

Fall 2021 Arts of Asia Lecture Series  
Crossing Boundaries: Understanding Contemporary Asian Art  
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## **Mercurial Moments in Contemporary Asian Video Art**

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Video is a mercurial medium for two reasons: it is made of electrons, and it flows easily among media and art forms, taking their shapes. I will explain the material basis of digital video and discuss how video's aesthetics respond to the medium. As a time-based medium, video is inherently narrative, and its indexical quality means it is always witnessing. Across the wide continent of Asia, artists have taken up this technological art form in a variety of ways, often adapting video's mercurial nature to indigenous aesthetics. We will see that different modes of video presentation, such as in theaters, in galleries, and online, rely on different configurations of institutional support and require skillful dealing with governments, institutions, and audiences both within and beyond their countries, including Western audiences. We will take a detour into the politics of biennial exhibitions. Then it's off to the main course: a tour of the many ingenious video movements and organizations across Asia that over the last 20 years have fostered what I call "cinematic friendships." We will zoom in on a few of these groups, in Tokyo, Beijing, Shanghai, Jakarta, Mumbai, Almaty, Tehran, Damascus, and Beirut, and appreciate some of the surprising and beautiful artworks they have fostered.

### **Background reading**

Bingfeng Dong, "Cinema of Exhibition: Film in Chinese Contemporary Art," in conversation with Tianqi Yu, trans. Hui Miao, in *China's iGeneration: Cinema and Moving Image Culture for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Matthew D. Johnson, Keith B. Wagner, Tianqi Yu and Luke Vulpiani (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 73-86.

Siyang Duan, "Yixiang (意象) in Contemporary Chinese Ink Installation Art," *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies* (2019): 1-11.

Edwin Jurriëns, "Shaping Spaces: Video Art Communities in Indonesia," in *Performing Contemporary Indonesia: Celebrating Identity, Constructing Community*, ed. Barbara Hatley with Brett Hough (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 98-119.

Laura U. Marks, "Cinematic Friendships," in *Hanan Al-Cinema: Affections for the Moving Image* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 23-58. *Suggest you read 23-34*

Yuliya Sorokina, "From evolution to growth: Central Asian video art, 1995–2015," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 10:3 (2016): 238-260.

On video's materiality:

"Digital video," Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital\\_video](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_video)

Laura U. Marks and Radek Przedpełski, "Bandwidth Imperialism and Small-File Media," *Post45 Contemporaries*, Special Issue "New Filmic Geographies" (2021), ed. Suzanne Enzerink.

<https://post45.org/sections/contemporaries-essays/new-filmic-geographies/>