



Archiving Social Experiences of COVID-19

Diverse Stories, Memories & Methods from Southeast Asia and Beyond

4 May 2021 (Tue) | 9:30AM - 12:30PM (SGT) | Online via Zoom

How has COVID-19 impacted the lives and societies of people across Southeast Asia? What can we learn from oral and visual histories collected amid upheaval? This trio of short roundtables offers exploratory answers informed by the ongoing research project 'Living with Covid-19 in Southeast Asia: Personal and Visual Experiences of Crisis, Control and Community' based at National University of Singapore's Asia Research Institute.

Led by Professor Naoko Shimazu, Dr Gerard McCarthy and Dr Yang Yang in partnership with more than a dozen collaborators across Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) countries the project has two main planks: an oral history archive of interviews with essential workers, the elderly, COVID-positive cases and minorities from every country of ASEAN; and a visual repository of lockdown images and social distancing signage from across the region.

The three panels of this event probe questions of memory, community and governance raised by personal and visual experiences of the pandemic recorded through the project. They also examine the possibilities and pitfalls involved with building diverse archives during a pandemic and the merits of collaborative methods. Discussions feature insights from collaborators and discussants from Southeast Asia and beyond including researchers and curators from Columbia University's Interdisciplinary Center for Innovative Theory and Empirics, National Library Board of Singapore and National Museum of Singapore – all of whom are leading COVID-19 social archiving initiatives of their own.

Thinking from and beyond the region, the event spotlights the role of oral histories and images in telling the story of trauma and resilience amid the upheaval of the pandemic and how these experiences are likely to shape cultural, social and political trajectories in the years to come.

For more information & registration, please visit our website:
<https://ari.nus.edu.sg/events/archivingcovid19experiences>

4 MAY 2021 • TUESDAY

9:30 – 09:40	WELCOME AND ARCHIVE LAUNCH
	<p>Tim Bunnell <i>National University of Singapore</i> Naoko Shimazu <i>National University of Singapore & Yale-NUS College</i> Gerard McCarthy <i>National University of Singapore</i> Yang Yang <i>National University of Singapore</i></p>
09:40 – 10:30	PANEL 1 – COPING AND NAVIGATING COVID
	<p>The first panel explores diverse experiences of crisis, control and community amid the pandemic informed by transcripts from the 'Living with COVID-19' project. Examining variations in subjective accounts of lockdowns, governmental and community action along with personal engagement with the virus itself, the panel explores how memories of the pandemic shape personal perspectives on the past and social and political aspirations for the post-COVID future.</p>
09:40	<i>Chairperson</i> Gerard McCarthy <i>National University of Singapore</i>
09:45	<i>Panellists</i> Apirada Cha-Emjan <i>Chiang Mai University, Thailand</i> Napakadol Kittisenee <i>University of Wisconsin - Madison, USA</i> Hannah M. Y Ho <i>Universiti Brunei Darussalam</i> Veasna Ky <i>Linnaeus University, Sweden</i> Nichola Khan <i>University of Brighton, UK</i>
10:10	<i>Discussant</i> Denise Milstein <i>Columbia University - New York City, USA</i>
10:20	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
10:30 – 11:30	PANEL 2 – CHALLENGES OF BUILDING A 'DIVERSE' ARCHIVE
	<p>This panel focuses on the challenges of building a 'representative' archive, including methodological and logistical innovations and approaches developed or deployed during the pandemic. It surveys the issues of sampling in archive construction, along with the question of temporality and memory raised by personal accounts of a rapidly evolving regional and global crisis.</p>
10:30	<i>Chairperson</i> Naoko Shimazu <i>National University of Singapore & Yale-NUS College</i>
10:35	<i>Panellists</i> Yulianti <i>Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia</i> Chalermchai Wongrak <i>Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand</i> Regina Hong <i>Loyola University Chicago, USA</i> Xi Min Ling <i>Northwestern University, USA</i> Tinesh Indrarajah <i>Yale-NUS College, Singapore</i>
11:10	<i>Discussants</i> Janice Loo <i>National Library Board of Singapore</i> Mark Wong <i>National Archives of Singapore</i>
11:20	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

