



# Asian Contemporary Art Week

Wednesday, October 22 – Sunday, November 2, 2014

Asia Society will host ACAW 2014's signature program **FIELD MEETING: CRITICAL OF THE FUTURE**, October 26th & 27th; keynote presentation by Tom Finkelpearl; commissioned performances from Haig Aivazian, Polit-Sheer-Form Office, Bavand Behpoor, and more; 35 art professionals to present latest projects and initiatives; highlighting individual practices, history and institution building in Asia, and subculture cross-pollination. Organized by ACAW director **Leeza Ahmady** and associate curator **Xin Wang**

## CURATORIAL STATEMENT AND LINE-UP INTRODUCTION

Inspired by and born of the intense field work carried out by all practitioners of art, **FIELD MEETING** foregrounds the immediacy of these dynamic exchanges by bringing together over 40 artists, curators, scholars, and institutional leaders whose works variously relate to and problematize the cultural, political, and geographical parameters of contemporary Asia. As a curated platform, **FIELD MEETING** capitalizes on this fall's citywide museum and gallery exhibitions shedding light on various aspects of contemporary Asian art through highlighting individual and regional practices; simultaneously, the intensive two-day forum facilitates another kind of exchange beyond established institutional representation and discourse to expose the field's creative practices in a more timely and less mediated fashion. Through lectures, performances, discussions, and most crucially, the presence of the art practitioners both on stage and in the audience, **FIELD MEETING** presents contemporary art from Asia in its present tense and as a working process that dynamically interacts with creative energies worldwide while challenging its own boundaries.



Sun Xun, *Magician Party and Dead Crow*, 2013, installation (wall painting, ink & color on paper, paper sculpture, and other materials). Courtesy of the artist and Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong.

**FIELD MEETING** recognizes that a critical inquiry into the conditions of making and thinking about art in Asia has profound implications in rethinking global contemporaneity. The application of the term “postmodernism” presumes a homogenous modernity, a narrative that still perpetuates in the power structure of today's art world, for instance, in the relentless generational thinking that ignores local genealogies and modes of pedagogy; mirroring the well-worn yet unresolved East-West dichotomy are still finer hierarchies, misunderstandings, and post-colonialism within the Asian continent. These pressing problems have inspired artists to respond in ever more thought-provoking ways, which have become more nimble and effective than entrenched academic debates.



Lamia Joreige, *Object of War*, 2013, installation. Courtesy of the artist and Taymour Grahne Gallery, New York.

Expanding its scope to involve regions routinely disassociated from the cultural and geopolitical notions of Asia, which typically skew toward centers in East and Southeast Asia, FIELD MEETING features artists such as **Lamia Joreige**, **Manal Al Dowayan**, and **Jeanno Gaussi** who investigate the intricate, sometimes hidden layers of daily life in Beirut, Saudi Arabia, and Kabul, where the sense of place is infinitely bound to memory, psyche, and even trauma. Often active in more than one ZIP code as a result of forced or willing displacement, artists have exploited their increasingly peripatetic trajectories to confront prevailing cross-cultural narratives, as **Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan**'s *Project Another Country* would testify. Treating the passport as a provocative medium, Melbourne-based Indonesian artist **Tintin Wulia**

explores the ideological mechanism of passport, border control, and nation-building policies that constantly entangle with identity. Taiwanese-American artist **Beatrice Glow** excavates nostalgia for an elusive past, spending two years in Peru's largest Latin-Asian population to trace the etymology of "chino"—a racial slur in Spanish that could also refer to fifty cents or marijuana—by retracing migratory landmarks embedded within collective memory. In her curatorial journal *Lovely Daze*, which launches at FIELD MEETING, Taiwanese artist **Charwei Tsai** creates an editorial residency that dispatches collaborating artists and curators to unfamiliar environments. Whereas **Alexis Destoop** examines archetypes of "precarious" contemporary landscapes, juxtaposing the real and fictitious, the hyper-urban and post-colonial desert, **Patty Chang** focuses on the elusive Wandering Lake in Xinjiang, China, to continue her exploration of cultural imaginaries, using water as a medium of politics and poetics. Acting as conceptual cartographers, the Hong Kong-based, France-Morocco duo **Map Office** charts the activities of contemporary Asian artists through the research-based projects *Atlas of Asia Art Archive* and *Performing the Archipelago*, making visible conditions of isolation and connectedness—an objective shared by many recent research and curatorial efforts, including that of FIELD MEETING.

