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The third avant-garde : contemporary art from Southeast Asia recalling tradition

Veiga de Oliveira Matos Guilherme, L.

Citation
Veiga de Oliveira Matos Guilherme, L. (2018, April 24). *The third avant-garde : contemporary art from Southeast Asia recalling tradition*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/62200

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Author: Veiga, Leonor
Title: The Third avant-garde : contemporary art from Southeast Asia recalling tradition
Date: 2018-04-24

The Third Avant-garde

The idea of a Third Avant-garde proposed in this dissertation follows from theoretical discourses which suggest the avant-garde project as unfinished and as a historical force. Building on these premises, I propose that an avant-garde was conjured in Southeast Asia and that its most striking feature is the presence of fragments from traditions.

The Third Avant-garde phenomenon is defined by several aspects. First, it employs fragments of traditional arts. This is done not solely to convey origin but, also to manifest a need for social cohesion with local and global communities. Second, the Third Avant-garde complies with avant-garde's fundamental features as defined by German literary critic Peter Bürger—anti-institutionalism, the liaison with life, and the blurring of high and low cultures. Third, the Third Avant-garde has its own institutional program—the recapturing of traditions' vanguard stance and the end of taxonomical divisions that refuse the contact between art and ethnography. And fourth, the Third Avant-garde attacks the Western monopoly of the avant-garde, which had yet to allow 'non-Western' societies to participate.

This complex phenomenon took place in Southeast Asia (and in other regions of the world) roughly since the early 1990s, when 'non-Western' artists started 'going global' to exhibit in large scale shows in the region and beyond. Without exposure, these practices would have remained undetected. Yet, despite great visibility, avant-garde's critical characteristic of deferred temporality has contributed to the Third Avant-garde's deficient understanding. This shortage relates to the (Third) avant-garde's inherent unorthodoxy which results in the deferral of its theorization.

Like the previous two avant-gardes,[1] the Third Avant-garde uses decontextualisation and appropriation as conceptual strategies, and the ready-made and montage as its material expressions. Thus, while the Third Avant-garde comments on the earlier events, it transcends them. This is done because the disciplines of art history and anthropology had not yet found common territory within (modern/conceptual) artistic practice. The Third Avant-garde thus contributes to the meeting of these two disciplines, and simultaneously engenders tensions in the taxonomical division between art and ethnography, art museum and ethnographic museum and proposes that traditional and conceptual can coeval.

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1 I consider that there were two prior manifestations which it continues and simultaneously contests.

2.1 The Avant-garde

In every era the attempt must be made to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it.[2]
Walter Benjamin

In this dissertation, I propose to apply Benjamin's words to what may seem an antinomy: to combine tradition, a category (most commonly) associated with reactionary forces, and avant-garde, a model rooted in radicalism. This combination exists despite avant-garde's customary insurgence against the traditional. The apparently antagonistic pair has come together in the space of contemporary art in Southeast Asia since the 1980s, when the principal energies of modernism started to wane and were replaced by postmodern tendencies.[3] Trying to explain postmodernism, Poshyananda said:

> Often postmodernism has referred to contradictory definitions associated with a certain constellation of styles and tones in cultural works: pastiche, kitsch, a mixture of forms and styles, cultural recombination, a relish for copies and repetition, revivalism as well as a rejection of history, and a combination of high and low art.[4]

Poshyananda's description alludes to some attributes of the avant-garde, especially in avant-garde's undermining of individual authorship and authenticity (relevant to tradition) and the recombination, or blur, of high and low art (tradition found in the latter). In fact, these avant-garde practices—those that merge art and tradition—were critical to postmodern practices that celebrated tradition. In terms of the relation to history, postmodernism and avant-garde diverge; avant-garde denies history, acts in the now and works toward projecting a better future, while postmodernism is said to recuperate the past in a non-critical way.

So, the introduction of tradition *through* avant-garde attributes and *within* postmodern practices demonstrates that traditions constitute one of the most concrete and tangible kinds of co-temporality,[5] and for that reason, remain issues of the present. It also demonstrates that there are multiple reasons for traditions' (re)introduction: this ingredient is present in both cases, but the two currents have different programs.

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2 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (London: Pimlico, 1999), 247.

3 See Apinan Poshyananda, "Modern Art in Thailand in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" (Cornell University Press, 1990), 576-577.

4 Poshyananda, Modern Art in Thailand: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992), 191–92.

5 In accordance with Smith's definition of contemporary art.

How can the event of avant-garde through tradition be explained? On the one hand, traditions' presence in avant-garde practices relates to the "postmodern logic of renovation rather than radical innovation" because postmodernism is characterized by a "willingness to revisit the past."[6] On the other hand, traditions' use is in itself a critique of the avant-garde: it can be proposed as an avant-garde continuation, an extension, because it "affirm[s] some of [avant-garde's] characteristics while critiquing others."[7] This conjuncture is reinforced by the fact that, as affirmed by Flores, "artists belonging to post-colonial cultures are involved in negotiating both Western modernism and the indigenous traditions of art,"[8] which they perform as innovating agents, and not just as traditions' passive recipients.

In 1997, Supangkat proposed that to analyze so-called 'non-Western' contemporary art—which he situates regionally after the developments in the mid-1970s—two aspects would have to be taken into consideration: the presence of postmodern ideas of diversity, difference, localness and traditions, and an opposition to Western modernism that was regionally becoming an institutional style, due to official academic and state support.[9]

Likewise, in 1996, Kapur observed for an eventual avant-garde in Asia to take place, it was imperative that it would be simultaneously a critical voice of internal and external conservatisms:

> In order for an African or Asian avant-garde to come to its own, it must make two moves simultaneously: one, dismantle hegemonic and by-now-conservative features of the national culture itself; and two, dismantle the burdensome aspect of Western art, including its endemic vanguardism.[10]

The two aspects advanced by Supangkat correspond to Kapur's positions: first, the attack on internal conservatisms which was largely done through the postmodern ideas Supangkat addressed, and secondly, the opposition to Western modernism rooted in an internal and an external relevance. Modernism (in art and architecture) was hegemonic in the region since the early-1970s. It was being disseminated internally as a stable assertion of nation and identity, and externally as the evidence of belonging in the contemporary

6 Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, 2nd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 276.

7 Ann Gibson, "Avant-Garde," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 156.

8 Patrick D. Flores, "Revisiting Tradition and the Incommensurate Contemporary," *Broadsheet* 41, no. 4 (2012): 238.

9 See Jim Supangkat, *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond* (Jakarta: Indonesia Fine Arts Foundation, 1997), 65.

10 Geeta Kapur, "Dismantling the Norm," in *Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions*, ed. Apinan Poshyananda (New York: Asia Society, 1996), 67.

world of free trade and liberalism.[11] This is the context which spurred the student protests in Southeast Asia, specifically in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand between 1974 and 1976. Flores notes that Western art, "as interpreted by an elite of tastemakers," conduced to modernity: the "policy [was] to foster modernism as a trajectory to an international world."[12] If the major claim of these artists' groups was to end subordination to the Western canon, the redemptive gesture proposed was to connect art with life, "a recovery of art from the death machine of the state and the art establishment,"[13] which also condemned traditional arts to the status of 'invented traditions'. Thus, "The avant-garde's appropriation of the indigenous or the native was a way of proposing modernity of postcolonial subjectivity."[14] This is why Supangkat affirmed that contemporary art (post-1970) shifted towards the formation of a cultural identity in detriment of the national one.[15] Still, Supangkat continued, while the search for a national identity continued, the way it was constructed changed. This shift also marked the emergence of critical thought towards the whole tradition of modern art and thus,

> This [contemporary art] discourse on low art attempts to demystify the situation [the separation of high and low art] by pointing out that the actual traditional culture has been marginalized, not only by high art, or Western art, modern art and international art, but also by the (locally formed) concept of 'traditional culture' itself.[16]

I propose that the 'programmatic vanguardism' of Western art pointed out by Kapur was, due to postmodern relativism, being questioned. All these considerations lead to the following question: *can postmodernism in a Southeast Asian context be seen as an avant-garde?* To give a preliminary answer to this question: not precisely, although postmodernism (which contains traditions, because it questions Modernism's hegemony), used avant-garde *premises* (e.g. the immersion of art in life by means of traditions), and avant-garde *techniques* (such as appropriation, quotation, assemblage and montage to name a few). Later, these aspects contributed to the emergence of another kind of avant-garde—one that attacked postmodernism's uncritical position towards traditions.

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11 Flores refers to state sponsored construction of buildings such as cultural centers and thematic parks that fostered modernism as a trajectory to the national and the ethnic. Flores, "First Person Plural: Manifestos of the 1970s in Southeast Asia," in *Global Studies: Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture*, ed. Hans Belting et al. (Karlsruhe: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 224–27.

12 Flores, 225–26.

13 Flores, 263.

14 Flores, 263.

15 Supangkat, *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond*, 80.

16 Supangkat, 84.

In fact, artists from Asia have effectively put forward an avant-garde—which I termed Third Avant-garde—that significantly corresponds to Poshyananda's, Supangkat's, Flores's and Kapur's considerations. The artists' strategy is somewhat surprising, especially if one takes the European and the American avant-gardes as starting points. While for the aforementioned the rejection of tradition was vital, in a Southeast Asian context such is not the case because, as Flores argues, "The definition of visual art was adapted without conceptual thoughts, without consideration of aesthetic acculturation."[17] Thus, the Third Avant-garde responds to this lack of criticality while it relies heavily on traditions' discursive capacities.

2.1.1 Proposing another Avant-garde

In the opening essay for *Documenta11*, the artistic director Okwui Enwezor advanced the question: "What is an avant-garde today?" To determine this, and given that avant-garde today is, affirms Enwezor, "so thoroughly disciplined and domesticated [that] a whole different set of regulatory and resistance models has to be found."[18] So, one should look not into the field of contemporary art, but into the field of culture (i.e. traditions) and politics. He argues that the history of the avant-garde (especially those of the past like Futurism, Dada and Surrealism) was disseminated through institutionalized discourses that have especially focused in its conflicting relation with bourgeois society, reason for a unified vision. He admits, "the history of the avant-garde falls within the epistemological scheme of grand narratives."[19] I agree with Enwezor; the avant-garde remains a Western construct/monopoly, where 'non-Western' practices have yet to be included.

Similar claims of Western domination of the avant-garde and its residence outside the field of art have been made by Kapur. In 1996, when advancing an eventual avant-garde for Asia, Kapur mentioned "that the model for the avant-garde may have to come from social studies."[20] Equally, she accused American art historian Hal Foster of Western centrism, especially because he was informed that (by then) Latin American cultures had developed a radical agenda and a cultural dynamic independent from their Euro-American antecedents.[21] To her, Foster's position on the postmodern avant-garde, which he legitimized as neo-avant-garde in 1994,[22] could permit the

17 Flores, "First Person Plural," 233.

18 Okwui Enwezor, "The Black Box," in *Documenta 11_ Platform 5: Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. Heike Ander and Nadja Rottner (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 45.

19 Enwezor, 45.

20 Kapur, "Dismantling the Norm," 65.

21 Kapur, "Dismantled Norms: Apropos Other Avantgardes," in *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Caroline Turner (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005), 57–58.

22 See Hal Foster, "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?," *October* The Duchamp

opening of avant-garde's spectrum to 'non-Western' initiatives. She affirmed that his position could be "extended to speak about avant-garde initiatives in the non-Western world,"[23] and went on proposing an avant-garde for Asia, but addressed some conditions:

> [S]uch an avant-garde would have to treat the avant-garde principle itself as an institutionalised phenomenon, recognising the monstrous assimilative capacity of the museum, the gallery, the critical apparatus, the curators and the media.[24]

This is the initial premise of the proposed Third Avant-garde: that the theoretical discourses on the avant-garde (the historical and the neo-avant-garde) have so far remained Western-centric, and its protagonists have been predominantly white men. Meanwhile, as pointed out by American art historian Anne Gibson, women and the people of "non-European descent [remain] art's 'object-matter' [rather] than its makers."[25] These authors' affirmations serve to remind us that (Southeast) Asian artists have had to establish an avant-garde that equally combated the hegemony of Western dogma and the artworld: here resides an iconoclastic attitude toward the Western avant-garde, which is 'being treated as ethnographic source material' for their production (see Chapter 1).

It is thanks to its postmodern emergence—postmodernism was preoccupied with relativizing historical narratives, by contesting the lapses and prejudices of grand narratives—and its immersion in a postcolonial climate—postcolonial theories, which replace grand narratives with new ethical demands on historical interpretation, introduced the discourse of the 'Other'—that the Third Avant-garde introduced traditional arts in artistic discourse. What failed to be detected was that traditions were used critically: for the first time, 'non-Western' peoples were makers of avant-garde *through* their own cultural legacies. As will be demonstrated, even *traditions* (i.e. 'invented traditions') are subject to avant-garde's transgressions.

It is possible that artists did not have full conscience that avant-garde discourse was in itself a metanarrative, bound in ideas of the superior capacity of making new that has characterized Western civilizing discourses. In 2008, Indian art historian Partha Mitter suggested the existence of a historical critical consciousness in India:

> [T]he modernist revolution... gradually spread to other regions throughout the twentieth [century], shaping global perceptions of contemporary art

Effect (Autumn, 1994), no. 70 (1994): 5–32.

23 Kapur, "Dismantling the Norm," 67.

24 Kapur, 67.

25 Gibson, "Avant-Garde," 156.

> and literature, a transformation that has left few societies untouched.... One of the favorite projects of the colonial powers in the nineteenth century was to inculcate 'good taste' in the subject nations through the introduction of academic naturalism and classic standards. Therefore, the revolt of the Western avant-garde against academic naturalism and its attendant ideology was openly welcomed by the subject nations, who were concerned with formulating their own resistance to the colonial order.[26]

In Kapur's opinion, the national cause of resistance to colonial order deviated and deferred the event of an Indian avant-garde.[27] In its place, activity was concentrated on the effort to build a sense of nationalism, many times by recuperating traditions. Every time this phenomenon takes place (see Hobsbawm's theory of invented traditions), traditions were experienced as revolutionary precisely because they contained resistance to colonial supremacy. So, the artist that used traditions during the colonial period can in fact be considered as avant-garde.[28] One such example is the activity of Indian artist Jamini Roy (Beliatore, 1887-1992), who according to Mitter, used Bengali primitivism as modern critical discourse. His ruralism belongs to a current that emerged in 1920s India, a particular expression of a global response to modernity. This current creatively used the dynamics of modernity's dialectical relations: rural/urban, rural honesty/urban decadence. With his gesture, Mitter says, "Jamini Roy created an avant-garde art of a monumental simplicity and deep social commitment."[29] Fig. 2.1 shows Roy's depiction of a mother with her child, a universal topic, that he localized. Roy is suggesting the art world to accommodate the depictions of the 'Madonna' by Indian artists.

