

Reframe: The (In)Hospitable World Online Symposium

Date: 23 October (Fri), 2020

Hosts/Moderators: Dr Kiu-wai Chu, Dr Soh Kai Ruo

About the symposium

This online symposium centres on the *Reframe* series – [“The \(In\)hospitable World”](#), based on both the selected films and texts that address ecological, environmental, and public health issues represented in cinema of Asia. The three panels will cover:

- 1) the theorizing of Asian cinema in the (in)hospitable world;
- 2) making films in times of environmental and health crises;
- 3) new forms of film distribution, exhibition and spectatorship in (post-)catastrophic time.

With this new geological epoch, which we call the Anthropocene, and the current pandemic outbreak, our Earth is reaching a new level of inhospitality.

So how are film production, distribution, exhibition and film studies, affected by both the environmental crises and pandemic situation? How are filmmakers, festival curators, spectators and researchers, adapting to these changes? Can we still explore new possibilities, maintain optimism, and find hope, in a (post-)catastrophic world?

Symposium Programme & Schedule

Opening

9:50am - 10am (SGT/UTC+8)

Kiu-wai Chu and Soh Kai Ruo

Session One: Theorizing Asian Cinema in the (In)hospitable World

10am - 11:45am (SGT/UTC+8)

In a world defined by intensifying ecological inhospitality, and a pandemic that unleashes mimetic rivalry and scapegoating mechanisms, how is Asian cinema offering us a glimpse of hope in a (post-)catastrophic world full of possibilities?

In this panel, Jennifer Fay explores how Tsai Ming Liang's films guide us out of the post-apocalyptic despair, showing us an alternative, viral hospitality through human intimacy. While Chia-ju Chang discusses how cinema functions as a "technology of compassion" that brings possible redemption to the ethnic scapegoating.

Panel Speakers:

- **Jennifer Fay** (Professor of Cinema & Media Arts and English, Vanderbilt University) (USA)

"Viral Hospitality: Sheltering in the Anthropocene"

- **Chia-ju Chang** (Professor of Modern Language and Literatures, Brooklyn College, The City University of New York) (USA)

"Mimetic Rivalry and Scapegoating of Women in Time of Pandemic: Cinematic Representation and Redemption"

Moderators:

- **Kiu-wai Chu** (Assistant Professor in Environmental Humanities and Chinese, Nanyang Technological University) (Singapore)
 - **Soh Kai Ruo** (Singapore)
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Session Two: Conversation with Filmmakers: Making Films in a Time of Crises

2pm - 3:30pm (SGT/UTC+8)

A conversation between film scholars and filmmakers, join us discuss stories of inhospitality in selected films shown in this series. Listen and ask questions about the filmmakers' experiences of producing and making films in this new world of growing inhospitality, and glimpses of hopes for a better future.

Panel Speakers:

- **Prateek Vats**, director of *Eeb Allay Ooo!*
- **Alex Curran-Cardarelli**, producer of *Mekong 2030* / Festival manager of Luang Prabang Festival
- **Anysay Keola**, director of *Mekong 2030* "The Che Brother"

- **Lungyin Lim**, director of *Ohong Village*

Moderators:

- **Graiwoot Chulphongsathorn**, Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)
- **Soh Kai Ruo** (Singapore)

Break

3:40pm– 4pm (SGT/UTC+8)

Session 3: Distribution, Exhibition and Spectatorship of Asian Films in Pandemic Time

4pm - 5:30pm (SGT/UTC+8)

How has film production, distribution, exhibition and spectatorship been affected by the inhospitable conditions of our present world, especially when made worse by the global environmental crises and more recently the coronavirus pandemic? Join world-leading film scholars and the Director of Udine Far East Film Festival as they discuss how local film scenes in Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and elsewhere are responding to changes respectively. Can online film experience replace cinemas, festivals and conventional modes of spectatorship?

