

Call for Participation

Precarious Art: How Do We Make Art in a World on Fire?

1 – 2 August 2024

The past two decades have been characterised by worldwide states of disruption. We have seen financial instability, international conflicts, democracy in crisis, culture wars, the rise of populism, a global pandemic, and the deepening climate emergency. In the face of such events, artmaking can feel insignificant, and artists may struggle to use their art to respond to and interrogate such events. Mirroring global events on a personal level, artists often experience financial and emotional instability in their own personal lives, again providing obstacles to creation.

The concepts of ‘precariousness’ and ‘precarity’ speak to this moment, where there is uncertainty and insecurity responding to global disruptions and localised instability in work, sexuality, and gender identity. Judith Butler identifies precariousness as a facet of humanity that arrives from our interdependency and injurability, which make us vulnerable to each other (2009). It is the very nature of our humanity – existentially and ontologically - that makes us vulnerable and so our existence is precarious. The existential condition of precariousness is linked to the more political notion of ‘precarity’ through lived experience. Butler explains that precarity arrives from social and political organisations that have ‘developed historically in order to maximise precariousness for some and minimise precariousness for others’ (pp. 2-3).

By way of an antidote to the bleak view that Butler offers, Sara Ahmed (2010) identifies hope as ‘a thoughtful way of being directed toward the future, or creating the very thought of the future as going some way’. She continues that ‘it does not mean that we *will be* happy but that we imagine we *could be* happy if things go the right way’. Imagination, then, becomes a powerful agent that engages hope to teach us ‘about what we strive for in the present’ (pp. 181–182). As artists we strive to understand,

represent, and reimagine what the world is and what it could be, holding precariousness and precarity alongside hope.

This call for participation invites artists and researchers to discuss the ways in which they respond to, explore, and offer insights into precarity, precariousness, and vulnerability through their artmaking and research. It asks how imagination and hope can play a part in an investigation of these issues through practice research.

Suggested topics include but are not limited to:

- Precariousness, precarity, and vulnerability in artmaking
- How art can represent those who exist in states of precariousness
- Technology and sustainability
- Artmaking as a site of exploration for marginality, anxiety, and paranoia
- Environmental precarity
- The place of hope and imagination responding to states of precarity

We invite presentations that respond to any aspect of this call. Collaborative presentations are encouraged, as are presentations of formal papers, creative interventions, or performances. Each presentation should be no longer than 20 minutes.

The conference will be in a hybrid format – both in person and online. Please indicate the format of your presentation clearly in your proposal with details of any technical requirements.

Timescale

Please send an abstract of no more than 250 words, and a biography of no more than 100 words to Laura Hayes at hlaura@nafa.edu.sg by 1 May 2024, 6pm.

ADPRex

The Arts & Design Practice Research Exchange (ADPRex) is Southeast Asia's first annual conference dedicated to practice research. ADPRex positions NAFA as the leading centre of arts and

design practice research in this region, where artists and thinkers come together to share ideas and insights at the apex of arts and design practice and innovative thinking.

This year, ADPRex is delighted to be partnering with NAFA's Southeast Asian Arts Forum.

Southeast Asian Arts Forum

NAFA's Southeast Asian Arts Forum 2024 will mark its 5th anniversary in conjunction with ADPRex. In concord with the theme of precarity, the 5th edition of the Southeast Asian Arts Forum will once again evaluate the meaningfulness of practice, the arts, and our communities. War, violence, and devastation have marked the last few years, if not tremendous then insidious in impact upon humanity. It begs the question more than ever, how art can maintain and assert its relevance in such challenging times?

References

Ahmed, S. (2010), *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Butler, J. (2009) *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*. London: Verso.