To propose a 'Third Avant-garde' I followed three procedures: first, I analyzed local circumstances; second, I revisited and extended the term 'avant-garde'; and third, I propose a program within the broader frame of avant-garde. With this, I hope to continue Kapur's and Mitter's claims for inclusiveness. To Mitter, the failure to recognize this possibility resides in the fact that relations between center and periphery are not resolved, only dissolved.[30] In my opinion, this negligence stems also from avant-garde's deferred temporality. So, I follow John Clark's remark that, when applied

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26 Partha Mitter, "Interventions: Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery," *Art Bulletin* XC, no. 4 (2008): 532.

27 See Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*, ed. Geeta Kapur (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000), 300.

28 See Thomas Docherty, ed., "Crisis in the Avant-Garde," in *Postmodernism: A Reader* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 217.

29 Mitter, "Interventions," 543.

30 See Mitter, "Interventions," 531–32.

to contexts other than the European and American where it emerged, the concept of "avant-garde must be theorised flexibly."[31] In my perception, the mission to open the discourse of avant-garde to 'non-Western' peoples' is plausible. The Third Avant-garde continues some aspects, like the attack on institutional discourse, while it also puts forward new ones.

Figure 2.1
Jamini Roy
Mother and Child
No date | Gouache on canvas | 76 x 41 cm | National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

2.1.2 What Does Avant-garde Signify?

In general terms, the term avant-garde came to be understood with artistic practices proposing new directions and breaking with past conventions in order to change society. As Romanian literary critic Matei Calinescu suggested,

> [T]he moderns favoured for the application of the agonistic metaphor of the 'avant-garde' (or 'advanced guard,' or 'vanguard') to various domains, including literature, the arts, and politics. The obvious military implications of the concept point quite aptly toward some attitudes and trends for

31 John Clark, *Modern Asian Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 217.

> which the avant-garde is directly indebted to the broader consciousness of modernity—a sharp sense of militancy, praise of nonconformism, courageous precursory exploration, and, on a more general plane, confidence in the final victory of time and immanence over traditions that try to appear as eternal, immutable, and transcendentally determined.[32]

Calinescu's description includes aspects of avant-garde as a practice—like the spirit of sacrifice, a non-conformist attitude, revealed in the constant (re)search for new with the intent to change life and society—but it says little about strategies developed by avant-garde artists, particularly Dada.

There are two main theoretical currents on avant-garde as phenomenon: the first, introduced by American art historian Clement Greenberg in 1939, regards anti-historicism as one of avant-garde's main features.[33] This vision was recovered in 1984 by Belgian film theorist Paul Willemen, who defined the avant-garde as "Tomorrow's art today."[34] He proposed an avant-garde for the 1980s as follows:

> [T]he new nascent avant garde... consists of precisely those films—and theories—which seek to challenge both the ossification of certain artistic procedures... together with the anti-historical tendency within the avant garde.[35]

Willemen recognized the importance for artistic discourse to combat conformism and fixity (that also characterizes invented traditions), while addressing the avant-garde project as related to history. In his view, "the very concept of avant-garde implies a set of historical relations."[36]

The second current regards the avant-garde as a method, a value, "a formula of practice,"[37] and regards its program as unfinished. This reading has several defenders: in 1994 Foster proposed that the 'neo-avant-garde' (also known as the American avant-garde) was symptomatic of the emergence of postmodernism;[38] Australian art historian John Clark understands that "Rather than ask what is avant-garde, it may be better to inquire into where avant-garde functions take place."[39] He situates an Asian avant-garde in mid-nineteenth

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32 Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 95.

33 See Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review*, 1939, http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/kitsch.html.

34 Paul Willemen, "An Avant Garde for the Eighties," *Framework* 0, no. 24 (Spring 1984): 55.

35 Willemen, 67.

36 Willemen, 55.

37 Foster, "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?," 13.

38 See Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 205.

39 Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, 217.

century Japan, in early-twentieth century India, or in contemporary Thailand, perhaps to demonstrate that avant-garde occurrences throughout time are not linear nor coincidental and result from local circumstances.[40] The author I am most interested in is Kapur, who in 1996 conflated both readings within *Traditions/Tensions*, thus refusing the Western monopoly on this (art historical) category. She contested its exclusiveness, observing that although Foster expanded on his definition of the neo-avant-garde in 1994,[41] his "own (Euro)Americanism, his indifference to non-Western ideologies of plural modernities/alternative vanguards,"[42] remained unabated. On this occasion, she advanced the mission of what I termed Third Avant-garde and formulated the artists' contribution for change: a double-dismantle against internal and external conservative forces. She proposed an Asian avant-garde as an agency born from history, a dialectical synthesis (practice) where contradictions are solved, thus allowing a conceptual move beyond the eclectic. That, she argues, constitutes a "defensive rearguard action."[43]

An important aspect of the avant-garde is its questioning of institutions, notably the museum of art. In Europe and America, where Modernism reached the museum and academia and became mainstream via the culture industry, avant-garde emerged as a revolt against this domination. In Asia, where museum culture remains incomplete (although it is following its own *parcours*), avant-garde has a different role. It directs its force to support the formation of a local art practice. This is what the Third Avant-garde proposes. If regarded as a series of historical events, the avant-garde brings us to renowned manifestations: Cubism emerged in reaction to the emergence of photography changing several painting conventions; Russian Constructivism called for the formation of a new society and integrated art at service of the revolution; the Dadaists and later the Surrealists revolted against expressionism in art.[44] The more prominent impact of Dada and Surrealists is bound to fundamental changes in the notion of art, the value of the art object, the process of art making, and the attack of art as an institution, including its organizational structures such as the museum, the exhibition and the market. The fact that the 'historical' movement introduced so many changes made its most renowned theorist, German literary critic Peter Bürger, affirm it as the one and only avant-garde, relegating all subsequent

40 See Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, 217.
41 See Foster, "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?"
42 Kapur, "Dismantled Norms," 57.
43 Kapur, "Dismantling the Norm," 63.
44 See Dietrich Scheunemann, "From Collage to the Multiple: On the Genealogy of Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde," in *Avant-Garde/Neo-Avant-Garde*, ed. Dietrich Scheunemann (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 17–28.

events to the realm of repetitions.[45] In fact, *repeating* is not contradictory to avant-garde's premises, as the remaking of some of its most important artworks attests.[46]

Since 1945, Dada activities re-emerged, after a twenty-year interruption in a politically troubled period in Europe. This period had seen World War I, the 1930s depression (that opened the path to the fascist campaign against 'degenerate art'), and the exile of many artists. Thus, the post-World War II avant-garde's recovery must be addressed as an historical operation: "What the neo-avant-garde of the 1950s and 1960s achieved, even if it were merely repeating the deeds and gestures of 1917, was to reconnect the contemporary development of the arts with the lost practice of the early decades."[47]

These initial considerations lead to the second way to conceive the avant-garde, as a historical force and with its own mission. If considered conceptually, it is possible to identify other avant-garde events (by definition, the avant-garde breaks with conventions, so it must be identified). Famously rejected by Bürger as a repetition "that is void of sense,"[48] his critics such as Foster affirm "the value of the construct of the avant-garde and the need for new narratives of its history."[49] His claim continues, as demonstrated by Enwezor's, Kapur's, Mitter's and Gibson's notations.

I approach avant-garde functionally, as a method, a creative practice deriving from locally contextualized historical forces: it emerges in moments of conformism and oppression, and it reveals a (re)searching attitude. Therefore, Kapur affirms, and I concur:

> I will argue that if the avantgarde is a historically conditioned phenomenon and emerges only in a moment of real political disjuncture, it will appear in various forms in different parts of the world at different times.[50]

So, what political disjunctures are these? I contend that in the 1990s, artists in an Asian context were still consistently regarded as belated makers in the international scene. Kapur continues:

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45 See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw, 13th ed., vol. 4, Theory and History of Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

46 It is significant that Marcel Duchamp's Fountain (1917) was reedited in the 1960s, and Jim Supangkat's *Ken Dedes* (1975) was reedited in 1996. Similarly, FX Harsono's *The Voices are Controlled by the Powers* (1994) was reedited in 2011. This demonstrates that behind the avant-garde gesture resides a thought that does not depend as much on craft and the original, as modern art addresses.

47 Scheunemann, "From Collage to the Multiple," 36.

48 Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 61.

49 Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 5.

50 Kapur, "Dismantled Norms," 57.

> I am suggesting that we extend the argument by a deliberate deflection: the successive forms of the vanguard are extended to include hitherto unlogged initiatives. Initiatives taken outside the West and vetoed out of modernist and avantgarde histories on the ground that these initiatives are belated and repetitious.[51]

Kapur was clearly attacking Bürger's proposition that contemporary attempts to continue avant-garde movements were ineffective because, a newer edition "can no longer attain the protest value of Dadaist manifestations,"[52] and Foster's Western-centrism. In the 1990s, voices against the prejudice inflicted on post-colonial communities were very prominent: the fact these communities were presented as belated makers of (post)modernism in the 1989 *Magiciens de la Terre* show in Paris, transpired that they were regarded as not capable to 'make new'. Third Avant-garde practices, which already existed at the time of *Magiciens de la Terre*, constituted an answer to that *framing*.[53] So, avant-garde has a *mission*—to disrupt conformism, categorization, and dogma—and this project did not exhaust itself in the historical avant-garde events.

In 1940, Walter Benjamin declared: "In every era the attempt must be made to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it."[54] While this is an important remark about the genesis of the avant-garde, in this case the *tradition* is the *avant-garde*. Proposing a 'Third Avant-garde' is insisting on Bürger's invalidation of its importance (due to repetition), but it is to validate avant-garde as a *method*. It is to concur with Kapur's affirmation that the avant-garde principle must be regarded as an institutionalized phenomenon. The major problem with such an enterprise resides in the fact that 'avant-garde as a method' is in danger of being systematically (re) utilized, ultimately leading to it becoming an 'invented tradition'—fixed and unchanging. But history does not happen equally everywhere; if regarded as a historical force, conditions for avant-garde, such as repression and neglect (which lie behind manifestations, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters), continue to rise in different locales, at different times. It is probable that other avant-gardes are being defined today.

In 1994, Foster refuted Bürger: he accused him of projecting "the historical avant-garde as an *absolute origin*", in a logic that "presents history as both *punctual and final*", leaving every reprise of the category as a mere

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51 Kapur, "Dismantled Norms," 57.

52 Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 57.

53 See Thomas McEvilley, *Art & Otherness: Crisis in Cultural Identity* (New York: McPherson & Company, 1992), 154; McEvilley, "Exhibition Strategies in the Postcolonial Era," in *Traditions/ Tensions*, 57.

54 Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 247.

rehearsal. Foster concluded that this view enclosed "the neo-avant-garde as riven repetition."[55] While he accepted that in part this reasoning is true, he nevertheless claimed that "this is not the entire story of the neo-avant-garde, nor does it end here [and] despite his grounding in Benjamin, Bürger affirms the values of authenticity, originality and singularity"[56] to the avant-garde. Foster was addressing that, regardless of his important avant-garde assessment, Bürger was looking at it through modern principles. So, Foster advances, and I concur: the avant-garde "is in fact a formula of practice,"[57] and this justifies its continuation.

Bürger also claimed that while neo-avant-gardes proclaimed the same goals as the historical avant-gardes, these neo-avant-garde practices claimed to be accepted by the (art) museum, while the historical avant-gardes attempted to destroy that institution. This difference turned, in his opinion, avant-garde into its opposite. In fact, the opposite happened: the institutionalization of the historical avant-gardes was addressed by American art historian Douglas Crimp on *On the Museum's Ruins* (1993), notably through the example of photography.[58] Here Crimp claims that the modern art museums began their decay with this introduction in the 1970s. He argues that the survival of modern art museums depended on, and was largely done, through a gradual accommodation of art (through artworks) that historically has been refused that status (notably the avant-garde). Nevertheless, there are other accommodations of interest for the 'Third Avant-garde': the famous addition of Primitive art to art's realm through modernist appropriation, leading to the transfer of many objects from ethnographic to art museums,[59] is one such example.

2.1.3 Historical Assessment of the Avant-garde

In 1974, Bürger wrote the influential *Theory of the Avant-garde*. Here, he described the historical avant-garde through some key characteristics: 1. The expansion of the 'artwork' category resulting from the negation of its dependency to the institution, 2. The attack of the institution, which included bourgeois culture enshrinement of autonomous art, 3. The reconnection between art and life, and 4. An encouragement for the integration of high and low cultures [Fig. 2.2].[60]

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55 Foster, "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?," 13.
56 Foster, 13–14.
57 Foster, 26.
58 See Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993).
59 See McEvilley, "Exhibition Strategies," 55; Susan Vogel, "Introduction," in *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections*, ed. Arthur C. Danto (New York: The Center for African Art and Prestel Verlag, 1988), 12–13.
60 Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 62.

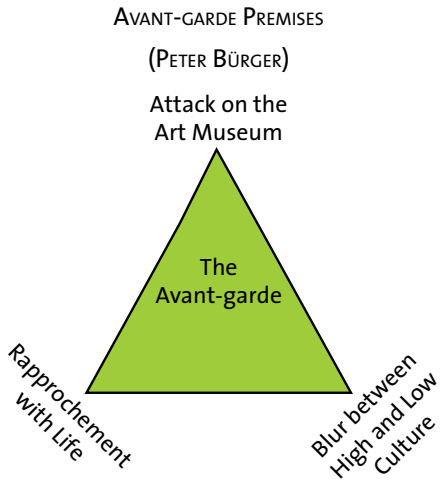

Figure 2.2
The Avant-garde Premises, according to Peter Bürger (1974)
Image edited by Leonor Veiga, 2017

While these propositions appear to enable the emergence of other avant-gardes, Bürger denied this possibility based on the fact that repeating the procedure would turn "the avant-gardist protest into its opposite."[61] Bürger defends a certain vein of the avant-garde, the so called "anarchic wing,"[62] which is characterized by extreme nihilism and negativism, leading Calinescu to say that avant-garde's first victim was art itself.[63] The avant-gardes changed the way art was made, displayed, and received forever. In spite of his denial, these premises are met by all avant-garde events of radical vein (see Appendix I).

