

A Special Event for the Society for the History of Technology Annual Meeting 2016
National University of Singapore

Techno-Imaginations

O N S C R E E N



**TEMBUSU
COLLEGE**
National University of Singapore

<http://shot2016.org/event-techno.php>

Tembusu College, National University of Singapore presents Techno-Imaginations on Screen, a day-long festival in collaboration with the Society for the History of Technology.

Films and AV-based media have shaped our imaginations of technology. This film festival offers new tools for thinking about, representing, and understanding the role and impact of technology in society.

The festival showcases Singapore-based and international film-makers and artists who are using creative cinematic techniques and exploring provocative subject matter in Asia and beyond. The collection reimagines technologies from the everyday to the state-of-the-art both in their visual narratives and the production of the film itself.

On 24th June 2016, from 12:00 onwards, nine films will be screened. This will be followed by a roundtable discussion with film-makers, artists, and scholars of science and technology studies from 19:30-21:45.

Transportation back to Grand Copthorne Hotel will depart at 22:15 (boarding at 22:00).

CONTACT DETAILS

Dr Eric Kerr, Festival Leader

Fellow @Tembusu College and Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore
E | eric.kerr@nus.edu.sg

Tembusu Volunteers

Suraendher Kumarr, Julia Yan, Dillon Keshvani, Nikhil Suresh, Reynard Tan

Poster Design

Wei Jin Jin Layla

LOCATION DETAILS

Films will be screened from 12:00-17:00 in **Seminar Room 3, Tembusu Learn Lobe**

The roundtable discussion will take place from 19:30-21:45 in the **Reading Room, Tembusu Learn Lobe**

FRIDAY, 24 JUNE 2016

12:00 – 12:15 RECEPTION (*Light refreshments will be served*)

12:15 – 12:20 WELCOME & INTRODUCTORY REMARKS TO FILM SCREENINGS

Eric Kerr, National University of Singapore

12:20 – 13:15 SCREENING 1 | GAMES

12:20 **Video Game**

Vipin Vijay

12:55 **Open Sky**

Tan Jingliang

13:15 – 13:25 INTERVAL

13:25 – 14:55 SCREENING 2 | LINES

13:25 **Life Cycle**

Malini Sur

14:10 **All the Lines Flow Out**

Charles Lim

14:35 **Rhythm of the Everyday**

Richard Baxstrom with Teo Bichinashvili, Teo Burki, Maka Chkhaidze, Mariam Kapanadze, Tinatin Khomeriki, Natalia Mosashvili

14:55 – 15:05 INTERVAL

15:05 – 15:25 SCREENING 3 | CODES

15:05 **Silica-Esc**

Vladimir Todorovic

15:15 **Recombinant #2**

Olivier Perriquet

15:25 – 15:35 INTERVAL

15:35 – 16:55 SCREENING 4 | NATURES

15:35 **A Dream Animal**

Sanyukta Sharma

16:00 **Wasted**

Anirban Datta

16:55 – 17:00 CLOSE OF FILM SCREENINGS

19:15 – 19:35 REGISTRATION & RECEPTION (*Light refreshments will be served*)

19:35 – 19:40 WELCOME & INTRODUCTORY REMARKS TO ROUNDTABLE

Eric Kerr, National University of Singapore

19:40 – 21:15 PLENARY PANEL | PRESENTATIONS

Chairperson **Eric Kerr**, National University of Singapore

19:40 **Non-Human Encounters (By Means of the Moving Image)**

Olivier Perriquet, Ecole Média Art Fructidor & Le Fresnoy

20:10 **CADA Present *A Moeda***

Sofia Oliveira and Jared Hawkey, CADA

20:40 **Generative Narrativity and Bit Sensation**

Vladimir Todorovic, Nanyang Technological University

21:15 – 21:45 OPEN ROUNDTABLE | REPRESENTATIONS

Chairperson **George Jose**, National University of Singapore

Lead Discussants **Tan Jingliang**, Independent film-maker

Sarah-Tabea Sammel, Independent film-maker

22:15 TRANSPORTATION BACK TO GRAND COPTHORNE HOTEL DEPARTS

ABOUT THE FILMS AND ARTWORKS*

A Dream Animal

SANYUKTA SHARMA | MARATHI | 2014 | 22 MIN

A wildlife sound recordist is on the trail of an undocumented animal when she disappears in the forests of Western Ghats. The recorder and microphone become her sole companions. The recorder functions as a verifier of the existence of all that it relays, visible or out of sight. She relies on them to locate her and lead her way out of the forest. As the recorder starts giving trouble, her journey depends on discerning the glitches from the real sounds.

