



## MAP 3: ARCHIVING 'ASIA'

3 November 2017, 7.00pm - 9.00pm

### PROGRAMME

#### **6.30-7.00pm Performance - "Does it Matter?" | Noel Ed De Leon (Durational until 9pm)**

Following his previous performances using collected historical objects (Tracing the Traces, Philippines Embassy of London, 2014; Kilapsaw: Everything Must Go, London Biennale, 2016), this live performance explores the intertwined relationship between destruction and construction as historical and social processes.

This performance takes its queue from the saw as a practical instrument and metaphor for construction and destruction. On the one hand, the saw is used worldwide as a tool for deforestation and destruction, thus embodying deep connotations of social and environmental destruction and even obliteration. On the other hand, the saw is a strong symbol of rebuilding and restoration - a theme which Noel Ed De Leon dealt with in his performance Kilapsaw: Everything Must Go, 2015, when tracing the key sites of bomb detonations from the Second World War in central London. Using 100 vintage saws from his personal collection, the artist plans to stage an event in which members of the audience are invited to hand him saws and watch as he constructs a house-like structure using nothing but the saws themselves, a military canvas tent and binding materials (wire, string, etc...). Having previously worked as an architect, he will employ his knowledge of construction in order to develop a setting which invites members of the public (many of whom are likely to be urban-based professionals with little prior contact to historical industrial materials) to handle old-fashioned saws (secured or sealed to prevent any physical harm), in order to reflect the gravity of these instruments on the environment and social structures. The audience will then be invited to hand the saws to the artist one by one and to watch him assemble them into a self-supported house-like structure. By using the saws themselves as the building blocks for the structure, De Leon wishes to call to mind the ease of destruction and the difficulty of creation and restoration, particularly as they relate economic exploitations of Southeast Asian natural resources and the waging of military conflicts.

The performance is durational and will take place to the background music of an original old gramophone from the artist's personal collection.

#### **7.00-7.10pm Welcome by Live Art Development Agency (LADA)**

#### **7.10-7.25pm Introduction by Something Human**

#### **7.25-8.10pm Keynote - "Reading skid-marks on the road: archiving as critical interpretation" | Dr Ray Langenbach (University of the Arts, Helsinki)**

Archiving is never a disinterested act of collecting and preserving. The archival impulse is fundamentally discriminatory. It is influenced by prevailing cultural and financial ecologies, as well as the particular ideologies, cultures, prejudices, erotics, and affinities of those doing the data selecting, recording, editing, and organising.

A documentation of live performance is conventionally read as a mnemonic artefact: the propositional body of evidence or *proof* (*documentum* or *habeas corpus*) of a past act or event. Correspondingly, the screen is often considered to be a window into the past. This pre-Brechtian optics remains unquestioned by most audiences.

But, for those of us who are committed to its production, documentation manifests as a kind of 'alienated ontology', marked by immanence and objecthood, in which the empty screen is seen to have its own intrinsic value. While documentation (the skidmarks in my analogy) index a past event, that event remains

an imaginary - forever out of reach. Perhaps there never was an originary moment of the *crash*. It is the present, not the past, that the skidmarks haunt with their de facto horizon of possibility.

I want to ask what requirements we consciously or subconsciously impose on performance documentation, especially time-based and moving-image documentation? And I wonder how to describe the underlying ontology of the moving image archive?

In 1978, just as the now ubiquitous digital age was opening, there was an important archival photography exhibition at the New York Museum of modern Art, *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography since 1960*, curated by John Szarkowski. He saw a fundamental dichotomy in American photography “between photographers who believe that all art is concerned with self-expression” (which he termed the “romantic” inclination) “and those who see it as a means of exploration” (the “realist” inclination). Primarily focused on production rather than reception, Szarkowski’s binary division now seems stereotypical and simplistic. But the visual metaphor he used may be far richer than the distinctions he described with it.