It is commonly accepted that there were two avant-gardes in history. The first avant-garde was called European or 'historical avant-garde' (by Bürger), and it took place in the 1910s and 1920s. It is recognized by various movements although specialists are divided in what to include[64] (see Appendix I). For some authors, an avant-garde of modernist vein that which occurred from the nineteenth century up until the 1960s, must be considered.[65] One of its most renowned movements is Cubism, another is Expressionism. Most commonly called modernism, because it used some

61 Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 109, n.4.
62 Gibson, "Avant-Garde," 158.
63 See Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 140.
64 Critics of Peter Bürger such as Dietrich Scheunemann point to his neglect of expressionism, and his preference for Dadaism in detriment for instance, of Cubism. Bürger explains his position in 109, n.4.
65 Calinescu commenting on Poggioli's definition of the avant-garde, in Gibson, "Avant-Garde," 157.

avant-garde aspects and strategies,[66] it has been placed under the same banner. Says Gibson, "the heroic avant-garde... represents as avant-garde as optimistic traditionalism, to which some would deny the title 'avant-garde' altogether, calling this aspect of the avant-garde 'modernism'."[67] Still, she continues, this modernist vein remains of interest because it "held out the hope that the disruption caused by modern progress in the arts and sciences will result in the end not only in the control of nature to humanity's benefit, but will also promote universal justice, moral progress and happiness."[68] Calinescu considered that there is a significant difference between modernism and the avant-garde that is "in every respect more radical than modernity."[69] Nevertheless, he acknowledges that the modernity's project centered in novelty and change opened way to the emergence of rebellious avant-gardes.[70] More prominently, the avant-garde is recognized through "that other anarchic and even nihilist wing... rooted in elements of Dada and Surrealism typified in the Ready-mades of Duchamp and Man Ray... [until] Brecht, and Warhol."[71] It emerged in a context of insurgence against retinal art: "Duchamp himself stated that he was 'interested in ideas—not merely in visual products. 'I wanted to put painting once again at the service of the mind'."[72]

Avant-garde is also renowned for its interest in real life and in its proposal to re-establish this relation, it suggested objects from daily life, such as a urinal, a bicycle wheel or a bottle rack as art (later the art museum would accommodate these gestures). So, it indeed broke with elitism in art, which has historically remained in the possession of few privileged classes. Within this anarchic stream, Bürger included other movements such as Italian Futurism, Russian Constructivism, Dadaism and later Surrealism. This anarchic vein emerged in Europe but it had an international scope, being present in Japan,[73] and in the United States (because of the exile of artists Francis Picabia, Marcel Duchamp and others).[74]

The second avant-garde is commonly referred to as 'American' or 'neo-avant-garde' and took place in the 1960s and 1970s.[75] It had several significant

66 See Willemen, "An Avant Garde for the Eighties," 57.

67 Gibson, "Avant-Garde," 156. Similarly, Calinescu recognizes that Americans do not distinguish avant-garde and modernism. See Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 96–97.

68 Gibson, "Avant-Garde," 158.

69 Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 96.

70 See Calinescu, 3.

71 Gibson, "Avant-Garde," 158.

72 Marcel Duchamp quoted in Rudolf E. Kuenzli, "Introduction," in *Marcel Duchamp, Artist of the Century*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli and Francis M. Naumann (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990), 6.

73 Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, 217–20.

74 See Rudolf Kuenzli, ed., *Dada* (London: Phaidon Press, 2006), 22.

75 Some authors situate the neo-avant-garde in the 1950s and 1960s. See Scheunemann,

movements, such as Op art, Pop Art, Conceptual art, Site-specific art, the practices of the Gutai group, and the Fluxus movement. It appeared in reaction against the hegemony of a 'Greenbergian Abstractionism'[76] that regarded painting as an expression of the personal, persisting on easel painting's capacity to capture the eye.[77] The neo-avant-garde recovered the historical avant-garde's claim of an art at the service of the mind and embodying an active signifying role.

Since the 1960s, when an 'anti-art' and 'anti-aesthetic' sentiment entered artistic discourse, many young artists chose Duchamp as their precursor. American art historian Rudolf E. Kuenzli observes that art critics, art historians, and museums matched artists' interest much later.[78] For Foster, this resurgence was an indication of postmodernism's emergence.[79] By the late 1970s, Postmodernism was becoming an all-encompassing term.[80] Then, the medium of photography—which, according to Crimp, is essentially modernist—was revaluated and entered the museum space.[81] To Crimp, this *accommodation* marked the shift between modernism and postmodernism in the museum's realm evident by the postmodern photographic practices that refused authorship and authenticity by American artists Robert Mapplethorpe and Sherry Levine being integrated in collections. So, the postmodernist claim "that originality and authenticity are discursively produced by the [modern] museum"[82] was introduced in the institution, resulting in its collapse. Notions of 'originality' and 'authenticity', essential to the museum's discursive integrity, were being undermined. Interestingly, these have also been avant-garde's claims.

Even though there is a certain hegemony concerning these two movements, the concept of avant-garde has been proposed (even) more times: in 1981, the Italian art critic and curator Achille Bonito Oliva declared a new movement, the 'Transnational Avant-garde', to refer to the work of a small group of Italian artists,[83] a 'bold claim' according to Terry Smith.[84] Oliva proposed that these artists were united by a rejection of Conceptual art: "The trans-avant-garde rejects the idea of an artistic process aimed entirely at conceptual abstraction [and

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"From Collage to the Multiple," 36.

76 See Scheunemann, 17.

77 See Kuenzli, "Introduction," 6.

78 See Kuenzli, 1–2.

79 See Foster, "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?," 31.

80 Homi K. Bhabha, "Postmodernism/Postcolonialism," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, 307.

81 See Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*, 2.

82 Crimp, 16.

83 The 'Transavantgarde Constellation' was formed by a small group of Neapolitan artists such as Sandro Chia, Francesco Clemente, Enzo Cucchi, Nicola de Maria and Mimmo Paladino. See Achille Bonito Oliva, *Art Beyond the Year Two Thousand* (Bali: BIASA Artspace Little Library, 2011), 187–88.

84 See Terry Smith, *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (London: Laurence King, 2011), 53.

proposes the return] to hand craftsmanship and to a pleasure of execution."[85] His description of the artists' intentions was markedly postmodern:

> [Artists are] opting for attitudes that take into account languages that had previously been abandoned. This recovery does not entail identification with the styles of the past, but the ability to pick and choose from their surface, in the conviction that, in a society in transition toward an undefinable end, the only option open is that afforded by a nomadic attitude and transitory mentality.[86]

His concept would be further extended internationally to latitudes such as Israel, Latin America, much of Europe, and Canada. But he adverts: "Not all new painting situations are necessarily identifiable with the term trans-avantgarde."[87] Oliva's remarks point to some aspects of the proposed 'Third Avant-garde', although they do not entirely define it. In 'An Avant-garde for the Eighties' (1984), Willemen defined the avant-garde gesture as 'tomorrow's art today', declared it as a force which challenged arts' ossification and addressed the avant-garde project as profoundly related to history. And, although he recognized a superficial resemblance between modernism and avant-garde, he declared them as two simultaneous but antagonistic tendencies:

> The avant garde, as a concept, is not prescriptive about the precise characteristics of any given art practice, [whereas] the notion of modernism reduces artistic practice to a set of formal characteristics, a set of procedures frozen into a generic practice, suggesting that modernism is a period style, as was impressionism or expressionism, or any of the other 'historical styles'.[88]

All these authors agree on the premise that the avant-garde consists of a counter-culture against normalizing and totalizing views, that it tries to connect the present with the future, while rejecting the historical past. The construction of a new reality seems to have been successful, despite avant-garde's failure to destroy the art museum—one of its main purposes. This is an aspect the Third Avant-garde builds on, equally without success: not only was the Third Avant-garde of the 1990s institutionalized through its appearance in high-profile exhibitions and its accommodation in art museums (especially in the regions where it acts), like the two prior manifestations, it didn't disrupt the binary of art and ethnographic museum. Nevertheless, the Third Avant-garde has equally contributed *to change the way art is made, displayed and received forever* (see Appendix II).

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85 Oliva, "The International Trans-Avant-Garde," in *Postmodernism: A Reader*, 257.
86 Oliva, 257.
87 Oliva, *The International Trans-Avantgarde* (Milano: Giancarlo Politi Editore, 1982), 151.
88 Willemen, "An Avant Garde for the Eighties," 65.

2.2 The Third Avant-garde

In this study, I propose to define another avant-garde event termed The Third Avant-garde. My gesture pertains to the fact that if regarded as a *historical force*, the concept of avant-garde remains useful for theorization, especially in new contexts. Yet, as observed, though expanded on by Foster, Oliva, and Willemen, the avant-garde remains a Western-centric legacy. In 1996, on the occasion of the seminal exhibition *Traditions/Tensions*, at the Asia Society in New York, Kapur advanced the project that I came to term the Third Avant-garde. Its main premise included an effort to perform the dismantlement of conservatisms of local culture with a national patina (including traditions), as weel as to break with Western hegemony, including its attachment to notions of novelty (including avant-gardism) [Fig. 2.3].

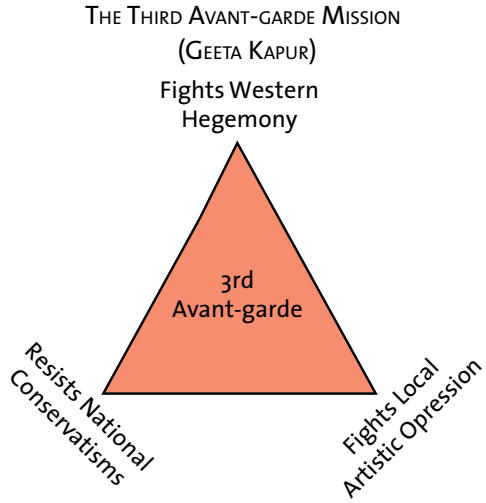

Figure 2.3
The Third Avant-grade Mission, according to Geeta Kapur (1996)
Image edited by Leonor Veiga, 2017

Interestingly, Clark identifies an avant-garde function already in 1930s China which would be reenacted in the 1980s. By the 1990s, these practices had become mainstream.[89] Chinese art historian Wu Hung has also recognized this Chinese avant-garde in the 1980s.[90] Now, we might ask, does Southeast Asia remain outside of avant-garde discourses? I propose it does not, and build on the demonstrations by Southeast Asianists including Flores and Singaporean T.K. Sabapathy to make my point. These two authors both trace the emergence

89 See Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, 229.
90 See Wu Hung, "A Case of Being 'Contemporary': Conditions, Spheres, and Narratives of Contemporary Chinese Art," in *Contemporary Art in Asia: A Reader*, 391–413.

of an avant-garde to 1970s Southeast Asia, tough each through different lenses (see Chapter 3).

In the essay 'First Person Plural', Flores described the emergence of an avant-garde 'agenda' by unrelated artists from Indonesia, The Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand working between 1974 and 1976. As a commonality, these groups were formed by students discontent with the hegemony of and certain governmental subservience towards the West which in fact impacted the arts. Through their written manifestos, a discourse was formed and partisanship was elicited. Artists were claiming an attentiveness to the overlooked diversity and peoples that characterized their native cultures in contrast to a uniform modernism: they proposed new media, rejected invented traditions, claimed the primacy of concept over form, opted for a (re)searching attitude, gave priority to the national in all its variations, and claimed the relation between art and life.[91] Installation art was equally claimed as an autochthonous medium that urged its use in order to express identity.[92] Their programs seem similar to those of the founding avant-gardes. Nevertheless, their distance from 'the center' and lack of resources must be considered. Avant-garde should be acknowledged *as a force*, not as a self-imposed model.

Such were the circumstances in the mid-1970s, when students revolted against a Western modernism that was being inflicted on them via the circuit of academia, the patronage of the state, and from outside. The question remains: *how can we identify a Southeast Asian Third Avant-garde?* I propose that Kapur's hypothesis of a double dismantle was effectively met through an incorporation of *traditions*. To her, avant-garde emerges cyclically which connects with Foster's idea that the avant-garde remains an unfinished project, which explains its return. Thus, he regards it as a formula of practice. I concur: since the avant-garde's attack on the art institution remained alien to the problematic of the *traditional*, critique had to continue. It is my belief that this project would have to emerge from the cultures that have remained outside avant-garde's discourse.[93] The two declared conditions united: Kapur's cyclical forces of history and Foster's not yet dismantled metanarratives. So, I argue that the Third Avant-garde resides in this space of interference—one that simultaneously disputes the modern metanarrative of the avant-garde and the metanarrative of fine arts. It questions the veracity of these projects, while it extends the main premise of the avant-garde—the ideology of the transgressive.[94]

Throughout history, all avant-garde movements have shared an external

91 See Flores, "First Person Plural," 238.

92 See Flores, 259.

93 While these peoples entered the discourse of modern and contemporary art since the 1990s, the discourse of avant-garde remains Western-centric.

94 See Gibson, "Avant-Garde," 156.

commonality—a rebellious attitude against a dominant culture, or normative model to follow. Artists rejected the norm and thus, the template handed down to them. The Third Avant-garde follows this trend. It emerged in reaction to another event of forced academicism (this time in the form of formalism and abstractionism), which was cornering some artists' production. Dissatisfied with the uncritical acculturation of modernist principles which emerged through academies and museums which was supported by nation-states that negotiated close ties with the West,[95] artists responded. They reacted to internal circumstances by questioning the veracity and validity of inherited Orientalist legacies: the perception that 'non-Western' peoples are traditional and their activities regarded as belated events resulting from a wider contact with American culture. As a result, traditional culture was engaged and the avant-garde gesture, especially since 1988, is characterized "not [by] nostalgia, but a 'critical assessment' of the 'present' and the 'historical past'."[96]

I contend that the 'seeds' planted in the mid-1970s through groundbreaking works such as Supangkat's *Ken Dedes* (1975) [see page 104] would 'blossom' as the Third Avant-garde in the 1990s.[97] In this respect, exhibition making is very relevant, because international exhibitions provided the only platform for global exposure and for the fostering of an inter-regional contact between Southeast Asian artists. The drawback of this model was that most international exhibitions were curated by overseas curators, who were not fully aware of local contexts despite using collaborative curation.[98] Collaborative curation is another aspect which contributes to the relevance of *Traditions/Tensions*: it was the first exhibition to present contemporary Asia to the West through the works of its own artists and selected by local curators without any Western interference.[99] Here we can recognize that the 1990s remains an extremely significant decade because it marked the early stages of (current) globalization.

The claims for an Asian avant-garde are also significant for the

95 These countries are Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. The other nations—Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Vietnam—entered the dynamics of the artworld after the collapse of the Iron Curtain. Timor-Leste was an occupied state from 1975 to 1999, so it does not enter any of these categorizations.

