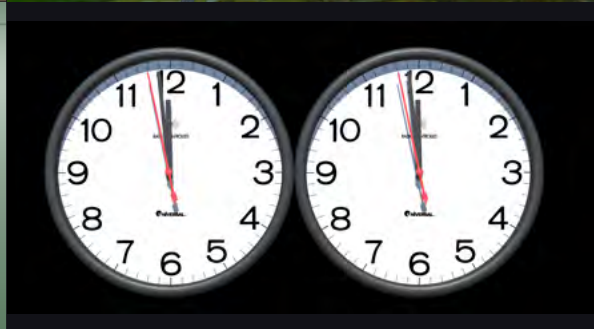




Ho Tzu Nyen
Time & the Tiger

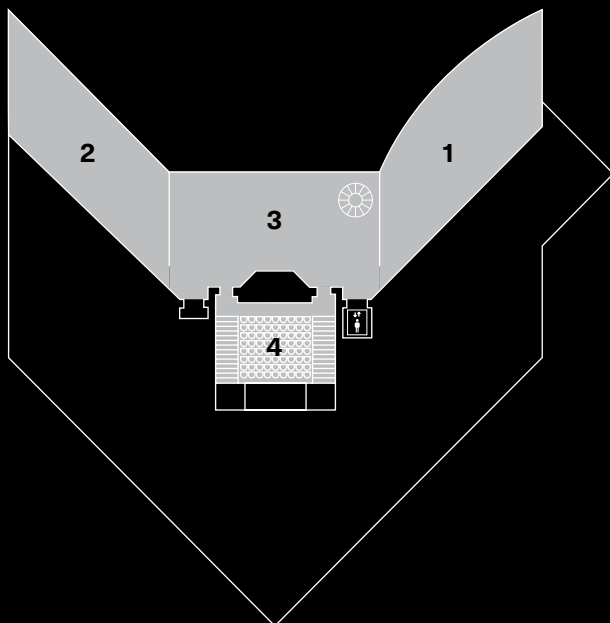




MUDAM
The Contemporary Art Museum of Luxembourg

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Level -1
Galleries, Foyer, Auditorium

- 1 *T for Time*, 2023 – ongoing
T for Time: Timepieces, 2023 – ongoing
- 2 *One or Several Tigers*, 2017
- 3 *Hotel Aporia*, 2019
- 4 *CDOSEA*, 2017

Ho Tzu Nyen

Time & the Tiger

14.02 – 24.08.2025

Lead curators for the touring exhibition

Eugene Tan (Singapore Art Museum) and Sunjung Kim (Art Sonje Center)

Curator for the exhibition at Mudam Luxembourg

Christophe Gallois

Production

Paula Fernandes, David Celli, Jordan Gerber, Richard Goedert, Matthias Heitbrink, Tawfik Matine El Din, Irfann Montanavelli, Pedro Serrano, Lourindo Soares

Technical Director

Andy Lim

Architect

Lazaridis Petros

The exhibition *Ho Tzu Nyen: Time & the Tiger* is organised by Singapore Art Museum and Art Sonje Center in Seoul, in collaboration with the Hessel Museum of Art in Annandale-on-Hudson (New York State), Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean and Hamburger Kunsthalle.

A S J
C
Art Sonje Center

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CONTEMPORARY ART IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The exhibition

Time & the Tiger is the most important travelling exhibition of Ho Tzu Nyen's work to date, organised in collaboration with four institutions in Asia, the United States and Europe. It takes us on a journey through the layers of history in East and South-East Asia.

A major figure in contemporary art, Ho Tzu Nyen (1976, Singapore) makes films, video installations and virtual reality works that fuse a variety of cultural influences from the East and the West: mythological stories, art history, philosophy, cinema, music, theatre and animated films, as well as images circulating on the internet. At the heart of his artistic practice lies a reflection on history: the way in which it is written and transmitted, but also the role of tales, myths and fiction within it. These questions manifest themselves in works that often take as their starting point the context of Southeast Asia – a region characterised by the multiplicity of identities, languages, religions, cultures and influences. Its 'unity', as the artist underlines, appears to lie above all in its plurality and transformation.

