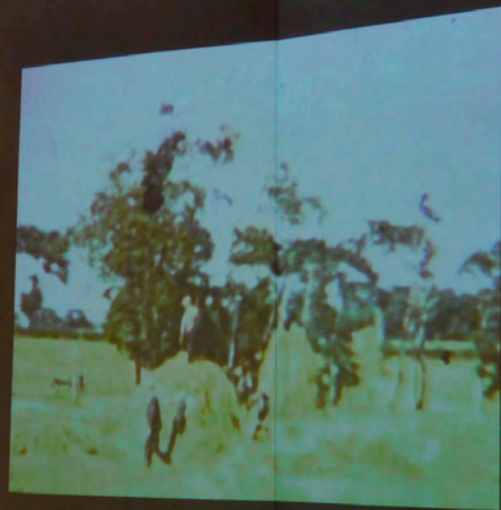




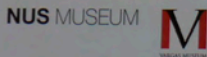
Persistent Visions | Erika Tan



Published on the occasion of the exhibition

Persistent Visions | Erika Tan

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Picture This

In collaboration with The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, 2005.

Persistent Visions is entirely produced from material held in The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum archives, and in particular the collections of Boles, Dalyell, Duke, Fisher, Fromings, Gaskell, Hartill, Harley, Hawley, Hayburn, Knowles, Lorimer, Morrison, Selkirk, Silk, Venned, Wickstead and Wilson.

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CONTENTS

Foreword Ahmad Mashadi and Patrick D. Flores	7
Reeling Patrick D. Flores	8
Persistent Visions In Dialogue with Erika Tan Shabbir Hussain Mustafa	12
'Hopping Around' within Time and Space: Transportable Modernity and Escaping the Archive Teren Sevea	25
Artist's Biography Erika Tan	28



Foreword

The NUS Museum and the Vargas Museum are happy to present *Persistent Visions*, a 24-minute three-channel video work by Erika Tan, a Singaporean artist based in the United Kingdom. Developed from fragments of films selected from archives of The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, *Persistent Visions* was conceived and motivated as described by the artist as a "desire to create an interpretative space, activate personalized readings, allowing for the failure of comprehension and to compromise and make difficult, total consumption". Wary of the nature of the archives as a mediated space, Tan sets off to reclaim and maintain "the instability of meaning" of historical fragments, to take them "away from servicing of narrated histories, supportive of textual accounts, illustrative of specific ideologies, or indeed even as representative of the work of individual filmmakers." Distanced from specific context of each fragment, *Persistent Visions* presents itself as a collage of images, ambivalent in its own constitution and seemingly self-effacing in its potential confrontation against the colonial, but strategically avails itself to variegated responses, regard or affiliation to the economy and politics of social relations.

Place and spatial contexts mobilizes the range of interpretative possibilities or questionings. At the NUS Museum, the work is presented in the Archival Square at the Museum's Lee Kong Chian Collection gallery, which hosts archaeological materials from Singapore's Fort Canning, to prompt intimations towards the 'museum' as an emporium of classifications and orderings configured by varied intents and ideals. Such potentials for intertextuality are also complicated by NUS Museum's concurrent exhibition on the photographic and film

collections of Ivan Polunin, resplendent in imageries encumbered by the legacies of colonial knowledge production and their implications today.

At the Vargas Museum, this is heightened by the intertext of three works: a painting of Europeans in Normandy by a Filipino painter of the 19th Century, a quaint depiction of a village during the Japanese period, and photographs of Americans in the Philippines mingling with 'natives'. These images serve to inflect the register of the archive with the resonance of art and photography, instances of the modern that complicate the politics of representation and carve out a potential post-colonial agency in the 'painter' and the 'photographed'. In this scheme, the antinomy between the self and the foreign is unsettled and the other is both object and subject.

The NUS Museum and the Vargas Museum are grateful to Erika Tan for this opportunity to present the artwork *Persistent Visions* in Singapore and Manila. The Museums also wish to thank the contributors to this modest catalogue including Erika Tan herself, Shabbir Hussain Mustafa and Teren Sevea.

Ahmad Mashadi
Head, NUS Museum

Patrick Flores
Curator, Vargas Museum

Reeling

Patrick D. Flores

The encounter with the archive is an encounter with mediation: getting in the way and getting across. It is commonplace to construe this process as a work of translation and memory. But it is with labor that we grasp its charisma: how knowledge could be so mythic and yet so moored to the fiction of fact. More fascinating still if this knowledge played out as an moving image, rendering reality virtually, yes, but projecting its opposite, "actually." And if the latter were regarded in the anthropology of the far and the project of the colonial, all the more this reality-effect would become alluring, because exilic.

Erika Tan's *Persistent Visions*, a phrase spinning off cinema's fundamental mechanism of the "persistence of vision," seeks to probe how "historically 'humanism' and its 'modernist' epistemologies have made and extended 'Orientalism' as a tradition of thought, vocabulary, and imagery." This "imperial" schema insinuated itself in an array of technological encroachments, from the cinema to world fairs, from anthropology to military conquest and medicine. This particular undertaking takes on flesh through the "archive," which is built up from fragments of amateur audio and visual material gathered by various overseas British colonizing missions, which are currently in the possession of The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum. This sentimental reverting to the archive becomes "productive" because it is able to "narrate multiple histories of contestation and its most abashing other, complicity." Another reversal may be effected when the "other," the ethnographic object of civilization, re-functions the gaze longingly or with contempt within a post-colonial horizon. This might be the "troubling legacy of the colonial experience itself." Thus, we are chastened by the words of the French-

Tunisian writer Albert Memmi who says: "How could the colonized deny himself so cruelly? How could he hate the colonizers and yet admire them so passionately?" Tan unveils this celluloid relentlessly and seemingly without rhyme, reprising the illusion of un-mediation, the innocence of wonder and discovery, and yet instills in us disbelief in the disinterest.

Edward W. Said, has stated that his discussion of Orientalism was about the west and its apprehension of the orient, which was not an interlocutor; it was its silent other. This would prompt Gayatri Spivak to pose her oft-cited query: Can the subaltern speak?

In this exhibition, we heed Said's indispensable lesson of negative dialectic as we disclose the archive and we try to respond to Spivak affirmatively; we, therefore, reconstruct a possibility by intimating the travail of agency in the face of irresistible power. And so, on the one hand, we critique the power to name and to represent. And on the other, we reconsider the paintings of Juan Luna, the Philippines's foremost nineteenth-century academic painter allied with the expatriate reformists in Europe, and Vicente Alvarez Dizon, a figure from the conservative school of the American period, as instantiations of what might be a critical modernity of at least a sign of the speaking Other.

In this exercise, we investigate the Vargas Museum as yet another archive to ferret out artifacts in the woodwork of history. Luna's *Picnic in Normandy* (c. 1890) limns a scene in the countryside in Europe, with women and their consorts whiling their time away



Still image from *Persistent Visions*, 2005.



