

Metaphor as Method: Curating Regionalism in Mainland Southeast Asia

Beginning in 2000, artists from mainland Southeast Asia were featured in a growing number of projects and exhibitions tied to geographical points of reference, such as the Mekong or the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Exhibitions such as *The Mekong* platform at the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial (2009) and the *Long March Project: Ho Chi Minh Trail* (2010) served as geo-historical metaphors that were instrumentalized by the organizers for objectives that extended beyond the site-specificity that such locations denote. These included attempts to define transnational and regional communities, to create networks for the sharing of resources and strengthening of local arts infrastructures, and to claim a presence for certain Southeast Asian artists from developing countries who had arrived later on the map of the contemporary art world.

This paper deconstructs the appeal of metaphors by first asking: Why metaphor? The use of metaphor has been widely theorized in the field of geography as lending credence to and promoting the appeal of regions. This includes continental expanses comprising groups of nation states, such as the geographic metaphor of Asia, or territorial subsets, such as the non-geographic metaphor of the Dust Bowl. Visual metaphors in particular have been the most reiterated throughout history, satisfying psychological interests and appealing to global imaginaries. However, as regional metaphors—like the territories they speak for—are always in flux, the nuances of their meanings need to be historicized and further deconstructed as they are integral to apparatuses of knowledge production. For this discussion, I want to expand on the question of how—and for whom—a geographical metaphor endures, and the embeddedness of such metaphors in curatorial projects particular to mainland Southeast Asia.

However, prior to discussing certain exhibitions in more detail, I'll provide a brief background on the context in which these projects emerged. In the 1980s and 90s, growing recognition of a regional contemporary art world in Southeast Asia can in large part be attributed to the art exhibitions organized by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which promoted nationalist representation within the theme of regional cooperation.¹ Outside of ASEAN-sponsored events, institutionally driven projects that raised the profile of Southeast Asian artists included international exhibitions in Singapore, Jakarta, Fukuoka, and Brisbane. The artists that came to represent Southeast Asia in the 1980s and 90s were largely from the more economically developed nations of Thailand,

Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia—those countries that comprised the core group of ASEAN when it was founded in 1967. Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia, “the socialist and post-socialist laggards,” in the words of critic David Teh, made their way into these circuits in the later 1990s following their respective entrances into ASEAN, and, for some, into the global economy.²

In T. K. Sabapathy’s discussion of discursive trends surrounding critical regionalism in Southeast Asian art, he notes that postcolonial conceptions of Southeast Asia have focused more on narratives of independent nation-building, thereby downplaying regionalist assumptions largely based on colonial theorizations of premodern Indianization.³ He suggests that the contemporary art historical paradigm questions both assumptions and seeks alternative frameworks, such as the metaphoric envisionings of micro-regions.⁴ In this regard, the recontextualization of metaphoric meanings should take into account the fact that the geographical metaphors of the Mekong and Indochina are mutually imbricated, as it was the colonial enterprise that first sparked global imaginaries of the river. In academic interrogations of the geobody of Southeast Asia, the Mekong has figured as the riverine network tying together numerous cultures and local geographies in the mainland, thus lending coherence to what is an extraordinarily diverse region in ethnic groups, religions, languages, and political systems. In the early to mid-twentieth century, the “Mighty Mekong” suggested expeditionary intrigue and adventure, evoking French colonial nostalgia for the tropics of Indochina. The Mekong later came to represent turbulent memories of the Vietnam War, particularly as it was used in a growing body of memoirs and films about the war. As the metaphor was made official through the naming of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) in 1992, the river formed the basis for a larger economic and ecological transnational project. Sponsored by the Asia Development Bank, the GMS was named after a development project based on what is considered a natural economic and ecological zone, comprising the six states of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and China’s Yunnan province.