Panel speakers:

- Gina Marchetti, Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong)

"Hong Kong on Borrowed Time in a Pandemic"

- Ma Ran, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Letters, Nagoya University (Japan)

"Save the Cinema? In (Post-)Pandemic Japan – an Incomplete Observation"

Guest Speaker:

- Sabrina Baracetti (Director, Udine Far East Film Festival, Italy)

“Sharing on Udine Far East Film Festival 2020”

Moderators:

- Sangjoon Lee (Assistant Professor, Nanyang Technological University);
- Kiu-wai Chu (Assistant Professor, Nanyang Technological University)

Closing

5:30pm - 5:35pm (SGT/UTC+8)

Kiu-wai Chu and Soh Kai Ruo

Paper Abstracts and Bios of Major Presenters

“Viral Hospitality: Sheltering in the Anthropocene”

Jennifer Fay

Professor of Cinema & Media Arts and English, Vanderbilt University (USA)

Abstract:

In April 2020, Arundhati Roy marveled at how the Coronavirus had afflicted the world’s richest countries “bringing the engine of capitalism to a juddering halt” perhaps not permanently, but long enough for us to consider alternatives to the unjust and toxic status quo. For Roy the Coronavirus, while deadly, is full of revolutionary potential: “Historically pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway, between one world and the next.” We can either drag our ruined world (the “data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies”) with us, or “walk through lightly” ready to create something new. The pandemic is both an interruption and a hold, it is both a time and space through which we may pass.

Imagining a similar pandemic in 1998 but projecting it into a future, Tsai Ming Liang figured such a portal between worlds as a hole—*The Hole*—between apartments through which antagonisms fester and body fluids flow until our heroine is lifted from near death into the light, and perhaps love, in the apartment above. The pandemic is the cause of social isolation and the reason there are so few people left in this crumbling apartment complex, which is the geographic totality of the film beyond which there is nothing but torrential rain. But what makes the woman’s apartment unlivable is not the flue (though she contracts it) nor the hole (though through it her upstairs neighbor urinates and vomits). It is rather than she is caught between the dark, unending rain outside and the bad plumbing that floods her apartment inside. This would be a story of utter, post-apocalyptic despair, but here, as in all of Tsai’s film, there is still a minimal hospitality to come not through a break in the clouds, but a through hole in the ceiling large enough to fit a body without baggage. The revelation is an unforeseen intimacy between neighbors.

This presentation thinks with a few of Tsai Ming Liang’s films in which crumbling mise-en-scene, bad plumbing, water-logged apartments, and persistent rain conspire to evict characters from their homes and worlds (*The Hole, Rebels of the Neon God, Goodbye Dragon Inn, I Don’t Want to Sleep Alone*). At once fantastic and utterly banal, the wet, wasted world of his movies projects the effects of rising tides and inclement weather events of the Anthropocene, a world made for human living that has turned out to be inimical to human life. But these are not films of despair. The make-shift shelters and invitations to share an apartment or a bed belong to a post-catastrophic world full of possibility, as if proleptically filmed from the other side of the coronavirus portal.

Bio:

Jennifer Fay is Professor of English and Professor and Chair of Cinema & Media Arts at Vanderbilt University. She is the author, most recently of *Inhospitable World: Cinema in the Time of the Anthropocene* (Oxford, 2018) and is co-editor and contributor to a forthcoming special issue of *Discourse* on "Cinema, Modernism, and the Perplexing Methods of Stanley Cavell."

