

Scenery & Landscape: Hotel Asia Project

BABU, Chen Sai Hua Kuan, Pan Lu / Bo Wang, SECOND PLANET, Gen Sasaki / Keiichi Miyagawa, Chulayarnnon Siriphol, Tong Wenmin, Yu Guo

Opening: April 25, 2025, 18:00 – 21:00

Exhibition: April 26 – May 17, 2025

Mariannenstrasse 33, 10999 Berlin

Curator: Ni Kun

Collaborator: Organhaus

Hotel Asia Project is an international art initiative that takes “the modernized scenery and landscape of Asian cities” as its starting point. Launched in 2015, the project has brought together artists, filmmakers, and researchers from Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and mainland China. Research and exhibitions have taken place in a wide range of cities, including Bangkok, Taipei, Yogyakarta, Chongqing, Chengdu, Hefei, Shanghai, Kitakyushu, Okinawa, Kumamoto, Tokyo, Vienna, and Prague. By examining how landscapes are represented in urban space, virtual media, online environments (including social networks), film, and contemporary art, the project seeks to provide new and diverse perspectives on landscape concepts in the digital age.

The modernization of Asia began with the expansion of colonialism and maritime trade. The collaborative work *Plants, Miasma, Export Paintings* (2017) by Pan Lu and Bo Wang focuses on this historical trajectory. The work draws on various threads: the Thirteen Hongs of Canton, a trade zone established by the Qing government in Guangzhou; British-led environmental and public health reforms in early colonial Hong Kong; the rise of oil painting production in Shenzhen’s Dafen Village following China’s economic reforms; and the botanical gardens that are now iconic features of contemporary Asian cities—both as products of colonial history and as major urban public spaces. Based on archival research and expressed in the form of an essay film, the work analyzes and reorganizes these threads, weaving past and present into an interwoven whole.

In Thailand, the national anthem is played at 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. daily in public spaces such as parks, train stations, subway platforms, schools, and streets. Citizens are required to face the national flag, stand at attention, and remove their hats as a sign of respect. Bangkok-based artist Chulayarnnon Siriphol challenges this ritual in his video work *Planking* (2012), using his body to perform a physical protest. In various public spaces throughout Bangkok, he collapses or falls flat at the moment the anthem begins, highlighting how politicized bodies are forced into visibility in contemporary Asian public space.

Tong Wenmin is a prominent figure among a new generation of Chinese performance artists. Her work often explores the intersection between external environments and individual perception. *Strangle* (2023), part of her recent project *From South to North*, is rooted in her stay in a minority village in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province. There, she learned local knowledge about coexisting with wild plants. Using her body as a medium, she visualizes, personifies, and transforms this relationship into poetic allegory. (“Strangling” in this context refers to a survival strategy in tropical rainforests, in which seeds of certain tree species—dispersed by birds or wind—parasitize host trees and eventually overtake them.)

Space Drawing is a long-term project by Singaporean artist Chen Sai Hua Kuan. Working in abandoned warehouses, historic buildings, and other urban sites, the artist uses bungee cords stretched across floors, walls, and ceilings—and even out of the buildings themselves—to release energy that transforms into a fusion of drawing, video, performance, and sculptural space. These actions capture visceral, site-specific memories, infusing physical space with a sense of temporal tension and giving new historical life to specific environments.

In the modern history of East Asia, Japan's Meiji Restoration was one of the most significant modernization movements in the region. A key intellectual text from this era is *The Japanese Landscape* (1894) by geographer Shiga Shigetaka, which examines the relationship between landscape, regional geography, and national identity through the lenses of climate, customs, and terrain. In contrast, leftist Japanese filmmaker Masao Adachi's *Landscape Theory* (1969), published during Japan's period of rapid economic growth, reflects on urbanization and the commodification of cities. Through filmmaking, Adachi sought to expose the power structures behind homogenized landscapes—how the state and capital shape society by controlling aesthetic environments. Decades later, Kitakyushu-based artists Keiichi Miyagawa and Gen Sasaki revisited Adachi's work in their video piece *Landscape Theory: An Interview with Masao Adachi* (2015), continuing the conversation on landscape as a political construct in contemporary Asia.

