

# Art Radar

*Contemporary art trends and news from Asia and beyond*

## Highlights from Asia Contemporary Art Week 2017 in New York

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**Asia Contemporary Art Week pulls together some of New York's biggest museums, galleries and institutions to shine the spotlight on the visual arts in Asia.**

*Art Radar* puts together a list of 4 highlights at this year's edition, running from 5 to 26 October 2017.



"After Darkness: Southeast Asian Art in the Wake of History", 8 September 2017 – 21 January 2018, Asia Society Museum, New York. (Left) FX Harsono, 'Burned Victims', 1998, burned wood, metal, shoes, and performance video with sound, dimensions variable; Video duration: 8:41min. Singapore Art Museum Collection. (Right) Dinh Q. Lê, 'Scroll #1' and 'Scroll #4, WTC' from "Four Perspectives", 2016, C-print scrolls, each 164 ft. x 50 in. (50 m x 127 cm). Courtesy the artist and Shoshana Wayne Gallery. Photo: Perry Hu. Image courtesy Asia Society Museum.

Curated by **Leeza Ahmady**, New York's **Asia Contemporary Art Week** this year boasts over 30 symposia, panels and exhibition-related events for those looking to explore the best in the Asian visual arts scene in New York City. In its 12th edition, the art platform provides a comprehensive survey of Asia-focused exhibitions happening in the city, as well as a schedule of moments of discussion and confrontation. This year's partners include **Asia Society**, the Asia Art Archive and the SVA MA in Curatorial Practice programme. Participating galleries include **C24 Gallery**, **Chambers Fine Art**, **Owen James Gallery**, and **Sundaram Tagore**. *Art Radar* picks four highlights at this year's Asia Contemporary Art Week.



Simon Fujiwara, 'The Personal Effects of Theo Grunberg', 2010, mixed media installation, performance, dimensions variable. Courtesy Hamburger Kunsthalle.

### "Field Meeting Take 5: Thinking Projects", 14-15 October

A two-day forum hosted at the Asia Society Museum, as well as the SVA Theatre, across the past weekend, “**Field Meeting Take 5: Thinking Projects**” brought together New York- and US-based museum directors, arts professionals, artists and scholars to explore current themes and works in Asian art. Field Meeting is a series of newly conceived performances, lecture-performances and discussion panels. Check back on ACAW’s **YouTube channel** for uploads of this edition’s talks and presentations.

This year, 25 artists, scholars and art professionals took part in the programme, including **Brian Kuan Wood** (New York), **Nancy Adajania** (Mumbai), **Hera Chan** (Hong Kong), **Tiffany Chung** (Ho Chi Minh City) and **Simon Fujiwara** (Berlin). The programme, curated by Leeza Ahmady, aims to provide a platform through which artists and arts professionals can get together to reflect on ideas, works and artistic processes collectively.



Hajra Waheed, 'Artist in Studio', 2016. Image courtesy the artist. Photo: Kaveh Nabatian.

Aiming to bring the studio visit experience to the next level, this year’s “Field Meeting Take 5” was based on a curatorial narrative that looked at the state of art and the art landscape in a world fraught by political tensions in a globalised environment. As Leeza Ahmady writes,

*“Field Meeting” presentations traverse between disciplines of visual arts, art history, science, social history, philosophy, architecture, mythology, film, folklore, subculture, medicine and self-development, to reflect on a variety of significant and timely topics including feminism as ecological consciousness; Lenin’s rendezvous with Jesus; telepathic animal communication; links between Chinese ink painting and global warming; cosmic speculation; the transformation of ancient symbols in the digital age, and much more.*

Addressing a smorgasbord of issues in one gasp, Ahmady’s programme attempted to present a panoramic sweep of Asia’s visual arts scene. An interesting point about the programme is that it prioritised unfinished works, and works in progress. Placing emphasis on the platform as a means of reflecting, contemplating and developing ideas, works and resources, the platform appeared to be a good way of creating conversations and networks through an

educational and curatorial programme. For the complete programme of "Field Meeting Take 5: Thinking Projects", click [here](#).



Song Dong, 'Eating the City in Beijing', 2003, installation view. © Song Dong. Image courtesy Pace Beijing.

### ACAW, "Thinking Projects x Creative China Festival": Song Dong and Li Jun, 15 October

Held at **Mana Contemporary** in New Jersey, ACAW highlights two exhibitions ongoing by China's contemporary visual artists Song Dong and Li Jun.