All the Lines Flow Out

CHARLES LIM YI YONG | ENGLISH | 2011 | 22 MIN

Longkang is from the Malay word for “drain”. It is used to describe any form of man-made water passage, from small drains to big canals. Set in the *longkangs* of hyper modern Singapore, a seemingly innocent activity triggers a mysterious event, which leads to a search and eventual surrender.

Life Cycle

MALINI SUR | BENGALI | 2016 | 42 MIN

LIFE CYCLE explores the place of the bicycle in the everyday lives of city dwellers in Kolkata, eastern India. Winding through Kolkata’s roads we follow the city’s daily wage-workers, teachers and environmentalists and their changing relationships to cycling. Are Kolkata’s bicycles relics of a past to be hastily discarded or are they viable, if complicated cargo vehicles in India’s burgeoning cities? What happens when new traffic regulations impede two-wheeled travelers from riding on Kolkata’s roads? How do vendors, couriers, newspaper sellers and artists negotiate Kolkata’s roads congested with cars and other motorized transport? Who wins the battle for the road – the bicycle or the car?

Open Sky

TAN JINGLIANG | MANDARIN | 2015 | 18 MIN

Two friends reconnect at their childhood haunts in the heartlands. As the night lengthens, their conversations draw out how their selves have deviated from their past dreams through the course of reality.

Recombinant (#2)

OLIVIER PERRIQUET | N/A | 2013 | 5 MIN

A short video showing a silent interlacing of two landscapes. The editing of this video, instead of being realized by a human, is entrusted to an algorithm that exploits an analogy between film and DNA to produce a visual experience where rhythm, colors and textures are involved, like in a piece of music.

Rhythm of the Everyday

RICHARD BAXSTROM with TEO BICHINASHVILI, TEO BURKI, MAKHA CHKHAIDZE, MARIAM KAPANADZE, TINATIN KHOMERIKI, and NATALIA MOSASHVILI | GEORGIAN, ENGLISH | 2014 | 18 MIN

What are the boundaries, if any, between scientific and artistic works? Where and how do they intersect? What is the link between the practices of anthropology and contemporary art? How can we engage with the everyday of the urban environment, related social issues and communicate this knowledge through visual or creative works? These were some of the starting questions of the project. Intended to be a direct application of an interdisciplinary practice, this film was conceptualised within a workshop as part of GeoAIR's "Cooking Imaginations: Tbilisi Migrant Stories" project. The theme of the workshop concerned the urban realm of Tbilisi, the "new" migrants living there and the respective rhythms, rituals and the everydayness of the city. Based broadly on Henri Lefebvre's concept of 'rhythmanalysis', six individual filmmakers from Tbilisi were tasked with making short sections pertaining to the general theme of GeoAIR's larger project. The formal cinematic structure of the individual sections was set in advance and the filmmakers had to adhere to the 'rules' pertaining to the number of shots, shot composition, and overall length in the making of their sections. Thus, while what is depicted in one individual section can be quite different from the next, the film as a single final work itself takes up a rhythm, giving it a certain unity in the face of the radical diversity of urban life for migrants in Tbilisi. The first public screening of the film took place on 23 December 2014 in the underground passage of the Rose Revolution Square, Tbilisi. A small commercial stall was rented for the occasion. It was run on a loop for approximately four hours, allowing passersby during the afternoon rush hour to watch (or not watch) as they wished. <http://geoair.ge/project/richard-baxstrom>