96 Flores, "First Person Plural," 239.

97 I situate the Third Avant-garde in three main phases: the 'Early Days: the 1970s-80s', the 'Boom Years: the 1990s', and the 'Global Phase: the 2000s' (see Chapters 3 to 5). My attempted periodization does not preclude the fact that each country has reacted differently to the times. Similarly, I consider the 1980s (1980-1988), the 1990s (1989-2001) and the 2000s after 2002. In consequence, Third Avant-garde's periodization remains incomplete and is subject to alterations, as my research advances.

98 The Fukuoka Art Museum (FAM) introduced 'collaborative curation' as methodology since the first edition of the *Asian Art Show*, in 1979. This procedure was later adopted by the curators of the *Asia-Pacific Triennial* (APT) of Brisbane.

99 McEvilley, "Exhibition Strategies," 57.

affirmation of a Southeast Asian avant-garde: Kapur recognizes that an Indian avant-garde project was deferred, or deviated during the revolutionary period; Clark locates several avant-garde events throughout Asian history, ultimately destroying it as a Western construction and event. To him, an Asian avant-garde must be carefully analyzed, as avant-garde's critical functions produce different outcomes. He observes its particularities and differences:

> [A]n important feature of avant-garde practice found elsewhere in Asia is that artists who adopt avant-garde positions feel free to explore indigenous artforms alongside—rather than in opposition to—the discourses they operate on. [In addition], avant-gardism always arises in a situation of discursial critique or debate [and] this can be externally provided. [100]

Kapur argues that this observed freedom to use traditions recovers their functionality and maintains their aggregating nature. In consequence, it appears, traditions can contribute to cultural praxis.[101] And because tradition has most commonly served to stabilize societies undergoing political, social and/or economic struggle, another intervening space for traditions is opened: their activation as a *critique*, which is where avant-garde comes in. In other words, "it is what is done with 'tradition'... that qualitatively marks the continuity of tradition, rather than anything substantive which in content or style can be used to mark tradition as such."[102] Yet, the Third Avant-garde is not the only artistic manifestation to engage with traditions. Thus, it is important to distinguish its radical gestures from its contemporary 'other': postmodernism.

2.2.1 Third Avant-garde and Postmodernism: Two Sides of a Coin

Postmodern artistic practices are generally traced back to around the 1980s,[103] when the term *modern* lost most of its critical resonance, and globalization and new media's impact began to appear in art. In general terms, postmodernism has been described as an eclectic approach, in which liking of pastiche is ever present. In this sense, it definitely abandoned the notion of single authorship which was so vital to modernism. American philosopher Peter Barry proposes that to distinguish clearly between modernism and postmodernism, one should look at the notion of *fragment*. During postmodernism, this definition gained a positive regard, as it conveyed liberation from a system of fixed sets of

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100 Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, 219.

101 See Kapur, "Contemporary Cultural Practice: Some Polemical Categories," *Social Scientist* 18, no. 3 (1990): 51.

102 Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, 75.

103 See McEvilley, *The Triumph of Anti-Art: Conceptual and Performance Art in the Formation of Post-Modernism* (New York: McPherson & Company, 2005), 49.

beliefs.[104] The notion of fragment is as relevant for postmodern practices as it is for Third Avant-garde practices. Both build on traditions that were displaced and compartmentalized in Western museums, and yet continued to be systematized during the post-colonial period in regional specialized museums. Within a context in which traditions' wholeness is compromised, both tendencies build on traditions 'bits and pieces'. Like postmodern artists (the trans-avantgarde of Oliva sets an example) Third Avant-garde artists also use fragments from traditions but, their gestures went beyond the postmodern ones because they performed traditions' critical revision. As a result, during the 1980s, it appeared as if traditions were omnipresent in art. This is one major aspect that I identify as contributing to the deferral of Third Avant-garde's identification (Chapters 3, 4 and 5 demonstrate the in-depth analysis of traditional arts by Third Avant-garde gestures).

Postmodern aesthetics contains fundamental differences from everything that has preceded it. It disregards the key criteria of modern aesthetics—the new, the rupture and the avant-garde. It is no longer necessary to innovate nor to be original, and repeating past forms is not only tolerated, it is actively encouraged. But a Third Avant-garde artist acts as an instigator of conscience: moved by a spirit of mission and a will to relate, he cites old forms and simultaneously embraces the need for change. This is particularly visible in the practice of Chinese artist Mio Pang Fei (see Chapter 4), who devoted his life to a self-imposed journey to merge the Western references studied in school with Chinese traditional painting, a mode in which he found refuge to continue practicing art. Mio is an artist who procured and ultimately created a new language and space for contemporary artists' intervention.

The two events—the postmodern revival of traditions, and the Third Avant-garde—must not be equated, since they have different programmatic ends. For postmodernism, the accommodation of 'low arts' corresponds to "the need to return to tradition."[105] The 1980s adherence to traditions was so significant that Poshyananda declared that "If Thai society is experiencing a 'postmodern' condition, then one of its most significant features or practices is pastiche... a practice of mimicry without the satirical impulse."[106] During this time, several Thai artists had started working on traditions' transformation within the medium of painting (see Chapter 3). Observing the lack of satire and criticality, Poshyananda suggested a return to traditional Thai painting, which he considered far more interesting than the mere following of Western models. Furthermore, during this period, the variety of movements employing the rhetoric of postmodernism—based on the promise to return

104 See Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, 2nd ed., Beginnings (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 82.

105 Foster, ed., "Postmodernim: A Preface," in *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1985), ix.

106 Poshyananda, "Modern Art in Thailand," 1990, 580.

and reinvent—was immense, and the term started being equated with *contemporary*.

The first event of radical practices through vernacular elements took place in Latin America (see Appendix I). This emerging avant-gardism in peripheral countries differed from their counterparts in the centers precisely because it penetrated into the local environment. During the mid-1960s, Hélio Oiticica (Rio de Janeiro, 1937-1980) started deconstructing conventional Western easel painting through a Brazilian experience:

> [H]e invited the public to abandon passivity in front of an artwork, especially by entering his *Penetráveis*, by dressing his *Parangolés*, smell coffee in his *Bólide*... He announced that the frontiers between painting, sculpture, drawing, were increasingly blurred... He drew with cocaine. He danced (*samba*), wrote and reflected. Without getting into classifications. He accepted an artist's value didn't reside in his manual capability but instead in his capacity to think and translate that visually. As such, he left detailed orientations so that anyone could remake his pieces... All following generations—of artists at least—on one way or another suffered his influence.[107]

Oiticica's work was in accord with his American counterparts of the political transformation based on the participation of the spectator. Yet, in 1992, in his retrospective in Witte de With in Rotterdam, his work was ridiculed. British art historian Jean Fisher remembers:

> [An] European art critic was overheard commenting that Oiticica's work was 'incoherent' since it covered a plurality of practices and thus 'wasn't art'... Other critics recognized Oiticica's relation to conceptualism, but dismissed this as 'inauthentic'—his practice was merely a reflection of Euroamerican tendencies and therefore wasn't authentically 'Brazilian'.[108]

This was 1992, in the early years of globalization following the Iron Curtain's collapse, when the Third Avant-garde possibility was yet to be recognized. And yet we can see now that methods were already being employed. Between 1994 and 2001, Harsono used Panji masks as ready-mades in his art (he had very little intervention in them) conferring them a significant and multivariate critical value (see Chapter 4). His messages could

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107 Gisele Kato, "Penetráveis: Três Motivos Para Prestar Atenção Em Hélio Oiticica," May 19, 2010, http://www.artefazparte.com/2010/05/penetraveis.html.

108 Jean Fisher, "The Syncretic Turn: Cross-Cultural Practice in the Age of Multiculturalism," in *Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985*, ed. Zaya Kocur and Simon Leung (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 233.

be perceived by an informed viewer, while a non-informed viewer could still grasp a localized critical message. In my opinion, the use of traditional arts by modern and contemporary artists must be regarded in this light—*for their creative and symbolic potential*. In many cases, artists are not the makers of these objects, but they inform them with new meanings. In consequence, traditional objects, which remain interpretatively confined into the realm of the ethnographic, can be elevated to the sphere of art.

A concern, which is central to the whole idea of avant-garde, is the elimination of the idea of an autonomous art, which is divorced from the everyday world (see Appendix I and Appendix III). The Third Avant-garde works reprocess both traditional referents and modernism. They are not evolutionary instances of both: in Southeast Asia, modern did not follow traditional, because traditional has historically penetrated the modern.[109] This historical tendency in art practice mirrors the multi-temporal reality that Southeast Asian nations lived in. From here, one can grasp why Kapur affirmed that if understood less rigidly, the vanguard notion tradition once carried could be recuperated and lead to a series of experimental moves (see Chapter 1). What she was suggesting is that 'traditions-in-use' retain flexibility and thus can adapt to environmental changes without losing their recognizability. So, the Third Avant-garde's gesture of using traditions, as well as other strategies from former avant-garde events, denotes rapprochement to real life.

It is precisely the possibility of recovery and adaptation that allows traditions to remain important for artistic practice. This explains why Asia Society director during the time of *Traditions/Tensions*, Indian scholar Vishakha N. Desai, mentioned that a viewer expecting to find timeless manifestations from the five selected Asian countries devoid of contemporary interventions would be disappointed.[110] Her words indicate the degree to which traditions remained important and relevant in (rapidly) developing societies and already in 1989, the third edition of the *Bienal de la Habana* entitled *Tradition and Contemporaneity* implied the urgency of this relation in the Third World.

Kapur further proposed to regard traditions as a play of attributes (handed down, containing a passive and immutable side) and functions (features responsible for their contemporary vitality). But, she did not affirm that all traditions retained this functional aspect, thereby declaring that if traditions were to maintain a space of intervention, it was fundamental that *they find one*.[111] The Third Avant-garde occupies this space of interference, by turning traditions into a critique and thus contributing to cultural praxis.

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109 See Joseph Fischer, ed., "The Traditional Sources of Modern Indonesian Art," in *Modern Indonesian Art: Three Generations of Tradition and Change 1945-1990* (Jakarta: Panitia Pameran KIAS, 1990), 16.

110 See Vishakha N. Desai, "Foreword," in *Traditions/Tensions*, 13.

111 See Kapur, "Contemporary Cultural Practice," 51.

Due to traditions' lack of wholeness—traditions, both 'invented' and 'in-use' are most times contained within *fragments* from the historical past—these radical gestures "include fragments of tradition that serve to question nationalistic aesthetics and bigotry."[112] So, Kapur asks, "the artist that pulls out fragments of Otherness and clads the self... Is this, then, a no-norm artist?" She then advances the "need to find ways to conceptualizing this oddly symbolic, various displaced art practice that manifests itself in the stark gestures of civilizational avatars, dismantled."[113] I suggest every Third Avant-garde artist is a critical thinker who deliberately chooses to refer to Western art and traditional arts ethnographically. This is not a no-norm behavior, but rather a pragmatic use of available materials.

2.3 Third Avant-garde's General Features

The Third Avant-garde is a scattered phenomenon, both in time and place, which is comprised by a set of practices which play with sets of binary oppositions including art and ethnography, conceptual art and traditional art, art and craft, etc. It introduces these tensions in the realm of art, precisely because of its materiality, one which is characterized by the presence of fragments of tradition. It impresses by the variety of its responses (see chapter 3, 4 and 5), while it contains very specific attributes that may help its identification. As with every avant-garde event, the Third Avant-garde works comply with the fundamental premises of the avant-garde (as defined by Bürger)—anti-institutionalism, the liaison with life, and the blurring of high and low cultures[114]—and reaffirm the definition of avant-garde as force,[115] imbued with a conscience of its own time,[116] that after electing its contemporary language and mission,[117] propels a change in the course of art history. And, like previous avant-gardes, the Third Avant-Garde equally manifests notions of discontent. One of its most relevant messages pertains to the avant-garde event itself, as suggested by Kapur. Not only do Third Avant-garde artists resist patronization—internal, via the academic circuit and external, via prejudice in their reception—they equally resist the institutionalization of the avant-garde, as it has been performed by the museum and academia. This in turn, is done by employing fragments from traditional arts, the Third Avant-garde's most striking feature [Fig. 2.4].

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112 Poshyananda, "Roaring Tigers, Desperate Dragons in Transition," in *Traditions/Tensions*, 29.

113 Kapur, "Dismantling the Norm," 62.

114 See Bürger, Theory of the Avant-Garde, 62.

115 See Kapur, "Dismantling the Norm."

116 See Willemen, "An Avant Garde for the Eighties."

117 See Sérgio Coutinho, "A Vanguarda Europeia: Entre a 'Globalienação' e a 'Unidade Humana'" (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2015), 4.

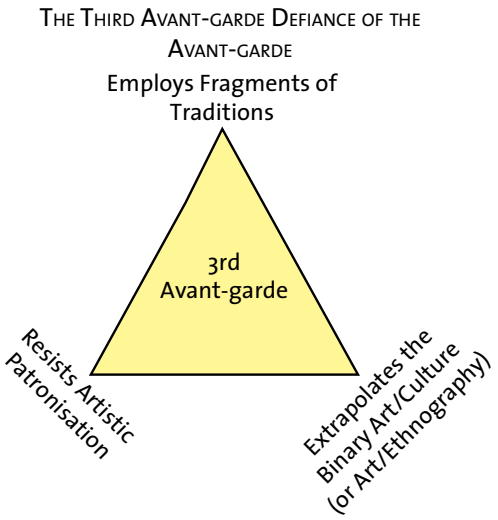

Figure 2.4
The Third Avant-garde Definace of the Avant-garde
Image edited by Leonor Veiga, 2017

2.3.1 The Third Avant-garde: Material, Method, Mission and Motivation[118]

As advanced, Third Avant-garde's most striking feature is the presence of fragments of traditional arts. This aspect is, in my estimation, responsible for its art historical deferral. In 1996, Poshyananda warned that traditions were being reprocessed and used as *material*:

> Artists who live in Asian countries with complex and multilayered cultures are fully aware of the burden of negative traditions that might be associated with their work. The persistence of stereotypes means that any of these artists may be prejudged on the basis of his nationality, race, or religion. But artists such as N. N. Rimzon, Heri Dono, Roberto Feleo, Ravinder G. Reddy, FX Harsono, Dadang Christanto and Agnes Arellano are not primarily concerned with self-reflection. Instead, they attempt to reveal the complexity of contemporary Asia through the revival or resurrection of traditional forms. *But, again, they do not simply restage the past as a consensual process of invention of tradition. Rather their works include fragments of tradition that serve to question nationalistic aesthetics and bigotry*.[119] (italics LV)

118 See Apendix III.
119 Poshyananda, "Roaring Tigers," 29.

I argue that artists use tradition as material through avant-garde's *methods*—they pick, they choose, and they appropriate,[120] to explore their postcolonial identity and negotiate their position on the world stage. This begs the question, why would artists' use avant-garde methods, which contain a warfare connotation, in their practice? The reason resides in the need to perform a necessary double-move, the double-dismantle that Kapur advanced. But, she mentions that to do so, artists must go beyond the primitivist trope and treat vanguardism as an institutionalized Western phenomenon: they must deconstruct the avant-garde and equally demonstrate the injustice caused by the persistence of the taxonomical system that opposes art and culture, West and the 'rest'. This is their mission. And with equal weight is the *motivation*: as proposed, artists behave as social agents, who act on behalf of their peers, and voice collective concerns. Traditions constitute indicators that artists use to better relate to their audiences, both global and local.

