

INAUGURAL  
ASIA-PACIFIC TWENTIETH CENTURY  
CONSERVATION ART NETWORK  
PUBLIC PROGRAM

11 JUNE 2008

BALAI SENI LUKIS NEGARA, MALAYSIA  
ABSTRACTS & SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY



**Balai Seni Lukis Negara**  
National Art Gallery Malaysia



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**MELBOURNE**

**9.30 – 9.50 Ms Nicole Tse, Research and Teaching, Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, University of Melbourne and Mr Amerrudin Ahmad, Curator, BSLN, *Materials & Techniques of 20th paintings in Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Overview of research to date***

#### **Abstract**

The production of oil paintings and the conservation practice engendered by their existence have a relatively recent history in tropical Southeast Asia. This study, which was part of an Australian Research Council Linkage project, undertook the examination of five 1850s panel paintings from Bohol in the Philippines and over two hundred early twentieth century paintings from four institutions in Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand in order to address a number of questions about the production and conservation of Southeast Asian paintings that used Western art material and techniques. This study sought to identify these materials and techniques and to investigate behaviour resulting from the use of these materials in tropical climates. The investigation indicated that these artworks were not copies of a Western influence but incorporated local, regional and Chinese art making practices.

In tropical Southeast Asia the material behaviour of oil paintings differs from the behaviour of oil paintings described in studies undertaken in Northern Europe and North America. This requires a reassessment of conservation parameters for their future care. The condition of the paintings in this study generally behaved according to predictions based on their materials and techniques, however the inconclusive identification of a size layer, known to be problematic in tropical climates, is still to be resolved. Further the degree of paint cracking was less than expected, which may indicate the response of oil paints at high relative humidities or the types of materials and techniques employed by the Southeast Asian artists. The conclusions of this study are based on visual examination, materials analysis of selected paintings and the in-situ application of Electronic Speckle Pattern Interferometry (ESPI) in the four institutions. ESPI also proved to be a useful tool for the qualitative assessment of the dimensional movement of canvas paintings in response to environmental changes.

#### **Biography**

Nicole Tse recently submitted her PhD on the *Characterisation of Oil Paintings in Tropical Southeast Asia* at the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC) at the University of Melbourne. She has been currently awarded an Australian Post Doctorate to investigate *The Twentieth Century in Paint* with eight collaborating institutions across Australia, Southeast Asia, the United Kingdom and the United States from 2008 to 2011. Nicole is part of the research and teaching team at the CCMC with a focus on the materials and techniques of cultural materials and their deterioration mechanisms. With an interest in materials conservation in Asia, Nicole has delivered a number of training programs, research projects and diplomatic assignments in seven Southeast Asian countries.

**9.45-10.00 Associate Professor Robyn Sloggett, CCMC, University of Melbourne, *Aims of Asia Pacific Twentieth Century Conservation Art Conservation Network***

**Abstract**

The Asia Pacific Twentieth Century Conservation Art Research Network (APTCCARN) is a collaborative effort led by a group of researchers whose work focuses on art produced during the twentieth century in the Asia-Pacific region. This research is informed by art historical research, art curatorial practice and conservation and scientific inquiry. APTCCARN provides a forum for the identification and discussion of research focusing on the conservation and scientific analysis of 20th century paintings in Asia-Pacific. The network will promote initiatives between partners and other researchers and research groups, and conduct demonstration projects and training. Members are committed to the broad dissemination of research outcomes and findings in order to increase understanding and appreciation of modern and contemporary art in Asia-Pacific.

**Biography**

Robyn Sloggett is Director of the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC), managing academic, collections management, client based conservation programs. Robyn is currently a member of the Collections Committee of the Library Board, State Library of Victoria; Chair of the Indemnification Committee Arts Victoria; and an Expert Assessor under the Federal Government's Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act. She is an associate of the School of Enterprise and the Centre for Free Radical Chemistry and Biochemistry at the University of Melbourne. In 2004 she was awarded the Australian Institute for Cultural Materials Conservation's Conservator of the Year Award for service to the profession.