The street performance *GOHI!* by Tokyo-based artist BABU offers a contemporary response to Adachi's *Landscape Theory*. Following the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, the town of Futaba was rendered a ghost town. The area was designated by the government as a "difficult-to-return zone," where annual radiation levels exceed 50 millisieverts. In 2022, evacuation orders were finally lifted. BABU created *GOHI!* in 2016 on the town's then-empty streets, engaging with issues of government promises regarding "safe energy," the contradictions of natural disaster and human error, and the unsettling presence of gas masks, hazmat suits, and skateboarding bodies gliding through silence—forming a post-apocalyptic urban allegory.

In his theorization of "mediascapes," Arjun Appadurai emphasized their relationship to globalization, noting that mediascapes—along with ethnoscapescapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes—constitute the imagined worlds of postnational life. Mediascapes, enabled by electronic media, collapse time and space, allowing transnational and transcultural communities to form. Contemporary Asia's core narratives are inseparable from postcolonial and global capitalist contexts. The mediascape has thus become a fundamental part of daily life.

SECOND PLANET, a long-established Japanese media art collective founded by Keiichi Miyagawa and Hisao Sotoda, has long focused on media-based artistic practices. Their work *Good night – Oyasumi* (2021) reflects on media landscapes during the television era. Before the digitalization of TV broadcasting, all programming would end at midnight with a static or moving image known as the "sign-off" screen. The artists collected sign-off footage from various Asian countries and presented them in an interlaced loop, highlighting how the mediascape intersects with other dimensions to construct the contemporary political everyday in Asia.

If television-era sign-offs represent sites of ideological projection, Chinese artist Yu Guo offers another kind of everyday media landscape through his work *Long-focus Videographer* (2017). Driven by technological advancement, this "technoscape" reflects on the effects of globalization: the normalization of travel, the rise of nomadic and consumerist patterns, and the reconfiguration of place and imagination. In the age of digital media, reality and performance have blurred into one another, becoming increasingly ambiguous and indistinguishable.

As we move into 2025, the world is undergoing profound transformation: AI technologies, the Anthropocene, war, trade conflicts, and a wave of de-globalization are intensifying global divisions. As an ongoing project, Hotel Asia Project continues to use the method of "from city to city"—combining travel, dialogue, field research, exhibition, and publication—to bring together more cities, institutions, artists, and researchers. Despite the growing uncertainty that now defines the global condition, we believe that action and cross-cultural dialogue remain vital and viable paths forward.

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Text: Ni Kun

Artists:

BABU

BABU (b. 1983, Kitakyushu, Japan) has visited various places to create street art and has created works in various media including film, paintings, drawings, sculpture, and tattoos by referring to street culture.

Chen Sai Hua Kuan

Chen Sai Hua Kuan (b. 1976, Singapore) is known for his interactive sound art, installations, and public artworks that explore our relationship with space through the body, engagement, and sound. His multidisciplinary practice—spanning sculpture, sound, film, installation, and drawing—centers on play and the overlooked aspects of everyday life. By deconstructing ordinary situations, Sai invites fresh interpretations and challenges habitual perception. His works are shaped by site and context, extending beyond conventional object-making. Sai graduated from LASALLE College of the Arts in 1997 and earned his MFA from the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, in 2007. He has received numerous awards and residencies, including at Yale-NUS (2020), Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2015–2016), and Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (2013). His works are held in collections such as the Singapore Art Museum, He Xiangning Art Museum (China), Vehbi Koç Foundation (Turkey), and Museum of Contemporary Art Busan (South Korea).

Pan Lu / Bo Wang

Pan Lu (China) and Bo Wang (China) has been working together on various artistic projects since 2012, delving into themes such as space, image, environment, colonialism, the Cold War in the entangled histories and presents in East Asia. Their collaborative works including Postcards from the Future (2014) and Ode to Infrastructure (2016) as multimedia installations. Additionally, they co-directed Traces of an Invisible City: Three Notes on Hong Kong (2016), Miasma, Plants, Export Paintings (2017) and Many Undulating Things (2019). Pan Lu currently serves as an Associate Professor at Department of Chinese History and Culture, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Bo Wang is an artist, filmmaker and researcher based in Amsterdam.