The notion of *fragment* is not only relevant for postmodern practices, but equally for avant-garde ones. This was advanced by Benjamin through the concept of allegory and Bürger built on this to explain that *allegory* "could serve to illuminate certain aspects of the aesthetic effect of avant-gardiste works."[121] The procedure can be described as follows: first, the allegorist pulls one element out of the totality of life context, isolates it, and deprives it of its function (this described action is reminiscent of the treatment towards traditional arts which were transported to ethnographic museums, where they have no life context). Second, the allegorist joins isolated reality fragments, thus positing meaning. Third, he/she rejoins elements. In sum, to Bürger, the avant-garde artist starts by dividing and later reunites. This thinking corresponds to McEvilley's definition of traditional arts' *reprocessing*,[122] which provides traditions with a novel critical function. Bürger's explanation builds on Supangkat's gestures in the work *Ken Dedes* and is extensible to all other works analyzed (see Chapter 3, 4 and 5).

Through traditional arts, the Third Avant-garde continues certain avant-garde procedures, such as the ready-made, the decontextualization of objects, and montage. Each of these techniques and tactics were useful for the transmission of messages to the audience. Meanwhile, the Third Avant-garde introduces new tensions in artistic and simultaneously museum discourses: it (re)introduces the problematic of craft in art's realm, and dismantles the fixed taxonomic institutionalization effectuated through museums and disciplines, especially the (problematic) compartmentalization between art history and anthropology [Fig. 2.5].

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120 Appropriation in terms of taking something into a new context, this time the art context, not in the sense to make one's own.

121 Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 68.

122 See Thomas McEvilley, "Fusion: Hot or Cold?," in *Fusion: West African Artists at the Venice Biennale*, Focus on African Art Series (Munich: Prestel Verlag GmbH & Co KG, 1993), 9.

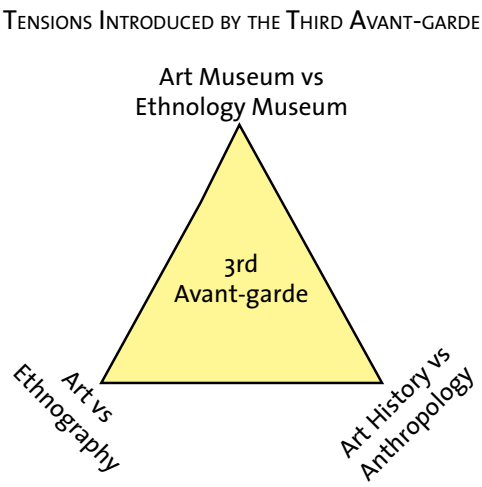

Figure 2.5
Tensions Introduced by the Third Avant-garde
Image edited by Leonor Veiga, 2017

While avant-garde has a fondness for the scandalous, in a Southeast Asian context, contemporary artists act in a non-confrontational way. I propose that because they behave like a voice of their close communities, they can be compared to the *dalang* of past. Javanese *dalangs*, or master-puppeteers, were extremely important members of their close communities. During the colonial revolution period, they delivered messages of discontent through metaphorical language. As such, they became an essential part of the resistance. This disposition, I convey, is maintained by artists such as Maria Madeira or FX Harsono, whose works do not immediately provoke sentiments of hatred: the message is delivered in a sharp yet subtle, multi-meaning way. The artist, seen as a *dalang*, refers to his condition of unique thinker who embodies various qualities. Interestingly, Kapur also identifies the artist as spokesperson for the Indian context.[123]

When Maria Madeira conceived *Silence at What Price?*, she was referring to the violent death of a resistance member at the hands of Indonesian military (see Chapter 4). The young boy was being interrogated and his unsatisfactory answers were punished with a severe form of torture resulting in his death. This is why Madeira entitled the work as *Silence at What Price?* [Fig. 2.6]; it alludes to the sacrifices the Timorese endured to protect each other. Her work provides an explanation as to why I do not consider these practices solely through the prism of identity: while she was saying 'I am Timorese' by employing a full piece of *tais* cloth (a traditional

123 See Kapur, "Dismantling the Norm," 60.

weaving that came to be elevated to national art in the post-independence era), she was affirming her discontent with human rights violations in the country she was uprooted from after occupation in 1975. Heri Dono's and Harsono's installations from the 1990s referencing Javanese traditional puppetry equally intended to materialize themes of genocide, censorship, and oppression. This procedure is radically different from that practiced by neo-avant-garde artists including Chris Burden (1946-2015), who performed *Shoot* (1971) [Fig. 2.7] to address his discontent with the armed conflict in Vietnam. Censorship coupled with local historic-social conventions make Third Avant-garde artists conceal their strong messages of discontent. This is what was proposed as 'do-it-yourself' cultural citizenship (see Chapter 1).

Figure 2.6
Maria Madeira
Silence at What Price?
1996 | Installation with *tais* | 200 x 100 x 30 cm | Image courtesy of the artist

Their efforts would not be noted without their participation in exhibitions abroad—Madeira was exiled in Australia; Harsono and his peers were practically confined to overseas exhibiting, a circumstance that led Supangkat to designate the 1990s as a decade of 'contemporary art in exile'[124] (see Chapter 4). Yet, contemporary practices equally suffer from an exiled condition. Just recently, Thai artist Jakkai Siributr [Fig. 2.8] produced a series of self-portraits wearing Thai official uniforms ornamented with talismans linked to superstitious animistic practices, demonstrating a variety of deep-seated beliefs underlying current conventions (of a top-down inflicted

124 Supangkat, Ken Dedes, unpublished interview by Leonor Veiga, Leiden, March 7, 2016.

Theravada Buddhism, Thailand's official religion). His analysis is relevant because it targets the politicians who dress in these uniforms on official occasions. This is the reason for exhibiting these particular works outside Thailand, in New York or Istanbul. So, in the 1990s and today, whenever artists feel uncomfortable, they voice their discontent but, they do so grounded in their cultural values, which value non-confrontation. This is, in my view, another contributing aspect for Third Avant-garde's deferral.

Figure 2.7
Chris Burden
Shoot
1971 | Performance | Video Stills
Image source: http://www.theartstory.org/artist-burden-chris-artworks.htm#pnt_1

As advanced, the main premise of the Third Avant-garde is the introduction of the traditional art object in the realm of radical gestures. This can be regarded as an appropriation, but in fact constitutes a pragmatic way to practice contemporaneity. Contemporary art's expanded space of inquiry penetrates issues of national identity, tradition and ethnicity and their impact in society, religion and spirituality, gender issues, and preoccupations of political, social and environmental nature. This allows for visibility and freedom to use local cultural traits and elements. This situation is further enhanced in locations such as (Southeast) Asia, which were previously deprived of self-criticality.

Figure 2.8
Jakkai Siributr
C-11
2014 | Digital Print | 102 x 76 cm | Image courtesy of Tyler Rollins Fine Art

Historically, one of the most important strategies of avant-garde practices has been "the procedure of creation-by-designation,"[125] which comes tied to the ability 'to pick and choose' that Oliva identified as an important aspect of postmodern gestures. When he addressed that trans-avantgarde artists chose the 'surface' value of all referents available to them, he was referring to a postmodern behavior, in which appropriations were not critical or conducive to social critique. In contrast, within avant-garde practices, traditions are chosen for their effectiveness in communicating. This is in line with tactics introduced by the historical Dada, like construction through montage and collage, which was many times coupled with an appropriation of the language of the media. It was precisely through the parody of several mediated messages—in an attempt to convince their audiences of the arbitrariness of social order—that Dada practices were particularly effective. Whenever they used familiar codes to reveal the myths created by the mass media, their audiences were much more apt to comprehend. I think that like their Dada precursors, Third Avant-garde artists have a deep desire to communicate with their peers. The root of such behavior resides not in the deliberate import of Western avant-garde practices, but rather

125 McEvilley, *The Triumph of Anti-Art*, 27.

in this historical legacy—the (artist as) storyteller. Thus, the Third Avant-garde artists' reliance on familiar codes stems from a contextual situation of intense repression, and in the midst of heavily depoliticized societies.[126] And to transmit messages, they turned their gaze to their surrounding reality. This is where the traditional object comes in, as Southeast Asian societies were in transition and differentiable from other societies for their circumstance of having multiple and overlapping temporalities.

The ability to 'pick and choose' has other implications when traditional arts are introduced: from a totalizing relation between inventor and maker, the possibility of nominating introduces a new genre. In consequence, within the Third Avant-garde traditional arts are *used and (re)appropriated* by artists, who often are not their makers. Instead, they are used in a secular way. In the second field trip to Timor-Leste in 2013, I confronted artist Ino Parada with the fact that he was depicting a portrait of a woman on *tais*[127] but this woman was wearing a *belak*—a silver crescent, which is part of men's traditional warrior costume. The artist responded the work was commissioned this way. This flexibility is intricately related to the use of cultural aspects as mere symbols, in response to market needs. It equally reveals a subversive attitude towards the rigidity of traditional values. Clearly, traditions are liberated from regulations when included in contemporary practices. Similarly, in 1994, in the work *The Voices are Controlled by the Powers* [Fig. 2.9], Harsono employed all masks featuring in the Panji tale. He did so to represent the variety of Indonesian people.

Since Raden Panji (Prince Panji) is a symbol of nobility of character, its association with the Indonesian people informed the audience of Harsono's respect, while he understood (and shared) their incapacity to communicate. The Panji masks are said to have carved on them the perfect smile and rightful expression, a circumstance that equally happens in Siam (nowadays Thailand), where the smile and has been also criticized by Thai artists, notably Chatchai Pupia (b. 1964, Mahasarakam). The Siamese smile has constituted an important sign of etiquette and hospitality and has become renowned through records of the past by foreigners who travelled there.[128] Harsono's recurrent use of this mask in the 1990s confirmed their inherent potential, but equally declared

126 In Indonesia, the New Order promoted total depolitisation of life since the coup in 1965, when LEKRA (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat) artists, the only radical group prior to the GRSB, were jailed. Along with the prohibition of expressing different political views, the regime also prohibited Chinese cultural manifestations. In addition, Timorese society was heavily guarded and quasi-isolated from the outside world.

127 The *tais* woven cloth is nowadays the country's national cloth. Historically, *tais* have been made for ceremonies and for rituals. In the mid-1990s, *tais* were introduced in avant-garde practices, and contextualized as canvas. After independence in 2002, the use of *tais* as canvas became frequent, bordering an 'invented tradition'.

128 See Poshyananda, *Traces of Siamese Smile* (Bangkok: Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, 2008), 56–67.

the prominence of *wayang* above other traditions. This aspect stemmed from a process of 'Javanization' promoted by Suharto, which was annulling and destroying cultural difference. In his hands, the masks came to represent the present, not the timeless past promoted by Suharto. Harsono used the mask until the early 2000s, when his work changed into profound reflections of his Chinese ethnicity and ancestry within Indonesia.

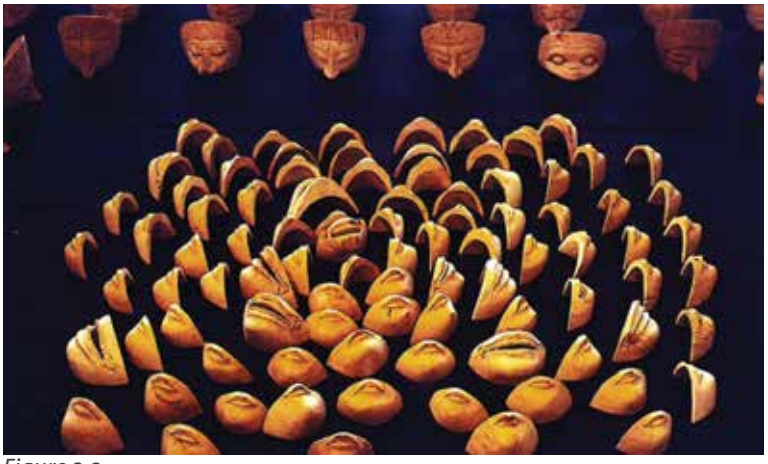

Figure 2.9
FX Harsono
The Voices Are Controlled by the Powers (detail)
1994 | One hundred wooden masks and black clothe | 350 x 350 x 30 cm
Image source: *Re:Petition/Re:Position*, p. 209

In 'The Artist as Ethnographer' (1995), Foster described the new paradigm of avant-garde as undergoing an *ethnographic turn*, traceable since the 1960s. In this new paradigm, the object of contestation remained the art institution and its partisan definitions of art and artists, identity, and community. But the subject of contestation changed: it was the cultural or ethnic Other. While he considered the shift from the economic relation to one of cultural identity significant, he continued a certain *primitivist fantasy*: the 'Other' remained a person of color, one that had no access to the fundamental fantasies of modernism. Despite claiming 'the world as a site' solely for the "white subject,"[129] Foster's position opened way to understand the behavior of Third Avant-garde artists who advanced the construction of a cultural identity in detriment of a national one. In this intention resides an ethnographic behavior, this time toward surrounding diversity, and neglected by High Modernism. This is also why Third Avant-garde artists opted for traditional art as an object of contestation and discourse making.

129 Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 175.

2.3.2 Avant-garde Impacts in the Third Avant-garde

Originality—a concept that implies a sense of coming first or doing first—and *authenticity*—a viewers' perception of truthfulness from the practicing artist—are two vital concepts for both art and art history. This is why avant-garde practices such as the found object and the readymade, with their claimed critical power, have shaken these concepts irreversibly. These are equally problematic concepts for traditional arts, because of the understanding that artisans solely followed procedures, with no permission for difference, novelty and uniqueness. And with the 1920s additional taxonomical division of art, traditional arts saw their space of intervention diminish even more: now, the pursuit of beauty belonged to art, and the pursuit of purpose was resigned to design.[130] This inadvertently contributed to traditional arts' absence from the fine arts, which became increasingly secularized.