"Mimetic Rivalry and Scapegoating of Women in Time of Pandemic: Cinematic Representation and Redemption"**Chia-ju Chang**

Professor of Modern Language and Literatures, Brooklyn College, The City University of New York (USA)

Abstract:

Covid-19 has turned out to be an exemplar of "catastrophic social effects of mimetic violence" (Girard). One such Covid social pathology is the wide-spread phenomena of scapegoating ethnic minorities, especially Asians (Chinese) and Asian/Chinese Americans in everyday life and social media in the West. The current prevalent phenomenon of blaming the Asian/Chinese other powerfully evokes Rene Girard's theory on mimetic rivalry and scapegoat mechanism. This paper first discusses the theme of scapegoating through the lens of Girard's theory, then asks the role cinema plays in relation to the theme and representation of "pandemic victimhood." In examining the complex scapegoating mechanism at work on both conscious and unconscious levels, I ask the following questions: does film (on either narratorial or formal level) contribute to our understanding of scapegoating mechanisms? Does it resolve, reinforce, or become complicit with the scapegoating? Can cinema be a technology of compassion that unveils the otherhood (or innocent victimhood) of the scapegoat? While I argue that the redemption of ethnic scapegoats can emerge, as in the case of Hollywood film *Contagion*, nonetheless redemption by mainstream culture is limited. An in-depth, authentic self-knowledge and representation of the pandemic needs to come from within as a form of healing. Film can also serve as a medium of resistance against mimetic violence and bigotry, as I will examine in Asian filmmakers representation of pandemic. I first discuss the some autoethnographic pandemic film, *Contagion*, and then move to analyze a cluster of pandemic films produced in Hong Kong and Taiwan: *Golden Chicken, Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (Hong Kong, 1970),

The Hole (Taiwan, Tsai Ming-liang), and 1:99 SARS Short film (*Memories of Spring*) (Hong Kong, 2003) and Hong Kong—the Winner.

Bio:

Chia-ju Chang is a Professor of Chinese at Brooklyn College of CUNY, USA. Her research interests include Chinese and Comparative ecological literary, cultural and film studies, animal studies, and eco-Buddhist studies. Her publications include *Global Imagination of Ecological Communities* (2013) and many articles (in both English and Chinese) appeared in many peer-reviewed journals and scholarly collections in the U.S., China, and Taiwan. She has edited two volumes, *Chinese Environmental Humanities: Environing at the Margins* (Palgrave, 2019) and *Ecocriticism in Taiwan: Identity, Environment, and the Arts* (co-edited with Scott Slovic, 2016). She also guest-edited the Special Issue on “Animal Writing” in the journal of Taiwan Literature Translation Series (2018). She was the Kiriama Professor in the Asia Pacific Center at the University of San Francisco in 2016.

“Hong Kong on Borrowed Time in a Pandemic”

Gina Marchetti

Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong)

Abstract:

Scientists note that perceptions of time change during a pandemic when lockdowns disrupt routines, eliminate schedules, and limit interactions with people outside the immediate household. Plugging into the digital world creates another sense of time in which we become more attuned to the global clock that takes us out of our own time zones more frequently. Hong Kong, of course, has its own sense of what Richard Hughes called “borrowed time.” (1968) The colonial status of much of its territory had 1997 as an end date, and its current existence as a “Special Administrative Region” (SAR) of the People’s Republic of China stops in 2047. Throughout its history, Hong Kong’s geopolitical time has been disrupted, too, by pandemic time. As a port city connecting the empires of China and Great Britain, at the crossroads of the world, and as Asia’s global city, Hong Kong acts as a conduit of goods, services, capital, ideas and disease. The colony channeled the 1894 bubonic third plague, the 1938 smallpox pandemic, and the 1968 Hong Kong flu pandemic, to name just a few diseases that also included other avian and swine influenza strains, cholera, malaria, and HIV/AIDS, among other infections; the HKSAR became synonymous with SARS in 2003, and, now, COVID-19 makes Hong Kong a sore point as it intersects with a wave of protests that started in 2019 and the intensification of international tensions because of the Sino-US

trade war. While Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion* (2011) reminded film audiences of Hong Kong's relationship to pandemics in the wake of SARS, other filmmakers take different approaches to the temporal rhythms of the territory's "borrowed" time in relation to waves of diseases. Patrick Long Kung's *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (1970), based loosely on Camus' *The Plague*, borrows the section headings from Hughes' book for the title of the film. Its plot links the anti-colonial riots of 1967 directly to a fictitious pandemic in much the same way Camus used his plague as an allegory of Nazism. The section of Bo Wang and Pan Lu's *Many Undulating Things* (2019) devoted to Hong Kong's history of disease also exhibits a particular sense of time when seen in relation to the HKSAR in 2020. This presentation probes the way in which digital, cinematic, geopolitical, and pandemic time intersect in the depiction of Hong Kong on global screens.

