Ming Tiampo: So, our penultimate panel is a group conversation between all of the speakers that we have heard from today, with M+ chief curator Doryun Chong, who will be thinking in a very holistic way about what some of the questions that we have been talking about today, and addressing. And really, trying to push us a little bit further—or, no? To push us to think about these questions in a way that makes sense. So, thank you for that, Doryun. And also for thinking about these questions in a global context. Because here we’ve been really thinking a lot about intra-Asia dialogues, a lot about Asia-qua-Asia. But here, I think, that we also have an opportunity to really situate Asia, within these larger global discourses, and see if perhaps we may be able to find some way of articulating Asia as method, rather than as geographical territory.

So, Doryun is the Chief Curator of M+, and prior to joining M+, which he just joined about three months ago, Doryun was an associate curator of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York from 2009 to 2013. So, here, actually, he was the example that I had in mind of ways of inserting Asia a global context, in a museum setting, an institutional setting, in ways that do not re-inscribe the territoriality of Asia. So, his title is Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture, not Associate Curator of Asian Painting and Sculpture. So, I think that there, that distinction is really quite useful. I don’t know if you feel that you can comment a little bit on that, but I think that might be a useful thing to talk about. Last year, at MoMA, he curated the show Tokyo 1955-1970: A New Avant-Garde, which was chosen by the New York Times and Artforum as one of the best museum exhibitions of 2012. It was a tremendous exhibition, one that I think introduced a lot of people to the importance of postwar Japanese art in our generation. Prior to that, he was a curator at the Walker, where he organized exhibitions on Huang Yong Ping and Tetsumi Kudo. So, it’s again a great honor for us to have Doryun among us. And I would invite you all to come to the stage to have this conversation. Thank you.

Doryun Chong: Thank you, Ming, for that introduction. And thank you everybody for sticking around. It’s a long day and it’s not one of those events that you can just sit mindlessly in. You know, you really have to focus. So, it’s a challenging task for the listeners as well. So, we really appreciate you being here with us to the end. So, I have the easy job of not having had to prepare a paper, or giving a presentation. But I think you’ll all also recognize that I have the difficult task of having to summarize these presentations today, which cohere together in certain ways, but perhaps not in very obvious ways. These were all touching upon disparate topics. But certain
things were emerging, at least for me. So, maybe I will start by setting the stage, if you will, by making some observations. But even before that, I’m going to be momentarily kind of lazy, and just read you the questions that were suggested by Ming Tiampo for this conversation. I will get back to these questions, after having made my own observation. But I thought that these were good questions, as provocations. And there are three of them. The first one is, “Is the changing nature of the market enabling a decentering of the contemporary art world?” The second question goes like this: “How can we present Asian art in a global context without obscuring regional conflicts and negotiations?” The third question is “What do diasporic artists bring to the conversation about contemporary art for Asia?” So, each one is a meaty question. So, I’m not sure if we’ll be able to cover all of them. But I’m going to try to bring these questions back to you during the rest of the time. But now, onto some observations that I had.

