

Cinematic Harvests

August 25, 6-8pm

Screening of films and video works in collaboration with KADIST San Francisco

Ancestors, ghosts and spirit companions thread through the experimental films and video works in this evening's program, drawn from the KADIST Collection. This selection of moving-image works emphasize ritual, relationship to place, and speculative journeys through memory, history and myth. My informal description for this program was originally "ghosts of farm and table", and the video works this evening trace a loose arc through different sites of sustenance: restaurants, farms, marketplaces, and the very earth, as well as the stories we tell about these places. They examine subjects such as the exoticism and familiarity embodied by Chinese restaurants in Stockholm, revolutionary fantasies of agricultural life, and the intimate and collective magic of origin stories that have been inherited across generations. History and legend are ever-present in these moving images: who, or what, gets lost — or added — in translation when stories of a place are passed down through decades or millennia? What are some visual strategies artists might use to convey a sense of alienation or proximity to a place when it changes so utterly that it is no longer recognizable?

The works shown this evening play with nonlinear or recursive storytelling practices, the dialogue between performance and moving image, and the ways in which bodies and places sometimes come to stand in for one another. They may not tell a straightforward story, and narrators might be unreliable or nonexistent. Some of the works in this program may not have even started out as a "film" at all, but instead as documentation or even an experiential mobile app. See what kinds of tensions, connections and questions surface for you as you sit with the visual and sonic rhythms, forms and textures of these visual poems.

Many thanks to my fantastic co-curator Amanda Nudelman, Curator of Video and North America Programs & Exhibitions Manager at KADIST, whose collaboration on this screening was both inspiring and necessary. Thank you also to Lauren Pirritano, Collection Manager at KADIST, for your archival assistance, and Jo-ey Tang, Director of KADIST San Francisco, for your support of this program!

— Connie Zheng

Total runtime: 57 min

Lap-See Lam & Wingyee Wu, *Mother's Tongue* | 2018 | 3D-animation, HD video | 18 min | COLOR + SOUND

A video work divided into three chapters exploring diaspora, language and identity through the lens of a ghostly Chinese restaurant through three timeframes: the past (1978), the present (2018), and the future (2058). Originally begun as documentation of several Chinese restaurants in Stockholm shortly before they closed, *Mother's Tongue* found its first incarnation as a mobile phone app used in a walking tour of Stockholm, which brought users to three locations of existing or former Chinese restaurants.

Thảo Nguyễn Phan, *Tropical Siesta* | 2017 | Two-channel HD video | 14 min | COLOR + SOUND

Set in the rice paddies and lush forests of Vietnam, *Tropical Siesta* portrays an agricultural commune inhabited and governed entirely by children. They study only the texts of the Jesuit missionary Alexandre de Rhodes, their other memories locked-away in a library, and revel in their 'tropical siesta' of blissful amnesia. The landscape and sleepy tonality of this work reference the traumatic periods of Vietnamese Communism, in which a fantasy of state-run agrarian collectivism led to innumerable deportations and executions, a history that continues to exist largely outside of written record.

Alicia Smith, *Teomama* | 2018 | Single-channel HD video | 6 min | COLOR + SOUND

"God Carrier" in the Aztec language of Nahuatl, *Teomama* was the name given to medicine men and women who carried the bones of Huitzilopochtli, the national deity of the Aztecs and god of war, sun and human sacrifice. Huitzilopochtli features prominently in the origin story of Tenochtitlan (present-day Mexico City), which was founded when the Aztecs were instructed by Huitzilopochtli to abandon their original home in Aztlán. After carrying their medicine bundles for 200 years, the Teomamas finally found their new home when they reached Lake Texcoco and saw the union of sky and earth, embodied by an eagle devouring a snake on a prickly pear cactus. In *Teomama*, Xicana artist Alicia Smith embodies both Teomama and Tenochtitlan as she stands thigh-high in a serene lake, her body bent to carry a god on her back and to enact a posture of abjection, a stance that Smith notes has "long been understood by her ancestors as a tool for accessing the sublime." (quote from the curatorial statement on the KADIST website)

Moe Satt, *Hands Around in Yangon* | 2012 | HD video | 7 min | COLOR + SOUND

Hands Around in Yangon is both a secular and religious exploration of the meaning of hands in Myanmar. Moe Satt's father is Muslim, while his mother is Buddhist. In the Buddhist context, hand gestures or mudras are often important in signifying the identity of deities. Here, Satt presents a conceptual video of intense observation of hands as cultural signals by filming the manipulation of materials involved in various labor and tasks—counting money, cutting nails, peeling vegetables. While the faces of the filmed subjects are obscured, their identities and psychological expression reside in their quasi-ritualistic repetition of hand gestures as they perfect their particular craft with care. As the film ends with shots of hands patting a pregnant belly, the simple stroking points to the way minute gestures in the most mundane contexts can become responsible for the ultimate miracle of life." — curatorial statement on the KADIST website

Ana Vaz, *Há Terra!* | 2016 | 16mm | 13 min | COLOR + SOUND

Há Terra! follows the movements of a young woman, Ivonete dos Santos Moraes, who hails from the region of Quilombos — a former settlement of runaway enslaved people in Brazil — and has joined the Landless Worker's Movement in Brazil's Sertão (backcountry). As a member of an agrarian land reform movement seeking to return land control from agriculturalists back to the people, Ivonete's darting presence forms a symbolic relationship with the sound loop of a man shouting, "Land! Land!", which simultaneously references the memory of colonial "contact", the violent Indigenous dispossession it wrought, and continued resistance against its legacy.