

Panel proposal – EuroSEAS 2021

“Vina-stalgia”: The Uncertainty of Nostalgic Objects in Post-Reform Vietnam

The nostalgia industry is booming in Vietnam, yet few scholars have taken seriously the relationship between material culture and memories of life under socialism. This stands in contrast to the large body of literature on “Ostalgia,” or nostalgic feelings for certain objects or products produced in the Communist east (originally East Germany), and the cultural practices and lifeworlds attached to them. While cautious not to romanticize, scholars have theorized nostalgia for objects associated with a difficult past as a means to make sense of the uncertainties of the present, particularly as these material worlds are discontinued or threatened with destruction and removal from contemporary life. On the other hand, many of such objects have been commodified and turned into souvenirs for tourist consumption. Paying careful attention to gender and generation, this panel brings together a diverse set of scholars to examine the material legacies of objects that evoke nostalgic memories and experiences among certain segments of the Vietnamese population on the one hand, and non-Vietnamese consumers of de-historicized objects, marketed as “socialist kitsch.” We aim to theorize a new approach to the study of nostalgic objects in post-reform Vietnam, or what the panel identifies as “Vina-stalgia.”

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Single session

Discussant: TBC