

Han Nefkens
Foundation

MCAD
MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY
ART & DESIGN

DE LA SALLE-
COLLEGE
OF SAINT
BENILDE

A photograph of three women standing outdoors, seen from behind. They are wearing dark purple sleeveless tops and long, patterned skirts in shades of purple and pink. Each woman has a bright yellow rectangular mask covering her face and a large, circular headpiece made of many small yellow flowers. Their arms are raised, with hands open. The background consists of green trees and a paved area.

CONSTRUCTIONS OF TRUTHS

MARTHA ATIENZA
MINERVA CUEVAS
LUAY FADHIL
RAMIN HAERIZADEH /
ROKNI HAERIZADEH /
HESAM RAHMANIAN
SHURUQ HARB
HO TZU NYEN
THAO NGUYỄN PHAN
MARIA TANIGUCHI
JAMES N. KIENITZ WILKINS

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ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Constructions of Truths asks us to reflect on the truths of images which populate our everyday lives and how these affect how we view the world. Artists included in the show present works using the projected image as a metaphor for how images are projected on us viewers, and how artists, through formal, aesthetic and narrative spaces, question these constructions.

The exhibition is a proposal to engage criticality from the audience, a way to negotiate the continually shifting perceptions of reality. To parse truthiness to reveal the conditions of truth in media, government, nonfiction, and elsewhere. We have come to accept with unquestioning confidence the authenticity of images. In a time when the image is never farther from the truth than it is closer to fiction, we have to be deeply aware of this shift in the 'truth' of the image.

The 21st century's digital turn has blurred the media of photography and film, producing the post-photographic image which is so altered through its various layers that the 'original' is no longer a matter of concern. For what is now the originating image? When we are inundated with images everyday, what happens with our perception of the world and its realities? Are we able to distinguish realities from constructed ones? Are we able to reconcile what is believable and what is not?

The exhibition will include works by Martha Atienza, Minerva Cuevas, Luay Fadhil, Ramin Haerizadeh/Rokni Haerizadeh/Hesam Rahmanian, Shuruq Harb, Ho Tzu Nyen, Thao Nguyễn Phan, Maria Taniguchi, James N. Kienitz Wilkins.

Constructions of Truths is presented by the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD), Manila in partnership with The Han Nefkens Foundation and in collaboration with Edouard Malingue Gallery, Kurimanzutto, the Ruya Foundation and Silverlens.

OPENING RECEPTION

6 February 2020
5.00PM

EXHIBITION RUN

6th February - 12 April 2020

#MCADManila #mcaDCoT

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND DESIGN (MCAD), MANILA

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MUSEUM HOURS

Tuesday - Saturday 10:00am - 6:00pm
Sunday 10:00am - 2:00pm
Closed on Holidays



Martha Atienza
Man in Suit, 2008
 Single-channel video
 15 min 2 sec
 Courtesy of the artist and Silverlens

To mock our perceptions of success, Martha Atienza's *Man in Suit* (2008) features several men from Bantayan Island, Cebu, and the *riles* in Manila going about their daily routines in suits. We see a man pushing a cart down the railway track, a man making bread, and even a man paddling his *bangka* in the open sea. These men take pride in their work; to see them perform laborious tasks while wearing suits almost seems paradoxical. Yet, this is precisely what Atienza wants to highlight. We have grown accustomed to thinking that those donning suits are successful and that they are ultimately the invisible hands exerting power over us. These men, however, are successful, with or without a suit. If these men had the voice of men in suits with power, what influence and change could they bring? *Man in Suit* (2008) is its own social reading on today's society that encourages viewers to rethink the meaning of success.



James Kienitz Wilkins
This Action Lies, 2018
 Single-channel video, sound
 32 min
 A coproduction of the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève for the Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement 2018

"There is no such thing as a Styrofoam™ cup."

This Action Lies is a film about the limits of observation, about staring very hard at something while listening to something else. It unfolds as a mistrustful monologue analysing a common and underappreciated commercial product elevated through cinema to the status of a near-platonic form.