Time & the Tiger brings together five large-scale installations completed between 2017 and 2023.

Two works created for the exhibition – the two-channel video projection *T for Time* (2023–ongoing) and the set of forty-three videos composing *T for Time: Timepieces* (2023–ongoing) – offer a profound meditation on the notion of time. Another major work by Ho Tzu Nyen, *One or Several Tigers* (2017), looks at the figure of the tiger as it appears in the mythologies of Southeast Asia and the role that it has played in the narratives surrounding the creation of Singapore during the colonial era. *Hotel Aporia* (2019) proposes a polyphony of narratives set against the backdrop of Japanese imperial influence in Asia during World War II. Finally, *CDOSEA* (2017) is composed of a multitude of images, video clips and texts found on the internet, which together draw a kaleidoscopic portrait of Southeast Asia.

This presentation revolves around two motifs that Ho Tzu Nyen chose to highlight in the exhibition title: time and the tiger.

For the artist, time does not follow a linear progression, but rather is made of meanders, loops, waves and whirlpools. Ho Tzu Nyen sees it as the very material of his work. 'Sometimes I think that the true medium I work with is time itself. After all, one could say that moving images like films and videos are just attempts to give shape to time,' the artist states.

The figure of the tiger, found in Ho Tzu Nyen's oeuvre since his first works, embodies such a conception of time and history. Present on the Asian continent for two million years, the tiger occupied a central place in Southeast Asian ancestral cultures, as a link to spirits and between the animal and human worlds, before being decimated to the point of near extinction. Yet, it continues to nourish imaginaries and play a major cultural and symbolic role. For the artist, it becomes a spectral, liminal figure, capable of traversing space and time: 'This entire cosmology, along with the tigers, was wiped out during the colonial period. ... But in this story, death is not the end. Instead, we see tigers returning again and again in various new forms,' he observes.

The exhibition also highlights Ho Tzu Nyen's interest in the question of images – the multiplicity of their forms, their modes of production and circulation, past, present and future, and the way they seep into us and often live within us. These reflections take the form of installations that place a central importance on the physical presence and sensory experience of the viewers – through projected images, but also through sounds, which the artist uses primarily for their capacity to affect us.

With *Time & the Tiger*, Ho Tzu Nyen immerses us in a dense universe where a multitude of images and sounds, myths and narratives, historical threads and geographic trajectories, real and fictional characters, human and animal existences intertwine.