You know, the question of destabilizing the notion of Asia, which is one of the big topics that we are tackling here, especially in the first part of the symposium. And this is not a totally novel question. This question has been asked a lot in academic settings, in curatorial settings, for perhaps at least a couple of decades or so. And I found myself sitting here wondering if this question is still necessary. So, I’m being a little bit provocative here. But then I guess I sort of came around in my own head that, yeah, it is still necessary to ask this question. Then, the question is, how best is this done? I don’t think it is enough for us to just constantly just question the notion of Asia. I think it has to, at this point, lead to some sort of, if not empirical and practical per se, then some sort of concrete gestures or actions beyond questions amongst ourselves. And I think Ming was perhaps feeling the same way, when she was asking the panel at the end of the first section, is it possible to recuperate Asia as a word? And you know, I tend to have very, kind of, straightforward relationship to Asia, the usage of the word, and the notion of Asia, after having very much been part of this relentless conversation about Asia, that, you know, it is what it is. You know, it’s a simple appellation that you can use on daily basis, or you can think of it in a more political sense. So, something clicked in my head when Professor Sakai said that when Europeans came up with that word, “Asia,” they weren’t expecting that Asians will be using it, right? This is, you know, one of those ironic historical manifestations of an idea, of a word. But we can also think of it in a particular historicist sense in that, at least in the United States, if you’re thinking about the late 20th century, you know, my own context, where I come from, to call yourself Asian is a political act, right? And especially Asian American is a political act. And this is very much part of the 1960s post-Civil Rights movement that inspired other groups of racial minorities. And just coming from, even more specifically, my own context of Northern California, which is the birthplace of ethnic studies, Asian American studies—you know, here, calling yourself “Asian” was something that had particular political importance. So, perhaps because I consider myself as part of that generation, or second, third generation, coming after these people who reclaimed “Asian” as the term, perhaps almost paradoxically, I have a very straightforward relationship to it. Yeah, I call myself Asian. So what? That’s that. But of course, it’s more complicated than that. It was quite a surprise for me when I learned that, in the U.K., calling yourself Asian means something a bit different than calling yourself Asian in North America, right? Because “Asian” in North America usually means East Asian and Southeast Asian, normally. And South Asian tend to call themselves South Asian. And in the U.K., it’s different. If I’m not mistaken, “Asian” usually means South Asian, in the U.K. So here, we have two contexts that obviously have different patterns of immigration and colonialism, in the U.K.’s case, more particularly. In the U.S. case, the history of, well, partly colonialism, if you’re
thinking about the Philippines. But afterwards, the Cold War Era involvement of the U.S. in this part of the world, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. So, this goes back to that third question about the question of diaspora. So, I think we’ve done enough destabilization. I just needed to make my own point about, you know, a perhaps necessary, literal attitude towards that. Unless we can make this destabilization or deconstruction any more productive, you know, sometimes you just go around a circle around yourself. But one thing that I thought was useful, especially with Professor Sakai’s paper, was the reminder of those binaries, the timeworn, almost tiring binaries of “West versus the rest” can be understood in a much more specific way. And the way, I guess, I now understand is that there are two binaries, right? West versus the rest, which often gets placed on top of “modern versus traditional.” But I think sitting in Hong Kong in the 21st century, we are the living example of how non-Western doesn’t equate to traditional. Modernity has already been naturalized thoroughly outside the West. That these binaries are destabilizing themselves in both ways. And so, this came up in a few different places. For instance, Parul, I think in your presentation, when you mentioned “national modern.” Then that leads me to think about modern before we start talking about contemporary and global, “modern” as a project was not only national, but it was always international from the beginning, and it was also a cosmopolitan project. So, I think we cannot make an easy distinction between modern and contemporary, and national, and post-national, or international, or global, at this point. This story is much more complicated than simple historical progression.

