

Panel proposal – EuroSEAS 2022

Vintage and “Vinastalgia”: 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 “Ostalgie,” or nostalgic feelings for certain objects or products produced in the Communist East, 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 interdisciplinary scholars across multiple institutions 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 “Vinastalgia,” by looking at coal briquettes, red tourism, collective housing, artwork, the TV show *Ký Ức Vui Vẻ* (Happy Memories), *Bao Cấp* cafes, and hip-hop dancing around monuments, to offer new perspectives on the role of the socialist past in the rapidly changing present.

Conveners:

Christina Schwenkel, University of California, Riverside and Annuska Derks, University of Zürich

Double session

Confirmed panel participants (depending on pandemic situation):

Annuska Derks, University of Zürich

Giang Nguyen-Thu, University of Queensland

Christina Schwenkel, University of California, Riverside

Sandra Kurfürst, University of Köln

Emmanuelle Peyvel, University of Brest

Phuong Le Trong, University of Bonn (not yet confirmed)

Rivka Eisner, University of Zürich

Discussant: Jane Ferguson, Australia National University