For example, what if we include other variations on the mirror/window theme, such as the panopticon, the two-way mirror of the interrogation chamber, Dorian Gray’s temporal portrait, or, the profound hyperreality of the computer screen in his optical economy? Was it the way categories were determined and composed that determined how and what the audience saw on the walls of MOMA? How do Eleanor Roche’s prototype theory or George Lakoff’s “Idealised Cognitive Models impact the way we archive and read archives? How should we interpret the interstices and juxtapositions, the spaces between the images- rather than the images themselves- in Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas*? I see in it an assemblage that reflects not just Warburg’s mental map of art and culture, but a larger reflection of European modernity and the advent of Structuralism. What is the reflected visage caught there in *flagrante delicto*? Does it belong to our subjective selves, or to our societies, our cultures, our time, our epistemes? To explore these issues, I will explore the archival impulse in a few Asian works that archive and memorialise other art works.

**8.10 - 8.25pm Keynote Respondent | Dr Dominic Johnson (Queen Mary University, London)**

**8.25 - 8.40pm Audience Q&A chaired by Dr Dominic Johnson with Dr Ray Langenbach**

**8.40 - 9.00pm Performance Finale - "Does it Matter?" | Noel Ed De Leon**

### **Beyond Documentation**

Throughout the programme DARC members Tara Fatehi Irani, Manuel Vason, Jemima Yong will respond to the talks, performative lectures, workshops, and conversations by exploring the notion of live documentation through a variety of media.

## BIOS

Filipino-British artist **Noel Ed De Leon** (b.1976, Philippines) holds a degree in architecture (1998) and has been working between Manila and London. His interests span archiving as artistic practice, installation, multimedia sculpture, art made with readymade and found objects and live performance art. Much of Noel's work deals and explore with the themes of memory, DNA, remembrance and mapping traces of history through material objects. An avid collector of memorabilia and original artefacts from the First and Second World War, Noel frequently incorporates these artefacts into his installations and performances which explore how memories are kept alive in the social fabric, as well as erased through changing political, religious and social developments.

Noel's first solo exhibition took place at Brentford Middlesex in 2011 titled 'Life As I Know It'. In 2012, David Medalla, one of the pioneers of kinetic art and performance art, invited Noel to participate in the London Biennale, staging a live performance art on Trafalgar Square outside the National Gallery London. Noel and David performed and held a silent action protest in front of the BBC building in Great Portland Street London (2013).

Since then, Noel has exhibited as part of the London Biennale holding a major solo show in 2014 at the Philippine Embassy of London titled 'Tokens Of A Time Gone By: Reanimating History as Art in the Work of Noel Ed De Leon' curated by Eva Bentcheva that displays a broad selection of Noel's art, as well as the international premier of his performance 'Tracing the Traces'. He also participated on the Expo Mail- Art Manifesto Brut & Acrodacrolivres (2014) held in Belgium. Noel co-founded 'Batubalani Art Projects' in 2015 and partake on its collaborative projects such as: 'It's About Time' (2015), 'Kilapsaw: Everything Must Go' (2016) and 'Corpografias' (2016). Recently, Noel was invited by Adam Nankervis (Museum Man- Berlin) to participate in an exhibition titled 'Should The World Break In II' as part of 'Autogestión' at Fundació Joan Miró Barcelona Spain. Noel is currently working as an independent artist alongside co-directing Batubalani Art Projects.

**Dr Ray Langenbach** creates conceptual performances, convenes gatherings, documents and writes on cultural theory, performance and queer culture. He has presented his work at Whitney Museum of Art, National Centre for the Arts Mumbai, India, Artspace, Sydney, Asia Pacific Triennale, Werkleitz Biennial, Gwangju Biennale, Malaysia National Art Gallery, Singapore International Festival of the Arts with Loo Zihan, Singapore Art Museum, National Gallery of Art Singapore, Kiasma Museum, Helsinki, Future of Imagination Festival (Singapore), Asiatopia (Bangkok), La Cite, Paris, La Bas Performance Art Festival, Cattle Depot Artists Village, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Art Centre, and Park 19 Artist Village, Guangzhou, China. His writings on SE Asian performance, propaganda and visual culture and have appeared in Performance Research, Oxford Dictionary of Performance, Mediating Malaysia: Media, Culture & Power in Malaysian Society (Yeo, Routledge 2010), Rigorous and Compassionate Listening, Dialogical Writing on Site-Specific Art (Kantonen, KUVA, 2010), Contesting Performance: Emerging Sites of Research with Rae (Palgrave 2009/2012), Histories, Practices, Interventions: A Reader in Singapore Contemporary Art (ICA, LaSalle, 2016), Narratives In Malaysian Art Vols. 3 (2015) & 4 (2017). Langenbach is Professor of Performance Art and Theory, Live Art and Performance Studies, Theatre Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki.