Okay, I think I’ve already talked too much, but I want to actually move this conversation to something a little bit more grounded, if you will to the local context, as well as global context, if you will. And I want to do that by focusing on institutions, and institutional practice, and institutional building. Because we are sitting against the backdrop that has the Guggenheim’s name, the Asia Society’s name, as well as UBS’s. So, these are to be examined. And what I am thinking about here is, of course, the Guggenheim as one of the oldest, and most respected and well-established institutions, and we know where that originated, in New York. But it is now better-known as an institution that has, or at least is working on, a kind of a global franchise. And Hong Kong, as a matter of fact, about ten years ago, was one of the sites where the Guggenheim wanted to build a branch. And Asia Society, another American institution that originates in New York, also comes out of a very particular context of the Cold War politics, or Cold War idealism, if you will, where the Rockefeller family, as well as those around them, wanted to create this institution to promote better understanding. And you know, the Museum of Modern Art, MoMA, is very much part of this network of institutions that came out of that context, although it existed a little bit longer. And combined with the financial institution of UBS, that has its particular program and orientation that includes contemporary art in relation to its more, perhaps traditional or conventional activities. So, these three things, at least, three institutions, and their practical concerns and interests are coming together to create an exhibition called No Country. So, this is—sorry, I’m very convoluted—but maybe the question naturally, then, goes to June, to hear a bit about your observation, or your discussion of your experience making an exhibition within this context—I mean, originally, between these two agreements between two institutions—and now bringing it closer to home, if you will, but perhaps adding another layer of complication, or improvement. So, I would love to hear how you interpret the evolution of your exhibition.
June Yap: I can’t answer some parts of your question, being that I became involved in the project as content, in a way, and not instigator. So I think between Guggenheim and UBS, the collaboration itself is something out of my scope to talk about, entirely. But definitely, what piqued me about this collaboration was what it was trying to do. The fact that it had interests not just in Asia, but also other regions, that it is in a sense placed on par with each other. It’s kind of interesting, in the light of what Naoki was talking about, you know, an international sense of a commensurability, almost, of regions. At least presupposed at the initial start of the project itself. And so, that was one aspect. And in that sense, doing this project was in that context. So, it was not just simply about a relationship with a museum that is originally based in the U.S., and with the Swiss bank, but the fact that there were these other regions in contest, too, with South and Southeast Asia, in a sense, in representation. So, that was kind of interesting. At the same time, for me at least, in the past five years, my projects have always taken me outside of Asia. So, curating being in some sense a work in progress, it was a continuing of certain ideas that I had been thinking about for a while. Early on, about five years ago, when I started doing projects outside of Asia, I was asked a question. I was invited because I would somehow represent the region. And I was already uncomfortable with that, in a very narrow sense. At the same time, it’s a relationship that is presented to you. So, it’s not simply a situation whereby one is dictating to another, but the possibility of a conversation. And so, even at that time, I was already thinking of ways of producing exhibitions, and talking about artists, and artworks, without framing Asia in a very limited sense. I must say that in this project, it’s been kind of open, in the way that the ideas were. The museum and UBS have been very open as to what sorts of ideas might emerge from this. And that, I found quite encouraging. Which explains why we can have a symposium like this, where we are, in fact, speaking quite critically of a situation, and it’s hoped that in this process, some parts of it might be productive. Whatever, you know, in different ways, of course. So, that’s kind of the context of the project, as far as my involvement is, and I kind of missed the second part of your question, perhaps? Or, if that answered part?

Doryun Chong: No, I mean, maybe I can just put it slightly differently. Guggenheim, in New York at least, is not a museum that is known necessarily for reaching out to parts of the world such as South and Southeast Asia. So, it is something that's very conscious, and strategic, on the part of the institution, to have chosen not only South and Southeast Asia, but also Latin America, and North Africa and the Middle East, I believe, is the third region, isn’t it? So, in a sense, if I just put it rather bluntly, you were chosen, and you answered the call to represent the first region. But once you are within the institution, you did something subversive, to do the job, but also question it. And I think that’s a fascinating move, that must have had generated certain tension as well as discussions within the museum.

