

MEMORY!

Censorship & Film Conference A Southeast Asian perspective



In the present times of economic, social, and political volatility, we can look at the past and compare: how were such issues coped with in previous decades? How do the banned or censored films of yesterday contribute to on-going debates about society and modernity? If new social conditions, technologies, or ideologies spark old anxieties, what might we learn from the media of the past, from its confrontations with official regulations or social codes?

As film and other media have demonstrated, many important intellectual and artistic movements have functioned under censorship in various countries over the years. In this sense, the conference will explore how censorship has influenced cultural production and the creative process. How do we negotiate film and media under the enduring presence of various forms of censorship and rugged political environments?

A first of its kind in Myanmar, this interdisciplinary conference aims to explore the idea of film censorship in a broad cultural context, inviting connections between various forms of censorship and across historical circumstances. We open the floor to Myanmar-based and international presenters to join us in addressing this topic from a variety of perspectives including case studies, theoretical investigations, problem-oriented arguments, and comparative analyses.

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H.E. Kristian Schmidt

Opening keynote: Artistic freedom in modern democracies

Kristian Schmidt is the European Union Ambassador to Myanmar and Head of the EU Delegation in Yangon since September 2017. He previously served as EU Ambassador to Uganda and held several senior positions in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid at the European Commission in Brussels. Kristian Schmidt studied economics in Copenhagen, Denmark, Bologna, Italy and Aix-en-Provence, France, and holds a degree in international relations from the University of Cambridge, UK. Ambassador Schmidt is a Danish national.

U Thein Naing & Daw Grace Swe Zin Htaik

Past, Present & Future of Myanmar Censorship

U Thein Naing is Director of Myanmar Censorship Board (MMPDB) – Myanmar. Daw Grace Swe Zin Htaik is a producer and director and has worked on an impressive number of locally distributed film productions. In 1977 she won the Burmese Academy Award for best performance. She attended the Rangoon Institute of Economics, graduating in 1977 with a bachelor's degree in commerce. Subsequently she obtained a degree from the Alliance Française in Yangon in 1989, and trained in special content media at the University of Southern California (Los Angeles) in 2002. She received a superior diploma from the International Institute of Abhidhamma, Yangon, in 2011. Heading International Affairs at Myanmar Motion Picture Organization (MMPO), she acts as a liaison between the government and visiting production teams.

Dr. Howard Besser

Film Censorship: What is It?

Dr. Howard Besser is Professor of Cinema Studies at New York University (the first Cinema Studies Department in North America). He is also the Founding Director of NYU's Masters degree in Moving Image Archiving & Preservation, and Professor Emeritus at UCLA's Library School. He has taught and written about policy impediments that keep films from being seen, and is particularly interested in how copyright, privacy, and censorship are used to inhibit film distribution. In 2009 Besser was named to the Library of Congress' select list of

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"Pioneers of Digital Preservation." He has also been involved in the creation of several library metadata standards (PREMIS, Dublin Core, METS), and has published more than 50 articles dealing with media and information technology in cultural institutions.

Ma Shin Daewe

Independent filmmaking, the Yangon Film School perspective

Shin Daewe is one of Myanmar's documentary pioneers. Born in Yangon in 1973, Shin Daewe began writing articles and poems during her studies at university. When Myanmar's universities were closed in the wake of student protests in 1996, she joined Yangon production company AV Media where she soon discovered her passion for documentary. In 2006 she took up studies at Yangon Film School where she quickly became one of the School's most prolific filmmakers. Many of her works – such as her portrait of the Burmese painter Rahula, *An Untitled Life*, and *Now I am Thirteen*, about a young girl living in Myanmar's dry zone – have screened to acclaim at numerous film festivals around the world. Several films, including *A Bright Future* about child-centred teaching and *Take Me Home*, about IDP camps in Kachin, have also won awards. With 10 short documentaries to her credit, Shin Daewe is currently developing a feature-length documentary about opium farmers in Shan State as part of the Yangon Film School's Fellowship programme. She is also a regular directing mentor on YFS courses and a member of the School's Steering Committee.

Manshur Zikri

Indonesian censorship in the 1980s

Manshur Zikri is a researcher, critic and curator in the field of media, arts and films. He earned his bachelor's degree in 2014 from University of Indonesia in Criminology. Since 2009, he is a member of Forum Lenteng, a Jakarta-based egalitarian and non-profit organization which focuses on cultural activism as well as alternative education on media, films and arts.

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Patrick Campos

Orapronobis

Patrick F. Campos is an independent film critic and an Assistant Professor at the Film Institute of the University of the Philippines (UP), where he received the 2017 Chancellor's Award for outstanding professor. He is author of books and articles on Philippine and Southeast Asian cinemas, media, and popular culture, and his latest book is *The End of National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century* (2016), which was recently nominated for the National Book Awards (Philippines) for Best Book on Art. He is editor of two leading journals on art and media in the Philippines, namely *Humanities Diliman* and *Plaridel: A Journal on Media, Communication, and Society*; director of the Office of Research and Publication of the College of Mass Communication of UP, and a current member of the cinema committee of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

Dr. Saw Tiong Guan

The Malaysian Film Censorship System: Key Issues and Concerns

Dr. Saw Tiong Guan is Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, University of Malaya. His doctoral dissertation from the University of Melbourne is entitled *The Final Cut: Film Censorship in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Australia*. A keen lover of film since a young age (he worked in a video store while still in high school in the 1990s) Tiong Guan is also a filmmaker. In 2007 he wrote and directed his first film entitled *G16 G17*, a short film about a boy's struggles to organize a screening in an abandoned dilapidated cinema for his ailing mother. In 2013, he produced and directed *Past Present*, a documentary film exploring Tsai Ming-Liang's journey through film, both as a film-goer and maker, tracing Tsai's philosophy as a director to his childhood memories. In 2016, Tiong Guan directed *Wind* with cinematographer Christopher Doyle.