Bio:

Gina Marchetti teaches courses in film, gender and sexuality, critical theory and cultural studies at the University of Hong Kong. She is the author of *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (University of California, 1993), *From Tian'anmen to Times Square: Transnational China and the Chinese Diaspora on Global Screens* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), *The Chinese Diaspora on American Screens: Race, Sex, and Cinema* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), *Andrew Lau and Alan Mak's INFERNAL AFFAIRS—The Trilogy* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), and *Citing China: Politics, Postmodernism, and World Cinema* (Hawai'i, 2018). Visit the website <https://hkwomenfilmmakers.wordpress.com/> for more information about her work on Hong Kong women filmmakers since 1997. To register for her Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Hong Kong cinema, go to <https://www.edx.org/course/hong-kong-cinema-through-global-lens-hkux-hku06-1x>

"Save the Cinema? in (Post-)Pandemic Japan—an Incomplete Observation"

Ma Ran

Associate Professor, Graduate School of Letters, Nagoya University (Japan)

Abstract:

This presentation highlights Japan's independent cinema in the (post-)pandemic time by turning attention to the struggles of mini-theaters in relation to the network(ing) of various film bodies, film festivals and other relevant grassroots organizations and events. As is known, the development of 'mini-theater' or single screen cinema in Japan has been historically associated with the boom of importing, distributing, and

exhibiting foreign arthouse films since the 1980s. Nowadays, I argue, 'mini-theater' configures one of the core exhibition and distribution *spaces* and *interfaces* of Japan's independent cinema, namely films produced outside of the already-transformed studio system, in a post-studio era. My presentation leverages a nation-wide crowd-funding movement called 'Save the Cinema' (launched in April) to examine the intersecting issues of Japan's cultural (film) policies, the current conditions of Japanese independent cinema, and in particular the challenges faced up by the mini-theater-centered network of distribution and exhibition under COVID-19. 'Save the Cinema' was launched at a time when the Japanese state required 'cultural events' to impose upon themselves 'voluntary restraint' (*jishuku*), requesting for their temporary closure. Whereas it is the film community and mini-theater audiences themselves that have successfully saved 'Save the Cinema', I also hope to push further the questions regarding *who/what* should have save(d) the cinema (the space/ the art), and *who/what* has been really saved amidst the COVID crisis.

Bio:

MA Ran teaches at the international program of "Japan-in-Asia" Cultural Studies and the program of Cinema Studies (*eizogaku*), Graduate School of Humanities, Nagoya University, Japan. Her research interests include East Asian independent cinemas and film festival studies, for which topics she has published several journal articles and book chapters, including contributions to *Chinese Film Festivals: Sites of Translation* (2017) and *The Japanese Cinema Book* (British Film Institute, 2020). Currently she is working on subjective filmmaking in postwar Japan. Ma is the author of *Independent Filmmaking across Borders in Contemporary Asia* (Amsterdam University Press, 2019). Besides research, she has also curated and organized screening events of independent films at Osaka, Beijing, and Nagoya. (112 words)

Sabrina Baracetti (Director, Udine Far East Film Festival, Italy)

"The Udine Far East Film Festival, now in its 22nd edition, in time has become one of the largest European events dedicated to Far-East and South-East Asian cinema. This year, due to the pandemic outbreak, after an initial postponement of the physical event, we took the decision of moving it online.