June Yap: Okay, yes. Well, for me, that part, actually, emerged from the fact that the exhibition was not just going to be in New York. So, in previous projects, whereby I present, or say something, about Southeast Asia, or Asia broadly, there was one type of audience. But in this situation, because the show was going to travel back to Asia, that created another layer of complication and complexity that was very challenging, and interesting, as well. Because then I had to be thinking of the framework not just in terms of how it might be perceived in New York, but also what would it be for us here? I mean, if you look at the exhibition—perhaps not so much
in Hong Kong. But if I was to bring the exhibition anywhere in Southeast Asia, or South Asia, we know all these artists. We know what they're doing. You know? This is not new, in that sense. So then the question became, what is it that is imperative for us to be talking about here? And that's why I say, you know, the whole process didn’t have a lot of contradictory elements that it had to somehow synthesize, and incorporate. And so, the paradox was one way, in order to deal with it. And therefore the paradox of representation, and therefore No Country as a starting point. Almost like a palette cleanser, you know? For us to then start talking about the issues and identities and representations that we are engaged and committed to. So that’s where it came from. And the museum actually was quite open to that, which I found encouraging. Yeah. It is a process. I mean, it’s not just simply an exhibition. So, we have contributions where we have various people, you know, articulating their contexts and opinions from the region. Not scripted in any way. And also through various programs such as this, where we try and engage more. And for me, that’s interesting. I imagine for the museum it’s also interesting, in getting an understanding of proximity. It’s kind of like what I was talking about just now, you know, when you have that notion of the Other. In a way that is being, hopefully, actively deconstructed in this process, where we’re going to get intimate, and talk about this relationship. And therefore, we learn something from it. The reason why, for me, that’s interesting, is because I work pretty closely with artists. And so I need that direct relationship, in order to start that communication process. And that’s kind of become incorporated in this. I don’t think I’m still answering your question.

**Doryun Chong:** I’m listening. Well, perhaps I would also love to hear from Pandit and Parul, now, being positioned in your own locations, right? And I think you were definitely thinking about, and you already made a suggestion to the earlier figures, say, from the early 20th century, that teachers or pioneers of modern art, who are very important in the art history of each nation, right? And we’re temporally and culturally situated at a different moment, but I am getting the impression that that trajectory that is nation-specific is an important one in your understanding of your contemporary condition. So, with that in mind, and in looking at a project such as No Country that was initiated by, at least allegedly, a global institution located in New York, then how do you understand that, or what are your impressions, or what are your anxieties, perhaps?

**Pandit Chanrochanakit:** It’s really exciting to see that what's going on, I think is the so-called transversality, you know, the junction, or more of things that are happening around. I think it’s an opportunity to bring together different practices and notions of art, and I think that it’s a possibility to create something, so-called post-national identity, which is really important for us to understand, what is important for us as human beings. So, art of this kind of project somehow envisions what is coming out for the next generation of artists, or people, you know, we might call them global citizens, we might call them diaspora—I don’t know. But it just something that emerges, and they are already there. And we are a part of it. Though my generation is quite limited to the space of so-called Thailand, but I’ve been abroad, I’ve been to many exhibitions. So do my generations. So I think many of my friends, curators, artists from Southeast Asia, we learn a lot from each other, and these kinds of projects somehow draw us together. And as I mentioned in the last session of my talk that new networks are emerging, from art scholars, curators, you know, artists. And some people from outside the field of the arts as well. So, I think
this is really interesting to see what’s coming out. I mean, we cannot predict what is coming out, but we can get a sense that something is changing, and it’s already changed. We don't know. It might be something like Raymond Williams’s so-called structures of feeling that is happening around. And it’s not something that we can name now, but maybe ten years later, we come back, and you know, and see what we did, and what we had done for today, and we get a sense, “Oh, that is what we are talking about 20 years ago.”

Parul Dave-Mukherji: Well, you know, I was really struck by the presentation that you made, Pandit, about your early modernism. And there’s such strong parallel between the state of art at that time in India and in Thailand. Especially I think in India, it was somebody like Havell, who was a British administrative officer, who was at the helm of this whole move towards Indian cultural nationalism. It was he who actually prompted Indian artists, who were actually far more derivative of what was happening in the colonial art schools, and it was Havell who was actually instructing these artists that, “Look, you guys have to be authentic. I mean, you turn to your own past. Why are you just, you know, mindlessly aping the West?” So, I think a similar phenomenon was unfolding in Thailand, and it’s quite interesting. I think, the work by John Clarke, for example, is so important, because he actually maps these comparative art histories. So, one has much to learn from each other’s art histories. Now, can I turn to those three questions that were raised?

Doryun Chong: Please. Yeah.