All these permutations of the metaphor and its meanings have co-existed through the present as evocative strata of imagery and affective associations, and continue to be used in varying forms of cultural representation, even as the region to which they pertain remains an uneasy geographical formation given inter-regional conflicts over resource allocation and territorial disputes, as I will discuss further on. But because of the evocative connotations of a metaphor, in the 2000s the Mekong was frequently used as a curatorial strategy to promote those latecomers in the Southeast Asian contemporary art world. Various exchange projects, organized by individuals and institutions, explicitly drew on the Mekong to name the particular region within which it was presumed that artists would share enough similarities and differences in order to generate productive creative dialogue. For independent curators and artist-organizers based in Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia, there was hope that such dialogue could

strengthen informal arts infrastructure within their respective locations as well as push local artistic subject matter beyond national preoccupations. According to Thai curator Gridthiya Gaweewong, the renowned artist Montien Boonma was the first to conceptualize a regional platform in the form of a Mekong Biennale, subsequently inspiring Gaweewong to initiate projects such as the Mekong Laboratory, in 2003, in the interest of developing more grassroots artistic collaborations within the Mekong region. Richard Streitmatter-Tran, a Vietnamese-American artist-organizer based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, co-curated with Russell Storer *The Mekong*, a group exhibition at the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial in 2009 based on his extensive research project titled *Mediating the Mekong*, which was funded by a Martell Research grant from the Asia Art Archive. Other institutional endeavours include the New York Dance Theatre Workshop's Mekong Project (2000–05), in which performing and performance artists from each of the GMS countries were invited to establish a network of collaborative projects. The more institutionally driven Mekong Art and Culture Project was a large-scale initiative undertaken by post-secondary art schools in the region to strengthen networks of knowledge production alongside educational and curatorial training; among the project's outcomes was the exhibition *Underlying: Contemporary Art Exhibition From the Mekong Sub-Region*, in 2008. In a larger evocation of riverine life, the Goethe Institut organized the traveling exhibition *Riverscapes in Flux*, in 2012, drawing on the theme of the ecological and cultural heritage of river systems in Southeast Asia.⁵



Installation views of various works at The 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT6), December 5, 2009–April 5, 2010. Courtesy of Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane.

The Mekong exhibition at the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial in 2009 achieved the highest degree of visibility due to its presentation at a major international exhibition. The co-curators of the platform both acknowledged the metaphoric registers of the Mekong in order to describe not just the conceptual coherence of the group of artworks, but also to denote “the flow and re-flow of arts knowledge” in the region.⁶ The artists chosen for the exhibition were Bui Cong Khanh and Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, from Vietnam; Sopheap Pich, Vandy Rattana, and the late Svay Ken, from Cambodia; Manit Sriwanichpoom, from Thailand; and Tun Win Aung and Wah Nu, from Myanmar. This was the first time that artists from Myanmar and Cambodia had been exhibited in APT. Along the lines of social engagement and outreach, the exhibition included a display of drawings by children from various communities in the Greater Mekong Subregion depicting their relationship to their local rivers. Ultimately, Streitmatter-Tran stressed the larger purpose of the exhibition as presenting the notion of a “mutual Mekong,” which could form the foundation for an



adaptable model that might flourish using a number of cultural initiatives, particularly where there is currently a lack of a developed institutional infrastructure for contemporary arts and culture.⁷

Top: Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, production still from the film *The Ground, the Root, and the Air: The Passing of the Bodhi Tree*, 2004–07, single-channel digital video, 14 mins., 30 secs. Courtesy of The Quiet in the Land, Laos, Mizuma Art Gallery, Tokyo, and the artist.

Right: Svay Ken, *One who is rich and has abundant food but hides delicious food for himself is subject to ruin* (from the series *Sharing Knowledge*), 2008, oil on canvas. Collection of Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art. Courtesy of Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane.



The Mekong platform at APT 6 was critiqued by Ho Chi Minh City-based Australian artist and curator Sue Hajdu, whose essay “Missing in the Mekong,” published in the art magazine *Broadsheet*, targeted a shaky curatorial premise, implying that the curatorial scheme was almost Orientalizing and

even fetishizing in its reductive representation of the GMS region and the actualities of its cross-border relationships. These include historical and present-day conflicts surrounding race, religion, and national borders, at times having escalated to warfare and genocide. The river itself continues to be a fraught site of antagonism due to dam construction plans on the part of countries such as China, Vietnam, and Laos, which would have a major impact on the livelihoods of communities in their adjoining countries. In Hajdu’s critique, the Mekong exhibition disregarded these inter-regional tensions in addition to ignoring China as one of the member countries of the GMS. This cartographic omission lent coherence to the group of artists as being from and located in Southeast Asia. Therefore, in taking the curatorial premise at face value, one could agree with Hajdu in her critique that for the



Opposite page: Vandy Rattana, *Fire of the Year 1*, 2008, digital C print, 60 x 90 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Sa Sa Bassac.