**Dr Dominic Johnson** is Reader in Performance and Visual Culture in the School of English and Drama, at Queen Mary University of London. He is the author of Glorious Catastrophe: Jack Smith, Performance and Visual Culture (2012); Theatre & the Visual (2012); and The Art of Living: An Oral History of Performance Art (2015). He is the editor of five books, including most recently Pleading in the Blood: The Art and Performances of Ron Athey (2013); and (with Deirdre Heddon) It's All Allowed: The Performances of Adrian Howells (2016). A new monograph, Unlimited Action: The Performance of Extremity in the 1970s is forthcoming from Manchester University Press in 2018. He is also an Editor of the journal Contemporary Theatre Review.

**DARC (Tara Fatehi Irani, Manuel Vason, Jemima Yong)**. We are Documentation Action Research Collective (DARC); an interdisciplinary and international artist collective interested in exploring and interrogating the notion of documentation and the archive. We believe that the documentation of artists' work is not just an act of preservation but a creative act in itself. We consider our work a process of collaboration, a dialogue, a responsibility and an art form of its own. Our current projects include TRANSFORMANCE: experiments on collective performance documentation and Sully Nights: a monthly artist gathering and conversation.

## ORGANISATIONS

**Something Human** is an independent curatorial partnership co-directed by Alessandra Cianetti and Annie Jael Kwan. Something Human is interested in exploring movement and relationships across boundaries, through its shared multidisciplinary interests in architecture, design, sculpture, mixed media,

photography, moving image and performance. It actively seeks collaborations with artists, makers and producers from different cultural and socio-political backgrounds, for exchange and dialogue with an aim to create new, exciting performative-driven works.

**Batubalani** was launched in March 2015 by artist Noel Ed De Leon and art historian Eva Bentcheva. The name 'Batubalani' stems from the Tagalog word for magnet. Like a magnet which draws objects to itself, we initially created this non-profit organisation to spread news of key developments in Philippine modern art. However, our mission has evolved from acting as an information resource to generating knowledge and awareness. Inspired by the return of the Philippines to the 2015 Venice Biennale after a fifty year hiatus, we now set out to organise exhibitions, seminars and publications which explore post-war Philippine art as local and international practice. In addition, we work as cultural brokers, connecting Filipino artists to exhibition and funding opportunities in the UK.

Established in 1999, the **Live Art Development Agency (LADA)** produces projects, opportunities, resources and publications for those who make, watch, research, study, teach, produce, present, write about and archive Live Art, and works to create the conditions in which diversity, innovation and risk in contemporary culture can thrive.

LADA is a 'Centre for Live Art': a knowledge and research centre, a production centre for programmes and publications, and an online centre for representation and dissemination. LADA works strategically, in partnership and in consultation with artists and organisations across the cultural sector to develop new artistic frameworks, legitimize unclassifiable artforms, and give agency to underrepresented artists.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The Southeast Asia Performance Collection at the Live Art Development Agency is initiated by Something Human, and includes a commission for Batubalani to contribute with research on live art from the Philippines. This was made possible with the generous support of Arts Council England, the Artists International Development Fund (British Council/ACE), and National Arts Council Singapore.*

*Many thanks to Java Arts, Linh Do, the Independent Archive Singapore Dia Projects, New Space Arts Foundation, Nha San Collective, Phare Selpak Ponleu, Sasa Art Projects, Sangker Battambang, Six Space and Studio Revolt.*

*MAP3: Archiving 'Asia' is supported by*



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