Parul Dave-Mukherji: I was thinking about how to address them, and I thought that your question one, and three, were closely interrelated, especially in the context of what is happening in the Indian subcontinent. The impact of the art market in decentering the art world, and the role of diaspora. And I think it was in 1990s, it was the Indian diaspora which really began to take a keen interest in buying modernist artworks. And that kind of catapulted Indian contemporary art and Indian modern art into some kind of a global stage. And from that point onwards there was no looking back. And that really acted as a catalyst. Which is quite interesting. Like, the location was actually happening outside the country. So, the 1990s was a very important period. And of course, there is a very—how do I put it?—fraught relationship vis-a-vis the national modern. I mean, on one hand, of course, it’s only in the 1990s it was seen as a repressive category. Before that, a lot of people thought that “Oh, this is what is going to protect us from the onslaught coming from the West?” So, for a long time, even our leading art critics, like Geeta Kapur, were hanging onto the national modern as some kind of a protective framework from where to withstand this kind of, you know, pressure for conformism, which is coming Euro-American world. But now, of course, everything has changed, because after the 1990s, I think economic liberalization completely changed the dynamics of the art world, in that sense. And talking about the anxieties, my anxiety, vis-a-vis contemporary Indian art at the moment, I see a sharp disjunction between the way in which practice is shaping, which is far more experimental, avant-garde, and really showing a kind of new kind of self-confidence. But when it comes to art writing, there is still a sense of falling back upon some earlier model. And that seems to be quite worrying. And I also feel that as far as the art schools is concerned, it’s so much, still, being
controlled by the metropolitan centers in the Western world. And I think it’s very important to perhaps have important intervention at that level, to really make a difference. Your curatorial intervention is already kind of making a step towards a direction. But I think unless a major move is done to kind of shake up the way in which one is theorizing . . . In fact, that’s where Asia as a method becomes very critical to the whole project, you know? So that one can really intervene at the level of theoretical constructions, and so on.

**Doryun Chong:** So, can I push a little bit? You may not have the answer already, but what form might this intervention take? And I understand the theoretical one is something that is obviously possible. But you know, not just because I’m an institutional curator, but you know, when we’re talking about the market and artist practices, obviously there are these containers, or mediums of institutions, whether it’s in the form of fair, or a museum, or spaces, need to play a role in there. So, I don’t know if, when you speak about intervention, if you think in those terms as well?

**Parul Dave-Mukherji:** Yeah. For example, in Delhi, there was this short-lived Delhi Biennale Society, which started off maybe 10, 12 years ago with a lot of utopian—I mean, it seems very utopian today—enthusiasm for setting up something new and engaging with the public. But ever since the art fairs have come up, since last, maybe, seven, eight years, it has really made a lot of people sit up and take notice of what’s happening. Because it’s really a new, how do I say it?, ethnographic phenomenon, vis-a-vis the audience, the spectators which are actually emerging in huge numbers. So, even those who are very critical of art fairs as purely commercial spaces, you know, to be completely rejected, now have to take cognizance of this new phenomenon, because it’s really, in a sense, making a huge contribution towards democratizing the art world. So, each year, I’m actually very interested, very much interested, in seeing what are the new kind of questions which are being asked by the audience. I think each year, the number mounts, and there’s a new exposure to the art world. And I think that every art fair also has a speaker’s forum, which is the conference component. And the idea is to make even theoretical ideas accessible to the public. And I think it’s very important and interesting how critics and curators, and art historians are coming under the pressure to speak to the audience. I think that is a very healthy sign of what I understand as democratization, you know, and recognition of this new audience.

**Doryun Chong:** Firoz, I think I have to turn it to you, to hear your experience as an artist, who also has navigated these various contexts.