The landscape of infrastructure-building in Asia is equally marked by vibrant changes and erratic progress that often seem impenetrable. FIELD MEETING offers instead a few glimpses into the deluge of such activities that range from building institutions to archive and research-based endeavors. **Jane Debevoise**, author of *Between State and Market: Chinese Contemporary Art in the Post-Mao Era* (2014) and Chair of the Board of Directors of Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong and New York, will moderate a conversation between **Farah Wardani**, Yogyakarta-based art historian and director of the Indonesian Visual Art Archive (IVAA), and **Kko-Kka Lee**, curator and project manager at Korean Artist Project, an online platform that connects artists with publications and institutions. The discussion will juxtapose and examine how efforts that can be loosely defined as "infrastructure-building" in different regions of Asia meaningfully impact local art scenes. Mumbai-based **Reena Kallat** will discuss



Map Office, *Island is Land*, 2014, print with styrofoam letters. Courtesy of the artists.

interlacing facets of mnemonic mechanisms that give meaning to experiences, while artist **Jitish Kallat** will articulate his vision for curating the highly anticipated 2nd Kochi Biennial in India this December. **Umer Butt**, founder and director of Dubai-based gallery GREY NOISE, examines Minimalism as a potent, challenging, and locally-specific genre in the context of contemporary Pakistan whereas Beijing-based **Li Shurui** discusses her approach to abstraction as anything but about pure, optical forms, but is rather heavily mediated by the surrounding political climate, pollution, and dynamics within the local art community in Heiqiao.

Keenly aware of the oscillating frameworks within which their practices are often subjected, many invited speakers question and ground art historical narratives in local genealogies and the vernacular. **Ava Ansari**, who splits her time between New York and Tehran, and **Bavand Behpoor**, who divides his between Shiraz, Munich, and London, present pedagogical performances that dig into the multifaceted life and practice of two seminal Iranian artists –Ardehshir Mohassess and Bahman Mohassess, respectively—as the basis for discussing multiple modernities. **Shilpa Gupta** investigates the filters consciously and unconsciously deployed when we perceive and construct images, information, and identity. Artists **Burcak Bingol**, **Zheng Chongbin**, and curator **Craig Yee** offer new material and theoretical frameworks to think about the effectiveness of anachronistic mediums—such as ceramics and ink—in contemporary art-making.

Geopolitics and local political situations often manifest in the practice of artists and curators as critique and/or intervention. New York-based Turkish curator **Ceren Erdem** reflects on her own engagement with memory shifts in different projects, striving to reveal alternative vocabularies on the streets, in nature, in technology, etc. **Polit-Sheer-Form Office**, the ever elusive China-based art collective founded in 2005 by artists **Hong Hao**, **Xiao Yu**, **Song Dong**, **Liu Jianha**, and curator/critic **Leng Lin**, presents an interactive project commissioned specifically for FIELD MEETING where the notion of the "collective form," a concept derived from the prevailing ideology during Mao's era, will be explored and experienced en masse.



Polit-Sheer-Form Office, *Do the Same Good Deed*, 2014, performance still. Courtesy of MABSOCIETY, Shanghai.

Athens-based **Georgia Kotretsos** presents the project of an emerging Greek artist who provocatively manipulates her civil rights in the form of repeated marriage to bring foreign artists to Athens, recruiting intellectual engagement through this alternative “residency program” in a state plagued by financial crises. Taipei-based **Yu Cheng-Ta** probes the micro-politics of the art world by staging a playful “living theatre,” where fictional roles are played by actual art professionals; the characters often overlap with each participant’s real-life identity, creating scenarios of unease commonly encountered by today’s young artists. Acting as myth makers to reflect upon broader human conditions, Beijing-based artist **Sun Xun** ponders how an artist might make use of the Cultural Revolution as material but not be confined to a narrowly defined political narrative, while Yogyakarta-based **Heri Dono**’s multimedia practice, which notably includes *wayang kulit*, or shadow puppet theater, draws upon mythologies of the Ramayana and Mahabharata as well as folkloric traditions to create works of social critique. New York-based Japanese artist **Aki Sasamoto** and Tokyo-based **Masanori Handa** adopt drastically different paths to illuminate hidden wonders of the world.