11:30 – 12:25	PANEL 3 – VISUALISING THE PANDEMIC
	<p>The final roundtable examines the role of images in shaping personal memories while also telling the collective story of COVID-19 as a social construction. It includes analysis of photos from the 'Living with COVID-19' archive by visual and digital humanities specialists along with comments by the Director of the National Museum of Singapore informed by their Singapore-focused 'Picturing the Pandemic' project.</p>
11:30	<i>Chairperson</i> Yang Yang <i>National University of Singapore</i>
11:35	<i>Panellists</i> Regina Hong <i>Loyola University Chicago, USA</i> Chris McMorrán <i>National University of Singapore</i> J Paul Manzanilla <i>Independent Scholar, Philippines</i> Berny Tan <i>TapeMeasures, Singapore</i>
12:05	<i>Discussant</i> May Khuen Chung <i>National Museum of Singapore</i>
12:15	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
12:25	CLOSING REMARKS & FUTURE PLANS
	Naoko Shimazu <i>National University of Singapore & Yale-NUS College</i> Gerard McCarthy <i>National University of Singapore</i> Yang Yang <i>National University of Singapore</i>
12:30	END OF SESSION

ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

Naoko Shimazu is Professor of Humanities (History) and Associate Dean of Faculty at Yale-NUS College, and Professor at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Her major publications include *Imagining Japan in Post-war East Asia* (co-editor, Routledge, 2013), *Japanese Society at War: Death, Memory and the Russo-Japanese War* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), *Nationalisms in Japan* (editor, Routledge, 2006), *Japan, Race and Equality: Racial Equality Proposal of 1919* (Routledge, 1998). She is currently working on the cultural history of diplomacy, focusing on the Bandung Conference of 1955, as well as exploring methodological issues.

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Gerard McCarthy is Postdoctoral Fellow at National University of Singapore's Asia Research Institute where he leads a range of projects on political and socio-economic dynamics in Southeast Asia, especially in the wake of COVID-19. He specialises in the politics of social policy and inequality, especially in Myanmar where he has conducted political ethnographic and survey research on authoritarian legacies since 2013. He was previously Visiting Fellow at Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore and Associate Director, Myanmar Research Centre at Australian National University (ANU). He co-edited *Myanmar Transformed? People, Places, Politics* (ISEAS, 2019) and his writing and commentary has been published in outlets including *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *The Straits Times*, *Conflict, Security and Development*, *The New York Times*, *The Economist* and *The Washington Post*. In 2017, he was a visiting scholar at St Antony's College University of Oxford, and in 2015-2016 was visiting fellow at University of Yangon's Department of International Relations.

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Yang Yang received her PhD in Human Geography from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Her research focuses on transnational religious networks and the politics of ethno-religious identity in northwestern China. Her dissertation thus adopts an ethnographic approach to analyzing the impacts of Hui Muslims' grass-roots connections to non-Chinese Muslim communities in Southeast Asia and the Middle East in the Hui's everyday lives in Xi'an, China. Her current research examines how the Hui diaspora in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia contributes to grass-roots connections between China and Malaysia, and how Malaysia becomes Hui's new Muslim role model through serving as their preferred destination for halal tourism and their style references for Muslim fashion. Notably, this project analyses how ethno-religious identities and mobility intersect in the contexts of migration and the recentering of Islamic teachings in both cultural and political contexts on a global scale.