**Firoz Mahmud:** Well, I left Bangladesh 11 years before. I go back to Bangladesh fairly often, though, to meet family and friends. But from my experience, what I realized about . . . You’re telling about the diasporic thing, diaspora artists. So, aside from Jewish diaspora people, I think there are a lot of diasporic Asian artists living out of Asia, in Europe or the United States. A lot of Bangladeshi people, they moved out of Bangladesh in 1930s and ’40s. When I first traveled to London, then I noticed that there was a huge Bangladeshi community, a place that is called Brick Lane, in Tower Hamlets. So, when I went there, then I found lot of people, they looked like Bangladeshi, or looked Indian. But they couldn’t recognize me, whether I came from
Bangladesh, or from Brazil, or from somewhere else. So, they totally changed, because they would be the third or fourth generation Bangladeshi people. So, among them, there are a lot of younger generation, they studied art. But then they never came back to Bangladesh. What happens, like, among the artists, like Runa Islam is maybe second or third generation Bangladeshi living in London. But except, then, Runa, there are a lot of other artists. They studied art. But their nationality or identity is totally lost. And even when I went to New York, then I noticed that there are a lot of Bangladeshi artists, they studied there. And they changed their identity, or culture. So, like them, even I found during the ’70s, or ’60s, even ’50s, a lot of NGOs, a lot of Dutch people, they brought Bangladeshi children to foster in the Netherlands. So, I found a lot of diasporic Bangladeshi. So, among them, they studied art, and they just practiced art, but they never came back to Bangladesh. So, how do you tap in? We have a long gap, to be established from Bangladeshi community to Bangladesh. Soon after the independence, it is like slow to establish our contemporary art or culture, because of the situation that people are not coming back. Like, in India, I noticed that a lot of Indian diasporic or Immigrated Indians, they came back. And they are just as flourishing, their careers, like I forgot the name of Subodh Gupta’s wife . . . Bharti Kher. I think other curators . . . There’s been a lot of Asian, or European-Indian, or European-American, they are just coming back, turning back to India. So, what it happens. Like, they’re establishing the contemporary art and contemporary culture. So, they are so internationally, inter-art community, arts . . . And it’s going to be more developed. So, it’s, even in, I think in Hong Kong, they are just come soon after they study, they come back. So, other artists, like in Singapore, I knew Sookoon Ang; like her, a lot of artists, they come back to their country. So, that’s how they can develop practicing their art, and who are involved with theory, or curatorial stuff. So, they came back, then they establish the contemporary art and culture. So we have a little kind of gap that we couldn’t develop, our contemporary art. So the artists, they go out of Bangladesh, then they study, and then soon after their art education, they just skip living there. They’re either in the States, or in Europe. So it’s like the project, the exhibition, there’s the way of the process of curating the exhibition, visiting each and every country, and meeting the artists, and being involved with the artists, and selecting the artists, there’s the kind of good encouragement for artists, for particularly younger artists, that artists or curators or the art community are just making in a group, and they’re just kind of having some unity. And being encouraging to present somewhere else. So, it’s a good way of presenting on artists. So, it’s a very good thing that not only diasporic artists will go and flourish their career out of Bangladesh, out of their own country, but it’s good to exhibit, or to doing something, some activities in their own country. And this exhibition is a very positive thing for each and every country’s younger artists. So, I think, immigrant artists or diasporic artists, it’s a good way to explore themselves, and be involved in their own country, coming back to their own country, and just doing something else, to the migrated country.