Juan Luna, *Picnic in Normandy*, Oil on canvas, c. 1890, Vargas Museum Collection.

— gathering flowers, sitting on the grass for a luncheon — on a rather harsh shoreline; he painted it during his Paris years, after his triumph at the Madrid Exposition in 1884 where he was awarded one of the three Gold Prizes for the magisterial *Spoliarium*. A sharp diagonal cuts the picture, creating asymmetry between human

presence and a patch of flora, between the impasto and the haze that hangs over it. Alvarez Dizon's *Day Begins* (1942) ordains an equivalent moment of nature, with the light of the sun beginning to spread across a quaint tropical village waking to the morning; this "rising sun" may well be read allegorically as an orientalist instance in the sense that Japan had endeavored to wean the Philippines away from America and bring it closer to its eastern heritage. In 1939, Dizon, an illustrator for the magazine *Lwayway*, painted *After the Day's Toil*, which was judged first by popular vote at the Golden Gate International Exposition. Within a short span of time, the artist's allegiance to a template of modernity had shifted, from American to Japanese. Surely, the painting prefigures the Japanese interlude and its implicit reference to Pax Americana and begins to imagine an East Asian "prosperity sphere." For his part, Luna returns the look, so to speak, and represents the European in the persona of an "artist" of academic tutelage and provincial origin. In his letter to Jose Rizal, dated August 13, 1890 and sent from Houlgate in France, he discerns Europe in the image of his homeland: "Country life is agreeable to all of us. One lives here as in Tondo or Antipolo; *Patis* (fish sauce), *tuyo* (dried fish), and other victuals are made. From our vegetable garden we get the prosaic cabbage, string beans, *sibuls* (sprouts), *agurans*, etcetera, we also have apricots, apples, and a magnificent grapevine. Bathing in the sea is delightful and my favorite sport is flying a kite which I have made and is admired by the boys in the house as well as outsiders." It is interesting to note that in spite of Luna's exceptional comparison between patria and empire, a translation that is bedeviling in the words of Rizal himself, the most influential Luna



Vicente Alvarez Clasen, *Day Begins*. Oil on canvas, 1942. Vargas Museum Collection.

chronicler Santiago Pilar would deny Luna the modernity of Impressionism on account of a desire for nation: "Luna belonged to the establishment because as a colonial he was seeking emancipation and approval for himself and for his country and only by toeing the line could he achieve his goals. He was an academician through and through. There was no color divisionism in this work, the hallmark of Impressionism."³

Inflecting these paintings are images from the book *Our Islands and their People as Seen with Camera and Pencil*, penned by the war correspondent Jose de Olivares, that portray Americans in the Philippines in the presence of natives and nature, deep in pastimes or lost in the wild of the civilizing mission. There is in these photographs both ennui and masculine sacrifice, of the foreign feeling at home in the colony, mingling with converts and earnestly inhabiting their everyday life.

It is consoling to revisit Said in the end by way of Freud.

In his lecture, "Freud and the Non-European," he asserts: "Identity cannot be thought or worked through itself alone; it cannot constitute or even imagine itself without that originary break or flaw which will not be repressed, because Moses was Egyptian, and therefore always outside the identity inside which so many have stood, and suffered – and later, perhaps, even triumphed. The strength of this thought is, I believe, that it can be articulated in and speak to other besieged identities as well – not through dispensing palliatives such as tolerance and compassion but, rather, by attending to it as a troubling, disabling, destabilizing secular wound – the essence of the cosmopolitan, from which there can be no recovery, no state of resolved or Stoic calm, and no utopian reconciliation even within itself."⁴ In her response to this, Jacqueline Rose proposes that, indeed, "we are talking here not about whole, nor even divided, but something more like broken identities." She then quotes Marc Ellis: "What if the center of contemporary Jerusalem is seen as broken rather than salvific and shared in that brokenness, rather than divided by victory and defeat."⁵

In this interplay between mediations and consequently of repressions, the self/other binary is not only transcended; it fails to translate or transpose other into self altogether. It spins a trope that merely re-members to belong again to archives of fragments, of nations breaking, of Europeans at the edge of sea and century.

ENDNOTES

- 1 All quotes from the initial curatorial brief which is also published in Shabbir Hussain Mustafa, "Persistent Visions I Erika Tan" in Ahmad Mashadi, Herman Chong and Lim Qinyi (eds.) *Curating Lab: 100 Objects (Remixed)*, Singapore: National Arts Council and NUS Museum, 2009 (forthcoming).
- 2 Jose Rizal, *Rizal's Correspondence with Fellow Reformists*, Translated by Encarnacion Alzona. Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1963, p. 494.
- 3 Santiago Pilar, *Pamana: The Jorge B. Vargas Art Collection* Manila: UP Vargas Museum, 1992, p. 29.
- 4 Edward Said, *Freud and the Non-European*, London: Verso, 2003, p. 54.
- 5 *ibid.*, p. 68.

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Persistent Visions | In Dialogue with Erika Tan

Shabbir Hussain Mustafa

Shabbir Hussain Mustafa (SHM): The filmic representations in the three-screen installation range from different parts of the non-West and are based on 'amateur' footage, i.e. films made by individuals and families of their experiences in terms of working and living in particular parts of the British Raj during the 20th Century. These are, in many ways, personal images, now placed in a public and more so importantly post-Empire archive. As one encounters (in triptych) visuals of Oriental bodies juxtaposed to the colonizing representatives presence in alien and exotic realms (as silent *burqa*-clad females of British India scatter across the screen, followed by fleeting images of the Colonial masters basking at the beaches on a sunny afternoon being served by their native servants in the backdrop) one begins to wonder about the different complexities that you may have encountered in terms of navigating between content and the peculiar *form* and *context* that these representations potentiate...?

Erika Tan (ET): I think, what is great about this opening question is the way in which it reflects how *your mind's eye has been imprinted with particular images and in particular specific pairings* that do not necessarily recreate the relations made in my edits but are specific to you, your interests and your indignations. This *Shabbir Hussain Mustafa time-space-collapse* reflects the process of your viewing and the indelible affect of Empire on your/our interpretive framework. Just as certain images persist in our memories, so too are we reminded of the insidious persistency and continuing potency of colonial perceptions, theories, and practices.

Not to over-state or fall into the trap of glamorizing

the Derrida-esque '*mal d'archive*', Steadman's 'dust' or the various accounts of relational toiling in Burton Archive Stories', but as with these research tropes, my experience within the archive was charged and transformative. From the train journeys to the archive, the convoluted physical access to the archive offices, the smell of the place, encountering the actual material, watching hours of silent footage often in fast-forward, aware of my limited time vis-à-vis the hours of footage left on the shelf remaining to be watched, being out of my depth, 'discovering' 'hidden' 'secrets', finding systems to remember what had been watched and what might be interesting to use for the work, and eventually leaving the physical structure of the archive, tired, grubby, head aching from too much screen time only to find that images continued to play and replay, creating loops of nostalgia, indignation, shock, delight, recognition, and even alienation. *Persistent Visions* is in a way my own personal compilation of images that *stuck*.

