

KUNSTVEREIN IN HAMBURG

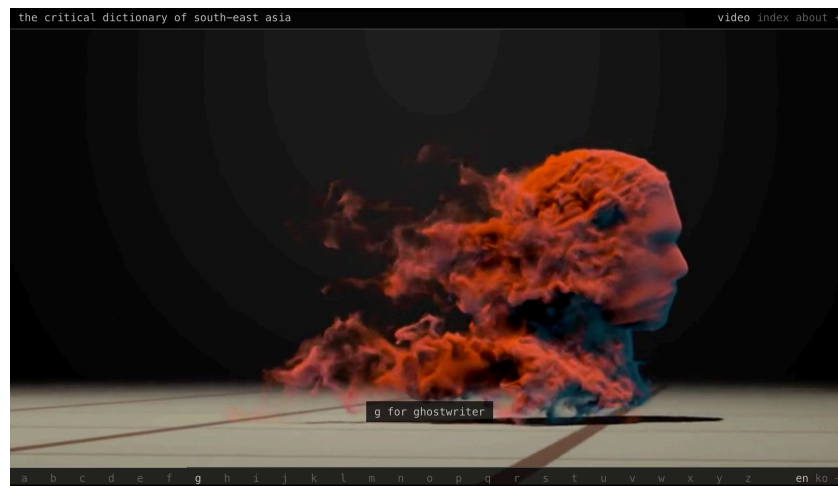
PRESS RELEASE

HO TZU NYEN

The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia, Vol 3: N for Names

8/8 – 10/7/2018

In cooperation with Internationales Sommerfestival Kampnagel



Ho Tzu Nyen, *The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia*

Press Conference

8/8/2018, 11 am

Opening

8/8/2018, 5 pm

Speakers: András Siebold (Artistic Director, Sommerfestival at Kampnagel/Board Member Kunstverein in Hamburg), Bettina Steinbrügge

Afterwards:

8/8/2018, 7 pm

Opening Internationales Sommerfestival Kampnagel Hamburg

Artist Talk

8/16/2018, 7 pm

Ho Tzu Nyen in conversation with Bettina Steinbrügge

Events at Kampnagel:

Ho Tzu Nyen – The Mysterious Lai Teck

8/9/2018, 9 pm

World premiere followed by open discussion

Further performances: 8/10 & 8/11/2018 respectively at 7 and 9 pm

Conference: Heimatphantasien

8/19/2018, 1.15 – 2.45 pm

Nation Building and Colonialism in Southeast Asia, Talk with Hyunjin Kim und Ho Tzu Nyen

The artist Ho Tzu Nyen (*1976 in Singapur, lives and works in Singapur) uses historical texts and

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artifacts to create technically and visually impressive films, video pieces, installations and theater works. Many of the artist's works are formally inspired by Baroque and the format of the tableau vivant, while also making numerous references to philosophy and the history of art and cinema. His installations are filled with as many signs as the sources from which they are derived. Pop cultural references mingle with citations of past eras in a sophisticated, filmic time vacuum. They are to be understood as allegories of the absence of the unspeakable history that has not been present in public life until this day.

His artworks are based on comprehensive research and the meticulous collection of data, the results of which he prepares like a historian. The thematic focus of his artistic practice is on the hegemonic power structures that have shaped the history of Singapore and Southeast Asia. This practice is reflected above all in *The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia*, a long-term project situated in the renowned Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong. In *The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia*, Ho Tzu Nyen collects metaphors, practices, sounds, biographies, and narratives beyond the official historiography that surmount national borders which were artificially drawn during colonial times, thus formulating the possibility of a different collective identity for the entire region. The result is an archive now including thousands of hours of audiovisual material that Ho has published as a virtual, critical encyclopedia, and which he also uses as source material for further artistic works.

