

## Roundtable on

# Displaying Communities and the Nation: Heritage, Museums and Identity in Singapore and Beyond

Date **Wednesday, 20 January 2016**  
Time **2.00 – 5.00pm**  
Venue **Asia Research Institute Seminar Room**  
469 Bukit Timah Road, Tower Block #10-01, Singapore 259770  
National University of Singapore @ Bukit Timah Campus

*Jointly organized by the Asia Research Institute, and Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore.*

This roundtable aims to discuss how heritage centers and museums put communities and nations on display. The roundtable is organized as part of Professor Peggy Levitt's visit to the National University of Singapore and takes inspiration from her most recent book *Artifacts and Allegiances: How Museums Put the Nation and the World on Display*. The central question which will frame the discussion is how museums and heritage centers display communities and the nation within the context of Singapore's multi-cultural/ethnic/racial make-up. Although the main focus will be on Singapore, the roundtable will also take a broader/comparative perspective. How do other nations engage with questions of community and identity through museums and heritage centers? Professor Levitt will briefly summarize the main points of her book after which the roundtable participants will briefly react based on their experience and expertise. The subsequent discussion will be moderated by Dr Terence Chong and the audience will be able to take active part in the discussion as well.

## PROGRAMME

1.30pm	<b>REGISTRATION</b>
2.00pm	<b>WELCOME REMARKS</b> <b>Michiel Baas</b>   Asia Research Institute, NUS <b>Terence Chong</b>   Institute of Southeast Asian Studies-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore
2.10pm	<b>INTRODUCTION OF BOOK &amp; RESEARCH</b> <b>Peggy Levitt</b>   Wellesley College, and Harvard University, USA, and Asia Research Institute, NUS
2.30pm	<b>COMMENTARY REMARKS I</b> <b>John N. Miksic</b>   Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS <b>Huang Jianli</b>   Asia Research Institute, and Department of History, NUS <b>Rajesh Rai</b>   South Asian Studies Programme, and Institute of South Asian Studies, NUS <b>Imran Bin Tajudeen</b>   Department of Architecture, NUS <b>Suriani Suratman</b>   Department of Malay Studies, NUS <b>Tan Y L Kevin</b>   Faculty of Law, NUS <b>Tan Boon Hui</b>   Asia Society Museum, USA
3.30pm	<b>TEA BREAK</b>
4.00pm	<b>COMMENTARY REMARKS II</b> <b>Peggy Levitt</b>   Wellesley College, and Harvard University, USA, and Asia Research Institute, NUS
4.10pm	<b>DISCUSSION</b>
5.00pm	<b>END OF EVENT</b>

To RSVP, please email to [minghua.tay@nus.edu.sg](mailto:minghua.tay@nus.edu.sg)  
For more information, please visit [www.ari.nus.edu.sg](http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg)

## ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

**Peggy Levitt** is Professor and Chair of the Sociology Department at Wellesley College and a Senior Research Fellow at Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations where she co-directs the Transnational Studies Initiative. Her latest book is *Artifacts and Allegiances: How Museums Put the Nation and the World on Display* (University of California Press, 2015). Peggy was the CMRS Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the American University of Cairo in March 2015 and a Robert Schuman Fellow at the European University Institute in Summer 2015. In 2014, she received an Honorary Doctoral Degree from Maastricht University, held the Astor Visiting Professorship at Oxford University, and was a guest professor at the University of Vienna. She was the Visiting International Fellow at the Vrije University in Amsterdam from 2010-2012 and the Willie Brandt Guest Professor at the University of Malmö in 2009. Her books include *Religion on the Edge* (Oxford University Press, 2012), *God Needs No Passport* (New Press 2007), *The Transnational Studies Reader* (Routledge 2007), *The Changing Face of Home* (Russell Sage 2002), and *The Transnational Villagers* (UC Press, 2001). She has edited special volumes of *Racial and Ethnic Studies*, *International Migration Review*, *Global Networks*, *Mobilities*, and *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. A film based on her work, *Art Across Borders*, came out in 2009.

**John N. Miksic** is Professor in the Southeast Asian Studies Department, National University of Singapore. He received his PhD from Cornell University. He spent four years in Malaysia as a Peace Corps Volunteer, worked as a Rural Development Advisor in Sumatra for two years, and taught at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, for six years. In 1987 he moved to the National University of Singapore. He served on the board of the Center for Khmer Studies from 2000 to 2015. He is an academic adviser to the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Sub-Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts. He received a Special Recognition Award from the Ministry of Information, Communication, and the Arts, the Pingat Bakti Setia from the government of Singapore, and the title of Kanjeng Raden Haryo Temenggung from the Susuhunan of Surakarta (Indonesia). His specialty is the archaeology of maritime trade and communication in Southeast Asia. He has served on committees of the National Museum, Asian Civilisations Museum, and NUS Museum. Among his 200+ publications is a book he co-authored and edited entitled *Rethinking Heritage Management in Southeast Asia: Preservation, Development, and Neglect* (London: Anthem, 2010).

