



Safe Havens -Freedom Talks

Our new programming series Safe Havens — Freedom Talks series is closely connected to the annual global Safe Havens conference which we have organized in Malmö since 2013, and in Cape Town, South Africa in 2019. The Freedom Talks series will once a month focus on issues regarding threats towards artistic freedom, free press and intangible heritage. Guests in the Freedom Talks series are highly knowledgeable and prolific actors in the global Arts Rights Justice sector fighting for artistic freedom.

You will be able to watch live-streamed versions of the talks through our website and social media channels, eventually opening up to an audience and on-site participants when the Covid-19 risks and restrictions are over. Keep your eyes open in our channels for updates. The talks will be in—or translated to English.

[Coming up this week, Friday September 25:](#)

Safe Havens –

Freedom Talks@ArtsEquator

After a noteworthy conversation held at the Museum of Movements with Ramy Essam and a number of experts on the Balaha case, we are now pleased to present the second event in the Safe Havens Freedom Talks series. This time we offer an extremely interesting streamed panel discussion titled *Arts and Culture in Southeast Asia: Proxy Wars*.

The event is produced in collaboration with **ArtsEquator.com** and it will be live streamed on Friday, September 25 at 2.30 pm CET / 8.30 pm Singapore time on:

<https://vimeo.com/event/50163>

<https://www.facebook.com/rorelsernasmuseum/> www.rorelsernasmuseum.se

<https://artsequator.com/freedomtalks/>

Note that you will be able to ask questions to the panel during the conversation, through our facebook site <https://www.facebook.com/rorelsernasmuseum/>

Freedom Talks@ArtsEquator

The 11 countries that make up Southeast Asia are marked by great diversity. The region was the seat of great empires such as the Majapahit and Champa empires. As part of ancient trade routes, it is marked by the influences of China, India, the Middle East and later, Western imperialism. These myriad inheritances are evident in the religious and cultural practices found across the region. It is reflected in the faces of the people who live in cosmopolitan cities as well as its rural regions. In terms of governance, there are democracies of different tones, authoritarian regimes, historically socialist nations and even absolute monarchies. Significant economic gaps exist between countries, but in-country income disparity is gaining urgent attention too.

Confrontations over arts and culture in the region take many forms. Western colonialists prohibited traditional practices, the Japanese Occupation implemented controls on arts and media. Post-independence, successive national governments across the region have continued to exert control over artistic expression, to varying degrees. The methods used and the rationale given continue to evolve. The underlying conditions of these controversies over arts and culture suggest that often, these works become the proxy battles for larger confrontations within society, be it over political power, power to define national identity, to assert moral/religious power rather than something inherent to the work of art. And yet, the regions' arts and culture makers continue to carve out invigorating spaces and practices that push boundaries.

Our panel of four Southeast Asian speakers, **Ann Lee** (Malaysia), **Katrina Stuart Santiago** (The Philippines), **T. Sasitharan** (Singapore) and **R. Sivarasa** (Malaysia) will share case studies of recent arts and culture censorship, and share their insights into the underlying reasons and meanings of these outbreaks. Special attention will be paid to the differences and similarities across the region, when it comes to the limits on freedom of expression in the arts in Southeast Asia. The panel on Friday September 25 will be moderated by Kathy Rowland of **ArtsEquator.com**.

Artsequator is a digital media platform which covers arts and culture in Southeast Asia. Please visit the The ArtsEquator fundraising page : https://www.giving.sg/artsequator-ltd-/ctrl_s_artsequator

Also we recommend you read Kathy's article about why a platform like ArtsE is an essential part of the arts ecosystem,: <https://artsequator.com/artsequator-deadline-now/>

About the Talks

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The speakers @ArtsEquator



Kathy Rowland (Singapore), Moderator

Kathy Rowland is the Managing Editor of ArtsEquator.com, which she co-founded with Jenny Daneels. The site is dedicated to supporting and promoting arts criticism with a regional perspective in Southeast Asia. Kathy has worked in the arts for over 25 years, running arts and culture programs and arts media platforms. She has edited several volumes of plays by leading playwrights in Malaysia and Singapore. Kathy has written widely on the politics of culture and, with a special interest in arts censorship. Kathy has also produced theatre and visual arts events in Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, New York, Australia and Thailand.