The Kunstverein in Hamburg presents excerpts of this project that deals with the region by posing complex questions of heritage, politics and culture. They are set in a new relation to each other for the location at Klosterwall. *The Nameless* (2014) is a video installation revolving around a Chinese-Vietnamese man named Lai Teck played by the iconic actor Tony Leung Chiu Wai from Hong Kong. From 1939 to 1947, Lai Teck was one of the 50 known pseudonyms of the secretary-general of the Malayan Communist Party, until he was killed in Thailand after being exposed as a triple agent. He initially worked for the French, then for the British secret troops, and finally, during the years of Malayan occupation (1941-1945), for the Japanese secret police. Based on the steady flow of Hong Kong movies about "double agents," "informers" and "traitors," the work relates the story of an identity metamorphosis lurking beneath the surface of nations and ideologies. Through the overlaying of several languages and the compilation of images of a single actor against different Asian films shot between 1989 and 2013, *The Nameless* seeks to depict this historical, mutating and eclectic character as one that not only influenced a crucial period of Malayan history, but also embodies the overlapping historical and ideological complexities of Southeast Asia. This story filled with ambiguities could not be shown in Shanghai because of the Chinese censors.

The artist sets the installation *The Nameless* in relation to his work *The Name* (2015) about the mysterious writer Gene Z. Hanrahan – and frames both with a new installation consisting of material drawn from his virtual dictionary *The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia*. *The Name* is an energetic found-footage montage of movies from the history of Western cinema that usually depict the creative but also excruciating act of writing in the form of a romantic genius cult. At the same time, the level of the voice-over deals with a type of author that entirely deviates from this idea. With *The Name*, Ho presents a filmic realization of his research on the mysterious author Gene Z. Hanrahan, whose published oeuvre he has been tracing for quite a while. The starting point of his interest in the writer is Hanrahan's astonishingly informative essay on the communist struggle on the Malayan peninsula during the time of colonialism (*The Communist Struggle in Malaya*, 1954). Further publications, including ones on Chinese guerilla tactics or the work of Ernest Hemingway titled *The Wild Years*, make Hanrahan's identity as an author-subject appear ever more dubious. When Ho did research on the character, he hardly found any traces of him as a real person and speculated about whether the name was possibly a pseudonym or the author a ghostwriter working for U.S. government authorities during the Cold War. Ho's film, then, engages with the instability of the concepts of work and author by employing filmic means and based on a concrete historical case that left its mark on Malayan historiography. The version of *The Name* shown at the Kunstverein in Hamburg is updated with a second voice-over drawn from a yet unpublished essay by Dr. Marc Opper who might possibly have uncovered the "real" Gene Z. Hanrahan. Therein, he presents information which contradicts the narration of the first version of *The Name* on a factual but not necessarily conceptual level.

The installation, in turn, stands in relation to the stage piece *The Mysterious Lai Teck*, a visually

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stunning agent story revolving around politics and betrayal in postcolonial Malaysia that will celebrate its world premiere at Kampnagel.

Ho Tzu Nyen has studied Fine Arts at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne and Southeast Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore. Solo exhibitions (Selection): Substation Gallery, Singapore (2003); Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide (2010); Artspace, Sydney (2011) and Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012). In 2011, Ho represented Singapore at the 54th Venice Biennale. He participated at a variety of international film festivals such as the 41st Directors' Fortnight at the Cannes International Film Festival (2009) and the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah (2012). Group exhibitions (Selection): Singapore Biennial (2006); Video Killed the Painting Star, Contemporary Center of Art, Glasgow (2007); Thermocline of Art: New Asian Waves, ZKM Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe (2007); Asia Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane (2009); No Soul for Sale, Tate Modern, London (2010); transmediale.11, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2011); Surplus Authors, Witte de With, Rotterdam (2012); Autonomous Zones, Times Museum, Guangzhou, China (2013) and Social Factory, 10th Shanghai Biennale (2014). In January 2015, Ho received the Grand Prize Award of the Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize.

This project is a coproduction of the Kunstverein in Hamburg with Internationales Sommerfestival Kampnagel and is supported by the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg as well as ZEIT-Stiftung and Behn Meyer.



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Press material and images of the show can be downloaded from our website:
<http://www.kunstverein.de/presse/login/index.php>
Username: media
Password: kvhh

KUNSTVEREIN **IN** **HAMBURG**

Klosterwall 23
20095 Hamburg
www.kunstverein.de

Opening hours: Tuesday – Sunday 12 – 6 pm
Public guided tours: Each Thursday at 5 pm
Admission: 5 euros, reduced 3 euros