Ramin Haerizadeh / Rokni Haerizadeh /
Hesam Rahmanian
From Sea to Dawn, 2016-2017
Single-channel video
6 min 26 sec
Produced by Han Nefkens Foundation

In their 'moving painting' *From Sea to Dawn* (2016), the artists focus on some of the most urgent issues of today, which echo a long and recurring history of iconoclasm and migration issues. The artists use the term 'moving paintings' when referring to works made by combining a series of single works on A4 paper composed from stills culled from the media, and painted and drawn upon into video animations.

From Sea to Dawn charts the perilous journey of the thousands of people leaving their homelands in West Asia and North Africa for Europe by sea and on foot. The artists employ Brecht's technique of representing contemporary conditions while creating a sense of alienation or estrangement from reality by transforming and rendering unrecognisable the majority of the people in the news footage by drawing animal heads or abstract forms over their faces. In this way, they aim to 'exorcise the sentimentalism' and create an emotional distance, and elicit 'astonishment rather than empathy' from the viewer, allowing for critical analysis of the scene depicted. By depersonalising the individual subjects and emphasising collective experience, the artists seek to encourage the viewer to recognise the reality of interdependency and the value of solidarity with others. They similarly alter the settings by overlaying drawn forms and patterns, and adding repeating and often symbolic motifs as for example, 'good luck' ladybugs.



The artists remove the original voice-overs, leaving only snippets and traces of captions from the original broadcast. This fragmented text which by and large is more frustrating than illuminating, functions as an interruption in an otherwise entirely visual narrative, occasionally providing commentary, such as 'Do something so that the refugees won't suffer so much on the way'. The process of combining and layering the individual paintings on paper results in what the artists have described as a 'pulse'. Formally speaking, this visual stutter creates both a sense of dynamism and anxiety that correspond to the tension arising from various threatening and destructive actions that unfold. In spite of the chaos and loss in the work, evidence of regeneration and hope abounds.

From Sea to Dawn acknowledges that not everyone can survive the journey to Europe and the hardships met along the way, while also highlighting the power of determination and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. The video not only depicts the seemingly endless sea of people and their travails, but also highlights small acts of kindness such as volunteers handing out bottled water, and unbroken connections as for example, a touching embrace of what appears to be a parent and child at the end of the video, juxtaposed with the words 'we have some very good news'.



Ho Tzu Nyen
The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia
 Algorithmic Editing System, 5-channel sound, 1 PC
 Infinite
 Courtesy of the artist and Edouard Malingue Gallery

In 2012, Ho Tzu Nyen began conducting research at Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong, for his project *The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia (cdosea)*. The question he posed was so complex that the project transformed into years of research. The work begins with a question: what constitutes the unity of Southeast Asia — a region never unified by language, religion or political power? *cdosea* proceeds by proposing 26 terms — one for each letter of the English / Latin alphabet. Each term is a concept, a motif, or a biography. Together they become threads weaving together a torn and tattered tapestry of the region.

The dictionary has, since its inception in 2012, generated a number of filmic, theatrical and installation works: *ten thousand tigers* (2014), *2 or 3 tigers* (2015), *the nameless* (2015), *the name* (2015), *timelines* (2017), *one or several tigers* (2017).

Working with a group of collaborators to manifest the dictionary as a whole, Berlin-based programmers Jan Gerber and Sebastian Lütgert (0x2620) developed a platform for absorbing and annotating online audiovisual materials to feed into the editing system that endlessly composes new combinations of audio-visual materials according to the 26 terms of the dictionary.



Minerva Cuevas
La Venganza del Elefante
(The revenge of the elephant), 2007
 Installation with a series of 12 slides, looped
 Courtesy of the artist and Kurimanzutto, Mexico City

Minerva Cuevas's *La Venganza del Elefante* is a slide presentation that uses vintage (ca. 1897) illustrations accompanied by text by Wilhelm Busch, a 19th century German artist regarded as one of the founders of modern-day comics. A common theme for Busch was 'bad behaving animals,' with accompanying descriptive text.

The slides in this projection were produced by W. Butcher & Sons, London (1870 to 1906) under the trade name 'Primus.' The slides, usually sold as a set of eight, were also released as sets called "Primus Projecting Post Cards," of which *La Venganza del Elefante* is the latter.

Cuevas has directly appropriated the images—without the text—reproducing the glass slides on photographic film, allowing her to project the images without following the original sequence, making the reading of the images' storyline more complex.



