyday artistic and craft-making practices of those living under these changed social-economic conditions. In the context of market reforms and new global cultural and material exchanges, what kind of synergies and tensions exist between the local creators of arts and crafts and the celebrator-endorsers of arts and crafts as national heritage and culture? What kinds ideologies and visions drive these various creators and celebrator-endorsers? In what ways might the enduring colonial and socialist legacies of post- and late-socialist countries shape the creative possibilities, innovations and imaginations of national identity and heritage for present-day state and non-state actors? In what ways do these creators re-write the narratives of national identity and heritage via their work? This panel intends to bring together papers from a variety of disciplines that explore the politics and practices of doing arts and crafts under post- and late-socialist economic and political circumstances.

(4) single session (1 x 90 min.): 3-4 presenters

(5) Discussant: TBD