T for Time and T for Time: Timepieces

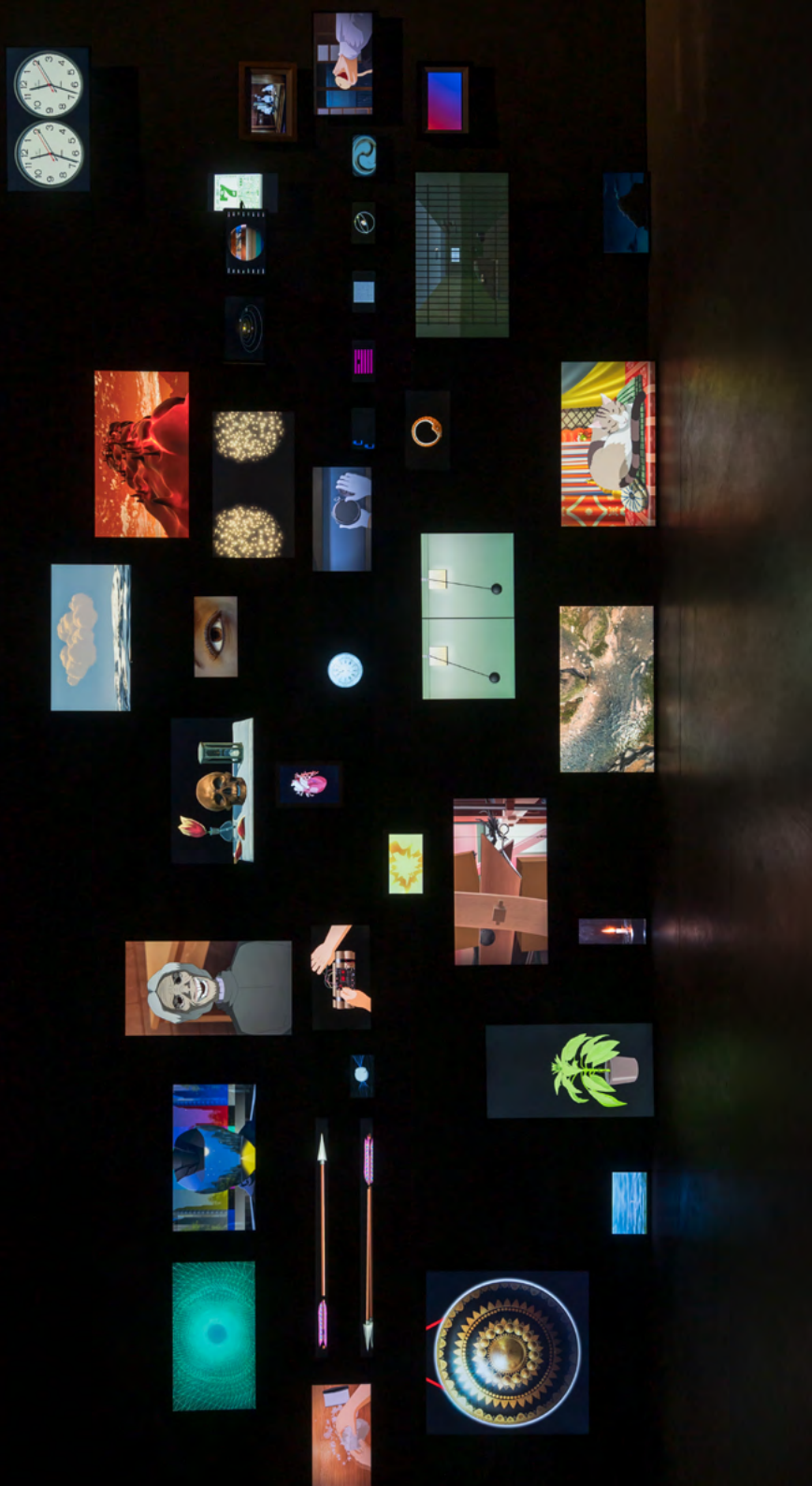
West Gallery

Associating found images with animated films, the two-channel video projection *T for Time* (2023–ongoing) draws on an array of references and anecdotes related to the notion of time. Different experiences and conceptions of time intermingle here, from everyday stories collected from the artist's entourage to reflections from the domains of philosophy, cosmology and quantum physics, by way of historical events that bear witness to the evolution of the measure of time in Asia and Europe. As the artist explains, 'I wanted to relate lived, personal stories to time on the biological, sociological, geopolitical and cosmic scales. I wanted to find out how they resonate with life as I live it – its little joys, small acts of heroism and absurdity – with memory and death.'

One of these 'notes' on time, for instance, features Mr P.K Chan, a 79-year-old man who manages the building that houses Ho Tzu Nyen's studio and who has found himself, for the past thirty years, as the caretaker of the most famous public clock in Singapore, that of Victoria Theatre & Concert Hall – an activity that has prevented him from taking more than five days off in a row. 'I followed him up the clock tower one day, and he adjusted the clock by checking it against the time on his mobile phone,' Ho Tzu Nyen recalls. 'For me, this story, so rich in its manifold multiplicities of time, became as monumental as the notion of gravity curving space-time and hence slowing down time...'

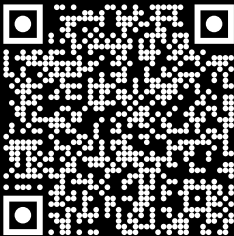
Lasting sixty minutes and composed of forty-two sequences, *T for Time* is programmed using an algorithm that generates a new montage each time the work is activated, thus creating ever-new associations between narratives and images, historical periods and geographies, and different scales and conceptions of time.