As you rightly point out in your question, there is in this archive, perhaps in the work itself, a tension between the specifics of personal and private, the geographic and historically located; and that of a more public or generic grand narrative of Empire and post-humous or postcolonial understandings, recognition, acknowledgement – or critique. A very important point for me is the context that I found this material in. The moving image archives are among a series of archives (oral history, picture archive and moving-image archive) housed and serving the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum. One initially encounters some of the material through the themes and storylines within the museum, which tell the story, primarily from a British perspective

of Britain's imperial history and the development of a common wealth of nations. Alongside commentary on the discrepancies of power and treatment of colonized peoples, there are also sections on life in British India, how the indigenous elite took up new cultural forms such as dress and sports, the laying of cable across oceans and how the British took telecommunications to other continents, the mapping of Tibet despite surveyors being prohibited, and finally in the last section, The End of Empire: The Commonwealth Comes To Britain, the story is of how the empire has impacted 'at home' in Britain and on its current population and multi-ethnic make-up. As I remember, it's a fairly upbeat account how British culture has benefited (and continued to) from these incoming influences from previous colonies.

SHM: So what you are alluding to is that there is a particular 'materiality' to the archives?

ET: As with most museums with collections, it's a tiny proportion of the collection that is ever seen. Within the film archive there is quite a range of material covering government propaganda, Christian missionary films, educational material, broadcast programs and amateur film footage. The amateur footage is primarily donated from individuals and their families living in the South West of Britain, where the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum was based.⁴ This material is diverse in terms of location, dates, and is primarily shot on super 8 with some 16mm and for a few exceptions is silent. Physically, the material is kept in its film spools and like most archives is still in the process of being indexed, catalogued, identified and digitized. However, access to the material is primarily through VHS viewing



Still image from *Persistent Visions*, 2005.

to back. The order of reels keeps the material of each filmmaker, together, but is not chronological. Jumping from for example, Christmas in Scotland in the 40's, to Kenya in the 60's, then a holiday in Greece, to an un-identified mine in Africa. The material propels you into freefall on a time-space-vocational kaleidoscopic journey. Occasionally the original reels must have had some information – perhaps a date or place name, or names of individuals filmed, but much of it comes in with the briefest of contextualizing information.

The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum has tried to stop this gap by collecting other ephemera from the filmmakers, or through interviews with them (if still alive) or their families. To catalogue the material hour's worth of watching and note taking has been done, to provide descriptions, identifications, and factual accounts on each reel. Often the individuals doing this have to rely on their own knowledge of particular

countries, events, or situations to identify what is on the reel. Many of the individuals cataloguing that I met were retired individuals who had spent a large proportion of their lives in ex-colonies or indeed had been party to and instrumental in colonial regimes. Their experiences gave them the kind of knowledge needed to identify some specifics in this material, but equally to render invisible or absent other specificities. This became even more important to me when I realized that initial access to the moving image material for most researchers is through the digital index or catalogue where you can find material via individual filmmakers, locations, dates, or by keywords. As I did not know the filmmakers, and I was not looking to focus on any particular location I attempted to approach through a series of terms which I felt were indicative of colonialist and orientalist outlooks. I used words such as 'native', 'slave', 'black', 'local', 'indigenous', and 'dead'; surprisingly the catalogue did not come up with much. However, other terms such as 'parade' or 'cricket' or 'picnic' threw up much more. Far from being just a neutral 'finding tool' the catalogue or index was highly reflective of the institution, its storylines and staff. The catalogue's descriptive and interpretive accounts formed the basis of both epistemological and physical/practical structures of access. I found myself very dependent on the interpretation of this material by others who came before me. And so, as we know theoretically, the archive is a highly mediated place, but this encounter and recognition was instrumental in the direction the project took. I saw the index as an intrusion, a negative intervention, and chose to employ a more physical, if somewhat random process of going straight to the material stacked shelves for my encounters.

The actual footage or original celluloid films in the archives are usually kept deep in chilled storage and so the nearest I got to this material were the VHS viewing copies. The process of making viewing copies is expensive and labour intensive, resulting in a much smaller amount of work available to view them is held in storage. In this instance, the VHS viewing copy material was a reflection of what had already been considered worthy or useful to the museum itself, its historical focus and storylines or what had been of interest to broadcast orientated documentaries and factual programming. Luckily, however, in the making of these viewing copies, full reels rather than selected clips are available showing film leader, occasional sprocket holes, reels out of focus or wrongly exposed material and a lot of other stuff which might otherwise be deemed not worthy of record. As the telecine was initially done very simply with a film projector and a video recorder the recording of the slippage of footage in the gate or film played backwards also exists. On one occasion I was reminded with surprise about the fragility of the archive, and its constant battle with time and loss; while watching a serene sunset scene in Hong Kong harbour a junk sailing past slowly, I had the horrible experience of seeing the image go still, expand, melt and then rapidly crinkle as the celluloid disintegrated in front of my eyes. The decay and destruction of empire enacted the image of loss manifest and the scene of the junk at sunset even more imprinted in my memory.

So the navigation you mention actually starts with the context of navigating the archives' form, through which access to content is possible, but mediated. Quite early on in the research phase of the project, I chose to



Still image from *Persistent Visions*, 2005.

determined use in mind other than personal, private or familial viewing of the filmmaker. Its fair to say that I do not absolutely know the motivations of each of the amateur filmmakers, and this is in some ways why this is of more interest, than as for example, a clip from a completed documentary or Christian missionary film. I sought to work with material that for me sat in a slight void of sorts.

But to return to your question about form, context and content; *Persistent Visions* was for me made as a counter-point to the ways in which this material is normatively viewed and used – to take it away from the servicing of narrated histories, supportive of textual accounts, illustrative of specific ideologies, or indeed even as representative of the work of individual filmmakers. If anything I sought to find a way of re-claiming or maintaining the instability of meaning that this material has when located and arrested between

filmmaker and its acquisition and display. The tension sought is that between reading and statement; personal and public; specific and generic. For me, *Persistent Visions* is about the desire to create an interpretive space, activate personalized readings, allow for the failure of comprehension and to compromise and make difficult, total consumption.

SHM: Your reference to the notion of opening up an 'interpretative space' is most discerning. If we are to look at the specific gallery, i.e. the 'Archival Square', in which *Persistent Visions* is presented at the NUS Museum, it is on the one hand sandwiched between a permanent display of predominantly 'Chinese' bronzes, ceramics and jade artifacts ranging from the Han to Ching eras and a temporary exhibition gallery which largely presents East Asian modern and contemporary art.