Installation view of children's drawings in *My River, My Future: A Children's Drawing Project*. Courtesy of Richard Streitmatter-Tran.



Left: Sriwanichpoom Manit, *Waiting for the King (standing)* (series), 2006, gelatin silver photograph on paper. Collection of Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art. Courtesy of Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane.



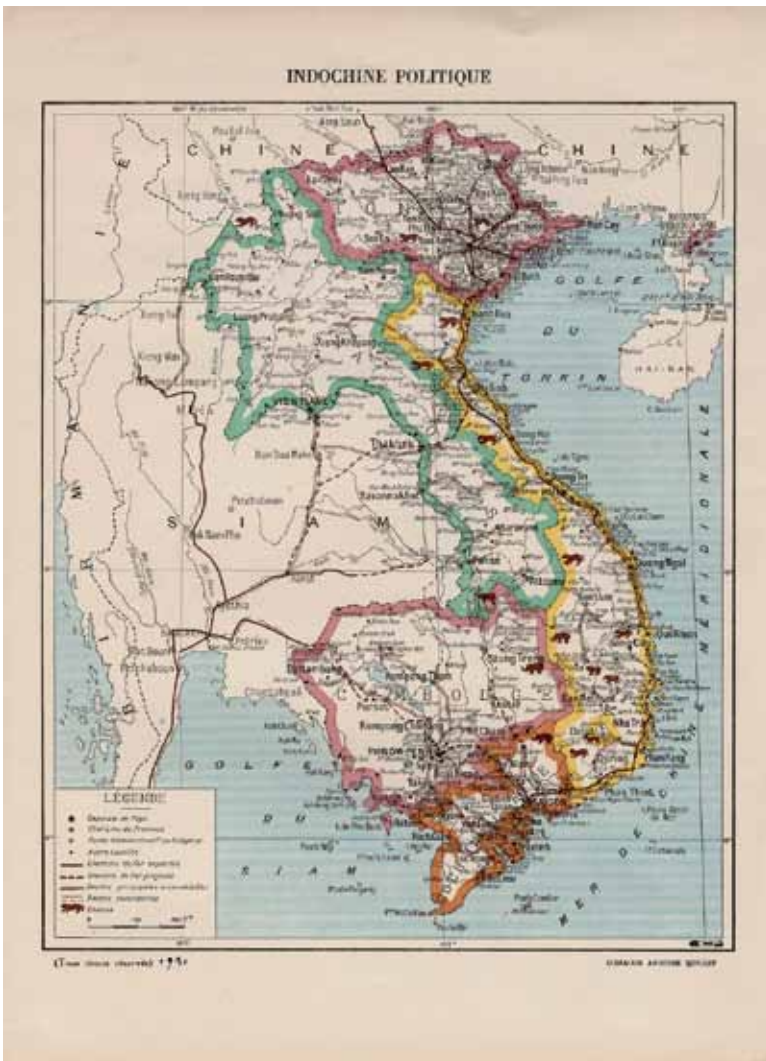
Right: Tun Win Aung and Wah Nu, from the series *Blurring the Boundaries*, 2007–09, digital print. Collection of Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane.



curators, “a simpler option seems to have been pursued: leave out China and an explicit engagement with the river itself, and treat the Mekong more as a coat-hanger for issues present in the countries represented, issues which are in fact shared by much of the developing world.”⁸

Hajdu’s criticisms signal the way that the Mekong has largely been used in these projects to indicate a regional community selectively excised from the GMS and thus founded upon a geopolitical formation but eliding cross-border tensions. Such a criticism resonates with historical precedents, such as the way Indochina came to signify French Indochina, or Indochine. The French political federation had been carved from the geographical region of Indochina, named by early English missionaries and geographers as an area falling between the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea, between the Malaccas and southern China. According to historian Christopher Goscha, the much smaller colonial geobody of Indochine represented a colonial state in constant flux, varying in name, usage, and recognition as a distinctive micro-region from European and Asian perspectives.⁹