Silica-Esc

VLADIMIR TODOROVIC | JAPANESE, FRENCH, GERMAN | 2010 | 8 MIN

SILICA-ESC is a generative movie that portrays a possible computing platform for the future. The story takes place in Singapore, where the decision about massive production of the new computing platform - SILICA-ESC is about to be made. The protagonists challenge the emerging supercomputer with issues like: class segregations, rules of art making, and spirituality. These questions seem like they are very important for the future developments of the global IT sector. Also, they are considered to be the most difficult ones and challenging for the super computer. But, SILICA-ESC responds with ease. By emitting audio, visual and scent impulses, she mesmerizes her first public users. The movie is created by writing code and designing a software environment, which can generate high number of variations and visual material in short periods of time. All the visual material is generated by working with computer language Processing. While doing this movie, the author worked with a variety of supercomputer clusters and High Performance Computing systems consisting of a high number of processors. This movie remixes works of Jean Luc Godard (*Weekend*), Velimir Khlebnikov (*Radio of the Future*), Fyodor Dostoyevsky (*Notes from the Underground*), and Caspar David Friedrich (artist's quotes).

Video Game

VIPIN VIJAY | BENGALI, ENGLISH | 2005 | 31 MIN

'Video Game' is "a unique Indian road movie. The film maker undertakes a journey to locations used on a previous 35mm film. He takes his video camera along and makes a personal on-the-road contemplation about life and its passing nature. The car he uses to cross the expanse of land is also wonderful: a 1980s 'Hindustan' Mark III Ambassador. This too does not escape the reflections of the maker about changing times. Just like the video camera. In the very first shot, a light reflection of the handheld flashing video cassette box is recorded. It becomes apparent that this is an early statement. 'Video surely doesn't retain memory, it creates illusion,' we hear the maker say a little later. Yet the film never becomes melancholy. The images are too beautiful and playful and the tone is too light-hearted. The end comes fairly suddenly. When his personal emotions threaten to get out of hand again, the last words are: 'The game is over.' It is basically only a game. Video Game shows a relentless, complex post-modern intelligence as it processes everything within its view, within its memory, within its wide range of cultural references. Its title is an index to this complexity, as it evokes not only digital game space as an aspect of the real, but the pursuit of video within the understanding of a game, replete with strategies, movements, and counter-movements.

Wasted

ANIRBAN DATTA | BENGALI | 2012 | 52 MIN

The uniqueness of documentary filmmaking is the possibility of recording events unfolding along the perimeter of the subject. That's where this film was born. With tears and with the loss of a very dear friend, *Wasted* was conceived. Ancient agrarian India believed nothing is waste. No Indian vernaculars have a word for waste. It came as a concept with the industrial revolution, borne by the colonial history onto an ancient agrarian culture. Waste has become a currency of development now. *Wasted* is a personal accord vis-a-vis India and the mountain of waste it produces as a global economic giant. Also, looking back at me as a documentary filmmaker and the waste I produce to make my films, the film tries to look back at material I shot for my previous films and tries to use them as found footage.

*All films have English subtitles except *Rhythm of the Everyday* which is intentionally not subtitled to explore issues of intelligibility and to reflect the multilingual sites where the film takes place.

ABOUT THE PRESENTATIONS

PRESENTATION 1

Non-Human Encounters (By Means of the Moving Image)

OLIVIER PERRIQUET

Ecole Média Art Fructidor & Le Fresnoy
olivier@perriquet.net

The term 'non-human' usually refers to what resembles a human in some way but is not, such as certain kinds of animals, robotic creatures or intelligent artifacts. This notion, that advances in artificial intelligence will probably bring to the forefront in the near future, conveys the idea we have to consider them on an equal footing with us, thereby questioning the place of humans amid their surroundings. This talk will discuss the aesthetic dimension of these considerations when it comes to the moving image.

PRESENTATION 2

CADA Present *A Moeda*

JARED HAWKEY

CADA
jaredhawkey@gmail.com

SOFIA OLIVEIRA

CADA
sofiaoliveira@cada1.net

A Moeda (The Coin) is a mobile phone application that contains a digital artefact – a 'coin' – that wants to travel around the world. Freely distributed for a large set of smartphones, every download creates a unique digital coin which is associated with the user originating a human/coin team. Coins travel the world in two ways: they are swapped between humans, and can initiate their own swaps, that is exchange their human hosts and escape. Defined by a 'desire' to eventually return home to its original host, the path of any individual coin is also influenced by a combination of individual biophysical, social and geophysical forces. *A Moeda* presents a scenario where humans are vehicles for coins, and coins are vehicles for humans. Hosts are left to wonder how much of a coin's movement is defined by their individual behaviour or the coin's 'free will'.