Subculture, as well as its myriad trajectories in contemporary Asia, is an often neglected area of investigation perhaps due to its volatility and magnitude; a closer look at its mark on individual practices and collective memory

allows more porous and nuanced frameworks than the broad strokes of “culture.” New York-based Thai artist **Korakrit Arunanondchai** has uniquely blended critique of modernism, millennial youth culture, tourism, and contemporary Thai life in his performances. In her latest videos, **Cao Fei** turns her recent fascination with the zombie genre to consider crises in her immediate surroundings: suffocating pollution, apathy, and other apocalyptic disasters. Shanghai-based artist **Lu Yang** will present a special performance developed from her latest work *Cancer Baby* (2014); deeply immersed in the subcultures of anime, video games, and sci-fi, Lu Yang taps into the enormous influence of Japanese cultural imports on her generation to imagine virtual realms as sites of criticality and provocation. Kansas-based curator **Kris Ercums** will discuss the propositions in an upcoming exhibition at the Spencer Museum of Art that examines creative practices rooted in speculations about the future in contemporary Asia.

Lastly, FIELD MEETING is honored to present two **Keynote features**. Beirut-based artist **Haig Aivazian** stages a lecture performance *To Neither Confirm Nor Deny that the Matter Neither Reflected Nor Absorbed Light*, a multipart project that looks at the multiple narratives that emerged from the visualizations of the so-called Dominique Strauss-Kahn Affair. Centered around an assault in a Sofitel suite in Manhattan, where the only witness is also the survivor of the attack, the work seeks to ultimately present a framework through which an immaterial globalized financial economy and corporeal violence become inextricably linked. **Tom Finkelpearl**, former president and executive director at the Queens Museum turned new commissioner of cultural affairs in New York, has long played the diverse roles of curator, community leader, museum director, and table tennis diplomat. His keynote address will revolve around topics pertinent to contemporary practices both in Asia and beyond: the practical dimensions of social activism through art, community outreach that navigates the complex urban texture and identity politics of New York, and the ways in which art can still be a viable path for social change.

The FIELD MEETING thrives on the possibilities of unexpected undercurrents, connections, and reflections on a variety of relevant subjects. Over the past few years more artists in and from Asia have established presence on the rosters of blue-chip galleries and international biennials, while research and academic inquiries within Asia have also expanded considerably. FIELD MEETING acknowledges the field’s achievements and challenges; it advocates nuanced approaches to unearth our recent past and, more urgently, to critically and radically envision the future.

\*During the program breaks there will be select screenings from *Project 35 Volume 2*, a major traveling exhibition organized by **Independent Curators International (ICI)** that invited 35 curators to each select one video work by an artist they consider important today.

For a complete schedule of ACAW events, and information about participating artists and organizations, visit [www.acaw.info](http://www.acaw.info)

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## Project 35 Volume 2 Screenings

### ICI, Independent Curators International

During the program breaks there will be select screenings from *Project 35 Volume 2*, a major traveling exhibition organized by **Independent Curators International (ICI)** that invited 35 curators to each select one video work by an artist they consider important today. Tellingly, 13 of the artists in the exhibition are based in Asia, as are 10 of the curators.

In playing sequence:

Aslı ÇAVUSOĞLU, *In Diverse Estimations Little Moscow*, 2011, 12 min, 45 sec.

Ahmet ÖGÜT, *Short Circuit*, 2006, 3 min., 32 sec.

Alexander UGAY, *Bastion*, 2007, 5 min.

Shezad DAWOOD, *The New Dream Machine Project*, 2011, 15 min.

Michael BLUM and Damir NIKŠIĆ, *Oriental Dream*, 2010, 7 min, 30 sec.

Sona SAFAEI, *Alphabet*, 2010, 1 min, 30 sec.

Prilla TANIA, excerpt of *Space Within Time* series, 2008-2011