To a certain extent, these kinds of alternative regional propositions within the contemporary art world find historical precedent in the visual efforts used to perpetrate a regional identity based on Indochine vis-a-vis colonial exhibitionary strategies, alongside regimes of circulation through print media and craft commodities. Indochine as spectacle was exemplified through hybrid architectures at the colonial expositions in France in the



Indochine Politique, 1931, map, Hartmann collection on Indochina RMC2004_0438, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.



Reproduction of the temple of Angkor Wat at the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition, Braun Editions postcard, 1931.

early twentieth century, which were intended to lure audiences in the hope of instrumentalizing the metaphor to rally domestic support for the colonial enterprise in Southeast Asia. One could ask if it isn't possible to see these

colonial expositions as sites of construction for a regional imaginary embraced by the West, and even an art history of sorts, given the role of crafted visual pastiche. In terms of such regional identity formations being enacted within Indochina, Benedict Anderson has suggested the importance of colonial connections in structuring nationalist imaginaries, and by looking at print media and educational institutions, he argued for the "growth of an 'Indochinese' consciousness."¹⁰ But Goscha has argued that the preponderance of the Vietnamese perspective in such sources has glossed over the political realities of Cambodian and Laotian objectives of becoming "Indochinese" citizens within the colonial framework that had placed the Vietnamese at the top of the colonial hierarchy.¹¹

Inter-ethnic tensions within the colonial project of creating an Indochinese citizenry retain lingering traces in similar projects in the present,

particularly the Long March Project: Ho Chi Minh Trail, which I will discuss shortly. With regard to the Mekong, while I would argue that this riverine metaphor has resurfaced again and again in various art-based projects and exhibitions due to its allure as a geographical imaginary rooted in colonial and wartime histories, some of these projects have nonetheless engendered networks of friendships and collaborations, shaping micro-regionalisms from above and below. I would cite here the ongoing curatorial work, again, of Gridthiya Gaweewong, who continues to work with local and transnational artists from the Mekong region and elsewhere in Asia, and the sustained friendships formed through The Mekong platform at APT and other projects mentioned earlier. The transnational intellectual friendships emerging from some of these exchanges have contributed to regional networks of artistic production, and, more importantly, to cite critic Lee Weng Choy, to a kind of discursive density that is key to the development of contemporary art in a region in which most countries lack significant institutions for critical training, patronage, and exhibition.¹²

In addition, while Hajdu's critique of The Mekong exhibition did indeed correctly point out the metaphoric romanticization of the micro-region for the sake of curatorial appeal, effectively narrativizing the individual artworks on display, I would also suggest that her writing also participated in this suppression. While many of her criticisms were on point, her focus on the ethics of representation nonetheless undermined the potential to allow the artworks to be accessed independently of this discourse. A careful analysis of the aesthetic and formal relationships within the group could have been much more illuminating in fleshing out what might be considered a more informal artistic regionalism or illustration of contemporaneity.

Still, projects using the Mekong as a curatorial premise have never encountered the degree of controversy that met the Long March Project: Ho Chi Minh Trail, particularly in the interface between the project's Marchers and a local audience of artists and activists in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The Ho Chi Minh Trail was an offshoot of the Long March Project, an initiative of spatial and temporal duration in which a group of Chinese artists began in 2002 to follow the journey of the historical Communist Chinese Long March (1934–36) with performances and exhibitions along the way. The scope of the project expanded to include forms of social and artistic outreach, with community-based programs and artist residencies at the physical Long March Space in Beijing, and works by the core group of artists were exhibited at venues including the 2004 Shanghai Biennale and the 2005 Yokohoma Triennale.

Zoe Butt, Xu Tingting, Vandy Rattana, and Nguyen Nhu Huy discussing keywords associated with nationalism in different languages. Workshop conducted at Long March Space, Beijing, July 2009. Courtesy of Erin Gleeson.



