

Nama Persidangan: Regions of the Contemporary

Tempat: University of Melbourne, Australia

Tarikh: 4 Nov 2016 - 8 Nov 2016

Abstract:

Title: Images without Bodies: Chiangmai Social Installation and the Art History of Cooperative Suffering

Presenter: Simon Soon

This presentation proposes the notion of 'images without bodies' as a means towards historicising such constellations of activity under the banner of Chiangmai Social Installation. The materials that survive are less representations than perspectives – interviews, photographs and videos amongst other ephemera; snapshots and afterthoughts, which take on many afterlives. Analogous to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of 'bodies without organs', the work of art history should hence be understood as drawing from this reservoir of possible formations to return the actual event into a state of potentiality – unanchored, in this case, by the historical circumstances that shaped the event's birth and eventual demise. Rather than obtain contemporaneous purchase for CMSI through the lineage of the twentieth-century European avant-garde, I have sketched two alternative and complementary possibilities.

I offer a preliminary diachronic sketch stemming from a Thai leftist lineage, which connects the motivations and sympathies of CMSI to the historical gambits of Chit Phumisak and the United Artists' Front of Thailand. Chit's appeals to 'art for life' resonate with the claim made by Atimana of being a culturalist rather than an artist, which is in turn revealing of the dialectic that spelt out CMSI's endgame. I also suggest a form of critical regionalism – a comparison via a constellation of case studies. Rather than being a pre-existing political unit of examination, the 'region' here emerges from a set of specific local contexts and temporary contingencies. Like the very concept of cooperative suffering, this is more about advancing forms of momentary allegiance than erecting geo-political boundaries, to sustain the view that art historical trajectories are always already multiple."