Thao Nguyễn Phan
Becoming Alluvium, 2019
 Single-channel 4k, video projection, color
 16 min 28 sec
 Produced by Han Nefkens Foundation

Becoming Alluvium builds on Phan's ongoing research into the Mekong River, which runs through China, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. It observes the environmental changes to the river due to the expansion of agriculture, overfishing and the economic migration of farmers to urban areas, with particular emphasis on the perceptions of the impact of environmental change on nature and human lives. Through different levels of narrative and speaking simultaneously of real and imaginary worlds, Phan proposes alternate versions of reality. Her work builds up a multi-layered, aesthetically thrilling, poetic body of work. However, going beyond a purely historical or political point of view, it explores current questions on food security and our ecological responsibility towards agricultural environments.

Thao Nguyễn Phan's work was commissioned as part of the Han Nefkens Foundation - Fundació Miró Video Art Production Award 2019, in collaboration with WIELS (Brussels), Chisenhale Gallery (London), and Galerie Zink (Waldkirchen).



Luay Fadhil
Scribe, 2017
 Single-channel video
 3 min 53 sec
 Courtesy of the artist and Ruya Foundation

While the figure of the *ardahalchis* or scribe is ubiquitous, waiting outside of public buildings to write letters and draft official documents, in the film he (the scribe) serves as an allusion to the heritage of writing in Iraq, and a mediator between the man who approaches him for help in writing a letter to his wife, and the text. The scribe is the hyphen between the man and his own anxious wrestling with what remains the most archaic and fundamental aspect of the human predicament: mortality.

The artist says in an interview that "the work is also a film about mourning where the main character visits him (the scribe) daily to deal with his grief, like a therapist. He wants to believe that his wife is alive, because he loves her. He resurrects her by talking to the scribe".



Maria Taniguchi
Untitled (crystal palace + gauguin), 2009
 Digital video
 17 min
 Courtesy of the artist and Silverlens

Maria Taniguchi's *Untitled (crystal palace + gauguin)* is a slideshow of images taken at the Crystal Palace Dinosaur Court in London with a voice over describing an unnamed Gauguin painting (Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?). The voice describes people going about daily interactions, as we look at some of the world's first dinosaur statues, sometimes creating humorous juxtapositions of image and text as well as two fictional worlds, in a light conflation of ideas about past and progress. The work creates a provocative collusion of art history with that of a scientific error in evolutionary theory. Taniguchi describes the work as "taking what already has an archetypal meaning or a historicized existence, to put it in a situation with another, and to derive a productive equation of this meeting."



Shuruq Harb
The Jump, 2020
 Single-channel video
 10 min
 Produced by Han Nefkens Foundation

Set within the tectonic rift of the Jordan Valley and weaving multiple storylines that are joined through a robotic narrator, *The Jump* explores the psychological terrains of leaping into the void.

Interested in acceleration, history, survival, and escapism in relation to narratives that provide agency in thinking about the future, the artist looks at the possibility of storytelling through fragmentation. She views fragmentation as a technological condition of our contemporary era— the way we navigate our lives virtually online through our devices, our condition of short attention spans. It also references the condition of geography and history as a Palestinian. Without giving up on the possibility of narratives, the artist is committed to finding new ways of narration that present sound and image without the total blur and abstraction of the human subject.

Shuruq Harb's work was commissioned as part of the Han Nefkens Foundation - Fundació Antoni Tàpies Video Art Production Award 2019, in collaboration with the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (Manila), the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art (Singapore), WIELS (Brussels), and Jameel Arts Centre (Dubai).

Martha Atienza's (*b. 1981, Philippines*) practice explores installation and video as a way of documenting and questioning issues around environment, community and development. Her work is mostly constructed in video, of an almost sociological nature, that studies her direct environment. Often utilizing technology in the form of mechanical systems, Atienza explores the immersive capacity of installation in generating critical discourse. Her work tends to be collaborative in nature, working with people from different backgrounds and expertise as well as residents of Bantayan Island, where her family is from, whose narratives are intricately woven into issues such as environmental change, displacement, cultural loss, governance and socio-economic disparities.