Lodged between the abovementioned spatial juxtaposition of the 'civilizational' and the 'contemporary' is *Persistent Visions*, to only be further complicated by the ongoing *I Polunin* exhibition in another gallery upstairs. The *I Polunin* exhibition presents rarely seen photographs and film footage of Singapore and then Malaya in the 1950s and 1960s selected from the personal archives of the British medical anthropologist Dr. Ivan Polunin.⁶

Curatorially, it has been my hope that the introduction of *Persistent Visions* into such a spatial (re)configuration will lead to at least two types of critical revelations or 'showings'. First, the rather ambivalent function of revealing the interests which inhibit the production of knowledge of various 'art' objects in the NUS Museum's

Collection, which, in many ways, may be considered 'post-colonial' both literally and otherwise. Second, the investigative function of the archival-curatorial method, in terms of attempting to 'retrieve' (not necessarily in the spirit of, 'saving') the wide range of illegitimate, disqualified or subjugated knowledges that may be discerned from parts of the Collection's history. In other words, I have always envisioned *Persistent Visions* as potentiating this attempt at complicating the Museums own history and presence by (re)locating various genealogical fragments and celebrating supposed 'multitudinous histories'.

Admittedly, even as I articulate this proposition, I realize how seemingly bizarre this may sound. But do you see *Persistent Visions* performing that 'interventionist' role?

ET: I personally don't find this bizarre at all as a strategy or as an ambition, but that it comes from a curator within the institution itself is interesting. That an artwork has the potential to intervene, possibly disrupt, call to question, or make counter-claims to received narratives (read: fiction), is something that I see as an underlying basis or intent to much of my practice. How successful it is at doing this is another matter! But what is of interest here is the invitation, or the putting to work of *Persistent Visions* by curators within the institution itself (homogenous or not in its intent and articulated aims). What does this say about the institution? Does the work become institutionalized critique, sanctioned by the Museum to show its openness for diverse opinions and perspectives? Or is this an engagement for mutual dialogue between museum and work? *Persistent Visions* own reference points are those of the archive;



Gallery Impression, *I Polunin: Memories of Singapore through Film and Photography*, NUS Museum, 2009.

context; the end use within museum displays and documentary projects; and viewers/audiences and their own spatiotemporal contexts of viewing. The current opportunity to show the work bang smack in the midst of Chinese ceramics etc, will, I hope emphasize something about the work that might have been lost in other more 'white cube' showings ... here I hope that the fact that it mumbles, stutters, and fails to inform definitively will not only affect its own reception, but call into question the rational by which other proximate objects, artefacts, archives, text panels are made/become significant.

In relation to the Polunin exhibition, I think in some ways being a more biographical approach, it might supply a different sort of narrative to my work. The intentions of actual filmmakers are in *Persistent Visions*, left as an absence; it is their new presence in an archive of colonial remembrance, which I am responding to, and which contributes on mass to a sense of the panoptical

imperial gaze. In the Polunin exhibition, I would expect and hope to hear the voice of the individual filmmaker, and to see how this material takes on different meanings through the lens of a specific individual. Is it perhaps a difference of *surveillance to enquiry*? I think this might already be reflected in the shows title; the 'I' of Ivan is stressed, which to me allows for the centrality of a specific individuals framework and lens to be acknowledged and explored. Additionally for the way I am thinking about things at the moment, its important where this material might potentially end up. I hope the Polunin material stays in Singapore and provides future individuals opportunities to re-visit this material, not in Europe, London, or Bristol, but in Singapore itself.

SHM: Reverting back to the work itself, with each fleeting visual of the Orient being made to submit to an extension of colonial preeminence, and as the three screens oscillate across geographical expanses from British India to Malaya to Africa, there is also a sensation of what Edward Said referred to as the 'discursive consistency' of Orientalism, where, representations of Orientalism not only present themselves as 'historical' claims but also command an institutional presence. In *Persistent Visions*, the stream of images that one encounters in triptych are on the one hand contextualized by their archived status at the Empire and Commonwealth Museum and on the other hand also de-contextualized as no specific details or captions about their 'original' context is provided in the artwork. Would it then be fair to assume that you approached the archives as subject, rather than as source from which a greater (if not, linear) narrative could emerge? In other words, was *Persistent Visions* an attempt to pay attention to the process of

archiving itself and not just treat the archive as a mere receptacle of fact, voices and memories?

ET: I am not sure if *Persistent Visions* produces or encourages a greater narrative to emerge, but it is certainly a reflexive stab at making visible the mechanism by which history is produced rather than rendering invisible or neutral the processes of selective telling. I was initially however going to try and do just that! That is to use the archives or re-visit them to generate a different sort of narrative; one of untold, neglected or censured histories. Here, the colonial archive was seen as the source of information rather than its obfuscating and limiting role on possible storylines. Initially I was working on the assumption that the archive would be full of untold stories - in some respects it still is, although this is often through the material gaps, absences, the indexical ellipses that exist. The voice and stories of the subaltern exist as unspoken, unrecorded omissions. Perhaps the closest material of this sort is the oral histories that accompany the final section of the museum exhibits, *The End of Empire: The Commonwealth Comes To Britain*. Here a collection of oral histories focuses on the life experiences, journeys and settling of commonwealth immigrants to the UK. Loss, the dream of return, home, racism, desire, family, and seep through these narrated life 'stories'. Whilst I found them really moving, there was also something uncomfortable in them for me. Perhaps it was their context within the museum and recent diversity politics in the UK, which made me feel that the voices performed too much a celebratory-feel-good-multiculturalism where festivals, food and culture are traded as tokens and celebrations of difference. Additionally, the focus on immigration in



Still image from *Persistent Visions*, 2005.

this section and its affects on Britain shifts the focus away from the failures and continuing dominance of power within the structure of 'common-wealth'. Here homelands become mythical places one may dream of returning to, whilst seemingly, enjoying all that the centre of empire can offer.

Context here is of absolute importance. Without this particular section of the museum, these voices and stories might not have been recorded, but the framework of the exhibition shapes the questions, editing and focus of the oral history interviews. I felt to make work generated in response to this material (although seemingly to respond to lesser heard voices), was in fact to continue a certain form of institutionalization domestication of these voices. I began to feel that the museum and its archives had far too much influence in mediating history, information and truth and was not so much a source, as a siphon through which material is made to work - its relevance and potential information

controlled by the logic of the archive and museum.

SHM: The title of the work, *Persistent Visions* is particularly enaming. On the one hand, it refers to a film term that describes the actual act of producing moving images from still pictures. On the other hand, the title draws inspiration, it seems to me, from Saidian critiques of Orientalism in noting that the images/visions maintain a certain persistence or 'internal consistency' of their own, i.e. images of the Orient continue 'despite or beyond any direct correspondence, or lack thereof, with a real/Orient'. Any thoughts about how you arrived at the title?

ET: You are right about the duality of film references and post-colonial struggles over history and representation that inform the titling of the work. I felt it very important to pull the viewer back to the medium of film as a point of reference, in addition to engaging with its content which despite its location in the past, still has affective commentary on contemporary global inequalities, neo colonialism/capitalism and of the resurfacing and residual socio-political cultural practices of othering and orientalism. I think this collision of meanings and references works really well together.