Presented on LED screens that together form a constellation of images, the forty-three videos that form *T for Time: Timepieces* (2023–ongoing) echo the sequences around which *T for Time* is structured. They embody different 'images of time': symbols (the arrow, the candle, the river, still life), measuring instruments (John Harrison's marine chronometer, an atomic clock), references to cultural history (Felix Gonzalez Torres's *Perfect Lovers*, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, Yasujiro Ozu's *Late Spring*), or even temporalities specific to the solar system, plant or animal life (the sunflower, mayflies). The duration of these *Timepieces* extends from a one-second loop to a potentially infinite period; several of them have been created in the form of applications that function according to cycles ranging from twenty-four hours to 165,8 Earth years – that is, the length of a year on Neptune.



Ho Tzu Nyen's notes on the *Timepieces*

Each of the videos composing Ho Tzu Nyen's *T for Time: Timepieces* is accompanied by a short text by the artist. Below is a selection of these notes. The complete collection of notes can be viewed using the following QR code.



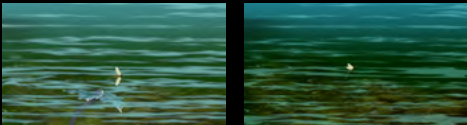
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Time Bomb

'In 1947, Martyl Langsdorf designed "The Clock of Doom" for publication in *the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. Her symbol of nuclear anxiety – a clock set at seven minutes to midnight – represented the finitude of time as it reminded us what happens when time runs out.'

24 Mar 2024 (11:53 pm)



Mayfly

'After more than 350 million years of evolution, mayflies have perfected the art of life. They start as an egg, turn into a naiad, emerge from the water, fully mature into adults to reproduce, and then start a family of at least 400. And they do it all in less than two days.'

18 Mar 2024 (3:15 pm)

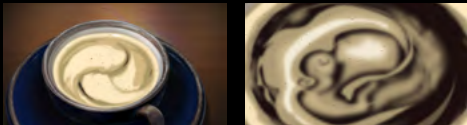
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Apple Peeling

In *The Transformation of Meaning* (1984), Atsushi Mori describes the peeling of the red skin of an apple in topological terms as an irreversible and cyclical movement: 'Given that the blade, which progressively slides from the bottom to the top, is one-dimensional space called "time", the apple's stalk becomes point at infinity to which the one-dimensional space called "time" returns "again" forming a circle.' At the end of Yasujiro Ozu's *Late Spring* (1949), after marrying off his only daughter, a widower returns home after the ceremony. Alone, in the otherwise empty house, he takes out an apple and begins peeling its skin, with a knife of time.

26 Mar 2024 (9:45 am)



Coffee (Cosmos)

A single cup of coffee, as seen from above, nearly fills the CinemaScope frame. It is stirred, and we sense the formation of the cosmos in the ripples and foaming. But as I think about it, the coffee turns cold.

29 Mar 2024 (9:03 am)

+++



Photograph

A few years ago, my Japanese friend received a Blu-ray Disc that contained all his family photos and movies. His father had digitally scanned these photos and 8mm films one by one, classified them into directories. But he did not have a Blu-ray Disc drive. Strangely, looking at these archives made me feel a sense of nostalgia for memories which were not mine. A story about: i) life-span of media, ii) an indexical photo vs. a digital image (made up of ones and zeros), iii) transferability of memories, and iv) contemporaneity of (certain) Asian modernities.

1 Mar 2024 (12:15 am)



Gong

In Southeast Asia, one musical element concerning time is the concept of a vibrating medium such as the suspended gong in the gamelan ensemble, which is allowed to vibrate freely with one stroke, without further control of the fingers, the hands or human volition.

23 Feb 2024 (1:23 am)

+++



The Cat

Every cat in history is I.

2 Apr 2024 (4:15 pm)



Calendar (The Days)

This calendar attempts to fuse the Chinese lunar calendrical system with that of the Western, Gregorian solar calendrical system. The Chinese lunar calendar is based on the orbits of the Moon and Earth. When the Moon moves into a line with the Earth and the Sun, it is the first day of the lunar month, and the full moon occurs in the middle of the month.

Extremely common in Singaporean Chinese households when I was growing up, it is now becoming rare.

29 Mar 2024 (3:16 pm)

+++



Clock 2 (Perfect Lovers)

Untitled (Perfect Lovers) by Félix González-Torres consists of two identical wall clocks hung side-by-side. When installed, the clocks are initially set to the same time but may eventually fall out of sync over the course of an exhibition, just as a lover can depart.

