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MCAD  
MUSEUM OF  
CONTEMPORARY  
ART & DESIGN

**APICHATPONG  
WEERASETHAKUL**  
THE SERENITY OF MADNESS

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**STUDY GUIDE**

# VIDEO INSTALLATIONS



## **Haiku**

2009  
Single-channel video installation, HD Digital  
Stereo (Shown here in silent) / Color  
1:58 mins

In Japanese literature, haiku has seventeen syllables in phrases of 5,7,5. The shortness of the form may be a reason why the name *Haiku* was given to this short of Apichatpong Weerasethakul. "Each short film in the *Haiku* series is comprised of three shots to contemplate reality and to capture, in the manner of Japanese poems, the unforeseeable, fleeting eternity of a moment, to be discovered at the beginning of each projection."

Identify the three shots that make up the haiku film.  
Write a haiku about the film.  
Discuss how fleeting moments are captured by technology like film, etc.

Filmmaker Jonas Mekas stated in an interview: "Poetry is a state of being, of attitude. It's an exalted, ecstatic state of living, of seeing, of experiencing: [an] intense, intensified way of seeing, perceiving reality, both in art and living. There is poetry in literature, in cinema, in dance, in all of the arts. In literature, haiku form is the most condensed form. Many different emotions and experiences of real life are locked in those few syllables." Does length increase or decrease intensity? How? What elements in the film give you an impression of intensity?



## **The Palace (Pipittapan Tee Taipei)**

2008  
5-channel video installation, Digital (Selected 3 pieces for the exhibition)  
Silent / Color  
Various Lengths

The title refers to the National Palace Museum in Taiwan and the work was presented as part of the exhibition *Discovering the Other* held there 7 June – 19 August 2007, curated by Gertjan Zuilhof. Apichatpong Weerasethakul likens the museum to a spaceship sailing through landscapes and times because of the variety of artifacts it houses that come from different periods and places. Which landscapes and periods do the museums that you visit bring you to? He also calls the museum a moving image. How is a museum a moving image?

He also talks about spirits of the artifacts. Do you believe objects have spirits? Which culture/s believe this and how is this belief manifested?

Instead of focussing on the artifacts in the museum, Apichatpong chose to focus on the dog that he found taking shelter from the rain in the museum. The dog is something considered insignificant in contrast to the items in the museum. Why are objects in museums considered significant? Who determines their values? In light of this exhibition of Apichatpong Weerasethakul, what makes the works on view significant? What do they tell of his practice?

# VIDEO INSTALLATIONS



## Film posters

Some of the posters are award posters, named so because there is an indication in the posters that the film has been nominated and/or given a prestigious industry award. If the film received the award before it was released to theaters and before advertising materials were issued, the awards posters are considered original. Otherwise, the posters are reissues or rereleases. Which posters are originals? Which ones are reissues?

In terms of film marketing, posters play an important role. According to Finola Kerrigan in *Film Marketing* (2010), posters speak to the consumer about what to expect from the film. Following the process of resemblance, one can get an idea of the quality of the film as well as the genre, whether this would be a star vehicle (focus on actor) or artistically or stylistically-driven (focus on director). What impressions do you get about Apichatpong Weerasethakul's films based on the posters?

Look at some of the awards Apichatpong Weerasethakul has garnered. What is the history of these awards? Why are these awards significant?



## Emerald (Morakot)

2007  
Cinema version and single-screen installation, Digital  
Dolby 5.1 / Colour  
11:50 mins

This work is a video installation and this link: <http://www.kickthemachine.com/page80/page22/page64/index.html> will give you some idea of the details for the installation. What challenges does the plan present? If you were to install this work in another place, what would that place be and why? How does space determine your experience of the work?

One of the premises of the work is that memory is a burden and/or a fuel. Listen to the stories being told in the film. Which of these memories are burdens? Which are fuel? How many persons are sharing stories in the film? What do the stories reveal about them? Their relationship? "Principles of storytelling can be used in understanding the relationship between personal and social identity, and the way group storytelling is involved in the creation and transformation of memories about the self / a final way in which [their] framework invites examination of the relationship between individual and social forms of knowledge."

Look for signs that the location is an abandoned building. Many of the structures built during the late 1990s in Thailand were abandoned because of the Asian crisis. Are there any abandoned buildings in your area? How long ago were they abandoned?



## Film and Sound

Some of the films featured in this exhibition are silent. Have you ever seen a silent film before? There are Silent Film Festivals where films from the silent era (1895-1936) are accompanied by live music. "The absence of recording on the set, though, meant that the camera was free to move with a grace and elegance that allowed visual storytelling to flourish and made film more than just an adjunct to the stage." Is this the case with Apichatpong Weerasethakul's silent films?

*Invisibility*, 2016. 2-channel synchronised video installation. Silent video but use live sound from the shutters / Color. 12:29 mins

## VIDEO INSTALLATIONS

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### **Ashes**

2012  
HD Digital, Shot with Lomokino, 35 mm still films  
Stereo (Shown here in silent) / Color  
20:18 mins

Chicago Reader describes the work as “more purely experimental works, an impressionistic photo essay about contemporary Thailand shot on a variety of film stocks and employing mainly nonsync sound ... Apichatpong relies on these different looks to give *Ashes* a subtle sense of structure, progressing from warm, sun-blached images of rural life to sober, black-and-white shots of urban life, then back again.” How would you describe the structure of the film? What are some of the film stocks available? What is the difference between camera and print stocks?

It is described as a drawn dream, film as a mental image.  
What is a drawn dream? How is film a mental image?

## ARCHIVES

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### ***Like the Relentless Fury of the Pounding Waves (Mae Ya Nang)***

1994  
Originally 16mm, re-edited on transfer to digital in 1996  
Mono / B&W  
22:37 mins

This work is a documentary and also an experimental film, the first of Apichatpong Weerasethakul's experimental work. Traditionally, an experimental film and a documentary are different genres. The hybrid quality of his work enables Apichatpong Weerasethakul to delve into the contradictions in his experience as a Thai artist and filmmaker. Listen to his interviews to find out what contradictions he seeks to address, and look at the different books and other materials from which he drew inspiration.

# APICHATPONG WEERASETHAKUL THE SERENITY OF MADNESS

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### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Bon Corachea

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## MUSEUM HOURS

Tuesday to Saturday  
Sunday

10.00am - 6.00pm  
10.00am - 2.00pm

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## MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND DESIGN

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