There is also something very important in the actual 'collective' of material; the 'bringing together' function of the archive that Derrida speaks of.⁸ Whilst each filmmaker's work has its own particular trajectory and interest, seen collectively within the archive a pattern emerges - a colonialist amateur filmmakers 'cannon' takes shape. Celebrations are family or with friends, trips across the globe, encounters with indigenous masses, children's birthday parties, leisure activities like swimming in the sea, or picnics at scenic

spots, friends, colleagues, workers and work locations, indigenous cultures, and specific landscapes are repeated over and over again - taking little heed to the specifics of time or geography. These were all the things that made up their world at that point in time, in no particular hierarchy or order. Filming African workers making a road is given as much consideration as filming blossoms in the garden or a military parade. A systematic recording of colonial life, location, encounter; recording the empire through the minutia of events to grand spectacles of monarchical visits

This sense of repetition is also in my edit, which creates a series of 4 parts to the work. Each part has a similar rhythm; film leader, arrivals and shots on moving platforms, encounters, rapid sections of film splices, slower sequences, and finally leader again. Although specific content in each section changes, moving through a series of thematic such as leisure, work, travel; the overall pattern of each part is to create a sense of repetition or persistence of visions despite of, or through, the fragmentation of individual filmmakers footage, the disassociation of it from its original context (this relates to the archival principle of respect des font which I talk about in other places¹⁰) and placing it within a new order, without signposts, voiceovers, closed readings.

SHM: Is it then fair to assume that amidst all the different complexities, the extraction of images that eventually appear in *Persistent Visions* was intuitive, almost visceral. This opens up a whole new range of issues, in terms of the interpretative potentials of the so-called point of 'encounter' between artwork, museological

space and audience

ET: I think far from 'intuitive' or 'visceral' the sections and selections are guided primarily by specific principles, but firmly and openly subjective, and not necessarily always followed! Some elements are chosen for their lack of immediacy or their indeterminacy, or for a structural reference; others are chosen for their descriptiveness or specific kind of shot. Intuition for me is learnt response; it's contextual, temporal and contingent. In some respects the work is about questioning these sorts of reactions or instincts alongside other ways in which we attribute meaning to objects, events, etc. Certainly there are moments in *Persistent Visions* where I employ certain material and the three screen relationships (as well as rhythm etc) to induce a more un-mediated response, but if engagement were left purely in this mode, the work would have failed.

For me, the question now is what frameworks should we view such material through? How should we read and attribute meaning to these fragments? Just as the effect of the persistence of vision, which creates in our brains, the illusion of movement between still images is realized, so too the illusion of progression, economic, political or cultural development, in our very politically correct age, might be shattered. That a thin polarized lens which dampens the contrast ratio 'we' seek to give lip service to and which provides an acceptable, standardized view which we can cope with - seems still very much in demand.

And this 'we' brings up the issue of positioning. In some respects I feel unable to leave un-spoken a personal biography or narrative that alongside the conceptual

engagement with the archive, also drives the work. In the encounter with the archive, its material, the archivist and the institution's staff I felt very much the outsider. Surnamed 'Tan' and practicing in a highly sensitized 'diversity' driven British cultural arena of post 9/11 Britain, I understood my position as an artist invited to make work for a project titled *Ghosting*¹¹ – as an invitation if not a request to 're-visit' alongside two other artists, a range of British archives. The other artists, Ansuman Biswas¹² and Harold Offeh¹³ were not coincidentally born outside of the UK but were chosen for their post-colonial commonwealth immigrant status. This choice speaks of ideas of re-reading, re-visiting, and re-interpreting through culturally diverse positioning. This invitation facilitated an amazing opportunity for me, both in terms of access, permissions, financial support and co-operation, which would not necessarily have been possible if I had chosen to do this alone, but also a sort of pressure to perform specific roles. As an artist who is often subsumed within the category 'culturally diverse' or now 'B.M.E.' (black minority ethnic), I have often felt the double bind of identity politics, where ones work and position are forced into being seen through the narrow prism of nationalist rhetoric, or reclamation politics. Performing the 'other' has become common practice, or in Jean Fisher's terms the 'Other' has become all too visible¹⁴. The institutionalization of critique is somewhat of an ongoing conceptual struggle for me, so in part *Persistent Visions* is also an attempt to circumvent too closed a reading and experience of the work; shifting the responsibility of 'performing' onto the viewer instead.

SHM: Returning back to the earlier point on archives



Still image from *Persistent Visions*, 2005.

Knowledge – the archive is not the sum of all texts that a particular society may have conserved. The archive is, in many ways, that 'system of statements' or 'rules of practice' that govern the particularities of what can be now articulated as a representation. Following in this spirit, students of colonialism too have taken the colonial archive to task by regarding it as a site of 'exclusions' and as a 'monument' which may be strategically mobilized in unmasking configurations of power. Such an assertion, it seems to me, remains crucial in thinking about the type of materials and imagery that *Persistent Visions* draws upon too...?

ET: Yes you are right here, although I also wonder about this 'authoritative', all encompassing, all knowing position we give the 'colonial archive'. I think from my experience of working within a range of museums and archives, I have come to realize just how idiosyncratic they can be, from what is collected and how it is ordered, to how one

may gain access to the material and how the institution sees this material (i.e. as an intellectual resource or a possible finance stream? Something to be disseminated and accessed freely, or protected and guarded?). But as you say, the archive not only has this 'symbolic' and mythical power of being the source or epicenter of factual proof, i.e. a truth deliverer, but additionally the fact that this material is owned by the museum and that it often holds the copyright or mediates access to copyright holders gives it a renewed form of control and authority.

In my particular case however, the archivist was extremely helpful, and copyright was mostly held by the still surviving filmmakers or their families whom I was facilitated to contact. In wanting to use material for this project, I had to approach each copyright holder and explain my project and seek permission to use the material. In all cases this was granted, and neither archive nor copyright holder controlled how the material was to be used. This didn't mean that there were no questions asked, or concerns expressed (e.g. concerns about how they personally might be represented, or that the material might be used to subvert or pervert initial intentions. I even had a letter return from an individual in the House of Lords whose father had shot the footage, asking for further clarifications. This direct contact with realms of power was not exactly surprising, but certainly added new insight into the 'who' of who was recording this material), but in general people seemed keen that what ever they had produced in the past might still have some resonance and relevance today.

In returning to the issue of circumventing the already weighted indexical system by a more physical and

random process, it could be argued that it was far too random to be a strategy for 'unmasking configurations of power', but this choice was in recognition of how these configurations are often so inbuilt within a system and normalized that it becomes difficult not to end up actually relying on them unintentionally. I found instead that as I watched and compiled material of interest, that I began to produce my own set of classifications for what I saw and was interested in. My 'key terms' consisted of: Shots On Moving Platforms e.g.: aerial, train, ship, elephant, car shots; Moving Shots i.e. Tilt, pan; Static Shots With Moving Subjects; People Looking To Camera With Recognition; People Looking To Camera With Ambivalence; People Approaching The Camera; and then also other less lens based criteria such as Landscape And Location Shots (territory); Leisure e.g. picnics, play, celebrations (often with foreground vs. background discontinuities); Domestic/Family life; Cultural Events e.g. specific local cultural events such as indigenous funeral rituals, or drinking games at a Colonial club; Work. In working this way I appropriated the material from the context of the archive, from its associations with original filmmakers and approached what I saw as a commonality, a repetition but that also spoke about technologies of power, hierarchies of focus, and the implications of the medium itself on the sorts of representational possibilities/limitations produced.