James N. Kienitz Wilkins (*b. 1983, United States*) is an artist and filmmaker based in Brooklyn. His works are engaged with questions of language and performance, and how media technologies are rife with loops, failures, and abstractions. He conducts investigations into the life and mind of artists, explores race, money, and technology, playfully and thoughtfully posing tough questions about the features, mechanisms and operations of the contemporary world we tend to take for granted.

Ramin Haerizadeh (*b. 1975, Iran*), **Rokni Haerizadeh** (*b. 1978, Iran*) and **Hesam Rahmanian** (*b. 1980, USA*) have lived and worked together in Dubai since 2009.

The collective work independently and together, propagating a form of collaboration that doesn't suppress individualism. The seeds of their language were sown as early as 1999, back in Iran. Their practice offers up a novel redefinition of the collective as theirs is constantly growing and contracting to incorporate friends, writers, and artists at large. It entails the use of both low and high art references, and they freely embrace 'what is considered marginal, wasted, wrong, messed up, useless, and taken for granted'. Their individual practices differ stylistically while political and social commentary become inherently subversive in a common reflection. The exhibitions they conceive are as much insights into their daily practice, which they designate as the ritual of living and working together.

Ho Tzu Nyen's (*b. 1976, Singapore*) complex practice that primarily constitutes video and installation, features work that unravels unspoken layers of Southeast Asian histories whilst equally pointing to our own personal unknowns. Permeating Ho's work is a sense of ambiguity, theatricality and unease, augmented by a series of deliberate literary, art historical and musical references. Centrally, Ho charges the viewer emotionally and physically to deliver a multisensory consideration of what we know and crucially, do not.

Thao Nguyễn Phan (b. 1987, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam) is a multimedia artist whose practice encompasses painting and installation. Through literature, philosophy and daily life, Phan observes the ambiguities of social convention, history, and tradition.

Minerva Cuevas's (b. 1975, Mexico) practice has always been accompanied and nurtured by her relation with social activism. Her work is known for integrating images appropriated and reconfigured via social context studies through different media. The distribution of information, employing techniques from the commercial publicity while transgressing their consuming persuasion purposes, public interventions and their documentation, the use of video and mural paintings are mechanisms Cuevas applies to conform complex projects that expand in time, and whose dissemination transcends the space and duration of the museum rooms.

Maria Taniguchi (b. 1981, Philippines) works across several media but is principally known for her long-running series of quasi-abstract paintings featuring a stylized brick wall device. Full of subtle gradations and low-key modulations, these are her trademark: a sustained, reiterative practice, steeped in repetition but carefully attuned to the economies and the sculptural presence of painting. Her approach to painting is conceptual. Her point of departure for the series is individual, subjective time. The unified visual grid of the black monochrome acrylic paintings is based on the simplest repeating pattern in masonry, yet when viewed more closely their stark surfaces veer more towards the personal and poetic: glistening patches of irregular shapes and sizes reveal the limits of a day's work.

Throughout her paintings, sculptures, and videos, Maria Taniguchi unpacks knowledge and experience—connecting material culture, technology, and natural evolution—and investigates space and time, along with social and historical contexts. Whether with her quasi-abstract brick paintings or with the moving images of plain and everyday objects, Taniguchi enforces the action of viewing upon our senses. The consequence is the reinterpretation of the objects, and the attainment of sensorial and cognitive experiences.

Luay Fadhil (b. 1982, Iraq) is a filmmaker based in Baghdad. After training as a construction engineer, Fadhil took a course in filmmaking at the New York Film Academy Abu Dhabi and began working as a film director in 2009. He has directed documentaries and short films which he has presented at international film festivals.

Shuruq Harb (b. 1980, Ramallah, Palestine) is co-founder of "ArtTerritories" (2010-2017), and "The River Has Two Banks" (2012-2017) last exhibited at the Asian Art Biennial in Taiwan. Her work has been exhibited internationally at the New Museum, Columbia University, Gwangju Biennial, Istanbul Biennial, Darat al-Funun, Ikon Gallery, amongst others. Her latest film, *The White Elephant*, received the award for best short film at Cinema du Reel Festival in Paris, 2018.

Running throughout the year, MCAD's Learning program aims to provide entry points and opportunities to be familiar with, study and interact with contemporary culture. The museum hosts free workshops, lectures, seminars and community events to engage with all members of the public.