After having his Cubist painting *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2.* refused from the *Salon des Independants* in 1912, Duchamp proceeded to invent an 'anti-art' practice. Ever since, the critique of dominant culture has been used by radical groups. And like him, other Dada artists refused authority: "We don't accept any theories. We've had enough of the cubist and futurist academies: laboratories of formal ideas."[131] Duchamp's anti-art strategy was articulated in three main pillars: chance, the ready-made, and the procedure of creation by designation (the urinal is a case point; Duchamp manipulated it and changed its meaning. Everything could be art).[132] In doing so, Duchamp attacked what was termed as art, challenging collective perceptions of its meaning and the role art plays in life. With *Fountain* (1917), he established that art is also constituted by its setting, and not solely by the art object. This is an equally important aspect of the Third Avant-garde, because it uses ritual objects and introduces them in the realm of non-traditional or conceptual art, *enabling the transformation of traditional symbols into secular objects*. Duchamp's gesture had several consequences: if on the one hand, the originality of Fountain was a paradoxical result, on the other hand, its lack of uniqueness was also firmly imbedded in its possible replication, something that several avant-garde works have equally demonstrated. Thus, the work's validity resides in its idea, not in its form (Supangkat's *Ken Dedes* was reassembled in 1996, and Harsono's *Voices Are Controlled by the Powers* was remade in 2011).

In accordance with Duchamp's practices of *displacing* objects from their usual context, the introduction of traditional materials in avant-garde gestures results in the loss of their ancient ritualistic function. Now appearing

130 See Peter Dormer, "The Salon de Refuse?," in *The Culture of Craft: Status and Future*, ed. Peter Dormer (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 6.

131 Kuenzli, *Dada*, 20.

132 See McEvilley, *The Triumph of Anti-Art*, 19.

largely secularized, despite the maintenance of their symbolic value, traditional objects' presence in contemporary art deprives them of their entirety and opens the way for their *fragmentation*. Because of their intrinsic historical value, each fragment—like the bust or the mask—conveys to the audience an individual artist's intention. And the avant-garde's introduction of the new skill—the "ability to choose and select, not the ability to make"[133]—has implications for contemporary art. It conflates traditional crafts with the analytical language of modern art: when an artist posits a traditional idiom, the artwork is initially interpreted through this vocabulary and, only after 'we' realize the work might contain other significations. This equally has implications for traditional arts, that have been regarded as devoid of critical consciousness and as testimonies of a continuation of modes of seeing and acting—their turn into a *critique*. Yet, traditions do change to accommodate the spirit of the time, and there were always periods of selection and adaptation (also for the original customs).[134]

An aspect introduced by the neo-avant-garde (and tried by the Dada artists) was *communal authorship*. This belief in collective production was equally tested by Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (New Art Movement Group) artists in Indonesia (see Chapter 3). The Third Avant-garde takes this aspect a step further, as traditional arts are many times collectively made. Even though they can be solely made by one craftsman—*wayang* is a case point, as traditionally, puppets are made by the *dalang* that performs them—the integration of traditional arts, made by a person who is not considered an artist within an artist work, results in different behaviors by Third Avant-garde artists: they may act as curators, sometimes as makers, and other times as collectors, and archivists.

The inclusion of these cultural artefacts in contemporary art practices paved the way for problematizing the binary set of 'high' and 'low' art, art and artifact, and the divisions between art and ethnography. "Scholars have noticed that the term 'Art' with capital 'A' in its modern sense... originated in all probability in the eighteenth century,"[135] and has remained undisputed up until the postcolonial moment. Brzyski adds:

> [T]he material culture from the West, enshrined by the designation 'art', became the domain of art history, while the material culture of the rest of the world, classed under the rubric 'artifact', was relegated to the domain of ethnography and later anthropology, from which it did not emerge until well into the twentieth century.[136]

133 Dormer, "The Salon de Refuse?," 3.

134 See Rita Widagdo, "Some Contemporary Expressions in the Visual Arts of Indonesia" (Second ASEAN Workshop, Symposium and Exhibition, Manila, 1993), 2.

135 Paul Oscar Kristellar quoted in Paul Greenhalgh, "The History of Craft," in *The Culture of Craft*, 27.

136 Anna Brzyski, "Introduction: Canons and Art History," in *Partisan Canons* (Durham:

Brzyski points to a current paradigm shift, marked by the rise of the artifact from ethnography's domain, but maintains: "we are still experiencing the consequences of the initial segregation."[137] While Third Avant-garde works respond to this problematic, artists do not seem busy with these considerations. Artists are simply exploring and re-discovering cultural and political boundaries. It is as if they (re)affirmed Susan Vogel's observation: "Whether the [Panji] is art, whether the [*ikat*], or the [batik] are art or artifact is strictly our problem... The question and the categories are ours."[138]

Supangkat noticed that in most cases, whenever a regional artist employs a traditional idiom, the artwork is interpreted through this vocabulary. Like Brzyski, he equally points the origin of this attitude to modernism's opposition between traditional and modern:

> Based on the history of development of western society, which has its roots in post-enlightenment western thinking, modernism made the contradiction between traditional and modern an absolute. Besides that, modernism also caused both the concepts of breakthroughs and of renewal to become absolutes within the development of art. These two beliefs make it impossible for modernism to understand works of modern art that are influenced by tradition.... When works of modern art created by artists from outside Europe and America exhibit signs of [tradition] these artworks are immediately viewed as 'not modern works of art,' but, rather, as 'traditional works of art'. In totality, the works are 'not works of art'.[139]

By definition, an avant-garde work must be out—meaning ahead—of its own historical moment, more appropriately placed in the future which it envisages. Thus, it problematizes the 'here' and 'now'. The avant-garde is caught in an event, it happens and refuses assimilation into a system of ordering according to which the world is oriented. The moment of its occurrence is one of dislocation from the 'here and now' to the 'then and there'. Its function is to go a step further. But with time, its *deferred temporality* is transformed, and integrated in a narrative of sequences that make it 'make sense', and consequently diminishing its radical force. This is what I propose as avant-garde's *institutionalizing process* (see Appendix II). Yet, the avant-garde denies this possibility.

Yet another level of institutionalization—which I call intermediate—is

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Duke University Press, 2007), 6.

137 Brzyski, 6.

138 Vogel, "Introduction," 17.

139 Jim Supangkat, "Art With an Accent," *CP Open Biennial 2003: Interpellation*, accessed January 7, 2009, http://biennale.cp-foundation.org/2003/essays01.html.

the integration of these works in exhibitions. This has been largely successful for the Third Avant-garde: (Southeast) Asian practices are constantly present in regional shows since the late-1970s, in worldwide exhibitions since the late 1980s, and more prominently in the experimental circuit of biennials since the early 1990s.[140] The most significant institutionalization is the one which follows, the works' accommodation in the museum. Formerly, entering a museum collection signified that a work achieved a canon of expertise enabling its classification. Since these works contradict the taxonomical system, their accommodation has been slow, and has largely resulted from: 1. commissions for exhibitions taking place in the wider Pacific region, especially those promoted by the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum and the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane, and 2. from acquisitions made by the Singapore Art Museum (where *Ken Dedes* is located). The moment artworks enter an institution's discourse, certain formalization and conformism ultimately happens: this can, although not by the time this dissertation was written, promote traditions fixity. But, as Poshyananda proposes, traditions have always been essential to accommodate change.[141] They constitute legacies that allow individuals the functions of assimilation, adaptation, and resistance to change. And the contemporary is no different.

2.4 The Third Avant-garde Artist

One of the most significant aspects artists retained from their historical culture was the participatory role of the artist as a member of their communities.[142] Kapur's reflection for India—where the artist is asked to articulate a national, integrated identity, along with being a spokesperson for the people—is equivalent to the situation in Southeast Asia, where the individual artist is immersed in a community. As mentioned, the Third

140 1989 was the year of the Third Havana Biennial, entitled Tradition and Contemporaneity, when the spectrum widened to artists from the entire world. This was the second edition to include Southeast Asian artists (in 1986, only Vietnamese and Cambodian artists were shown. In a total of 136 Asian works, ninety were from India.) See Bruce Altshuler, ed., "The Second Havana Biennial," in *Biennials and Beyond—Exhibitions That Made Art History 1962-2002* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2013), 252.

Regionally, a network of exhibitions started developing slowly in the late 1950s; in the late 1960s, ASEAN started promoting exhibitions every two years. Japan came in early in the game: the first Asian Art Show in the Fukuoka Art Museum (FAM) took place in 1979 (*Asian Art Show: Part II,* which focused on contemporary art and included practices from five Southeast Asian nations, was in 1980). Australia would follow in 1987 with the first edition of *Artists Regional Exchange* (ARX), in Perth; in 1993 opened the first *Asian Pacific Triennial*, in Brisbane, Queensland. See Simon Soon, "Maps of the Sea," *Search: Southeast Asian Art Resource Channel*, accessed April 10, 2013, http://search-art.asia/attachments/files/MAPoftheSEA.pdf.

141 See Poshyananda, "Preface," in *Traditions/Tensions*, 15–16.

142 See Kapur, "Dismantling the Norm," 60.

Avant-garde artist shoots out from the *dalang* (puppet master) of the past: like his predecessors, the contemporary artist tells stories, comments on reality and conveys political opinions through metaphor and allegorical language. Sometimes, he equally entertains people.[143] This aspect of entertainment is particularly visible in performance art which is widely used by regional contemporary artists.[144] My suggestion of the artist-*dalang* reminds Poshyananda's proposal of the contemporary artist as a shaman.[145] Regarded this way, contemporary artists continue the social role played by these past figures, while recovering their importance.

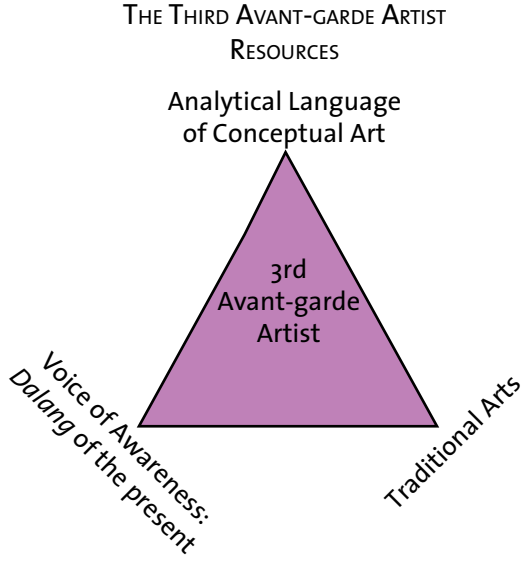

Figure 2.10
The Third Avant-garde Artist Resources
Image edited by Leonor Veiga, 2017

Generally, a Third Avant-garde artist acts upon a triad of resources [Fig. 2.10]: 1. his surrounding reality, which is defined by the presence of traditional arts from which he picks and chooses fragments, 2. his educational background (from which he acquired fluency in the analytical language of

143 See Johannes Jacobus (Hans) Ras, "The Social Function and Cultural Significance of the Javanese Wayang Purwa Theatre" (Conference on Asian Puppet Theatre, London, 1979), 1; Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 263.

144 See Iola Lenzi, "Negotiating Home, History and Nation," in *Negotiating Home, History and Nation: Two Decades of Contemporary Art in Southeast Asia 1991-2001*, ed. Iola Lenzi (Singapore: Singapore Art Museum, 2011), 11–13.

145 See Poshyananda, *Playing with Slippery Lubricants: Apinan Poshyananda Selected Writings 1993-2004* (Bangkok: Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture, 2010), 193–200.

conceptual art that Mosquera identified for Bedia's work, see Chapter 1), and 3. circumstances that he comments on as a voice for the community. Because of this positioning of a communal voice, the avant-garde artist can be said to act as an *emancipatory hero* who sacrifices his interests in the name of the *arrière-garde*—that is, the group that remains behind or 'out-of-date'.[146] Being first, many times, results in not being understood: how could Indonesian people in 1975, including prepared and lectured art critics, apprehend Supangkat's *Ken Dedes*? They could not, unless they would engage with the artist. That would have required a (re)searching attitude, a procedure that critics, with the exception of Sudarmadji and Sanento Yuliman, did not follow (see Chapter 3). The Indonesian 1975 event recalls Duchamp's claim: "It's the posthumous spectator [who matters] because the contemporary spectator is worthless."[147] By saying this, Duchamp suggested that those who he witnessed rejecting *Fountain* and littered his intervention were not capable of thinking beyond categories (his genius would be recognized by artists in the 1960s). So, while he waited to be understood—this is the *deferred temporality* of the avant-garde—he was actively exhibiting the work of his friends.

In the European avant-garde of anarchic vein, the artist acted as an emancipatory hero. Foster also rendered the neo-avant-garde as heroic.[148] In the Third Avant-garde, the artist has a double function: first, the social framing, in which he continues the role of the spokesperson—the *dalang*; second, the artistic framing, in which he destroys the myth of the individual artist, promoting instead the artist as a thinker that acts radically by employing traditional arts from his surrounding culture(s). This double-position makes the Third Avant-garde artist conflate both positions: heroic and anarchic. Traditional arts make this a concrete possibility (see Appendix I).

Regarding his behavior toward reality and the employment of traditional arts as part of an I discourse of innovation, activism and archival functions, the Third Avant-garde artist may act in three distinct ways: the first group acts primarily as innovators, and searches for novel territories for traditional arts. This is for instance, the case Chinese Mio Pang Fei, or Timorese Maria Madeira or Indonesian Jumaadi, who foster new solutions for the art of Chinese calligraphy, Timorese *tais*, and Indonesian *wayang*, respectively. Their innovations make visible the resilience which is inherent to traditions, that they adapt according to the spirit of the times [Fig. 2.11].

Second, there are the artists-activists who employ traditional arts as idioms that aptly convey messages of discontent. In this group, I include Jim Supangkat, Harsono, Arahmaiani, the duo Brahma Tirta Sari, I Wayan

146 See Docherty, "Crisis in the Avant-Garde," 217.
147 Kuenzli, "Introduction," 3.
148 See Foster, "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?," 25.

Bendi, all from Indonesia, and Redza Piadasa from Malaysia, Norberto Roldan from the Philippines, and Jakkai Suribitur and Kamin Lertchaiprasert from Thailand. Their activism targets not only frozen traditions (sometimes to imbue them with their avant-garde capacities), but equally uses them to convey extremely politicized messages.