Ann Lee (Malaysia), Panellist

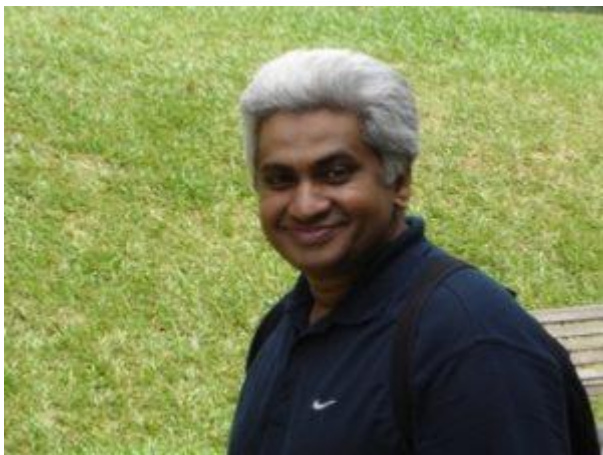
Born in Tawau, Malaysia, Ann Lee is a playwright, and a researcher of political humour in theatre, television and social media, including contemporary indigenous satire. She earned her PhD in Southeast Asian studies at the National University of Singapore. Ann is a past Fellow of the Asia Leadership Fellow Program (Japan Foundation and International House of Japan). She is currently working on two independent research projects; the first concerns 'freedom of expression' and faith-

based texts; the second as supervising researcher for the Censorship section of online Malaysian arts archive www.myartmemoryproject.com. Her latest play is available in Southeast Asian plays (Aurora Metro, 2016)



Katrina Stuart Santiago (The Philippines), Panellist

Katrina Stuart Santiago is an independent cultural critic and opinion writer from Manila, with a decade of work in print and online. She holds a Masters Degree in Philippine Studies from the University of the Philippines, and her critical work on theater, film, visual arts, and popular culture was published in *Rebellions: Notes on Independence* and *Romances: Variations on Love* by the Ateneo de Naga University Press in 2017. Her role as critic has fueled her activism, which cuts across issues of cultural labor, systemic dysfunctions, and institutional crises. She is contributing writer for CNN Philippines, and is teacher of multimedia arts at the College of St. Benilde-School of Design and the Arts. She maintains the review website gaslight.online, the opinion page disquiet.ph, and has been writing at www.katrinasantiago.com since 2008. She is founder of PAGASA-People for Accountable Governance and Sustainable Action, which seeks to build a new civil society for the urgencies of the present.



T. Sasitharan (Singapore), Panellist

T. Sasitharan (Sasi) is Co-Founder and Director of the Intercultural Theatre Institute. With the late Kuo Pao Kun, he conceived and started ITI in 2000. He was Artistic Director of *Substation* (1995-

2000), Singapore's only independent arts centre to date, and was the Theatre and Visual Arts critic of The Straits Times (1988-1995). Between 1983 and 1988, he taught Philosophy at the National University of Singapore. For 40 years he has worked in theatre as an actor/performer, director and producer. He writes and lectures on art, theatre training, performance practice and Singapore culture and received the Cultural Medallion in 2012.



R.Sivarasa (Malaysia), Panellist

Sivarasa graduated with a First Class Honours degree in genetics from the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. He proceeded to study law at St. Anne's College, Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. With other activists, he founded Malaysia's leading human rights advocacy organization SUARAM in 1989 to campaign for the repeal of the infamous Internal Security Act. After the Reformasi movement ignited in 1998, he entered the political arena first with Parti Rakyat Malaysia and then Parti Keadilan Rakyat. He is now a third term Member of Parliament and currently serves the constituency of Sg Buloh in Selangor. He has been a member of Keadilan's central leadership council from 2003 to date and also served as a Vice-President from 2003 to 2010. He is married to Anne James, a prominent actress in the Malaysian theatre scene who won Best Solo Performer in the Boh Cameronian Arts Awards in 2003. He is also a cancer survivor having been diagnosed with metastatic medullary thyroid cancer in 2000.

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