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ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Apirada Cha-Emjan is project coordinator for The Foundation for Older Persons' Development Thailand and Researcher with Chiang Mai University Faculty of Medicine. She holds a Masters in Health Social Sciences from Chiang Mai University and a BA from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University Thailand. E | apirada81@hotmail.com

Berny Tan is an artist, curator and writer based in Singapore. Her interdisciplinary practice explores the tensions that arise when one applies systems to—and unearths systems in—intangible personal experiences, complicating the false binary between rational and emotional. From March to December 2020, she ran the Instagram account [@tape_measures](https://www.instagram.com/tape_measures), a visual record of social distancing markers in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tan holds an MA (Dist) in Contemporary Art Theory from Goldsmiths, University of London. She has exhibited her work as well as curated shows in Singapore, the United States and the United Kingdom. E | tapemeasures.sg@gmail.com

Chris McMorran is an Associate Professor in the Department of Japanese Studies at the National University of Singapore (NUS), where he has taught since 2010. He is a cultural geographer of contemporary Japan, who researches the geographies of home across scale, from the body to the nation. His latest work is *Ryokan: Mobilizing Hospitality in Rural Japan* (2021, University of Hawai'i Press), an intimate study of a Japanese inn, based on twelve months spent scrubbing baths, washing dishes, and making guests feel at home at a hot springs resort. He also has published research on tourism, disasters, gendered labor, area studies, field-based learning, and popular culture, including as co-editor of *Teaching Japanese Popular Culture* (2016). Chris co-produces the Home on the Dot podcast with NUS students, which explores the meaning of home on the little red dot called Singapore. E | mcmorran@nus.edu.sg

Chalermchai Wongrak is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Liberal Arts at Ubon Ratchathani University. He received his PhD in Second Language Education at University of Cambridge, specializing in ethnic identity and language acquisition in Northern Thailand. E | chalermchai.w@ubu.ac.th

Denise Milstein is co-director of Columbia University's New York City COVID-19 Oral History, Narrative and Memory Archive and Program Director of the MA in Sociology at Columbia. Her work develops a relational, historically grounded perspective at the intersection of art and politics, and culture and the environment. She has written on the articulation of urban imaginaries through music, the impact of repression on artistic careers, political engagement and counter-culture, and artistic innovation. E | dm531@columbia.edu

Hannah M.Y. Ho is an Assistant Professor at Universiti Brunei Darussalam. She read her PhD at University of York, United Kingdom. Her postdoctoral fellowships were completed at King's College London and University of California, Berkeley. She has published in journals, such as *Global Society*, *Asiatic*, and *Southeast Asian Review of English*. She is editor of *Engaging Modern Brunei: Research on Language, Literature, and Culture* (Springer 2021). E | hannah.ho@ubd.edu.bn

J Paul S. Manzanilla finished his PhD in Southeast Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore with a dissertation on the history of photography in the Philippines examining the optical unconscious in colonial photography; the problematization of place in news and magazine photos; the interrelationship of photography, revolution, and historical consciousness; and the crisis of witnessing in the drug war pictures. He is also engaged in research on print and broadcast media, film, activism, and social movements. He edited (with Kyoto University Professor Caroline Hau) the *Remembering/Rethinking EDSA*, a book collecting the reflections of activists, academics, and artists on the 1986 Filipino People Power Revolution, which won the 2016 Philippine National Book Award.

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Janice Loo is a Librarian with the National Library, Singapore. Her main responsibilities include managing collections, developing content, as well as providing research and reference services related to Singapore and Southeast Asia. She oversees the library's 'Documenting Covid-19 in Singapore' initiative.

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Xi Min Ling is an incoming History PhD student at Northwestern University, having completed his Masters at the University of Chicago and graduated as part of Yale-NUS College's inaugural cohort. His current research interests include the politics of war commemoration in Japan and Southeast Asia, and the anthropology of history. An alumnus of the Japan Exchange and Teaching program, he has also worked with public-historical institutions including the National Museum of Singapore and Kyoto Museum for World Peace. He is also a co-author of *Postcard Impressions of Early-20th Century Singapore*, together with Prof Naoko Shimazu and Regina Hong.

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Mark Wong is Senior Specialist (Oral History) at the Oral History Centre (OHC), National Archives of Singapore. He has conducted interviews covering such areas as the Japanese Occupation, education, sports and the performing arts, and is presently leading the OHC's project on Singapore's COVID-19 experiences. He is also Vice-President of the International Oral History Association.