To reimagine, in a complete new format, a festival in such an advanced stage of preparation was uncharted territory. With a total of 46 titles from 8 countries (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia), our programming team came up with a screening schedule to create a more communal, festival-like viewing experience; at the same time, we provided our audience with an on-demand option. We set up an interactive user area and run social media challenges

to engage the public. Filmmakers and talents sent us short video-messages to greet our audience before their films. We also arranged live “coffee talks” with directors, consultants and journalists, overcoming the spatial distance and time-zone difference, so as to bring everyone together amidst the pandemic situation. We also worked to move online our Campus programme, dedicated to aspiring journalists, and Focus Asia, our industry section.

It was essential for FFFF22 not to merely replicate the model of previous years, but to work towards a new, adapted event that would fit and thrive in this novel web habitat, rewriting the festival’s architecture yet preserving its primary objective: to investigate a territory, the Far East, and present the best of its popular and genre-based film productions.”

Bio:

Sabrina Baracetti is Founding member and President of Udine Far East Film Festival, president of cultural organisation C.E.C., head of acquisitions of Tucker Film, co-founder and consultant for Ties That Bind and member of the Board of Directors at Friuli Cinematheque.

Sabrina was born in Udine and graduated in 1994 in Literature with a thesis on Vito Pandolfi’s film Gli Ultimi, a rediscovery work which helped the subsequent restoration of the film at the end of the 90’s. Since 1991 she’s been involved in programming and promoting C.E.C. activities, becoming its president in 1994. In 1998 she coordinated a retrospective dedicated to the history of Hong Kong cinema, which in 1999 evolved into Udine Far East Film Festival under her direction. She has been a member of many Festival juries, as well as being a nomination advisor for the Asian Film Awards.

Alex Curran-Cardarelli

Festival Manager, Luang Prabang Film Festival

Bio:

Born and raised outside of Boston, Massachusetts, Alex Curran-Cardarelli studied creative writing and art history at Denison University.

Through a Princeton in Asia fellowship, Alex moved to Lao PDR to work at the Luang Prabang Film Festival as a festival coordinator. She continues her work at LPFF as its festival manager where she implements the organization’s year-round educational programs and its annual six-day event celebrating Southeast Asian cinema. Alex is also the producer of the anthology film Mekong 2030, an official selection of the 33rd Tokyo International Film Festival.

Anysay Keola

Director, *Mekong 2030*, "The Che Brother"

Bio:

Anysay Keola was born and grew up in Lao P.D.R. In 2003, he was awarded a scholarship from AusAid (Australian Government) to complete his Bachelor of Multimedia System from Monash University, Melbourne, Australia (2007). During mid-2009, he received a scholarship granted by TICA (Thailand International Cooperation Agency) to further his studies with a Master of Arts in Film in Chulalongkorn University. During his studies, his short film 'Another Love Story' was awarded the Distinguished Prize in Film Category in Young Thai Artist Award 2011 program, awarded by Siam Cement Foundation. In mid-2012, Keola's thesis movie "At the Horizon", has been a great success for Lao cinema industry, attaining recognition from various groups of audience among Southeast Asia and Asia pacific region. Together with other young Lao filmmakers, Keola founded "Lao New Wave Cinema Productions" aiming to change the face of Lao cinema industry. In 2016, Anysay had written and directed the first LGBTQ movie in Laos, titled "Noy-Above it all".

Prateek Vats

Director, *Eeb Allay Ooo!*

Bio:

Prateek is an independent filmmaker based in Mumbai. A graduate of the film direction course from Film & Television Institute of India (FTII), he has directed both fiction as well as non-fiction films which have been showcased at various film festivals and non-formal spaces. His debut feature documentary, *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, was awarded the Special Jury Award at the 65th National Film Awards. *Eeb Allay Ooo!* is his first fiction feature length film.

