

Tang Maohong: Noa Noa
Southeast Asia Residency Programme

Opening: 3 May 2019, 4pm – 7pm

Duration: 4 May – 14 July 2019

Hours: Daily 11am – 7pm excluding Monday, Tuesday and Public Holiday

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Singapore, April 2019 – ShanghART Singapore is pleased to present a solo exhibition by our artist-in-residence, Tang Maohong, from 4 May to 14 July 2019. Taking inspiration from Paul Gauguin's famed but controversial residency in the Tahiti, the exhibition title borrows from Gauguin's travelogue *Noa Noa: The Tahitian Journal*. Such a reference reflects the artist's initial impression of Southeast Asia as a place of lush greenery and azure skies, with big clouds and strong shadows; contrasting yet harmonious landscapes. Aside from being part of the artist's childhood memory, the book brings forward an important principle in art practice— a work is ultimately the product of stimulations from the artist's environment. As such, the limited duration of a residency forces the artist to treat his journey as a catalyst; the foreign land thus becomes some sort of incubator for pre-existing ideas.

The long-lasting influence of Gauguin can be glimpsed from the travels and practices of Nanyang style artists. The tropical island of Bali stood in as their Tahiti as they projected onto it their fantasies of an exotic realm. The 'other place' hence presents the artist with not just a shift in geographical location, but also, and perhaps more so, a flight of fantasy. Artists who painted foreign landscapes traditionally paid more attention to the novelty of their environment and overlooked the element of stereotypes and orientalist biases. Tang's residency projects consciously avoid overtly cultural-specific visuals and romantic ideals; adopting a disinterested eye towards the surface of things and focusing on the reality of identity in relation to larger political entities such as countries. As human migration becomes ever more prevalent, in addition to the fact that most parts of Southeast Asia have colonial histories, our understanding of self-identity becomes more complex than before. To address this complication, Tang again borrows from Gauguin the questions "Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?"¹ as an entry point in his exploration of the concept of "country".

The centrepiece, *Categorising Humans Is a Chore*, presents the state crests, flags, and maps of 198 countries in a series of looping graphics. As symbols of political entities, the three elements are usually the most recognisable representations of governing bodies. The state crests are depicted in an hourglass; tipping over endlessly and gradually losing their forms in the process. The flags are arranged in an upward angle— as how they are usually seen, flashing and inter-changing in a geometric formation. The maps are portrayed as oscillating flat pieces; warping and stretching as they approach either side of the screen, only appearing in their standard ratios in the middle. The movements in the videos are repetitive and recurring in nature, resulting in a seamless loop. To Tang, repetition is a mesmerising tempo. The hint of tediousness introduced to the work undermines the solemn nature of the state symbols whilst encouraging viewers to contemplate on the topic in a mood of lethargy.

The Southeast Asia residency programme was made possible by ShanghART with the support of the National Arts Council (NAC) and the Economic Development Board of Singapore (EDB), exploring the potential of Singapore as a site for artistic practice and inspiration, in addition to its status as a hub for art exhibition and business.

¹ *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* is a painting by French artist Paul Gauguin painted between 1897 to 1898.

About Artist

Tang Maohong (b. 1975, Guangxi province, China) graduated from China National Academy of Fine Arts in Hangzhou and divides his time between Beijing and Seoul. He simultaneously references and undermines art history and popular culture. He has integrated a variety of visual elements and subject matters, producing works that inhabit the ever-blurred border between elegant art and popular illustration. His work is absurd, magical, humorous and confrontational, hinting that the juxtapositions of figurative objects might be more than just illusions. Tang Maohong's pictorial universe reflects not only a new subject – a psyche whose internal eclectic imagination is echoed in the environment of constantly flowing images – but also the inversion of out-grown traditions.

Recent exhibitions include: *TANG Maohong: Riverbed*, ShanghART Beijing, Beijing, China (2017); *Video Art*, Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai, India (2014); *Video Bureau Archive 20: Tang maohong*, Video Bureau, Guangzhou, Beijing, China; *Green Box, Remapping - The Space of Media Reality*, Hangzhou, China (2013); *Uninkable*, TOP Contemporary Art Centre, Shanghai, China (2012); *Nomadic Report 2012*, Arko Art Center, Seoul, South Korea (2012); *1st Shenzhen Independent Animation Biennale*, Shenzhen, China (2012); *Gravitational Field*, 2011 Himalayas Cross-Media Art Festival, Himalayas Art Museum, Shanghai, China (2011); *7th Shanghai Biennale*, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China (2008); *8th Jeonju International Film Festival*, Jeonju, South Korea (2007); and *Belief*, 1st Singapore Biennale, curated by Fumio Nanjo, Singapore (2006).

About ShanghART Singapore

Established in Singapore in 2012, ShanghART Singapore is ShanghART Gallery's first overseas gallery located in contemporary arts cluster Gillman Barracks.

About ShanghART Gallery

ShanghART Gallery was established in Shanghai in 1996. It has since grown to become one of China's most influential art institutions and a vital player in the development of contemporary art in China, representing over 40 pioneering and emerging artists, including DING Yi, Melati SURYODARMO, Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL, XU ZHEN®, YANG Fudong, and ZENG Fanzhi.

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