**10.00-10.15 Dr Pisit Charoenwongsa: SEAMEO SPAFA, *University Consortium on Multi-disciplinary Approach to Cultural Resource Management in Southeast Asia***

**Biography**

Dr Pisit Charoenwongsa is the multi-awarded Director of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education's Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SEAMEO-SPAFA). As the Centre Director, he successfully brought SEAMEO SPAFA to the public sphere: engaging more stakeholders and mobilising people and resources throughout the region to achieve SEAMEO's vision. He is planning to establish the SEAMEO SPAFA - University Consortium that would have courses in cultural resource management, thereby promoting and advocating beyond the region the wealth and wise use of Southeast Asia's heritage. Educated in the fields of arts, archaeology, and anthropology from the universities of Silpakorn (Thailand), London (UK), and Pennsylvania (USA), he has since the 1970s performed and encouraged to meet the changes and challenges in these fields using a multi-disciplinary approach in which the humanities and the sciences are integrated in a fruitful relationship. This approach resulted from his research works in Thailand in a Southeast Asian Archaeology study program at the University of Pennsylvania, USA. Starting his teaching career at the Silpakorn University, he directed numerous field projects that accelerated the development of archaeological research in the whole of Southeast Asia and one of which was listed as a World Heritage Site. He is also a committee member in a wide number of councils and commissions in Thailand and abroad that focus on education, archaeology, history, art, and culture. Dr. Pisit is a prolific author, with more than a hundred papers and several books in both Thai and English, some of which were translated into French, Italian, and German. He is likewise a sought-after resource person on archaeology, history, culture, cultural resource management, heritage conservation, tourism, etc. He prefers learning together with his audience rather than directly teaching them.

10.45

Chair: Ms Nicole Tse, CCMC

**10.45-11.00 Panel: Key research topics and collaborations with Puan Zanita Anuar (BSLN), Associate Professor Ana Labrador (formerly University of the Philippines), Mr Lawrence Chin (Paintings Conservator, The Conservation Studio) and Madam Chiraporn Aranyanark (Conservation Science Division, Thailand)**

**11.00-11.15 Associate Professor Ana Labrador and Associate Professor Maricor Soriano, *Art Beyond Appearances: Preliminary results from the JB Vargas Museum and National Institute of Physics project at the University of the Philippines***

#### **Abstract**

A University of the Philippines' Research Project initiated by Dr Ana Maria Theresa P. Labrador (formerly of the Jorge B. Vargas Museum and Filipiniana Research Center), Dr Maricor Soriano (National Institute of Physics), Engr. Marc Talampas (Department of Electronics and Electrical Engineering). A two-year project that began in December 2006, they worked together on a cross-disciplinary research project, funded by the University of the Philippines at Diliman to investigate the extent of artists' knowledge in science and technology. One of their case studies involved painters like the late Filipino National Artist Fernando Amorsolo who knew how to stretch his canvases and make frames, mix his own paint, and create the right color combination to attract his intended viewer. The project *Art Beyond Appearances: Physics Looks into Paintings* examines the collection of the VM using non-invasive techniques to develop more comprehensive criteria for reporting conditions of artworks. In this presentation we will give the audience a picture of how art historical accounts – both documented and anecdotal – could be verified using principles of optics, collecting statistical color and texture signatures of artworks, as well as monitoring the humidity and temperature in which these are stored and displayed. After all, Amorsolo's attempts at capturing the perfect light on canvas implicate art, science and technology.

#### **Biography**

Ana Maria Theresa P. Labrador is associate professor of anthropology at the Ateneo de Manila University, lecturing on economic anthropology and visual anthropology. She was formerly associate professor of art studies at the University of the Philippines. For 7 years, she led the university museum, the Jorge B. Vargas Museum and Filipiniana Research Center to become a vibrant art and reference institution, attracting a larger local audience as well as international visitors and artists. The University of Cambridge in England awarded her an M.Phil and Ph.D. in Social Anthropology, focusing on ritual, museology and material culture. She also holds an MA in Museum and Gallery Management from the City University London, UK. She is the vice president of the International Committee for the Training of Personnel (ICTOP) of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the museum representative in the UNESCO Philippines Memory of the World National Committee. She was a Fellow of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) in Rome, Italy in 2007 and is involved in CollAsia 2010 programme since 2005, which ICCROM runs jointly with SEAMEO-SPAFA based in Bangkok, Thailand. From February 2008, Dr Labrador took up a three-month Visiting Scholarship at the University of Melbourne's Centre of Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC).