PRESENTATION 3

Generative Narrativity and Bit Sensation

VLADIMIR TODOROVIC

Nanyang Technological University

vlada@ntu.edu.sg

The talk focuses on the emerging narrative forms that reflect creative computerized generative practices within various artistic fields, from the world of film and digital art, to computer games, and interactive media in general. Information technologies influence the way we tell stories, and in particular aesthetics of computer-based generative processes are leading the way to novel technological forms for storytelling and narrative transformations. These novel artistic forms are analyzed in relationship to a computer bit, whose nature largely influences such creative expressions. The bit becomes a unit or a term to metaphorically address and encompass the reduced, cold, synthetic and non-figurative forms that are often present in computer-based generative practices. Our growing sensation and constant interaction with bits then lead to minimalistic creative expressions which further enable unique sensual experiences within such reduced forms and structures. It is nonetheless crucial for the artists working within the field of generative art to embrace this new medium of expression as it is, and in any given form: whether it is data, images, or events that an artist is worked with. As Caspar David Friedrich would put it: "A picture must not be invented, it must be felt."

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Richard BAXSTROM's research interests include art, cinema, and popular culture, everyday life in urban settings, Malaysia and Southeast Asia, the history of ideas in anthropology and the human sciences, and the anthropology of Native American art, objects, and markets in the Southwestern region of the United States. His first book, *Houses in Motion: The Experience of Place and the Problem of Belief in Urban Malaysia* was published by Stanford University Press in 2008. Richard also co-edited with Todd Meyers (New York University - Shanghai) a volume and DVD entitled *anthropologies* that was released the same year. His latest book, *Realizing the Witch: Science, Cinema, and the Mastery of the Invisible*, was published by Fordham University Press in 2016 and concerns Benjamin Christensen's notorious 1922 film *Häxan*. Written with Todd Meyers, the book shows how *Häxan* and its expression of the witch in 16th century Europe serves as a fascinating window onto wider debates in the 1920s regarding the relationship of film to objective scientific evidence, the evolving study of religion from historical and anthropological perspectives, and the complex relations between popular culture, artistic expression, and ideas and concepts in medicine and psychology. Richard is also co-editor of the Routledge journal *Visual Culture in Britain*.

CADA is an art group that makes software for the public realm and exhibitions. Formed in Lisbon in 2006 by **Sofia OLIVEIRA** and **Jared HAWKEY**, CADA's works activate a space for questioning and reflection on our entanglements with technology in everyday life. The group has exhibited across Europe and in Brazil. www.cada1.net.

Anirban DATTA started his career as a screenwriter before he joined Satyajit Ray Film & TV Institute as a student of Direction and Screenplay Writing. His Diploma Film *Tetris* premiered at Cannes 2006 and travelled to international festivals. His most recent Film *.In for Motion*, traces India's recent growth after economic liberalisation and the information revolution vis-a-vis its effect on the vast Indian populace. A co-production with Steps India and YLE Finland, the Film received the prestigious Jan Vrijman Fund from IDFA, Amsterdam.

George JOSE held full-time positions for nearly two decades in the academia and the arts and culture sectors across teaching, research and management roles. He is a Joint-PhD candidate in Anthropology and Contemporary India in National University of Singapore (NUS) and King's College, London (KCL), studying resistance to the city in its periphery. He was an International Fellow at Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin for the 'Global Prayers - Redemption and Liberation in the City' project with Europa-Universität Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin. George was the first Programme Director of Asia Society's India Centre and was Programme Executive at the India Foundation for the Arts. He taught Sociology in Mumbai, and was visiting faculty in Architecture, Design, and Management Institutes in India. George has a special interest in cinema, serves collaborative arts projects in an advisory capacity, and occasionally acts in theatre productions.

Eric KERR is Research Fellow in the Science, Technology & Society cluster at the Asia Research Institute and Fellow of Tembusu College, National University of Singapore. He writes primarily on the philosophy of science and technology. Eric received his PhD from the University of Edinburgh in 2013 and has been a visiting researcher at the University of Vienna and TU Delft.

