



Dear Art World, Southeast Asia Exists

Looking at the regional art scene, NFTs and more.



Reena Devi

Mar 4, 2021

ooo



You're reading Reena Makes Lists, a weekly newsletter by [arts journalist Reena Devi](#). This post will go out every Thursday, unless said writer is swamped with commissioned assignments or life in general. If you like this, subscribe [here](#).

In this fifth issue

1. Southeast Asia's Varied Art Scene
2. A (Non-Exhaustive) NFT Reader
3. Worthwhile Reads Beyond the Art World



Southeast Asia exists. Screenshot from Asia Society website.

I have a working theory that a fair number of people in the international art scene don't know that Southeast Asia exists, when in fact, it is a culturally rich, nuanced, varied region demanding a closer look.

- While Indonesia had a rough year with the pandemic and looks set to outpace the world in terms of 'Crazy Rich People', the experimental dynamism of the country's arts scene has always been obvious to anyone familiar with it. This does not look likely to abate with artist collective ruangrupa taking on Documenta in 2022 and experimental band Senyawa making efforts to decentralise the music industry.
- Myanmar is in the midst of a roiling political crisis, with local contemporary art playing a major role but artists such as Aung Myint, Aye Ko and Suu Myint Thein have always been known for creating "art embedded with coded political messaging."



Screenshot from ArtReview of Wasinburee Supanichvoraparch,
'DRAGONERPANZER' (Dragoon Tank), details (2018).

- Thailand's push-and-pull between its immensely creative, socially aware arts community and its "smart-casual showmen" is summed up by this exhibition review of the Bangkok Art Biennale with a rather hard-to-miss quote about the artistic director.

In every talk, video tour and media interview, he appears every inch the smart-casual showman: repeats his 'Escape Routes' lines and opines on the logistical challenges overcome. Littered with references to power-mongers, pollution, greed and plagues, his BAB 2020 writings, meanwhile, continue a long Poshyananda tradition of emphasising art's conciliatory and cathartic role, only to retool that schtick for the geopolitical and epidemiological shitshow that is now.

- The permanent closure of Singapore's oldest independent art space, finally confirmed this week, comes on the heels of a slew of local art spaces facing challenges or closing its premises, detailed [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Also, there will be a new arts university.



alain servais
@aservais1

Singapore turning more and more to a contemporary art desert 😢-
Singapore's The Substation Loses Space After 30 Years. By Martine Ma
via [@artasiapacific](#)
artasiapacific.com/News/Singapore...



February 16th 2021

1 Like

While it is admittedly fun to watch established institutions figure out what exactly are NFTs or non-fungible tokens, most of us are really in the deep end so I created a (non-exhaustive) reader for an article I am working on.

- Highly recommended introductory piece with an in-depth profile on Beeple, the digital artist who is currently the face of crypto art.
- More about Beeple and Christie's ongoing sale here and here, with insights from Christie's postwar and contemporary art specialist Noah Davis comparing NFTs to Street Art and more.
- Another relatively easy to read explainer by Kenny Schachter discussing his own experiences in the new virtual art market while addressing a range of issues around NFTs such as copyright.



kenny schachter
@kennyschac

I'm beginning to hate nft.s

Acclaimed musician Grimes has made \$5.8 million in 20 minutes by auctioning eight tokenized artworks in her first NFT drop.

cointelegraph.com

[https://cointelegraph.com/
news/musician-grimes-
debut-nft-auction-
generates-5-8m-in-20-
minutes](https://cointelegraph.com/news/musician-grimes-debut-nft-auction-generates-5-8m-in-20-minutes)