Established artist **Song Dong** will present his edible installation *Eating the City*. Made out of thousands of edible cookies, sweets and other snacks, Song Dong builds the structure of the city, inviting visitors to participate in its destruction by, literally, eating the city. Created as a means of commenting on the exponential growth of Asian cities and the similarities between global cities in today's day and age, the installation encourages people to explore the topology of the urban environment. Song Dong has created many "biscuit cities" before, including some modelled after Beijing, Shanghai and Paris, amongst others, all of which are meant to be eaten by viewers.





Li Jun, 'Free to Go', 2012, performance. Image courtesy the artist.

Emerging artist Li Jun presents another exhibition alongside Song Dong entitled "Zi Jie at East Lake". A pop-up show addressing issues of urbanisation and gentrification, the two projects speak to each other in complementary ways. "Zi Jie at East Lake" is inspired by the artist's engagement with an environmental awareness initiative that he co-organised since 2010, known as "Everyone's East Lake Project". The exhibition will showcase videos, writings, illustrations and installations, and looks at the real-estate boom that is currently changing the East Lake areas in Wuhan, China. Meant to be an archive of sorts of the rapid eradication of communal recreational and public spaces, the exhibition provides a more personal, poetic look at the topic of urbanisation in China today.



"After Darkness: Southeast Asian Art in the Wake of History", 8 September 2017 – 21 January 2018, Asia Society Museum, New York. Dinh Q. Lê, 'Light and Belief: Sketches of Life from the Vietnam War', 2012, 70 drawings in pencil, watercolour, ink, and oil on paper and single-channel video with sound, dimensions variable. Video duration: 35 minutes. Courtesy the artist, Shoshana Wayne Gallery, and 10 Chancery Lane Gallery. Photo: Perry Hu. Image courtesy Asia Society Museum.

### Asia Society, "Negotiating Change: Art from Societies in Transition", 20 October

Held in conjunction with the current exhibition at Asia Society, entitled **"After Darkness: Southeast Asian Art in the Wake of History, Negotiating Change"**, "Negotiating Change: Art from Societies in Transition" is conceived as a day-long symposium that looks at Southeast Asian contemporary art.

"After Darkness" explores contemporary art from societies in transition, examining the relationship between individual artistic practices and the sociopolitical contexts that they sprang from. Looking at points of tension between art, politics and history, the exhibition serves as a means of exploring the Southeast Asian contemporary art landscape, and the roles that the artists play in their respective countries' histories and political narratives. With an additional performance entitled *Passport In/Passport Out: Stories of Dinh Q. Le and Tintin Wulia*, the symposium will comprise a staged reading from the accounts of the two artists, Le and Wulia, followed by a question and answer session.



Tintin Wulia, 'Violence Against Fruits' (still), 2000, single channel video with sound, duration: 2:56min. Image courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery.

**Dinh Q. Le** is known as one of Vietnam's foremost contemporary artists engaging with the themes of identity, memory and history, often working with photographs, images and material in his research-driven projects. **Tintin Wulia** is best-known for her works that deal with the issues of global citizenship, nationality and cultural identity. Both artists have exhibited in major institutions and art platforms. Wulia has exhibited at the Yokohama Triennale, Istanbul Biennale and Sharjah Biennale, and is a recipient of the Australia Council for the Arts' *Creative Australia Fellowship 2014-2016*. Le has exhibited in the Mori Museum, Japan, dOCUMENTA(13) in Kassel, Germany, and Singapore Art Museum, amongst others.





Raghubir Singh. 'Subhas Chandra Bose statue, Calcutta', 1986, C-Print. Image from 121 clicks © Raghubir Singh





Raghubir Singh, 'Pavement Mirror Shop, Howrah', 1981. © 2017 Succession Raghubir Singh

### The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Reflections on Raghubir Singh", 27 October

Held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ruth and Harold D. Uris Centre for Education, the panel discussion will feature screenwriter **Sooni Taraporevala** and photographer **Ketaki Sheth** sharing their experiences working with Raghubir Singh. The discussion will bring together Taraporevala and Sheth, inviting them to reflect on their memories of Singh, and what it was like to work with him in an informal conversation-style format.

Raghubir Singh is known as a pioneer of colour street photography in India, tirelessly capturing life in India through his gaze. Lauded for melding traditional Indian aesthetics with the new technology, Singh managed to create a distinct, yet arresting and highly vibrant photographic style that set him apart from other photographers. Singh also influenced many generations of photographers and filmmakers, including Henri Cartier-Bresson, William Gedney and Lee Friedlander. The exhibition ongoing at The Met (running until 2 January 2018), "**Modernism on the Ganges: Raghubir Singh Photographs**", is a retrospective exhibition that traces the trajectory of his career from the late 1960s to the 1990s, examining the unfolding of his creative pursuits.

**Junni Chen**

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