I found that some material spoke for itself, but that others remained in a void of ambiguity, waiting to be fixed by an interpretive gaze. At times the two conflate or competed. Take for example the pan and tilt shots, does one read the slow tilting shot over a tattooed, perhaps Dayak, male body as a colonial extorting gaze? Especially

when the same filmmaker spends similar amounts of film doing the same thing in filming a swim-suited 'white' woman (perhaps wife)? When one sees this repeated again with a coconut tree, does the recognition of 'exotic' and 'erotic' suddenly transform to, 'media limitations'? Similar too, the pans across landscapes. One reading might be: colonial territory – power – control; Another, the hierarchy of power in who owns the technology to survey through lens based measuring instruments the land or to capture it on camera. Equally though, that the practical limitations of the camera's frame insists a landscape is shot as a pan with moving image.

It was important for me in the work that these ambiguities survived the edit, but equally too, the shots that seem to have no purpose, the points where filmmakers spliced and edited their footage, the accidental double exposures or incorrect exposures, and the incidental shot that perhaps alone carries little meaning, but in association with the other material included starts to take on new resonance.

SHM: What does this then tell us about the field of historiography? Like other fields of inquiry, the disciplines of history and anthropology in their multitudinous manifestations have turned to the colonial archive for legitimacy. Scholars such as Ranajit Guha, for instance, have argued for reading the colonial archive 'against the grain' in an attempt at discerning 'subaltern voices'. Such reformulations have intervened and reconfigured how historical anthropology may be approached and has forced most practitioners to rethink methodological issues in a fundamental way. Implicit, however, in this rethinking is the assumption that the colonial archive

is still the source for understanding and questioning of colonial pasts. Alternative sources of history such as oral histories, hagiographies and traces from popular culture and performances have sought to destabilize this hegemonic position of the colonial archive, but the sort of an unavoidable end is still located in the knowledge one may 'find' in the colonial archive. It seems, our frames of reference are then caught in this intense nexus – for the colonial archive – is this 'productive' space which may be encountered as a *discursive* system of representations and but also as a set of fragments which alludes to 'real' material legacies of the colonial encounter. Given such a state of the debate, the archive that you engaged must have presented an interesting artistic challenge?

ET: The productive space for me and in this project is not within the archive, but within each of us as viewers of this material. As for the discursive system, this exists for me, amongst those who participate, we are all the material legacies, real or otherwise existing alongside material artifacts that 'speak' and take meaning only through our interpretations and putting to use. *Persistent Visions* as a project starts as an exploration of an archive and ends as a comment on readership/viewers and interpretation. Whilst context is important, showing the work within a 'white-cube' gallery space or the museum in which the archives are held obviously impacts on the sorts of readings provoked, but perhaps more importantly for me is the contingency of meaning in relation to the specifics of an audience, who he or she is, where they align themselves in relation to the material, how their own current position and knowledge informs the sorts of meanings generated. In the context of *Persistent Visions*, the shift in emphasis from the 'unavoidable

end' being located within the archive, to us, the viewer-where knowledge is produced despite and because of, our own often myopic visions, understandings and positions of complicity and compromise. Perhaps it's passing the buck, but for me the challenge is well and truly what the audience is presented with.

SHM: To dwell on the question of 'subaltern' subjectivity a bit further. Caught amidst such a complicating ecology of logic and desire, *Persistent Visions* engages the colonial condition as molded between particular reactions of both invader and native. In my view, such a tension is most discerning for it enables this *revisiting* of the colonial archive to narrate multiple histories of contestation, but also its most abashing other – *complicity*. With each new frame and image that is encountered, as the desire of the colonizer for the colony comes to be denaturalized, one is left wondering about the inverse – i.e. the longing of the colonized to return the voyeuristic gaze back unto a non-territorial 'Europe'. I do not suggest such a predicament as an idyllic mode of recovery of the post-colonial Self but as a troubling legacy of the colonial experience itself. Or – as the French-Tunisian writer Albert Memmi might ironically say – 'How could the colonized deny himself so cruelly...? How could he hate the colonizers and yet admire them so passionately?'¹⁵

ET: *Persistent Visions* is certainly more engaged with contemporary post-colonial conditions rather than historic moments and 'lost' subjectivities. I think the position we find ourselves in now is much more complex and confounds or perhaps obscures such clear-cut roles and dichotomies such as invader / native. This

might just be specific to me, but I don't think so. On a personal level my mixed heritage includes 'colonizer' / 'colonized'; and my lived experience encompasses both a post-colonial Britain and an independent Singapore. I have spent years maneuvering between the differing expectations and demands, playing various roles and taking changing positions. Contingent strategies, as I call it, are often seen as positions of complicity, but for me, it just depends on whose doing the naming! This does however bring us to the issue of positioning and I hope that what *Persistent Visions* does manage to do is to take away the ability of the viewer to return to a pre-conditioned or default positioning, through the stripping away of expected guidelines, narrative structures, linear progressions and contextualizing frameworks... to un-tether interpretative frameworks and leave the audience bereft of guidelines, instead encountering a pace and rhythm not of their own choosing, material seemingly random and ad hoc, silence that might be a barrier, disquieting, or an invitation to provide ones own narration. The challenge perhaps for any audience is to recognize the complicity already at work and to become actively more complicit in new readings. Who am I in all of this? Who are they in the frame? Who is doing the filming and for whom? Who are these others that stand beside me watching this material and what do they make of it? ... What do I make of this?

ENDNOTES

- 1 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Trans. Eric Prenowitz, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- 2 Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002.
- 3 For example Durba Ghosh's accounts of working within Indian

and British archives on the subject of miscegenation bring up very different responses from archivists, and she talks openly about the formal and informal mechanisms at play which structure access and information. Additionally, her own Asian-female-body within the archive does not go un-noticed. Found in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* in Antoinette Burton (ed.), London: Duke University Press, 2005.

4 The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum is currently undergoing a move to London. There is also now an online moving image archive www.imagesofempire.com. For more details on its galleries and collections please see www.empiremuseum.co.uk/exhibitions/maingalleries.htm

5 A couple of documentaries to mention are BBC2's *Lost World of the Raj* (2007) and *Empire's Children* (2007) aired on Channel 4.