Envisioned as a further extension of discursive networking and regional exchange, in 2009 the Ho Chi Minh Trail served as the metaphoric framework for an educational platform, with a residency program consisting of



Discussion at Long March Education residency at the Long March Space, Beijing, in July 2009. Courtesy of Long March Space, Beijing.



Left: Marchers visit Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, Phnom Penh, June 14, 2010. Courtesy of Long March Space, Beijing.

Right: Conversation between Chinese and Vietnamese artists at Himiko's Café, Ho Chi Minh City, June 19, 2010. Courtesy of Long March Space, Beijing.



Marchers walking the Ho Chi Minh Trail in southern Laos, June 24, 2010. Courtesy of Long March Space, Beijing.

artists and art organizers from Vietnam, Cambodia, Korea, China, and the U.S. Much of the programming centred on discursive activity surrounding contemporary art and infrastructures in the region, using the transnational space of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a major system of transportation and supply routes connecting North Vietnam to South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, as a historical and geographical starting point for discussion.¹³ The name of the project itself was already a sensitive point, particularly within Vietnam, given the contentious nature of the Communist incursions throughout the region and lingering tensions still felt by southerners toward northern cultural hegemony. This was in addition to the controversial title of the larger project, referencing the Long March, a sequence of military movements that cost tens of thousands of lives. In response, the organizers would reiterate the Ho Chi Minh Trail as “a methodology, as a metaphorical

A map of the Ho Chi Minh Trail network. From Major George R. Dunham and Colonel David A. Quinlan, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Bitter End, 1973-75* (Marine Corps Vietnam Series) Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1990).



idea that begins an engagement with a history that is intimately, traumatically, culturally, economically, politically, socially overlapping. The geographical outline of this trail and its complex occurrence bring into question much broader issues of international engagement that are integral to understanding the relationships between these cultural communities.”¹⁴

Zoe Butt, former Director of International Programs of the Long March Project, described a primary impetus of the project as both a form of self-education and cultural outreach on the part of the Chinese artists: “Long March Space collaborates with a range of contemporary artists (predominantly Chinese) in a continual unfolding of the artistic self. . . . This educational project, currently in research development, firstly asks thinkers in China to engage with the region in which this infamous trail is traced, namely Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.”¹⁵ Yet it was precisely this seemingly one-way perspective that was addressed at a discussion at Metahouse, the German Cambodian Cultural Center in Phnom Penh in July 2010, when the Long March group was confronted by questions targeting numerous issues. These included gender and the role of women artists within the overall project scheme, the sense that the Long March artists were on a mission of knowledge-gathering rather than sharing, and their lack of

sensitivity to specific national histories despite the desire for a romanticized notion of regional exchange. Lydia Parusol, the discussion moderator, noted that suspicions voiced by the audience surrounding the objectives of the project group were fueled by the Chinese artists' sophisticated use of theoretical language and reiterations of the project as process, along with what appeared to local artists as a narrow selection of expatriate Phnom Penh-based curators as partners for intellectual collaboration.¹⁶

Despite what many took away from the discussion as the project's shallow use of geographic coordinates, there was a communal feeling among many Cambodian artists and activists that the discussion had been invigorating for the opportunity to vocalize criticisms felt keenly within local conditions of cultural discourse.¹⁷ The resistance they felt towards the project's methods was intensely stimulating, especially in regard to the language surrounding artistic collaboration. Had the organizers had a deeper understanding of the prevalence of NGO discourse in the development of contemporary art in Phnom Penh and the larger issue of aid dependence in Cambodia, they might have rethought the project's approach and articulation of key terms, such as exchange and collaboration, along with other phrases, such as "Knowledge of the Ignorant," a database of collected research material.

Reflective of larger debates and critiques facing the project model in developing countries sensitive to nuances of neocolonialism and neoliberalism is a tension that lies between the use of what can be the productive use of metaphor as a curatorial method and the preponderance of rhetorical symbolism overshadowing tangible discursive commitment, and even provoking major offense and contention in the host country. Most of these critiques hone in on the ethical considerations of such work, and Grant Kester succinctly questions "to what extent the work remains mindful of the violence of community and of representation itself. There are other possibilities, of course, other ways of working, in which the experience of collaborative labour is seen as generative, not simply symbolic, improvisationally responsive rather than scripted, and in which the distribution of agency is more reciprocal."¹⁸ Whether such an ethical model of distributed agency can be truly achieved is difficult to answer, but I return to this proposition in my final mention of Reyum at the end of this paper.