Third, there are some artists who are themselves repositories of traditions. This is an important aspect of exiled artists such as Vietnamese Dinh Q. Lê and Madeira, who practiced their essential identity as a form of survival within the dominant culture they were immersed in. Similarly, Harsono (along with other artists) contains an 'archive of pain' of Chinese history in Indonesia. In other cases, artists act as they themselves are living archives. This is the case for instance of Lê and Harsono and Indonesian Albert Yonathan Setiawan and Entang Wiharso. Through their personal memories—recent or old—they make visible personal and communal histories.

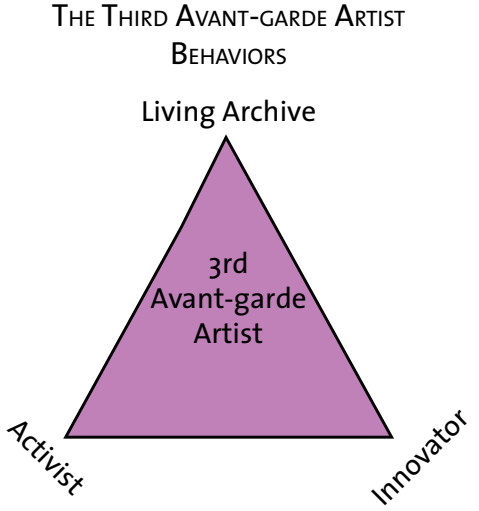

Figure 2.11
The Third Avant-garde Artist Behaviors
Image edited by Leonor Veiga, 2017

The Third Avant-garde artist equally acts upon traditions by making, unmaking, and remaking them [Fig. 2.12]. Their attitude breaks with the status quo, not solely on traditions, but also on bourgeois art and collective culture. What is most striking is that even if the artist has one program in mind—making, unmaking and remaking a certain tradition—his actions result in a conflation of all these possibilities. So, even if the artist acts as an originator of a new tradition, what ultimately happens is that the traditions they act upon are simultaneously made, unmade, and remade.

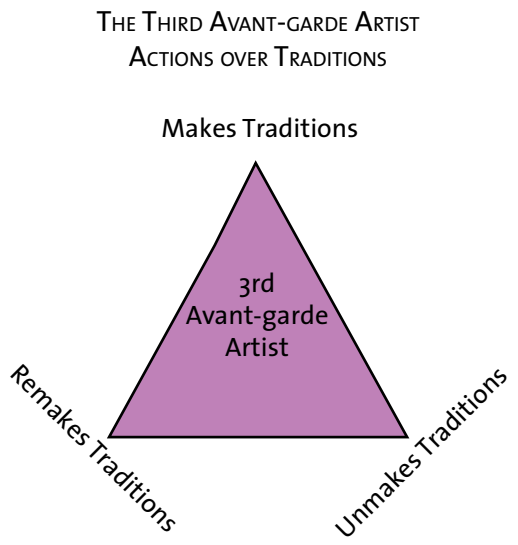

Figure 2.12
The Third Avant-garde Artist Actions Over Traditions
Image edited by Leonor Veiga, 2017

In general, the Third Avant-garde artist who quotes traditions does not start by making a deliberate choice to engage with traditional culture, especially that which is prominent among tourist brochures and spectacles. Instead, they are reluctant to pay attention to these particularities, often the reason for many artists refusing to concede their engagement with traditional arts. Whenever an artist addresses the impact of tourism, traditions are employed in a satirical way. I propose that the choice to engage with traditions is intimately tied to a sense of belonging, and conveys an intended act of citizenship (see Chapter 1).

In sum, the Third Avant-garde artist who manipulates traditions may have different reasons to do so. Nevertheless, they do not abstain from being an active voice of their community or from trying to project a better future. They work on traditions according not only to their personal needs, but also to the needs of their audiences. Therefore, it is possible to say that they resist state patronization—via for instance the continuation of discourses on *wayang*—, rebel against artistic oppression and act locally. Now, moving toward explaining the internal dynamics of the Third Avant-garde work, I hope to make these possibilities clear.

2.5 The Third Avant-garde Artwork

Generally, avant-garde works cause an initial discomfort in the spectator, precisely because of their social commentary and aptness for sarcasm. Third Avant-garde works equally produce such feelings in the spectator (see Chapters 3, 4 and 5), who undergoes two moments of interpretation: firstly, when they see the a recognizable idiom and secondly when they identify the its displacement and understand that the work carries other significations. This is what Foster's deferred temporality means in relation to the work (and is one of avant-garde's main attributes): the temporal gap between production and reception.

As suggested, the avant-garde gesture acts upon the present and envisages a different future. This is one of the reasons why political messages are so frequently present in artworks. Such is the position taken by Vietnamese artist Dinh Q. Lê, whose works span beyond Vietnam's borders, many times commenting on Burmese and Cambodian realities: "Vietnam turmoils happen constantly and shape our lives. That is why our works are political. Not because we are political artists."[149] The avant-garde artist who acts as an emancipatory hero conveys this envisioned constructed reality. Within every Third Avant-garde artwork, three events happen simultaneously: through fragments of traditional arts, the wholeness of traditions is (apparently) conveyed. Every time an Indonesian artist uses one aspect of wayang theater—be it the stories, the puppets or the masks—he addresses aspects of the traditional arts that are of use to him in a given circumstance (see Chapters 4 and 5). Second, as proposed by Clifford, traditions employed are made, unmade and remade. And finally, social commentary is advanced through the artists' actions. By acting as a voice of and for his close communities, the work becomes a repository of social agency [Fig. 2.13].

Kapur states that historians in India have anchored their work in the notion of *fragment* to convey three aspects: one, that the part can take the significance of the whole, two, that in the fragment resides the ability to split off from the pressure caused by hegemonic culture, and three, to manifest the inclusion of new elements which have never been assimilated into discourse. As stated above, the notion of fragment has also been considered by Benjamin through the concept of allegory and Bürger explained that Benjamin's concept of allegory was useful to understand the fragmented nature of the avant-garde work: because of the deconstruction performed by the artist, the work no longer accomplished its (ritual) function. This 'taking out of context' practiced by the Dada artists resembles traditional arts that remain deprived of a clear reading stemming from their inclusion in

149 Dinh Q. Lê, Splendour and Darkness, unpublished interview by Leonor Veiga, Leiden, April 14, 2016.

ethnographic museums. Thus, the Third Avant-garde artist that works with traditional arts further extrapolates this aspect, because he equally takes traditional objects out of their local and institutional contexts.

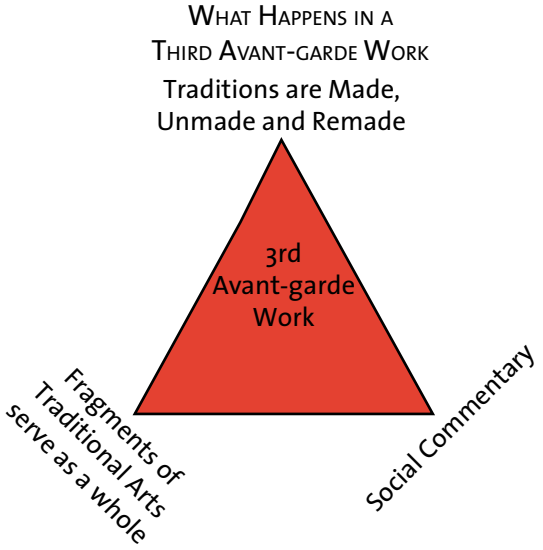

Figure 2.13
What Happens in a Third Avant-garde Work
Image edited by Leonor Veiga, 2017

Lets take Supangkat's work *Ken Dedes* [Fig. 2.14] as an example to demonstrate the conflation of events happening in a Third Avant-garde work. Reading the work through the Third Avant-garde lens, it is possible to say that it was conceived to pay tribute to a woman, to produce social commentary on gender inequality, and to resist national subservience towards foreign models. Here, the artifact chosen is material and appears separated from its context: *Ken Dedes*'s bust served as material and as reference to a certain historical past. But the fact that *Ken Dedes* was a symbol enabled a multitude of associations. While in the act of choosing an artifact, a process of fragmentation commences (because the ritualizing end is lost) but is continued through the act of recombining, resulting in new meaning(s). Thus, for the avant-garde artist, artifacts can be separated from their context and still serve as reference.

Supangkat's gesture relates to what McEvilley designated as 'reprocessing', an act that derives as much from a sense of replenishment as a need for transformation, with the past providing fuel for the future. Thus, the first move of the reprocessing act is the selection (that includes fragmentation and division), and the second move is elements' re-joining. This is how processes of montage—one aspect of avant-garde works—come to be

and are articulated. McEvilley meets Bürger's description on the making of an avant-garde work,[150] but differs from him regarding the context of production since when he wrote about reprocessing, McEvilley was dealing with the first participation of West African artists in the Venice Biennial.

Figure 2.14
Jim Supangkat
Ken Dedes
1996 (artist's reconstruction from the 1975 original) | Mixed media | 61 x 44 x 27 cm
Collection of the National Gallery of Singapore | Image courtesy National Gallery Board, Singapore

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Third Avant-garde artworks are made from material fragments which are chosen (the traditional artifact or story). So, this fragmentation (also) symbolizes disjuncture of our time, where past and present coexist. Thus, a totality is denied. Fragmentation is further enhanced by the medium of installation, which lacks the wholeness of traditional media including sculpture and painting. The high degree of autonomy of fragments—the mask, the bust or the story can live by themselves—also permits the readings of works through their parts and not necessarily in their wholeness. I think this is a very

150 See Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 55–82.

important aspect of Third Avant-garde works, as oftentimes traditional (or foreign) societies are not (fully) knowledgeable of the production context. Just as most people do not know *Ken Dedes*'s story, most people do not know that it was the closing of *TEMPO* magazine that triggered Harsono's installation *The Voices are Controlled by the Powers*. In my opinion, this involuntary unawareness resulted in the deferral of the works' recognition as avant-garde.

Processes of montage claim from artists' little interference. The unsubstantial modification also denotes it is a fragment from reality as avant-garde claims. So, using fragments originating in traditional societies (most times studied by anthropologists, another reason for their deferred reception) confirms their role in everyday life. Thus, these works should not be judged as performing acts of self-exoticization. In consequence, new territories of intervention were opened to traditions and to art, without losing their recognizability. Still, the preference for combining traditional materiality and analytical discourse, as posited by Mosquera, is evident.[151] I believe it results from the performed ethnographic analysis of cultures, in which rationality is more linked to the Western frame of reference. For Harsono, the masks alone served the purpose and for Supangkat, the Dedes's bust was enough. So, the choice for certain *curated* fragments is both method and ideology conducive to conveying the artist's message. Within Third Avant-garde works, one example may contain several positions: in *Ken Dedes*, the bust symbolized a national narrative, the opposition to Western modernism, while it introduced classical Javanese culture into the discourse of (contemporary) high art.[152]

Poshyananda also referred to 'fragments of traditions' as the active ingredient of contemporary art practices. McEvilley pointed to the South African artists' acts of reprocessing both the legacies of a Western modernism (that had been forced onto them, a similar situation to that of Asian artists) and simultaneously their attentiveness to their surrounding culture. In his opinion, and I concur, artists reprocess both instances—local and global. When they do so, an artwork is born, but a new, invigorated tradition is also created. This leads to Clifford's affirmation that traditions articulate the disjunctures of our time and are being actively made, unmade, and remade [Fig. 2.15].[153] He argues that even though cultural continuity was more discernible in earlier periods then today, examples can be found in the contemporary. So, traditions that persist must be seen through a prism of heterogeneous elements, old and new, indigenous and foreign.

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151 See Gerardo Mosquera, "The Marco Polo Syndrome: Some Problems around Art and Eurocentrism," in *Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985*, 218–25.

152 Ken Dedes and Singosari sculpture are part of High Art discourses since the nineteenth-century. Yet, Western scholars did not continue the narrative, relegating the art from 'non-Western' countries to a past immemorial.

153 Clifford, "Indigenous Articulations," *The Contemporary Pacific* 13, no. 2 (2001): 479.

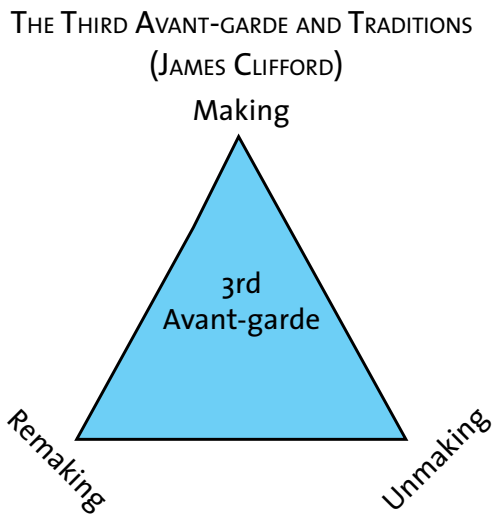

Figure 2.15
The Third Avant-garde and Traditions, in accordance to James Clifford (2001)
Image edited by Leonor Veiga, 2017

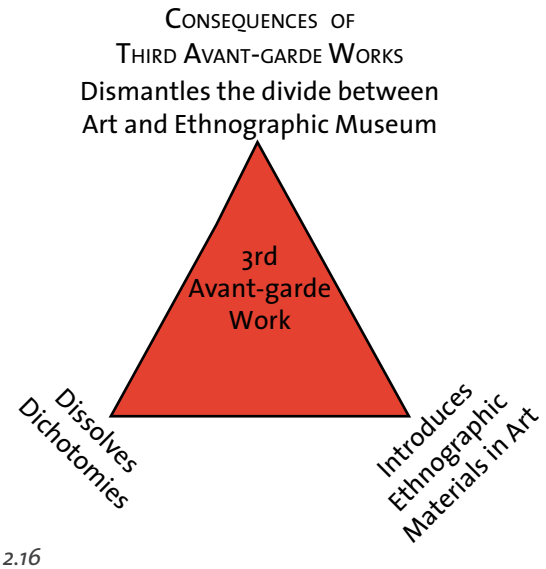

Figure 2.16
Consequences of Third Avant-garde Works
Image edited by Leonor Veiga, 2017

Because Third Avant-garde works equally introduce new tensions, they also provoke consequences in to the field(s): through its repudiation of the taxonomical division between fine art and low art, it introduces traditional

arts in art's realm; because it dismantles the art/culture divide identified by Clifford, it enables their meeting [Fig. 2.16]. In consequence, Third Avant-garde practices equally dissolve dichotomies such as East and West, traditional and modern. The Third Avant-garde emerged to propose new trajectories for Art History and Anthropology and their respective museums (see numerous possibilities in Chapter 3, 4, and 5). It not only promotes their meeting, it equally continues avant-garde's disruptive discourses.