6 Approached as a survey of everyday life in Singapore and Malaya in the 1950s and 1970s, I Polunin presented rarely seen photographs, slides and film footage selected from the personal archives of Dr. Ivan Polunin. Conceptualized as an 'archival site', the exhibition also brings together Dr. Polunin's personal objects which sit alongside the photographic displays. Encouraging its audiences to connect intuitively but also set against the different legacies of colonial knowledge production and of what constitutes a sense of the Singapore Self - I Polunin - strives to challenge take-for-granted notions of memory and melancholy in the postcolonial era. *Arriving in Singapore from England in 1948*. Dr. Polunin taught Social Medicine and Public Health at the then University of Malaya. In an adventurous career that began with the filmic documentation of tropical diseases, Dr. Polunin's ethnographies grew to encompass hundreds of hours of film footage on Malaya's eclectic sociocultural practices and its rich biodiversity. For a curatorial brief on the project please see: Ken Cheong Hock Cheun, *The Good Old, Bad Old Days*, Singapore: NUS Museum, 2009.

7 This position I am more inclined at present to attribute to the showing of this works within the UK context, where as the showing of *Persistent Visions* within Singapore, a former British colony, and especially within the context of a museum, for me highlights the works form and its commentary on knowledge systems.

8 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon, 1978, p.5.

9 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Trans. Eric Prenowitz, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.2. Derrida also calls this 'consignation' or the 'gathering together signs'. 'Consignation aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system of synchrony in which all elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration. In the archive there should not be any absolute dissociation, and heterogeneity or secret which could separate (seccerner), or partition, in an absolute manner'.

10 Josephine Lanyon and Jane Connarty (eds.) *Ghosting: The Role of the Archive within Contemporary Artists' Film and Video*, Bristol: Picture This Moving Image, 2006.

11 For more details please visit www.picture-this.org.uk/current/ghosting.htm

12 Details on Ansuman's artwork may be found on www.picture-this.org.uk/2006/AnsumanBiswas.htm

13 Details on Harold's artwork may be found on www.picture-this.org.uk/2006/HaroldOffeh.htm

14 Jean Fisher, *Vampire in the Text: Narratives in Contemporary Art*, London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 2003.

15 Albert Memmi, *Dominated Man: Notes Towards a Portrait*, London: Orion Press, 1968, p. 45.

SHABBIH HUSSAIN MUSTAFA is an Assistant Curator with NUS Museum. As a student of the arts, his research interests include political philosophy and modern South and Southeast Asian history. His approach to understanding the arts has centered heavily on engaging with different archives of thinking and writing, all in an attempt at opening up the archives to multivariate struggles of perception and reading. The South and Southeast Asian exhibitions that he recently curated include: *Archives & Desires: Selections from the Mohammad Din Mohammad Collection* (2008), *Mapping the Corporate: Ronald Ventura* (2008), *Past-Present: Craft Communities in Contemporary India* (2009) and *Proverbial Interventions: Ratnadeep Gopal Advikar* (2009). His recent publications include "Re-membering the Intimate Past" in *Shifts: Wong Hoy Cheung* 2000-2007 (2008) and "Something" in *Being: Ahmad Zakari Anwar* (2008).

'Hopping Around' within Time and Space: Transportable Modernity and Escaping the Archive

Teren Sevea

In a post-Edward Said era, a variety of historians have struggled to 'defend' their use of valuable European sources or what have come to be termed 'Orientalist' texts. Unlike the works of such historians, Erika Tan's *Persistent Visions* is more in line with a range of 'postcolonial' projects that have validated a more creative use of materials derived from colonial archives. In the case of *Persistent Visions*, the silent three-screen video installation draws upon footage derived from the moving image archive at the Bristol-based British Empire and Commonwealth Museum. Tan chooses to work with silent 'Super-8' films recorded by individuals and families during a particular juncture of the British Empire instead of relying upon commercial documentaries, establishment-produced film, missionary material and news footage. Tan refers to this lesser edited film material that does not appear to be dogged by an authoritative narrative, as 'amateur footage.'

It may be too far-fetched to elaborate upon the topic of modernity in Tan's video installation. However, it will be apparent to viewers that a form of 'transportable modernity' can be accessed through the moving image archive.¹ Nile Green's work, and to lesser extent mine, has recently been concerned with how evangelical enthusiasm combined with mechanical ingenuity in terms of portable and relatively inexpensive presses produced on an industrial scale came to be disseminated to distinct centres by peripatetic Protestant missionaries.² In the moving image archive that gives birth to *Persistent Visions*, there is much that one can discern from how enthusiasm combined with mechanical ingenuity in terms of more accessible and transportable cameras. Drawing upon this historical discourse of

'transportable modernity,' the triptych work runs us through approximately half a decade in the twentieth century, and through a 'geographically unbounded' colonial world. Like portable printing technologies, it is plausible to speculate that the production of the moving image archive required sophisticated and everyday collaborations with 'native' middlemen. Unfortunately at times, in the face of postcolonial scholarship, the study of such interactions between portable technologies and its middlemen has itself been plagued by the pejorative label of 'colonial collaboration'.

The way *Persistent Visions* approaches the contexts of these images and escapes the project of archiving images provokes the pukka historian. It might be useful to deal with some of the issues Tan brings up through her creative use of the moving image archive, and briefly list some issues that may be of significance to enthusiasts engaging with colonial archives.

In referring to her use of the archive in *Persistent Visions*, Tan once suggested that the process of collecting and compiling footage is relevant in showing how "original" histories become opaque, [and] new stories are told.³ As suggested above, Tan creatively selects from the archive and compiles reels without chronology and geographical boundaries – which, to put it crudely, enables the video installation to 'hop' around within time and space. Furthermore, Tan drops the usually unsuccessful search for filmmakers' intentions and little is known of the contexts of footage beyond clearly identifiable monuments and haphazard (and at times, almost hazy) signs such as: 'Speed Limit on Fraser's Hill,' 'A Zulu in Her best beadwork with enormous earring,' '...

of Dubai,' 'British Railways Tilbury Riverside,' 'Port of London Tilbury,' 'Haig's Gold Label 12 Bottles Dumps,' and 'Epworth Mission School: Fete.' It has already been noted elsewhere that Frantz Fanon indicated little concern with 'types' of colonialism, suggesting instead that 'All colonialism [fascist totalitarianism to French settlerism] is settler colonialism'.⁴ It is plausible that Tan, in 'jumbling' the archival footage and stripping the material of its time-space references, is making a point on colonialism being a larger totalitarian discourse rather than being manifest in 'real' military, political, economic or social structures.⁵

Tan appears to deal with certain themes and issues that preoccupy most historians working with colonial archives such as the need to be sensitive to history as a process involving memory and the possibility of accessing 'authenticity'. With little known of the context of footage derived from the Bristol-based archive, Tan invites viewers to position themselves vis-à-vis the footage and 'tell' or be 'told new stories.' Using silent footage and the technical process of producing seemingly moving images from still ones (captured by the term 'persistent visions'), Tan invites readers to actively participate in this process of creating new meanings or stories from silent (or perhaps, silenced) archival footage. It seems that there is a celebration of what has been thought of as the 'postcolonial moment' within *Persistent Visions*. Privileging the postcolonial moment over 'original' historical settings may be indicative of Tan's view that the dichotomies of colonizer and colonized that may have driven the colonial archive are far less prominent today. Intentionally or unintentionally, *Persistent Visions* facilitates debates



Still image from *Persistent Visions*, 2005.

over paths for working with archival material. One could, for instance, work with similar archival material to show that the aforementioned dichotomies were unclear in the colonial era, and that there was little that was 'new' in the coming of colonialism since it almost perpetuated pre-colonial systems (which include discursive systems), calling into question the attractive option of re-writing the history of colonialism.