Maricor Soriano is a recipient in 2006 of the Ten Outstanding Young Scientists awarded by the Republic of the Philippines. She is associate professor of physics at the National Institute of

Physics at the University of the Philippines and did her postdoctoral research with the Machine Vision and Media Processing Group at the University of Oulu, Finland. Her scientific papers in refereed journals focus on optics, electronic imaging and pattern recognition. She was the president of the national association of Physicists in the Philippines and the deputy director of academic affairs at the National Institute of Physics. Besides her involvement in the research of the Vargas Museum Art Collection, Dr Soriano was part of the Recovery of Spectral Signatures from Coastal Waters project and is now exploring working with archaeologists in investigating surface patterns to help characterize exceptional sites.

**11.15-11.30 Mr Lawrence Chin, Paintings Conservator, The Conservation Studio, *Technical Art History Studies at The Heritage Conservation Centre, Singapore***

**Abstract**

Technical Art History is a cross-disciplinary study that combines technical analysis, material characterisation, archival information and art historical research to gain a deeper understanding of artworks and, indirectly, their historical contexts. The work carried out at the Heritage Conservation Centre is presented here as a platform for discussion on the range of methods and techniques that could be employed in this emerging field.

**Biography**

Lawrence Chin is currently working as an independent conservator specialising in easel paintings. Previously, he had worked at the Heritage Conservation Centre, an institution of the National Heritage Board, in Singapore. Lawrence's research interest, besides the conservation of paintings, is the area of contemporary art and its preservation.

**11.30-11.45 Madam Chiraporn Aranyanark, Director, and Ms Kwantjit Lertsiri, Paintings Conservator, Conservation Science Division, Thailand, *Conservation of Contemporary Painting in Thailand***

**Biography**

Chiraporn Aranyanark is a senior expert on conservation science and has worked since 1972 as a conservator at the Fine Arts Department, Office of National Museums. Among the positions she has held are ICCROM Council member (2003-2007), member of the scientific committee for conservation of stone (ICOMOS) and lecturer in the faculties of archaeology and architecture at the various universities in Thailand. She gained a BSc in Chemistry and an M.Eng in Nuclear Technology, before she acquired certificates in scientific examination and conservation of cultural heritage, most notably at the Institute of Cultural Properties, Tokyo, ICCROM in Rome, National Museum in Denmark and CCAE in Canberra, among other qualifications. She is a consultant for several organizations and has been an instructor in over 100 national and regional courses.

**11.45-12.00 Prof. Dr. Truong Quoc Binh, Director, Vietnam Museum of Fine Arts (Bao Tang My That Viet Nam), Ministry of Culture and Information  
*Conservation and restoration practice in Vietnam***

**13.15 Chair: Mr Amerrudin Ahmad, Assistant Curator, BSLN**

**13.30-13.45 Dr Supanee Chayabuta, Silpakorn University, *Oil Paint Manufacture and collaboration with practicing artists in Thailand***

**Abstract**

Silpakorn University conceived of the idea of a project to produce a range of high quality artist's paints that are affordable, safe and non-polluting. On three separate occasions, sixty of the country's leading artists were invited to test these paints and their comments and suggestions were used as the basis for improving their quality. Today, Silpakorn's one artist's paints are second to none.

**Biography**

Associate Professor Supanee Chayabutra is the director of the Research and Development Institute and Material Centre for Art and Design at the Silpakorn University, Thailand.