Lungyin Lim

Director, *Ohong Village*

Bio:

Lungyin Lim is an Award winning film director, photographer and cinematographer based in Fengyuan, Taiwan. His feature film debut *Ohong Village* has won the CIPUTTI Prize in the main competitions of 37th Torino Film Festival, and has entered the official competitions of International Filmfestival Mannheim-Heidelberg, Jeonju International Film Festival, and Taipei FF.

Departing from his background in international politics, Lungyin commenced his studies in cinema directing at the national film school FAMU of the Czech Republic. His short film directing works were selected for the official competition of Williamsburg International Film Festival, Ostrava Kamera Oko, Czech Dance For Film, and others. Works as cinematographer has been awarded Special Jury Prize of the Monaco International Charity Film Festival, and Best Feature at Twenty Festival, Taiwan.

As a crossover artist, Lungyin engaged in international reportage photography as well. Collaborated transmedia production *Distant Echoes* was honoured with the prestigious Tseng Hsu-Pai award for journalism, 4A Award, and was the official entry at the Excellent Journalism Award in Taiwan.

Lungyin co-founded TYDAL Production at his hometown Fengyuan in 2017. With this independent studio, he seeks to bring in a global perspective with grass root essence.

Symposium hosts and moderators**Kiu-wai Chu**

Assistant Professor in Environmental Humanities and Chinese, Nanyang Technological University (Singapore)

Kiu-wai Chu is an Assistant Professor in Environmental Humanities and Chinese, Nanyang Technological University. He obtained his PhD in Comparative Literature in University of Hong Kong, his previous degrees from SOAS University of London and University of Cambridge, and his postdoctoral fellowships from University of Zurich and Western Sydney University. Kiu-wai's major research explores how cinema, media and arts represent animals, nature and the environment; and how they impact people's perceptions and actions towards environmental issues in contemporary world. He has published in books and journals related to ecocriticism and contemporary cinema and visual art, specifically in Chinese and Southeast Asian contexts. His work has appeared in *Transnational Ecocinema*; *Animated Landscapes*; *Ecomedia: Key Issues*; *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*; *Asian Cinema*; *Chinese Environmental Humanities*; *Cli-fi: A Companion*; and elsewhere.

Soh Kai Ruo

(Singapore)

Having been in academia for a couple of years, Soh Kai Ruo decided it was time to put her theoretical knowledge into action. Motivated to amplify awareness towards social issues, she is currently at a non-profit media organisation, hoping to provide a platform for diverse voices to be heard. In academia, her research focuses on international film collaborations with China, from production to distribution. Specific interest includes film collaborations with China and Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Hollywood.

Sangjoon Lee

Assistant Professor, Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, Nanyang Technological University (Singapore)

Sangjoon Lee is an Assistant Professor of Asian cinema at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, Nanyang Technological University. Lee is the author of *Cinema and the Cultural Cold War: US Diplomacy and the Origins of the Asian Cinema Network* (Cornell University Press, 2020). He edited *Hallyu 2.0: The Korean Wave in the Age of Social Media* (University of Michigan Press, 2015), *Rediscovering Korean Cinema* (University of Michigan Press, 2019), and guest-edited "Reorienting Asian Cinema in the Age of the Chinese Film Market" (*Screen*, 2019) and "The Chinese Film Industry: Emerging Debates" (*Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 2019). He is currently completing his second book *Border Crossings in Celluloid Asia: South Korea's Encounter with Sinophone Cinemas in Southeast Asia* (Amsterdam University Press, 2022) and two edited volumes *Asian Cinema and the Cultural Cold War* and *The South Korean Film Industry*.

Graiwoot Chulphongsathorn

Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)

Graiwoot Chulphongsathorn is a lecturer in film studies at the Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

In 2018, Graiwoot was awarded the British Academy's Visiting Fellowship for his project 'Southeast Asian Cinema and the Anthropocene.

In the same year, he was also a guest programmer for the Asian Film Archive.

He programmed the screening "Screening the Forest", which was exhibited at the National Museum of Singapore.