Doryun Chong: You made the comparison between the Indian situation, and Bangladeshi situation, even though they are two just neighboring countries. But also, you have this experience in the U.K., as well as in Japan. And for many Asian-born artists who choose to travel, and live, and get educated in other places, they often go to the U.K. or other European countries, or North American countries, or maybe Australia. But Japan is not the most popular choice. So, I would also be curious to hear about why you made that choice, and how that experience compared to your experience in the U.K.
**Firoz Mahmud:** Always, from my childhood, I wanted to study in the U.K., because we had, like, in Bangladesh, traditionally, people would like to study for higher education in the U.K. There’s just a common tradition. Gradually, in the ’80s or ’90s, people are just moving towards the United States, and some people are moving too. Maybe a few of the people are moving to Japan to study, because soon after the independence, the Japanese government started to provide grants and fellowships for students. But for my case, after the formal art education I went to, Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, where I was given a grant, a fellowship. Then I was there for two years. Then my family was involved in Japan. Traditionally, my family had some kind of business, job, and involvement in Japan. So, I was kind of curious to do something, to research or study for short time, for a year. Then I started to, after one year. Then I decided I should extend my duration of stay there. Then I did my masters and my Ph.D. That’s how it happened. I started to get a little opportunity, gradually, so I was thinking, it’s good to be there in Japan. But the only thing is that Japan is a very isolated country. It’s far from everywhere. So, it’s really difficult to connect with the rest of the world. But my interest was because I started to like the Japanese culture, and art. And my painting was kind of related to Japanese woodblock printing. That is the reason I started to, like . . .

**Doryun Chong:** Parul was already beginning to answer this question a little bit, but I wonder if I can actually push a little bit the first question, of the changing nature of the market. And certainly, if we look at contemporary art-related literature in general, market-related literature, the coverage is certainly the majority of it, I think we can say. So, certainly something is happening in terms of the contemporary art market in the wider Asia. But the question is, is it actually enabling a decentering of the contemporary art world? And Parul, you started talking about certain roles, the void that these more private ventures or commercial bodies are filling while the national or state institutions are failing. So, if it isn’t necessarily decentering, at least some certain transformation in the nature of how institutions and market relate to each other is definitely happening. So, I would like to hear from people, from their own contexts, not to sound too nation-specific about it, but Thailand obviously has its own manifestations. India certainly does. Singapore and Hong Kong certainly do. So, I would love to hear everybody’s further observations.

**Parul Dave-Mukherji:** I just wanted to give you the instance of this meteoric rise of Subodh Gupta, which really happened in this changed circumstances of the early ’90s. That was a time, as I said, private art galleries were mushrooming in city of Delhi. And you must be knowing about Nature Morte Gallery, which was run by Peter Nagy. And it was actually Peter Nagy’s selection of Subodh Gupta who actually offered, for the first time, Subodh Gupta a place in Nature Morte Gallery in Delhi, which kind of got him this global stage, and global visibility. And such a thing would have been unthinkable, just maybe a few years ago, because the whole art world was still very much in control of, as I said, a very tight network of, you know, critics and artists, who were acting as gatekeepers of what should be authentic contemporary art. And partly also to do with the impact of the Internet, information technology, where you know, India started making big strides. And that greater connectivity allowed even Raqs Media Collective to
completely bypass these so-called guardians who controlled who could get entry into the art world. So, now this entire space was opened up for them, and they could be directly in touch with the important global players of the wider art world. And it is through that connection that they actually got new opportunities, which would have been unthinkable before. So, it has made a huge impact, in that sense.

**Pandit Chanrochanakit:** I just wrote a market report for art fair, in some country nearby. I stated that the art market in Thailand is quite limited. The majority of the sales are the portion made by a very modernist approach, like painting. Not so many conceptual artists can make a good sale, only those who went to international art festivals and made it through the museum, and, that needs a lot of effort. And it needs a lot of time to be an exhibition artist, in terms of Thailand. Years ago, I talked to a Chinese curator, in China, the mainland, I mean. He said that, “Well, you don’t have that many ex-pats,” you know, those who move from Thailand to stay abroad. “You don’t have Thai collectors. So, you have to build that up.” So, in this sense, I think, the art market in Thailand is still limited to only in particular contemporary art, still limited to museums, private collections, a really limited number. Not that wide, compared with other nations in our region. I think for example India, and Chinese artists, I sense a lot of collectors from the diaspora community. But Thai artists I don’t think there is a Thai who lives abroad, who collects Thai art, or consumes Thai art, just because of longing for home, right? Only some collectors in Thailand, yeah. A really, really small community in Thailand. Most of them who buy contemporary Thai art are business tycoons, or you know, collectors who know a lot about what’s going on in the international art realm, not limited to Thailand. But local Thai tycoons, Thai businessmen, they would buy modern art, rather than contemporary art. Yeah, this is different. And those ex-pats who came to Thailand have a tendency to buy the old traditional style, rather than the contemporary one, which is quite unintelligible for them. They don’t know what this contemporary art is talking about. It’s not beautiful at all, it’s just junk they cannot put as decorative things in their home. That’s why, part of the reason. Yes.