Tan Pin Pin

Banning To "Singapore, with Love": the Aftermath

Director Tan Pin Pin is Singapore's foremost documentary director. She chronicles and questions the gaps in history, memory and documentation. Her films study the process of self-examination itself, rendering its complexities with emotional power and visual clarity. They have screened at the leading festivals including the Berlinale, Hot Docs, Busan, Cinéma du Réel, Visions du Réel, SXSW and at the Flaherty Seminar.

The Singaporean director has won or been nominated for more than 20 awards,

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most recently for her 2013 feature *To Singapore, with Love* (banned in Singapore) from Dubai International Film Festival. Previously, *Invisible City* (2007) won the Scam International Award at Cinéma du Réel. *Singapore GaGa* (2005) was voted Best Film, 2006, by Singapore's The Straits Times. *In Time to Come* (2017) is her latest feature documentary, it currently being released in Singapore, as well as screening at festivals.

Thaiddhi

Censorship law & contemporary filmmaking in Myanmar

Thaiddhi is a freelance filmmaker working on both documentary and fiction films, and has completed projects for local and international NGOs in locations all over Myanmar. His directorial debut *Awake* won the FAMU International Film award in 2009. Thu Thu Shein, Director of Wathann Film Festival is a graduate of the Myanmar National University of Arts and Culture's Cinema and Drama program. On the film scene since 2005, her directorial debut *A Million Threads* won the Heinrich Boell Foundation Documentary Award in 2007. She has worked as either director or cinematographer on a number of productions. Thaiddhi and Thu Thu Shein run Third Floor Productions, which provides production services to local and international organizations and supports the development of independent filmmakers. Thaiddhi and Thu Thu Shein co-founded the Wathann film Festival in 2010, and since then it has become one of the principle Myanmar organizations to support film education and media development in Myanmar. The first festival to promote independent film production in Myanmar, its educational program and workshops intend to train a new generation of Myanmar filmmakers in the diverse professions of the film industry.

Dr. Paul D. Grant

Closing remarks

Dr. Paul Grant teaches graduate cinema studies at the University of San Carlos, co-chairs the School of Architecture Fine Arts and Design Research Committee and is vice-president of CAMIRA (Cinema and Moving Image Research Assembly). He is the author of "Cinéma Militant: Political Filmmaking and May 1968," co-author of "Lilas: An Illustrated History of the Golden Ages of Cebuano Cinema," editor in chief of Sinekultura Film Journal, and editor at La Furia Umana journal. He has translated work by French film critic Serge Daney and Film theoretician Jean-Louis Schefer, and his writing has appeared in, among others, La Furia Umana, Situations: Project of the Radical Imagination, Film International,

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Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society and Senses of Cinema. He is currently editing a collection of writing on Visayan cinema by the late D.M. Estabaya and a monograph on Philippine regional cinemas.

Conference organizers:

Dr. Paul Douglas Grant
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Censorship & Film Conference: A Southeast Asian perspective

Nov. 4 Sule Shangri-la Hotel, 5 floor

09:30 Coffee & refreshments

10:00

Opening keynote: **Artistic freedom in modern democracies**
H.E. Kristian Schmidt, European Union Ambassador to Myanmar

10:35

Panel 1: **Censorship and Screen Media Policy**

Chair: Theo Stojanov, PhD candidate, Film & Moving Image Studies, Concordia University – Canada

Past, Present & Future of Myanmar Censorship

U Thein Naing, Director of Myanmar Censorship Board (MMPDB)
Grace Swe Zin Htaik, Actress & Secretary of the International Relations Committee (MMPDB) – Myanmar

Film Censorship: What is It?

Dr. Howard Besser, Professor of Film Studies at NYU – USA

Censorship law & contemporary filmmaking in Myanmar

Thaiddi, Filmmakers and Co-founders of Wathann Film Festival – Myanmar

Q&A

Nov. 5 Sule Shangri-la Hotel, 5 floor

09:30 Coffee & refreshments

10:00

Panel 2: **Censorship and Southeast Asian Filmmaking**

Chair: Dr. Paul Grant

Independent filmmaking, the Yangon Film School perspective

Ma Shin Daewe, filmmaker, Yangon Film School – Myanmar

Indonesian censorship in the 1980s

Manshur Zikri, researcher, critic, curator, Forum Lenteng – Indonesia

Orapronobis

Patrick Campos, critic and Assistant Professor, University of the Philippines – Philippines

The Malaysian Film Censorship System: Key Issues and Concerns

Dr. Saw Tiong Guan, filmmaker and Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, University of Malaya – Malaysia

Banning To Singapore, with Love: the Aftermath

Tan Pin Pin, producer, director – Singapore

11:45

Q&A

12:20

Closing remarks: Dr. Paul D. Grant, Professor of Film Studies at University of San Carlos – Philippines