**14.00 – 14.15 Assistant Professor Victoria Herrera, Department of Art Studies, University of the Philippines, *Contemporary Art Practice in the Philippines: Mainstream and Alternative Directions***

**Abstract**

In discussing contemporary art practice in the Philippines, this paper will focus on two factors that influence the artist's creative process: namely, the key players in the distribution of visual art and the challenges that artists continue to pose to themselves, particularly aesthetic concerns related to materials and processes. There are mainstream and commercial streams of art production as well as the alternative venues created by artist initiatives, among others. The latter include artist-run-spaces and the adoption of collaborative projects between artists and institutional entities such as museums and commercial art galleries.

**Biography**

Ma. Victoria T. Herrera is an assistant professor at the Department of Art Studies, University of the Philippines and a lecturer in the BFA in Arts Management program, Ateneo de Manila University. She teaches Western art history, curatorship, collections management, and other museum-related courses. She recently assumed the post of Curator to the UP Jorge B. Vargas Museum and Filipiniana Research Center. She is a member of the International Council of Museum (ICOM).

14.15

Chair: Puan Zanita Anuar, Senior Curator, BSLN

**14.15-14.30 Puan Shireen Naziree, Independent Curator/ Art Historian, *Diversities of Malaysian Art Practice***

**Abstract**

This talk will deal with diversities with regard to expressions, adaptations as well as media in relationship to the development of post colonial art practices here in Malaysia.

**Biography**

Shireen Naziree is an art historian and independent curator. Her international curatorial practice includes working with some of Southeast Asia's most important artists. She has written extensively on contemporary art practice and traditional art practices of the region. She has served two terms on the Board of Trustees of the National Art Gallery of Malaysia.

**14.30 – 14.45 Mr Ahmad Mashadi, Head, NUS Museum, National University of Singapore, *Art Practice in Singapore***

**14.45-15.00 Ms. Selina Halim, Assistant Paintings, Heritage Conservation Centre and former MA student, CCMC, *Ageing Behaviour of Chinese and Western Artist Oil Paints in Humid Tropical Climates***

**Abstract**

This project was initiated by Ms. Nicole Tse in collaboration with Balai Seni Lukis Negara (BSLN) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia as part of an ARC research grant on the 'Behaviour of Western Artist's Materials in Tropical Climates'.

A natural ageing experiment was set up at BSLN between 2003 - 2008 to assess the ageing behaviour of two brands of oil paints: Marie's (from China) and Winsor & Newton (from Europe) in a humid tropical environment. Both brands were chosen to represent commercially available and established artist oil paint brands in the market. Within a few months of the curing period of Ms. Tse's natural ageing experiment, small protrusions and surface deformation, as well as mould growth were observed on some of the Marie's paint samples. The same phenomena were not apparent on those of Winsor & Newton.

The aim of this research was to analyse the probable cause of deterioration observed on the Marie's oil paints. The paint composition of prepared Maries and Winsor & Newton were analysed using environmental scanning electron microscopy, energy dispersive x-ray spectroscopy (ESEM-EDS) and Fourier transform infrared with attenuated total reflectance attachment (FTIR-ATR). The paints' reactions to the humid tropical condition were observed using fresh samples exposed to a simulated (humidity and temperature-controlled) ageing. Chemical changes in the paints during the initial curing period were monitored using FTIR-ATR, whilst stereomicroscope and colourimeter were used to observe any physical changes.

FTIR-ATR results from the simulated aged paint samples indicated a much greater chemical reactivity of the Marie's oil paints in a humid tropical environment compared to those of Winsor & Newton. Examination of the paint samples under stereomicroscope and visual observations provided reasonable links between the chemical behaviour of the paint with the physical structure of the paint (pigments size and dispersion in the film matrix).

Complications due to the limitations of simulated ageing experiment and the analytical equipments are discussed in this paper alongside avenues for further research.

### **Biography**

Selina Halim graduated from Master of Cultural Materials Conservation (Paintings) at Melbourne University in 2008, after finishing Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting) at the Victorian College of Arts, Australia in 2006. She is now working as an Assistant Paintings Conservator at the Singapore Heritage Conservation Centre, whilst persistently maintaining her contemporary art practice. Selina has an avid interest in the development of artist materials and conservation practice, particularly in Asia.