Our Public Program is categorized, with targeted programs being delivered to: Elementary Education (7-11 year olds), High School Education (12-16), Teachers (Training and Curriculum support), Young Creatives (University Students, Late Teens, Young Professionals), Community (Widening Participation and Outreach).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Insight: Moving Image, Philippines

27 February 2020, 3pm

MCAD Multimedia Room

Manny Montelibano, Lisa Chikiamco, Rica Estrada, Tenten Mina, Merv Espina and Shireen Seno will discuss collecting, archiving and exhibiting video and film within the Philippines.

Focusing on some of the countries leading moving image projects, the speakers will discuss the collections of the *Institute of the Moving Image* of University of St La Salle in Bacolod, the projects of Visual Pond, and Kalampag Tracking Agency with its participatory archive.

Public Lecture Series 2020 - Han Nefkens

7 March 2020, 3pm

12F Cinema, Benilde SDA Cinema

Collector and founder of the Han Nefkens Foundation will discuss the evolution of his personal collecting which transformed into the setting up of awards, scholarships, commissions and residencies globally. The foundation focuses on emerging and mid-career moving image artists, working and presenting works internationally.

Crafting Images

21 March 2020, 1-5pm

A1002, SDA Campus, Benilde

The workshop will introduce aspiring filmmakers to the theoretical and practical aspects of image-creation and narrative-construction in film, such as the *Kuleshov* effect. To maximise the experience of the workshop, it's recommended that participants have a basic knowledge of Adobe Premier.

100 Years of Creating the Moving Image

24 March 2020, 3pm

MCAD Multimedia Room

In light of 100 years of Philippine cinema, this panel discussion with local artists, filmmakers and industry professionals will explore critical junctions in the development of moving image in the Philippines, and its impact on the conversation on the medium's form and function.

The Art of Contemporary Videomaking

4 April 2020, 1-5pm

MCAD Multimedia Room

Community-based initiative Lost Frames have pioneered showcasing artists' moving images in the Philippines. In this special workshop, Lost Frames members will teach and inspire participants on techniques for shooting, viewing and developing images, culminating in a screening of the workshop's films.

Open House

29 March 2020, 10am-2pm

MCAD

Inspired by the artworks of *Constructions of Truths*, join us for free engaging activities, exhibition guided tours and giveaways for all ages.



The Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD) is a free, not-for-profit institution that continues to be the external face of De La Salle – College of Saint Benilde. Distinct locally for its position as a non-collecting institution, MCAD’s contemporary art exhibitions, public and learning programs, as well as other cultural and art-inspired undertakings showcase the possibilities of technology, new media and presents content that encourages engagement with art and culture, its practice and production, as well as its presentation and interpretation. Professionally recognised for its standards in curatorial and exhibition practice, MCAD is a space where art is central, serving as inspiration to its viewers and a means by which to understand and change the world at large. By remaining reflexive and responsive to changes in society, politics and the production of ideas, the Museum continues to develop an innovative and inclusionary paradigm where “free access for all” addresses not only a cross-section of social classes, but also of knowledges.

<http://www.mcadmanila.org.ph/>



Benilde is a learning environment that nurtures students to develop their interests and passions, and trains them to become professionally competent in established industries and emerging fields of specialization. At Benilde, learning in its many forms is encouraged. Spiritual creative pursuits, artistic endeavors, service to the community, awareness of environmental issues, and concern for the common good are all part of the Benildean education. The College continues the mission started by St. La Salle and St. Benilde by making innovative education accessible to the poor and to diversely-gifted learners.

<https://www.benilde.edu.ph/>

Han Nefkens Foundation

The Han Nefkens Foundation supports emerging and mid-career video artists by financing the production of new work and provides an opportunity for the output to be presented internationally. The Foundation delivers its awards through scholarships, commissions and residencies across all areas of the globe. They have partnered with artists and institutions from countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Korea, Ecuador, Peru, Spain and the Netherlands and strive for personal, long-term relationships to be built with the people and institutions they collaborate with. In short, the Han Nefkens Foundation connects people through art.

<https://www.hnfoundation.com/>

CONSTRUCTIONS OF TRUTHS

Opening Reception

6 February 2020
5:00PM - 8:30PM

Exhibition Run

6 February 2020- 12 April 2020

Images available upon request.

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IN COLLABORATION WITH

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