SECOND PLANET

SECOND PLANET is an artist unit founded in 1994 by Keiichi Miyagawa and Hisao Sotoda. It has conducted projects that emerge the invisible socio-economic system embedded in the urban space and that humorously confuse the existing framework of an art institution and/or art history.

Gen Sasaki / Keiichi Miyagawa

Keiichi Miyagawa (b. 1961, Japan) has been running an artist-run-space called GALLERY SOAP since 1997. He is also a member of artist collective "SECOND PLANET". Gen Sasaki (b. 1980, Japan) is an artist based in Kitakyushu and a member of GALLERY SOAP since 2004. Hotel Asia Project is organized by them with Chinese curator Ni Kun and others.

Chulayarnnon Siriphol

Chulayarnnon Siriphol (b.1986, Bangkok, Thailand) is both a filmmaker and an artist, he employs moving images and his body as his main medium. His works are wide and varied in genre, ranging from short film, experimental film, documentary to performance video and video installations. From adaptations of local mythology and science fiction to transformation of analog body to digital spirituality, he questions contemporary issues and political ideology through his own sense of sarcasm.

Tong Wenmin

TONG Wenmin (b. 1989, Chongqing, China) received her BFA at Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 2012. TONG has recent solo / duo shows at Macalline Art Center, Beijing; Essence Contemporary Art Museum, Chongqing; OCT Boxes Art Museum, Foshan; WHITE SPACE, Beijing; Thousand Plateau Art Space, Chengdu; Organ Haus Art Space, Chongqing, and recent group shows / art festival at National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong; M+, Hong Kong; Salzburg Museum der Moderne, Salzburg; Gamle Strand, Copenhagen; Lillehammer Art Museum, Lillehammer; HE ART MUSEUM, Foshan; OCAT Shenzhen, Shenzhen; By Art Matters, Hangzhou; Power Station of Art, Shanghai; Koganecho Area Management Center, Yokohama; Asian Art Museum, San Francisco; A4 Art Museum, Chengdu; House of Egnon, Berlin; BARRAK, Okinawa; Responding: International Performance Art Festival and Meeting 2018, Tokyo & Fukushima; Adelaide Festival Centre, Adelaide; Petach Tikva Museum of Art, Tel Aviv. She won the Grand Jury Prize of Huayu Youth Award in 2018, the First Prize of the 8th New Star Art Award by Deji Art Museum in 2018, Nomination Prize of The 5th Contemporary Sculpture Award in 2017, the Accolade Artist by Documentaries of Chinese Performance Art in 2016. She has also been selected for MQ Artist-in-Residence Program: Art & Ecology Studio, Vienna (2024); The Swiss Arts Council Artists Residency, Switzerland (2023); Offshore Residency, Dinawan Island (2019) and other residencies project. TONG currently works and lives in Chongqing.

Yu Guo

Yu Guo (b. 1983, Sichuan, China) graduated from Department of Oil Painting of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 2016, currently lives and works in Chongqing. Yu Guo's art practice involves painting, video and writing. Base on the space practice, Yu Guo emphasizes the combination of body and media materials to keep the minutes of the creation process. Recently his works focused on the interweaving of images with texts, as well as the interplay between visible and invisible of social fact. He also participates in various joint projects. Yu Guo is a member of the Chongqing Work Institute.

Curator:

Ni Kun

Born and raised in Hunan and living in Chongqing, Ni Kun is an artist and the co-founder of the non-profit organization Organhaus Art Space. The art interaction in the background of rapid urbanization in China and globalization is his concern, which he uses as tools to reflect the circumstance by developing series of experimental art practices refer to "City and Reconstruction". Recently his curating works include: Forum: "Under-Construction/Reconstruction as the "Imagination" of Social Practice: Projects on Social Art Practice by Artists in Asia" (The Rockbund Museum; Curator); 6-week thematic studies in Fukuoka Art Museum as a researcher; Daily Farm: Video Art Exhibition on the New Silk Road 2014 (Sinkiang Contemporary Art Museum; September 2014, Curator); "Play City: Sm-art C&V" Forum (April 2015)