With the shift toward project-based exhibitions, the focus on networking and social engagement via artistic production is further emphasized, and the exhibition as an art historical site appears to be less relevant. What we see a lot of now is the prioritizing of educational discursivity over exhibitionary objecthood, effectively situating the virtual archive or the exhibition Web site as the base for knowledge production and exchange.¹⁹ This form of virtual educational platform can be seen as the primary strength of *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia*, a segment of the larger Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative, which, for curator June Yap, might be seen as an attempt to mediate and problematize regionalism within the larger institutional agenda of museum

acquisition and major global capital interests. Naturally, these constraints present limitations, yet one simplistic critique of No Country may have been its failure to present a distinctive regional allure, despite the individual strengths of artworks on display. The exhibition might have been seen to disappoint on two counts. The title referenced two geographic metaphors, South Asia and Southeast Asia, yet disavowed the structures of feeling attached to these regions, and, ultimately, these geographical names may themselves be seen as failed metaphors, referencing geobodies that have been problematically deconstructed and reconstructed.

To conclude, beyond the use of such international exhibitions as key *loci* of knowledge dissemination about regional geographies and histories, the question of art historical construction remains elusive in many of the countries that have been featured in these exhibitions. An important question always remains: For whom are these metaphors being presented, and for whom and how are local and regional art histories being written? Because the difficulties presented by language and translation are often key in these discussions of Asian art and discursivity, it is instrumental to again return to the use of metaphor. As a kind of affective sign, something that “elicits an imaginative and emotion-tinted response” according to philosopher Yi-Fu Tuan, it is useful to think about the role that the Reyum Institute of Arts and Culture, founded in 1998 in Phnom Penh, and active for about ten years, played in pioneering a long-term cultural project that emerged in response to a request by the curators of the first Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale to have access to contemporary Cambodian art.²⁰ Part of Reyum’s larger project was an attempt to both historicize the visual arts and discursively introduce contemporary art for local audiences through exhibitions and publications as determined by the co-directors, Ingrid Muan and Ly Daravuth, who were fulfilling simultaneous roles as curators, scholars, teachers, ethnographers, and artists.

The point I want to bring up has to do with Reyum’s name, which Ashley Thompson has carefully considered in terms of literal translation and metaphorical interpretation. In changing the original name from “Situations” to “Reyum,” Thompson notes that “Reyum literally means “cicada crying,” and carries a melancholic association for Khmer speakers. It gives expression to abstract intangible Nature. As a proper name in English and French, it retains the mellifluous quality it has in Khmer, while remaining out of reach—the name was never translated. It is itself a kind of present absence, an untranslated foreign word, and already in Khmer: as an inarticulate cry evoking an inaccessible mourning for an unknown loss.”²¹ Thompson recognizes that this may come across as an excessive reading at this point in time, but emphasizes the specificity of this choice in 1998, a time during which the metaphor was—and arguable still is—more resonant.

I have contrasted the diverse use of metaphors in curatorial endeavours in the 2000s, describing the respective perceptions of The Mekong as exhausted in its efficacy and the Long March Project: Ho Chi Minh Trail as an inevitable controversial provocation. To conclude, Reyum is cited as an

alternative, not as a proposition in ethical curation per se, but as an example of a different use of metaphor, one that may be both opaque yet suggestive, productive and provocative of affective inquiry, and, as such, less likely to direct the viewer's expectation that a metaphor animate and subsequently categorize the meaning of an artwork, or that a project primarily illustrate a geographical or historical metaphor.