**Huang Jianli** is Associate Professor with the History Department of the National University of Singapore. Within the university, he is concurrently the Deputy Director of Asia Research Institute and a Research Associate at the East Asian Institute. His first field of study is on the history of student political activism and local governance in Republican China from the 1910s to 1940s. His second research area is on the Chinese diaspora, especially the relationship between China and the Chinese community in Singapore. He has a monograph on *The Politics of Depoliticization in Republican China* (1996, 2nd edition 1999, Chinese edition 2010) and co-authored *The Scripting of a National History: Singapore and Its Past* (2008). His co-edited volumes include *Power and Identity in the Chinese World Order* (2003) and *Macro Perspectives and New Directions in the Studies of Chinese Overseas* (Chinese, 2002). He also has published papers in international refereed journals such as *Modern Asian Studies*, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, *East Asian Studies*, *Journal of Oriental Studies*, *Frontiers of History in China*, *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, *International Journal of Diasporic Chinese Studies*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *South East Asia Research* and *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*.

**Rajesh Rai** is Assistant Director and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS). He is concurrently Assistant Professor at the South Asian Studies Programme (SASP) in the National University of Singapore. Dr Rai received his MA (with Distinction) and PhD from the University of Birmingham, UK. A historian, he specialises in diaspora studies, nationalism and the postcolonial history and politics of South Asia. He has edited several books on the South Asian diaspora including the *Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora* (2006) for which he was the Assistant Editor. His recent publication includes, *Indians in Singapore, 1819-1945: Diaspora in the Colonial Port-city* (Oxford University Press, 2014). Dr Rai also serves on the Editorial Board of the journal, *South Asian Diaspora*, and is also Associate Editor of the *Asian Journal of Social Science*.

**Imran Bin Tajudeen** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture at the National University of Singapore. His research interests include the history of architecture and urbanism in Southeast Asia with a specific focus on the intersections between indigenous vernacular, colonial, and modern professional practice; the role of socio-cultural diversity in the architecture and neighbourhood cognition of the city; as well as the processes, underlying motivations and assumptions by which notions of heritage have been constituted, and how they are narrated in contemporary reconstructions and representations. At the same time his research also involves a longue duree perspective on historiographical problems concerning the categories "Indic" and "Islamic" in Southeast Asian architecture in the 9th to 18th centuries, specifically their limitations and entanglement with the vernacular, through a number of published research papers and public lectures, including the latest one at the New York University's Institute of Fine Arts on Feb 19, 2015. His doctoral dissertation on the architecture, urban histories and heritage issues of Southeast Asian Cities (National University of Singapore, 2009) won the International Convention of Asia Scholars Book Prize for Best PhD, Social Sciences in 2011.

**Suriani Suratman** is Senior Lecturer at the National University of Singapore, Department of Malay Studies. She is trained as a social anthropologist. Her teaching covers areas on Malay culture and society, Malay ethnicity and identity and Malay families and households. She has conducted research in Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines. Her research focuses on Malay ethnic identity and the (re)production of portrayals of Malays and gender relations and the issue of (in)equalities in Malay families and households. Her teaching covers areas on Malay culture and society. She is currently researching on women in the field of visual arts focusing on narratives of women's experiences of negotiations with existing structural and cultural obstacles as art practitioners in Singapore and Malaysia. She is Deputy Chair of the Malay Heritage Foundation Board of Directors since 2011. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Gallery (since 2011) and the National Heritage Board (since 2015). She is also a member of the Istana Art Collection Advisory Committee (since 2014).

**Tan Y L Kevin** LLB (Hons); LLM, JSD (Yale), taught full-time at the Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore from 1986 to 2000. In 2000, he founded Equilibrium Consulting Pte Ltd, a boutique consultancy focused on history, heritage and publishing. He is active in many civic organizations including the Singapore Heritage Society and the Foundation for the Development of International Law in Asia (DILA). He has edited and written some 40 books and over 60 articles on the law, history and politics of Singapore. He is currently Adjunct Professor at the Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore as well as at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University. Kevin specializes in constitutional law, the Singapore legal system, international human rights, and legal history. He is founder-President of ICOMOS Singapore.

**Tan Boon Hui** is Vice President for Global Arts and Cultural Programs, and Director, Asia Society Museum, NY, where he leads the organisation's global arts and cultural activities spanning visual arts, performing arts, literary arts and film. As museum director, he oversees Asia Society Museum's acclaimed exhibition programmes and collections, including the Mr and Mrs John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection of Traditional Asian Art and the Contemporary Art Collection of photography and new media works by Asian and Asian American artists. Additionally, he directs the organization's Asia Arts and Museum Network and Arts & Museum Summit. Prior to this, he was Assistant Chief Executive (Museum & Programs) at the National Heritage Board (NHB) in Singapore overseeing exhibitions, programmes and outreach events across the Board's museums, institutions and divisions. In 2015, he was Artistic Director for *Singapour en France, le Festival*, the largest multidisciplinary presentation of contemporary culture from Singapore and Southeast Asia in France. As a curator and programmer, his research and writing interests focuses on the contemporary artistic expressions of Southeast Asia and Asia and the remaking of traditions among artists of today. Tan is a founding board member of the International Biennial Association. He was Director of the Singapore Art Museum from 2009 to 2013, where he led the transformation of the museum into a contemporary art institution focused on Southeast Asia and assembled the largest public collection of contemporary art from the region. He was concurrently Director of the Organising Secretariat for the Singapore Biennale 2011. He initiated the regional focus and group curating approach which has become the distinguishing feature of the Singapore Biennale 2013: *If the World Changed*, as well as being a co-curator and Project Director.