Beyond celebrating multiple interpretations and contingent meanings, Tan appears to share a Foucauldian concern with 'power.' This is perhaps most apparent in an interview with the curator of the exhibition Shabbir Hussain Mustafa, wherein Tan clarifies that *Persistent Visions* is more concerned with revealing the power dynamics of colonialism and the commonwealth in its portrayal of variegated life experiences.⁶ Such a method opens up questions on whether the 'visual' re-marginalizes subalterns; to be left fixated with deconstructing colonial texts in search

of ambivalence and liminality; and whether a fruitful engagement of the sophisticated contexts of images and footage may help us access the subalterns that were plugged into such contexts. While it is apparent that we are unable to access the 'original' meanings or realities of intimate actions, journeys, construction, immigration and everyday transcultural collaborations, one cannot help but wonder whether searching up and imposing a narrative of power might also be silencing these actors and the possible meanings they might have attached to their actions. *Persistent Visions* is most compelling in its stand that the realities or origins of archival materials are impossible, and not overly important, to access.

For those who have worked with archives in a conventional manner, Tan's 'hodgepodge' of texts stripped of their time-space backgrounds might appear as a challenge. *Persistent Visions* counters the tradition of archiving itself, undermining 'originality' through contemporary artistic intervention, failing even to recognize what we might still call the 'first' or 'original' filmmaker in the video installation. Of course, Tan acknowledges eighteen surnames who donated their films to the Bristol-based archives in a blurb to *Persistent Visions*, but one may not be inaccurate to claim that even the most deconstructive critics of 'Orientalism' have acknowledged the authors of 'Orientalist' texts.⁷ Tan's project, however, is dedicated towards making a seemingly hegemonic colonizer-filmmaker 'silent' or the sudden 'object' of observation, and allowing the audience to intervene (perhaps even, intercede) on behalf of the 'colonized.' Indeed, such an intervention may be a remarkable permutation of 'deadening' the author. One is also left perplexed over whether an encounter with *Persistent Visions* could be

a warning that counter-Orientalism could perpetuate the colonizer/colonized dichotomy, with the compromise of the supposed postcolonial moment.

ENDNOTES

1. Cited from Nile Green, 'Journeyman, Middlemen: Travel, Transcultural, and Technology in the Origins of Muslim Printing,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41 (2009): 216.
2. Ibid.; Teren Sevea, 'Print Evangelism and Malay Bibles: Transcultural Collaborations and Abdullah, the "Qualified" Middleman,' Unpublished Paper (2009).
3. Erika Tan, 'Part II: Popping Open Archives,' see http://www.luxonline.org.uk/artists/erika_tan/essay3.html.
4. Udo Krautwurst, 'What is Settler Colonialism? An Anthropological Meditation on Frantz Fanon's "Concerning Violence",' *History and Anthropology* 14, no. 1 (2003): 58–60.
5. Nicholas Dirks, 'Introduction: Colonialism and Culture,' in Dirks (ed.) *Colonialism and Culture*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992, pp. 11–12; Teren Sevea, 'Islamist Questioning and [C]olonialism: Towards an Understanding of the Islamist Oeuvre,' *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 7 (2007).
6. Erika Tan, 'Part II: Popping Open Archives,' in *Dialogue with Erika Tan in Persistent Visions* [Erika Tan, Singapore: NUS Museum, 2009].
7. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.

Teren Sevea is a PhD Candidate at the University of California, Los Angeles. His articles include 'Islamist Questioning and [C]olonialism: Towards an Understanding of the Islamist Oeuvre,' *Third World Quarterly* 28(7), and 'Islamist Intellectual Space: "True Islam" and the Ummah in the East,' *Asian Journal of Social Sciences* 35(4–5). He is the co-editor of a volume entitled *Islamic Connections: Muslim Societies in South and Southeast Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2009), and the co-editor of a forthcoming volume entitled *Sufi Movements in Contemporary Islam*.

Artist's Biography

Erika Tan

Born: Singapore 1967

Erika Tan is an artist and curator whose work has evolved from an interest in anthropology and the moving image. Her work is often informed by specific cultural, geographical or physical contexts; exploring different media to create situations that excite, provoke, question, confront and invite comments from an audience. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally including *Thermocline of Art* (ZKM, Germany 2007), *The Singapore Biennale* (2006), *Around The World in Eighty Days* (South London Gallery / ICA 2007), *EAST International* (Norwich Gallery 2000), *Cities on the Move* (The Hayward Gallery, London), and *Incommunicado* (Hayward Touring exhibition). She has completed a Picture This Commission (Persistent Visions) and a Film & Video Umbrella Commission (PIDGIN: interrupted Transmission), permanent work for East England Arts (Utopic Blur), and a permanent work for the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail (In Situ). Recent projects include a residency commission with Turner Contemporary, Margate, a BBC Radio London Residency and an Artists Links Shanghai Residency, China.

As an extension to her practice, Erika has also jointly curated and project managed art projects in association with Above:Below such as: The ICA in China; Imaginaria Digital Art Prize '99; HUB @The RiCHMiX, an urban regeneration project; Souvenirs, interventionist project in Museum Street, London. Erika has also had a long-standing interest and engagement with the Chinese Arts sector in Britain. Working as a Chinese Arts Worker and freelance research assistant/curator she has contributed to *Half the Sky: Chinese Women in*

London, Museum of London, 1997. *In Focus: Film and Video from the Chinese Diaspora: Britain and Another Province*, Waterman Art Center, London, 1997. She was involved in the initial developments of CAS, an East Asian Art Space within the center of London and is currently part of the Chinese Art Centre's (Manchester) Leadership Network Training Scheme.

Erika studied Social Anthropology and Archaeology at Kings College, Cambridge; Film Directing at The Beijing Film Academy, followed by an M.A in Fine Art at Central Saint Martins School of Art, London. Awards have included: The Arts Council Black Arts Video Award, 1993. Firstbase, ACAVA Studio Award, 1995. Digital Arts Fellowship, The Arts Foundation, 1998. British Council Travel Grant to Japan, Arts Council Connections Fund to Singapore, 99/2000. ACME Live Work Studio Award, London, 2001-2004. Artists Links British Council/Arts Council Residency in China Award.

Erika is also a member of TrAIN, the research department for Transnational Art, Identity and Nation, University of the Arts, London.









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