2.6 Conclusions

In this chapter I debated the significance of the avant-garde and proposed that it consists of a contemporary gesture that, after finding its language and mission, propels a change in the course of art history and art's institutionalization. If regarded as a force, avant-garde has not lost significance and can happen in several places, in several times. Through these conditions, I advanced an avant-garde for Southeast Asia, which I termed the Third Avant-garde. Such an initiative seems to be a valid project because avant-garde has, so far, remained almost a Western-centric construct. Thus, my nomenclature signifies the continuation of an unfinished project. Many authors, from Kapur and Mitter to Enwezor, have pointed to the persistence of avant-garde's metanarrative, one that relates to its Euro-American centrism. They argue it should be subjected to a dismantlement process and propose to identify avant-garde's gestures outside the field of art.

The Third Avant-garde continues Bhabha's proposition of a Third Space, as it dismantles a third layer from the modernist partisan system of classification, which has been questioned since the historical avant-garde. If the first avant-garde refused to do retinal art, and questioned what art was—thus shacking the structure of the museum (here, Duchamp's urinal is a case-point)—, the neo-avant-garde proclaimed art as a possible existence outside the modern art museum and expanded the field of intervention (Burden's *Shoot* embodies these preoccupations). Both questioned the originality of the work and the notion of author. In this respect, avant-garde's radical gestures are paramount: the ready-made proposed that a work can be a machine-made piece selected by the artist, with little or no interference in its composition; neo-avant-garde movements questioned ideas of authorship and originality by means of collective participation in the making of an artwork, and by reprising several former practices. Through traditional arts, the Third Avant-garde continues these projects, the notion of loss of authorship and use of the ready-made and appropriation, while it extrapolates the two. This is done by contradicting the compartmentalization between art and ethnography (or art and craft). Instead of, but in continuation with preceding

events, the Third Avant-garde project takes all these proposals—origin or circumstances enabling an avant-garde event, mission of the artwork, attack on institutionalization and conformism, notions of authorship, authenticity and originality—one step further. And, in consequence of its denial of the artificial divide between art and culture, the *local* becomes a ready-made element of the artwork.

So, like the previous avant-gardes, the Third Avant-garde introduces new zones of tension (tradition, art, craft), thus promoting its own questioning of what can be termed as art. The placement of traditional objects into art's discourse results in their elevation to the status of art—a circumstance that equally happened four decades later to *Fountain*—and, as a result, it requests a significant change in art categorization. Meanwhile, the Third Avant-garde does not *per se* attack the art museum. Instead, its aims at annihilating the partisan taxonomical division between art and culture. This is a project of a wider scope, which ultimately dismantles and ruins the art museum and the ethnographic museum. In this regard, ethnographic museums have, as Clifford observes, been faster to adapt: "ethnographic museums are rebranding themselves as world art museums."[154]

Deriving from their postmodern inception, Third Avant-garde works contain simultaneously an avant-garde and an anti-avant-garde vein. When in 1995 Kapur proposed to use traditions to "make postmodernism in our own terms [because] it is what renders us distinguishable,"[155] she suggested traditions as a space of transgression. So, Third Avant-garde artists presented in the following chapters demonstrate the phenomenon's particularities, namely its 1970s-80s early manifestations (see Chapter 3), its boom in the 1990s (see Chapter 4) and its globalization throughout the 2000s (see Chapter 5).

154 Clifford, *Museum Realisms: What Does Realism Mean in Museum Contexts, Especially Those Concerned with Cross Cultural Translation?* (Leiden: Research Centre for Material Culture, 2016), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQL09kUTUes.

155 Kapur, "When Was Modernism in Indian Art?," in When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India (1995), ed. Geeta Kapur (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000), 297–98.

Plate 1. Jim Supangkat, *Ken Dedes*, 1996.
Artist's reconstruction from the 1975 original.
Mixed media, 61 x 44 x 27 cm.
Collection of the National Heritage Board, Singapore.
Courtesy of the National Heritage Board, Singapore.

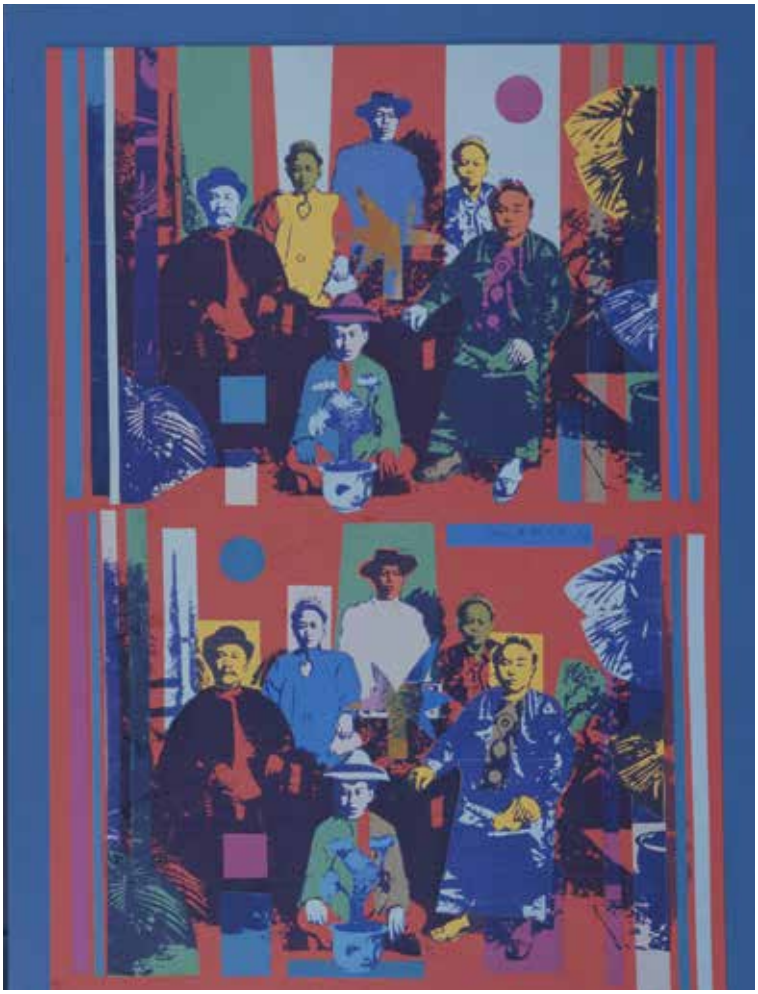

Plate 2. Redza Piyadasa, *Baba Family*, 1987.
Photocopy on colored paper, 101.3 x 75.8 cm.
Collection of the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum.
Courtesy of the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka.

Plate 3. Norberto Roldan, *Langgoni Nine*, 1989.
Textile, 157.5 x 97.5 cm.
Collection of the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum.
Courtesy of the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka.

Plate 4. Mio Pang Fei. *Wu Yong of Shui Hu*, 1996.
Mixed media on wood, 200 x 135 cm (each).
Images by Leonor Veiga, 1996.

Mio Pang Fei. *Bandits of Marsh*, 1996. Installation view.
Source: *Path and Adventure* (exh. cat.).

Plate 5. Maria Madeira. *270+ Massacre Santa Cruz Nian*, 1996.
Mixed media with *kaibauk*, 350 x 350 x 30 cm.

Maria Madeira. *Silence at What Price?*, 1996.
Mixed media with nails and *tais*, 200 x 100 x 40 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 6. Dinh Q. Lê. *Cambodia: Splendour and Darkness*, 2005.
C-print, linen tape, 160 x 120 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 7. I Wayan Bendi. *Revolusi*, 1991.
Acrylic and ink on canvas, 146 x 266 cm.
Source: *Traditions/Tensions* (exh. cat.).

Plate 8. FX Harsono. *The Voices Are Controlled by the Powers*, 2011
Remake of the 1994 original. Installation with one hundred masks and black cloth, 350 x 350 x 30 cm.

Destruction, 1997.
Performance and documentation. Courtesy of the artist.

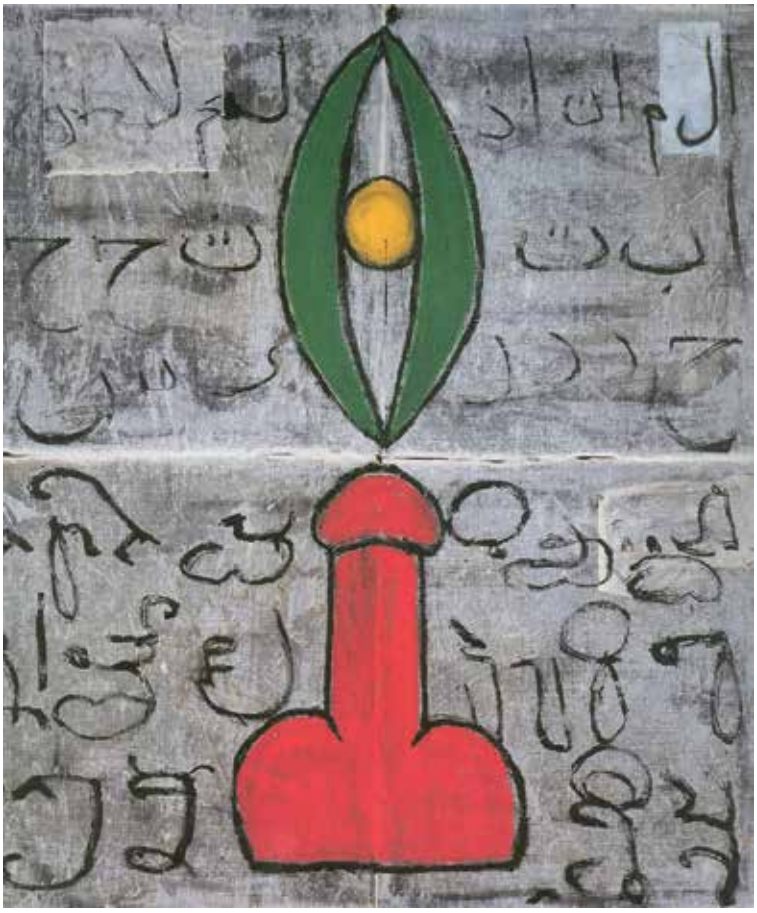

Plate 9. Arahmaiani. *Lingga-Yoni*, 1993/4.
Acrylic on canvas, 182 x 140 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 10. Maria Madeira. *Rei e Labele Koalia (Kiss and Don't Tell)*, 2007.
Mixed media with *tais* on canvas, 61 x 76 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 11. Arahmaiani. *I Don't Want to be Part of Your Legend*, 2004. Still images from 12' video.
Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 12. FX Harsono. *Writing in the Rain*, 2011. Performance and video documentation, 6' 12". Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 13. I Wayan Bendi. *Terror*, 2010.
Acrylic and ink on canvas, 500 x 200 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 14. Dinh Q. Lê. *Untitled (Columbia Pictures)*, 2003.
C-print, linen tape, 97 x 183 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 15. Jakkai Siributr. *78*, 2014.
Steel scaffolding bamboo, fabric and embroydery,
350 x 350 x 350 cm.
Courtesy of the YAVUZ Fine Art, Singapore.

Plate 16. Brahma Tirta Sari. *Sarung*, 2009. From left to right, clockwise: *Sarung West*, *Sarung North*, *Sarung East*, *Sarung South,* and *Sarung Center*. Installation with batik on silk, hand stitched, variable dimensions. Courtesy of the artists.

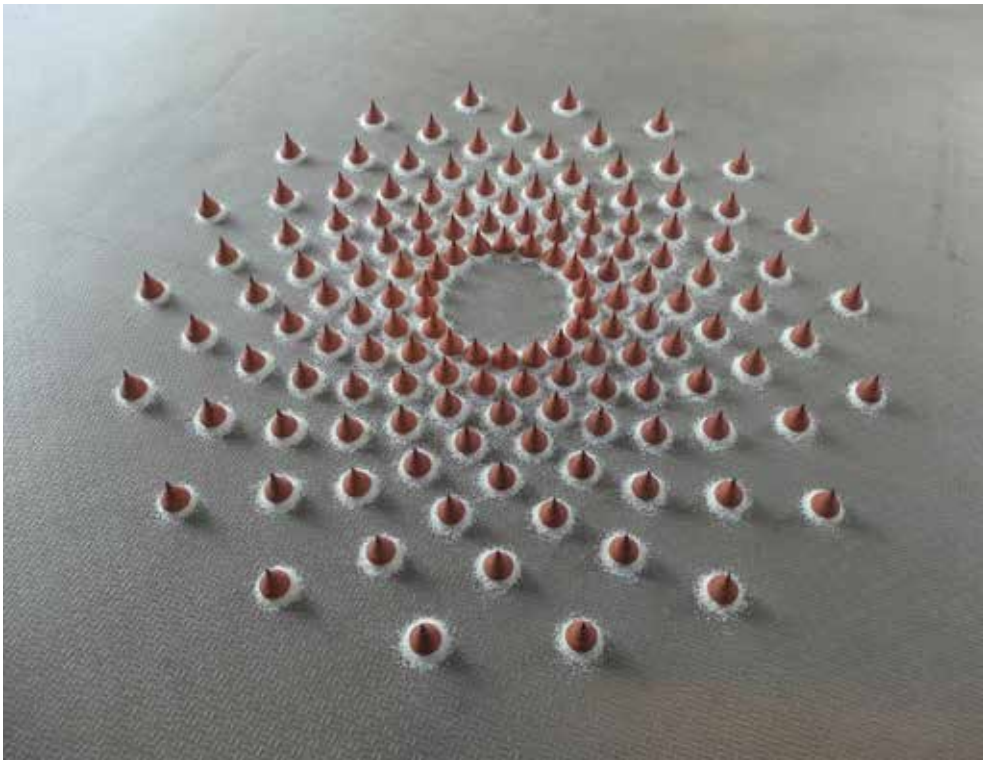

Plate 17. Albert Yonathan Setiawan. *Mandala Study #4*, 2015. 650 terracotta pieces atop marble sand, 300 x 300 x 10 cm. Courtesy of the Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York.

Plate 18. Kamin Lertchaiprasert. *Lord Buddha Said 'If you see dhamma, you see me'*, 2003-4.
Papier machê (shredded Thai Bath bank notes), Head 244 x 73 x 73 cm; Torso 206 x 83 x 79 cm; Feet 70 x 79 x 78cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 19. Entang Wiharso. *Borderless: Floating Island*, 2011-12.
Graphite, resin, steel, brass, color pigment, thread, 350 x 750 x 140 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 20. Jumaadi. *The Life and Death of a Shadow*, 2015-16.
From left to right, clockwise: West view of the installation; leather and paper cutouts; Mix of found and produced *wayang* materials and overhead projector; performance.
Images by Leonor Veiga, 2016.