Will transforming the two clocks into an app keep the clocks in perfect synchronisation forever?

30 Mar 2024 (1:45 pm)



Cloud (Horizon)

Only people with time on their hands, can watch clouds drift by. Only people with time on their hands, can afford to think about what time is.

28 Mar 2024 (3:12 pm)

+++



Water Clock

In the Northern Song period (960–1127 AD), the Chinese scientist and statesman Su Song built the 'Cosmic Engine' – a five-story high clock tower moved by water. Its main purpose was not the measurement of time but the mapping of the movement of the heavenly bodies. It is now regarded as the most accurate clock of its time, until the invention of the pendulum clock in the West.

26 Mar 2024 (3:50 pm)



Heart

'The rods and cones in the retina respond to light oscillating at between 10^{14} and 10^{15} Hz. The brain's electrical activity has a frequency of 10^1 Hz, or a period of 0.1 seconds; the heart beats at approximately 10^0 Hz, or once a second; and respiration occurs at about one breath every six seconds.'

26 Mar 2024 (4:10 pm)

+++



Pendulum

The pendulum – a 'simple harmonic oscillator' – is at the core of the development of the modern Western clock. The history of clock-making can be described as the search for ever-more-reliable forms of oscillations, from the movement of the pendulum, vibrations in quartz, to atomic resonances.

26 Mar 2024 (4:29 pm)

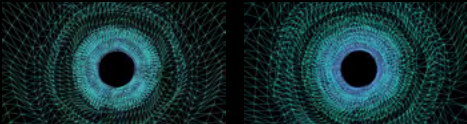


I-Ching

The *I-Ching*, usually translated *Book of Changes* or *Classic of Changes*, is an ancient Chinese divination text that is among the oldest of the Chinese classics. It was originally a divination manual in the Western Zhou period (1046–771 BC) and can be regarded a manual that seeks to co-relate every possible situation of life. Its 64 hexagrams made up of permutations of broken lines (Yin) and unbroken lines (Yang) were understood by the German philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz as a precursor to the binary arithmetic that he invented – a foundation of digital computing.

26 Mar 2024 (5:03 pm)

+++



Time Travel

On his seventy-seventh year, H. G. Wells tried to recall how the idea of *The Time Machine* came to him: 'I have been trying, for a day or so, to reconstruct the state of my brain as it was about 1878 or 9... I find it impossible to disentangle... the old ideas and impressions.'

15 Feb 2024 (3:03 pm)



One or Several Tigers

East Gallery

Combining a double projection and a puppet show created in the tradition of Indonesian wayang kulit – an ancient form of shadow play with leather puppets – *One or Several Tigers* (2017) takes as its starting point a nineteenth-century lithograph by the German artist and illustrator Heinrich Leutemann (*Interrupted Road Surveying in Singapore*, c. 1865). The lithograph depicts the encounter between a Malayan tiger and George D. Coleman (1795–1844), accompanied by a team of Indian convicts, while he is conducting topographic surveys in the jungle, using a surveying instrument named a theodolite. Coleman was an Irish civil architect who played a decisive role in the construction of Singapore during the colonial era.

On two facing screens, the characters of Coleman and the tiger, brought to life by the artist using computer-generated images, begin a sung duet. While Coleman represents rationality, conquest and territorial control, the tiger incarnates the wild forces of nature and of life, and the presence of ancestral spirits. Their narrative unfolds like an epic poem that quickly immerses the spectator in a hypnotic experience, where the boundaries between man and animal, nature and culture, reason and magic, and history and myth blur.