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May Khuen Chung is currently Director of the National Museum of Singapore. She began her career as an Assistant Curator (South Asia) at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) in 1997, where she curated exhibitions such as *The Monkey as God and Hero: China, India and Southeast Asia* (1999) and *Krishna: The Blue God* (2001). In 2003, May Khuen joined the National Museum of Singapore (NMS; then Singapore History Museum), where she curated the Fashion Gallery (Singapore Living Galleries), in addition to overseeing the content development of the other three living galleries. May Khuen received her MA in History and Culture of Fashion from the London College of Fashion (UK) in 2009, under a full scholarship from the National Heritage Board (NHB). In May 2012, she curated *In the Mood for Cheongsam: Modernity and the Identity of Singapore Women from the 1900s to the 2000s*, and published a book with the same title for the exhibition. That same year, May Khuen oversaw the curation of *White Wedding Dress*, an international traveling exhibition from London's Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) – the first such collaboration between the two institutions.

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Napakadol Kittisenee is a doctoral candidate in the Department of History, University of Wisconsin Madison where he specialises in the anthropology and history of Theravada Buddhism and mainland Southeast Asia. He was previously a research fellow at the Regional Centre for Social Science and Sustainable Development, Chiang Mai University, Thailand and project coordinator at the NGO Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), Cambodia. He holds an MA from Thammasat University and a BA from Silpakorn University.

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Nichola Khan is a Reader in Anthropology and Psychology, and Director of the Centre for Spatial, Cultural and Environmental Politics at the University of Brighton. She works on violence, migration, subjectivity and mental distress, with a regional focus on Pakistan, Afghanistan and Afghan diasporas. Her books include *Mohajir Militancy in Pakistan* (2010, paperback 2012), *Cityscapes of Violence in Karachi* (2017, Hurst & Co.; Oxford UP) and *Mental Disorder: Anthropological Insights* (2017, Toronto UP). Her latest book *Arc of the Journeymen: Afghan Migrants in England* is under contract with the University of Minnesota Press.

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Regina Hong is currently completing her MA in Digital Humanities program at Loyola University Chicago with her capstone, a digital database of sources relating to the pre-war Japanese community in Singapore. As a Sesquicentennial Scholar with the Women and Leadership Archives at Loyola, she was involved in the creation of an oral history project and the building of a digital project of timelines and exhibits for Loyola's 150th anniversary. Regina is the co-author of *Postcard Impressions in Early 20th-Century Singapore: Perspectives from the Japanese Community*, alongside Prof Naoko Shimazu and Ling Xi Min. Her research interests lie in digital archives, digital pedagogy, and the history of migrations.

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Tinesh Indrarajah is a Residential Life Officer at Yale-NUS College. He graduated from Yale-NUS with a BA in History and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy with a Master in Public Policy. Tinesh's research background is in the socio-cultural history of the Singaporean Ceylonese Tamil diaspora via an analysis of their oral histories. Furthermore, Tinesh enjoys learning more about Southeast Asian history (especially of the Malayan Peninsula), understanding how our colonial roots continue to influence current realities, and understanding the intersection of history and social policy.

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Veasna Ky is a master student in the Tourism and Sustainability program at Linnaeus University, Sweden. He is doing his final research on Business Models for Sustainability in tourism application. His current affiliations include Southeast Asia Research Academy, YSEALI-AdvocaSEA Regional Workshop and SI Network of Global Future Leaders. He is a young professional whose career has been dedicated to community development such as water and sanitation, non-formal education, trafficking in persons and community-based tourism.

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Yulianti received her PhD from the Institute for History at Leiden University in 2020 which was a joint project between the Leiden University and Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia. Her dissertation was about transnational Buddhist networks in the making of Buddhism in Modern Indonesia (1900-1959). Currently she is a research fellow at the history department and visiting lecturer at the Center for Religion and Cross-cultural Studies (CRCS) Universitas Gadjah Mada. Her topic of interest includes transnational Buddhism, history of Buddhism in Indonesia and beyond, Women's history, Chinese religion and its history in Indonesia, religion, identity and the state, and material culture and heritage studies.

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