Notes

- ¹ Apinan Poshyananda, "Positioning Contemporary Asian Art," *Art Journal* 59, no.1 (Spring 2000), 12.
- ² Claire Hsu and Chantal Wong, eds., "The And: An Expanded Questionnaire on the Contemporary," *Asia Art Archive Field Notes* no. 1 (2012), <http://www.aaa.org.hk/FieldNotes/Details/1174/>.
- ³ George Coédès' *Les états hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1948) is one of the most well-known scholarly works to espouse the theory that premodern Indianization was the dominant force in shaping artistic and religious life in Southeast Asia, with the exception of Vietnam, which was seen as having adopted more Sinicized practices. This influenced the perception of the region as an extension of India, and in some circumstances Southeast Asia was referred to as "Further India."
- ⁴ T. K. Sabapathy, "Developing Regionalist Perspectives in Southeast Asian Art Historiography," *Contemporary Art in Asia: A Critical Reader*, eds. Melissa Chiu and Benjamin Genocchio (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 59.
- ⁵ Goethe-Institut RiverScapes blog, <http://blog.goethe.de/riverscapes/>.
- ⁶ Richard Streitmatter-Tran, "Mapping the Mekong," *The 6th Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art* (South Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2009), 120.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.
- ⁸ Sue Hajdu, "Missing in the Mekong," *Contemporary Visual Art + Culture Broadsheet* 38, no. 4 (2009), 268.
- ⁹ Christopher Goscha, *Going Indochinese: Contesting Concepts of Space and Place in French Indochina* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2012), 17–19; *The Global Art World. Audiences, Markets and Museums* (Ostfildern: Hatje-Cantz, 2009), 53.
- ¹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 120–33.
- ¹¹ Goscha, *Going Indochinese*, 8.
- ¹² Lee Weng Choy, "The Assumption of Love: Friendship and the Search for Discursive Density," *Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asian Art: An Anthology*, eds. Nora A. Taylor and Boreth Ly (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asian Program Publications, 2012), 189–210.
- ¹³ The Long March Project: Ho Chi Minh Trail, <http://www.hochiminhtrailproject.com/html/e-main0.html/>.
- ¹⁴ "Arts Network Asia report: The Long March Project: Ho Chi Minh Trail," <http://www.artsnetworkasia.org/content/gallery/LongMarch.html/>.
- ¹⁵ Zoe Butt, "Marching Out of Step," *Artlink* 29, no. 2 (2009), n. pag.
- ¹⁶ Lydia Parasol in conversation with the author, July 31, 2013. A more in-depth account of the Metahouse discussion can be found in Viet Le, Christ Hearle, and Thien-Huong T. Ninh, "Ho Down: Long March's 'Ho Chi Minh Trail Project' in Phnom Penh," *Diasporic Vietnamese Artists Network's Diacritics Blog*, November 7, 2010, <http://diacritics.org/2010/ho-down-long-march%E2%80%99s-ho-chi-minh-trail-project-in-phnom-penh/>. Similar critiques are voiced by Jay Koh in his account of cultural insensitivities at the segment of the 8th Nippon International Performances Art festival in Myanmar. He describes how "the event turned out to be an opportunity for the showcasing of works by artists from well-resourced nations. Most of the works seemed to have been conceptualised outside of the Myanmar experience, and reflect the artists' insensitivity to cross-cultural negotiations. The perceived self-indulgence and belief in the myth of the privilege of the artist as a 'universal spokesperson' or 'to speak about social injustice' climaxed with the performances of Morgan O'Hara. She used Burmese craftsmen, reduced to mere props by the passive display of their activity in her performances, and asked them to use 'Schwee Sein'(gold leaves) that are made for the sole purpose of honouring the Buddha, to be wrapped around slippers, which were also used as props in her performances. She then placed dolls representing all of Myanmar's ethnic groups on a platform, then kneeled before them and started wailing. I will leave the message of her performance open for interpretation but I feel the Myanmar organiser should have told her about the offensive nature of using the 'Schwee Sein' in that manner, which was related to me by some members of the audience."
- ¹⁷ Lydia Parasol in conversation with the author, July 31, 2013.
- ¹⁸ Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 76.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 213–15.
- ²⁰ Yi-Fu Tuan, "Sign and Metaphor," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 68, no. 3 (September 1978), 364.
- ²¹ Ashley Thompson, "Forgetting to Remember, Again: On Curatorial Practice and 'Cambodian Art' in the Wake of Genocide," *Diacritics* (2014), forthcoming.