March 2nd 2021

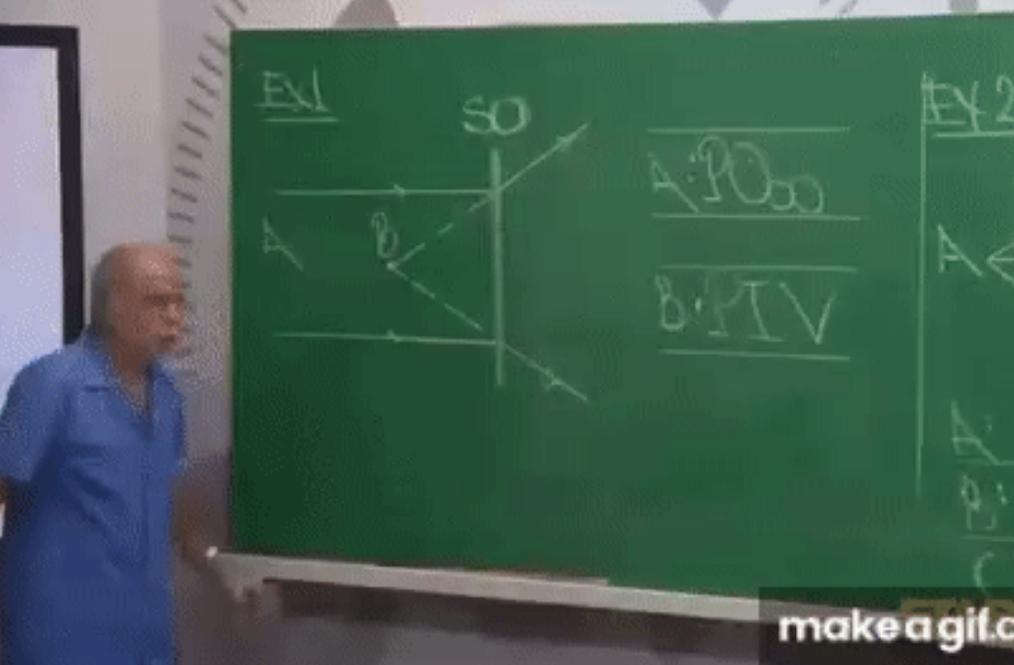
2 Retweets 28 Likes

7:01 AM

- There is some debate on the origins of “art on the blockchain” and these two posts flesh it out [here](#) and [here](#). Goes as far back as 2014/2015.
- This [piece](#) looks at the connection between the social media app Clubhouse and the rise of NFTs. Includes insights from Artnome’s Jason Bailey.

 **Artnome**
@artnome

Just received an invitation to lecture on NFTs at Sotheby's Institute this semester. The artworld is watching ☺



March 1st 2021

11 Retweets 236 Likes

- Another thorough overview and analysis on NFTs with choice quotes from Ruth Catlow, editor of the book “Artists Re:Thinking the Blockchain”.
- Lest we forget, the rise of crypto art is tied to the rise of cryptocurrency, and while this has happened a few times before, it currently seems to be gaining institutional attention such as this announcement from the US Fed Chair.
- The environmental implications of cryptocurrency are a relevant issue to consider and there are various attempts to mitigate this impact such as shutting down crypto-mining facilities and Green NFT grants.
- This live Twitter thread I created featuring online commentary by collectors, tech experts, writers and artists:



Reena Devi
@ReenaDeviSR

Re-creating a thread for article research.

Tim Maughan @timmaughan

apparently the future of art is making imaginary things for rich ppl to get richer off investing in and speculating on, so basically like the history of art, but faster and worse and on a scale nobody can control, cool

March 4th 2021

Articles worth reading for their prescience in describing contemporary issues and developments beyond the insularity of the art world:

- Whether you agree or disagree with his takes, Yuval Noah Harari has always had an intriguing way of framing our existence on this planet. His recent Financial Times piece is no different. There are so many choice quotes I even created a really long Twitter thread just for it but these two lines live in my head now:

It is often said that every civilisation is just three meals away from barbarism. In 2020, the delivery people were the thin red line holding civilisation together.
- This is an old one but in his 2008 essay 1,000 True Fans, Kevin Kelly predicted that the economics of creative activities would be altered drastically by the internet and given the recent advent of Substack and crypto art, it makes for a good re-read.

Thank you for reading the newsletter. Please share and subscribe. Feedback is always appreciated. Also open to pitches, tips and leads related to topics discussed in this issue.

[!\[\]\(feabb98897b440bc8695a03336a6e2df_img.jpg\) Like](#)[!\[\]\(9dfdaff1d86ba3c1f8353b4d1b61b8c5_img.jpg\) Comment](#)[!\[\]\(83f22ed94ec5517769dd76d702c6bfd8_img.jpg\) Share](#)

Write a comment...

© 2022 Reena Devi. See [privacy](#), [terms](#) and [information collection notice](#)



[Publish on Substack](#)

Reena Makes Lists is on [Substack](#) – the place for independent writing