Hotel Aporia

Foyer

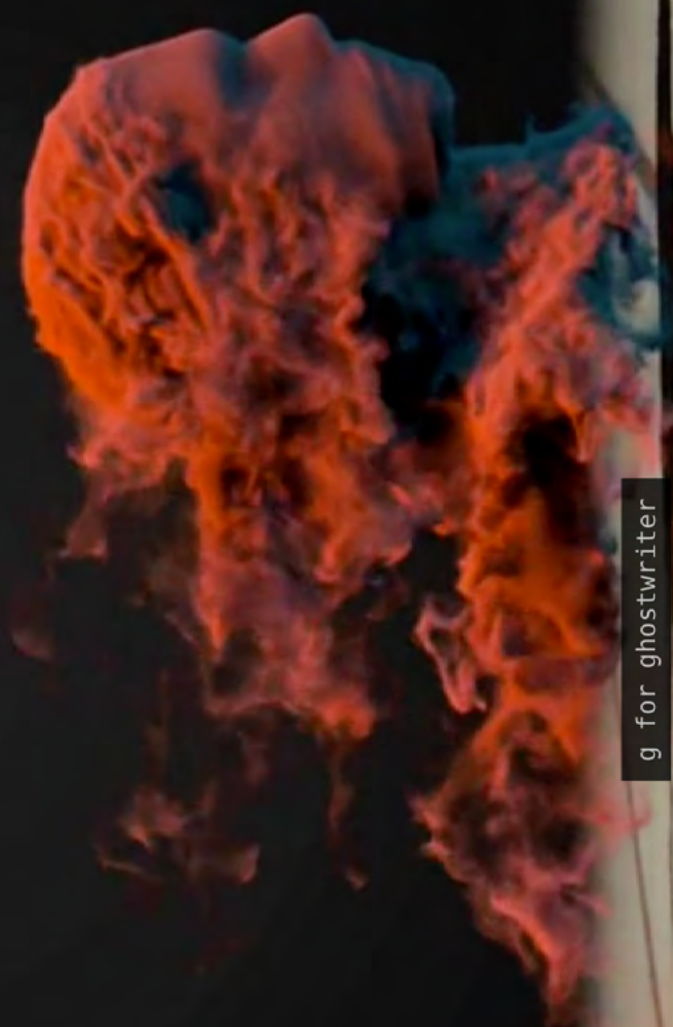
Initially created to be housed inside a ryokan – a traditional Japanese inn – situated in Toyota, *Hotel Aporia* (2019) explores the influence of Japanese imperialism in Asia during World War II.

This video installation was envisioned as a collage of stories based on the trajectories of six characters or groups of characters who lived through that troubled period in Japanese history. Here, one finds the manager of a ryokan, a squadron of kamikazes, philosophers affiliated with the Japanese movement of the Kyoto School as well as the director of animated films, Ryūichi Yokoyama (1909–2001), and the filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu (1903–63), who were both ordered to direct propaganda films during World War II. The former transformed his favourite character, Fuku-chan, into a member of a submarine crew (*Fuku-chan's Submarine*, 1944). The latter, who spent the years of the war in Singapore, never completed his commissioned film, for reasons unknown.

The work combines images found in various contexts, including archival images and excerpts from films by these two filmmakers, alongside a 'polyphonic' story written by Ho Tzu Nyen, drawn from his correspondence with his Japanese collaborators during the production process. His unfamiliarity with the Japanese language and his position as an outsider are regularly brought to the fore, most notably through the involvement of the translators in the exchange. They open, within the narrative, the possibility of 'circulation between interior and exterior'.

The viewing area of the videos is itself inspired by the films of Ozu, renowned for having filmed the world from the perspective of a person sitting on the ground, at the height of a tatami mat.





g for ghostwriter

CDOSEA

Auditorium

CDOSEA (2017–ongoing) takes as its starting point a database that Ho Tzu Nyen has been developing since 2012, *The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia*, which gathers images, video, audio and texts from the internet that relate to the geographic area commonly referred to by the term 'Southeast Asia'.

'What constitutes the unity of Southeast Asia – a region never unified by language, religion or political power?' was the question the artist posed at the beginning of his project.

The expression 'Southeast Asia' was forged by the Allied Powers during World War II and popularised in the 1950s through the emergence of 'Southeast Asian Studies', particularly in the context of American academia, where it had its basis in opposing the spread of Communism throughout that region. Today, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a political, economic and cultural organisation that includes Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, along with Papua New Guinea and East Timor as its observer states.

