

European Association for Southeast Asian Studies (EuroSEAS) 12th Conference
June 28 – July 1, 2022
Ecolé des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)-Campus Condorcet
Paris-Aubervilliers, France

PANEL CONVENERS

Louise Liwanag (Co-Convener)
Independent Scholar, Manila, Philippines
louiseliwanag@gmail.com

Pearlie Rose S. Baluyut, Ph.D. (Co-Convener)
Professor, Imperial Valley College, USA
baluyut@gmail.com

PANEL SOLICITING CONTRIBUTIONS TITLE (90 minutes – ONLINE)

Joining or Making Worlds of Art?: Knowledge and Creativity in Southeast Asia

PANEL ABSTRACT

Places that have benefitted the most economically from globalisation are those that have been able to localise the global diffusion of knowledge and creativity. Interchangeably referred to as human capital, it is inexhaustible and with increasing returns to scale it is a driver of growth. In Southeast Asia, links have been made among countries occupying varying stages of developmental trajectory, with how much and how early their governments invested in human capital development. Providing incentives for local education and workforce training alongside attracting foreign highly-skilled individuals and multinational corporations (for their R&D) set up the conditions for thriving economies.

The art world, when considered as a global network of goods, individuals, and institutions, is a treasure trove of knowledge and creativity. Aided by technological developments in mass media which have reduced frictions in viewing and communication, the network's reach extends beyond established art capitals. New places that participate in its exchange indicate a level of prosperity or, at the very least, aspirations to a certain model of growth. Not only have regions in the Global South found increased artist representation in core biennials, if not record sales in the art market, the countries themselves boast homegrown large-scale international events. It can be argued that art's core-periphery model is shifting; however, its transnational nodes of art institutions continue to concentrate in the Global North. In case they do elsewhere, for example in Southeast Asia, they touch down temporarily as branches or events and in cities that already attract creative persons seeking the market and buzz. Within the context of a global system that allows for slippery flows of capital, information, goods, and people regardless of distance and location, the absorptive capacities of a place to intellectual and creative capital can spell the difference in its fate to retain positive effects and to catch up to the rest of its neighbours.

This panel invites papers that analyse the extent to which the production, exhibition or reception of art in Southeast Asia position any one or community to the benefits of globalization; or, conversely, some areas are locked out due to existing institutional arrangements. It is also open to other cultural and creative industries, as well as historical accounts that cover previous waves of globalisation.

CONFIRMED PARTICIPANTS | PRESENTATIONS:

Kimberley Lustina Weir, Ph.D.

Ph.D. Graduate, University of Nottingham, UK

“A global memorial landscape: The Quezon Memorial Shrine”

Philippine Commonwealth President Manuel Quezon, who had been in exile in the United States following the Japanese invasion of Manila on 8 December 1941, died of tuberculosis at Saranac Lake, New York State, on 1 August 1944. On the anniversary of his death a year later, his former vice-president and now president, Sergio Osmeña, declared that he would mark Quezon’s “imperishable place in our history” alongside “Rizal, Bonifacio, Mabini and our other national heroes... [by] erect[ing] him a monument worthy of his glory”. The initiation of the monument in 1945 marked a key moment in Philippine history. In August the nation had regained its status as a commonwealth protectorate under the United States, following nearly four years of Japanese rule. Additionally, it was also a turning point in the country’s long struggle for independence, as just under a year later on 4 July 1946 the United States would recognise the Philippines as a sovereign nation.

For Osmeña and the Quezon Memorial Committee, the memorial was intended to stand as an emblem of the country’s progress and its close association with the United States, yet it took another 33 years to be completed, when the Philippines was governed under a dictatorship led by President Marcos. This paper examines several design proposals put forward for the memorial, from its initiation by Osmeña in 1945 through to its final realisation under the Marcos regime in 1978. While Marcos may have courted US interests and continued to foster Philippine-United States relations, he was also attempting to build a new political and national identity that “depart[ed] radically from Western, or the old nationalism”.

This paper examines the impact of the post-independence Philippines’ evolving global position on the designs for the memorial, and details how Marcos’ own geopolitical manoeuvres shaped the aesthetic of the memorial, marking a radical shift from earlier proposals by renowned Filipino artists such as Guillermo Tolentino. The paper explores Marcos’ use of Quezon’s commemoration to foster his own cult of personality, and reveals the Quezon Memorial’s connections to a transnational postcolonial memorial landscape.

Louise Liwanag

Independent Scholar, Manila, Philippines
“The Making of Singapore Art”

Predating the 1997-98 Asian currency crisis but accelerated by it, Singapore was on its regionalisation drive, of both economic and cultural. Whilst acquiring or writing up loans on regional art from around Southeast Asia, it also embarked on the repurposing of buildings into museums. The investment drive admittedly exposed it to the downside of the regional crisis but emerged relatively unscathed. Despite some counterintuitive financial engineering moves that would normally affect investor confidence elsewhere, it prevailed and proved Singapore's control over its capital accumulation. To complicate this matter, I will analyse one and/or two works in its collection and relate it to their other efforts, having emerged as requirements in its making of the Asian world of finance and art. A perspective is offered in relation to its offering permanent residency to regional artists. For an explanatory extension, its laying of the authoritarian hand on the production of local art, not as the usual guard from threats of its political implications, but as strengthening of its grip on financial liberalisation, the cornerstone of the current wave of globalisation.

Pearlie Rose S. Baluyut, Ph.D.

Professor of Art History, Imperial Valley College, Imperial, California, USA

Discussant