**Firoz Mahmud:** Should I tell something about my country’s art sales? Okay. I can say, selling contemporary art in my country is zero, I can say. So, the thing is that a lot of artists sell a lot of artwork that is only traditional painting. Just classical painting. Not classical painting, just painting. The collectors, we cannot sell. Collectors don’t say themselves collectors. They say “buyer.” So, they mean they buy, that’s it. They never share to any exhibitions, give, or re-exhibit the artworks. But recently, one or two tycoons, are just buying, just fairly limited. But thing is, the artists have to know them or they have to know the artist. So, that’s how we talk, and it happens. But we don’t have, actually, curators. But a few theorists, art historians, and art curators, they studied outside [Bangladesh] but never came back. I can say one of the persons, who was a writer, Hammad can say, Naeem Mohaiemen. He was a super-active person. He was involved with writing, doing something with a curatorial focus. But he stopped doing this thing. But he himself chose to practice his artwork. So, he’s exhibiting. So he’s not involved anymore, to promote the artists who are like him. Other art historians, they study, but they don’t have the ability to curate an exhibition, or promote art to the collectors. But I think it will happen gradually, to develop the art market. I hope in a few years, it will develop. Yeah.
Doryun Chong: Well, I think . . . No, go ahead.

June Yap: Well, one thing I observed just now in the second half, the panel in the afternoon, that was kind of interesting, was that we had Parul and Pandit in a way representing, in some sense, India and Thailand, both of which are nations in South and Southeast Asia that really internationalized, in terms of contemporary art practice, compared to the rest of the region. They were the most successful ones. The rest of the region has not quite caught up, actually, with what Thailand and India managed to achieve. And I thought it was interesting that both of them were in the same panel. And so, Singapore, inasmuch as, yeah, certain kinds of visibility, in certain aspects, in terms of the market, of its own artworks, does not have the same kind of achievements as India and Thailand. And, of course there are certain aspirations, but I think when it comes to the market, the market already presupposes inherently an unstable situation. The market is not stable. It is characterized by rises and falls. And so that I think is inevitable. I would like to turn the question then to not just look at market, in terms of economic value, but also as resource, which is the resource that artists, that art professionals, curators, writers, employ or use, in order to achieve certain other things. And therefore, it has certain other value, besides just economic value alone. But I was thinking down further, to turn the question around, is to to ask, can institutions also destabilize contemporary art practice? And how they actually do so. Looking at then, institutions and the market in kind of a commensurable sort of way, we are looking at the things that legitimize value. Whether it’s social value, political value, what is, you know, considered popular, economic, historical, art-historical, and how perhaps, you know, it’s not just in spite of the fact that that economic value is the one that gets most reported in media. I think we need to be looking at the various other ways in which legitimacy is being conferred. And how that is, in fact, in contestation with economic value as well.

Doryun Chong: I think what I have done here with this group of people isn’t quite summarizing or resolving, but just totally blew up the can to open a lot more questions. But I think it is very clear to me, that there are at least two different things going on here. One is the necessity to constantly theorize, and question these categories, in order to make them not fixed, and too stable. But at the same time there are unique national, or at least local, situations where different forces are in play. And this has become very clear. So, obviously, these are two often-unrelated situations that need to be related in a much better way for theoretical productivity, as well as practical applications. So, perhaps I hope that the final conversation between Ming and Hammad can get closer to some sort of resolution. So, I’m putting all that weight upon the last two. Thank you.