Organised around the twenty-six letters of the Latin alphabet – from A for 'altitude' and 'anarchism' to Z for 'zone' and 'zoomorphism' – the continuously evolving 'dictionary' developed by Ho Tzu Nyen constitutes a kind of matrix for his work, capable of provoking new ideas, new lines of research and new works.

Like *T for Time*, *CDOSEA* is programmed by an algorithm that sequences the video files in a random order. It combines these videos with sound recordings and a voiceover that exists in ten versions, each performed in ten different ways. No one viewer will experience the same work: this unique editing process allows the artist to generate new relationships among the images, and thus new meanings each time, echoing the changing nature – ungraspable and unstable – of Southeast Asia itself.

In a recent interview, Ho Tzu Nyen highlighted the broader importance of this open, ever-changing work: 'The content of the question, "What is Southeast Asia?" may be relevant to some of us from this region. But I like to think that the form of the question can be adapted to many other situations. This query seems more relevant than ever in our present landscape, which is marked by essentialist, exclusive and highly destructive identity politics.'

An online version of the *Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia* can be accessed at: www.cdosea.org

The artist

Ho Tzu Nyen (1976, Singapore) has presented solo exhibitions in institutions such as the MOT, Tokyo; the Artsonje Center, Seoul; the Hessel Museum, Annandale-on-Hudson (2024); the Singapore Art Museum (2023); the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2022); the Toyota Municipal Museum of Art (2021); the Kunstverein in Hamburg (2017) and the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao (2015). In 2011, he represented Singapore at the 54th Venice Biennale. He participated in the Whitney Biennial 2024; the 13th Gwangju Biennale (2021) and the 14th Sharjah Biennial (2019). His films and performances have been shown in festivals such as Theater der Welt, Frankfurt (2023); the Theaterfestival Basel (2020); the Holland Festival, Amsterdam (2018); the Sundance Film Festival (2012); the 64th Locarno International Film Festival (2011) and the 62nd Cannes Film Festival (2009). His works are held in the collections of the Tate Modern, London; the M+, Hong Kong; the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo and the Singapore Art Museum, among other institutions. Ho Tzu Nyen lives and works in Singapore.



Public Programme

Artist Talk

With Ho Tzu Nyen

13.02.2025 | 19:30 – 20:30 | EN

Drop in!

Six Months From Now

15.02 – 23.02.2025 (every working day during the Carnaval holidays)

Every weekend between school holidays, 10:00 – 18:00

Curator's tour

26.02.2025 | 18:00 – 19:00 | FR

With Christophe Gallois

Lunchtime at Mudam

07.03.2025 | 12:30 – 13:30

02.05.2025 | 12:30 – 13:30

Workshop Mudamini

Chimeras in Motion

13.03.2025 | 14:30 – 16:30

6 – 12 years

LuxFilmFest Collaboration

Carte blanche to Ho Tzu Nyen

Screening of *Songs for dying /*

Songs for living

by Korakrit Arunanondchai

14.03.2025 | More information on

www.luxfilmfest.lu

LuxFilmFest – Workshop for schools

Chimeras in Motion

10 – 14.03.2025 | 9:30 – 11:00

Mudam Akademie

Pushing the boundaries of the real.

Video production and the Asian scene

09.04.2025 | 18:00 – 19:00 | LU

09.04.2025 | 19:30 – 20:30 | FR

Workshop Mudamini

Tales and Shadows

10.04 + 24.04.2025 | 14:30 – 16:30

6 – 12 years

Drop in!

Moving Pixels

17.05 + 18.05.2025 | 10:00 – 18:00

With Dadofonic

In the framework of LUMU DAYS

Images

Cover

Ho Tzu Nyen, *T for Time: Timepieces* (video stills), 2023–ongoing

Courtesy of the artist and Kiang Malingue

Images

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1 | Ho Tzu Nyen, <i>T for Time</i> , 2023–ongoing
Courtesy of Singapore Art Museum |
| 2 | Ho Tzu Nyen, <i>T for Time: Timepieces</i> , 2023–ongoing
Courtesy of Singapore Art Museum |
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Courtesy of the artist and Kiang Malingue |
| 36 | Photo: Seowon Nam
Courtesy of Art Sonje Center |

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