Charles LIM Yi Yong graduated from Central Saint Martins School of Art and Design, London with a B.A. in Fine Art (2001). Lim went on to co-found the seminal net art collective, tsunamii.net, which participated in Documenta11 in Kassel, Germany (2002). Combining his knowledge of the sea and his love for making images, he then embarked on the SEA STATE series, an ongoing body of work that has been exhibited at Manifesta 7 (2008), the Shanghai Biennale (2008), and most recently at the Singapore Biennale (2011). Lim's moving image works have been screened at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Tribeca Film Festival and the Edinburgh Film Festival. His 2011 short film *All the Lines Flow Out* premiered at the 68th Venice Film Festival, winning a Special Mention, the first award ever won there by a Singaporean production. The piece has since received three more awards at other international festivals.

Olivier PERRIQUET is a visual artist initially coming from experimental cinema. With a dual background in art and science (PhD in computational biology, graduated from Le Fresnoy – National Studio of Contemporary Arts), he currently teaches as a Professor at the media/arts school EMA Fructidor in France and is a research fellow at Le Fresnoy, where he leads a mixed art-science group.

Sarah-Tabea SAMMEL is a director-producer, writer and film scholar. Pursuing both practice and academia, she works as a storyteller across drama, documentary, photography, animation, flash fiction and poetry, and operates as a media and marketing consultant. She is part of the Singaporean artist collaborative Alien & Turtle, with whom she just released an internationally distributed zine. She is an asker of questions, a shooter of images, an enthusiast of shared moments and an appreciator of witty wonders. The globe hopper works bilingually with broadcast and art projects reaching across South East Asia, Europe and the US.

Sanyukta SHARMA completed her diploma in film screenplay writing and direction from the Film and Television Institute of India in 2013. *A Dream Animal* is her final project film from the institute and has been screened at a number of festivals since then. She is currently working on her independent projects in various mediums - documentary film, sound art and visual art. She is also working in the field of film-making education, especially for children, while also working as a freelancer in commercial films. Her own projects continue to explore the relationship of ecology and technology.

Malini SUR is an anthropologist and holds a fellowship at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Her research interests connect three broad areas — borders, mobility, and citizenship — with a focus on South Asia. She has lectured at the University of Amsterdam and held a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Toronto. Malini's fieldwork photographs on South Asian borderlands have been exhibited in Amsterdam, Berlin, Bonn, Chiang Mai, Heidelberg, Kathmandu and Munich.

TAN Jingliang completed her BFA in film at Nanyang Technological University in 2013, where she was supported by the Nanyang Scholarship. Her graduate work *The Transplants* (2013) premiered at the 43rd International Film Festival Rotterdam and has screened in-competition at the 2015 Vienna Independent Shorts and at the 11th Singapore Short Cuts. She is directing alumnus of the Asian Film Academy held annually by Busan International Film Festival. *Open Sky* (2015) premiered at the 26th Singapore International Film Festival.

Vladimir TODOROVIC is a filmmaker, new media artist and educator based in Singapore. He is working as an assistant professor at the School of Art, Design and Media, NTU. His projects have won several awards and have been shown at hundreds of festivals, exhibitions, museums and galleries including: Visions du Reel, Cinema du Reel, IFFR (42nd, 40th and 39th), Festival du Nouveau Cinema, BIFF, SGIFF, L'Alternativa, YIDFF, Siggraph, ISEA (2010, 2008, 2006), Ars Electronica, Transmediale, The Reina Sofia Museum (Madrid), and Japan Media Art Festival.

Vipin VIJAY, award winning Indian screenwriter and Film Director graduated from Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Kolkata. His films have won short Tiger Award – Rotterdam, Best Film – Signs Du Nuit, Paris, National Film Awards, India (twice), Grand Jury Award MIFF, Golden pearl HIFF, Kodak award, Kerala State Film & TV Award (thrice), Padmarajan Puraskaram, IDPA Award (thrice), John Abraham National Awards (thrice), Hassankutty Award- IFFK 2010. Apart from widely shown in film festivals like Rotterdam, Karlovy Vary, Oberhausen, Montreal, Japan, Vladivostok and art museums like Serpentine Gallery, London, Ullens Centre for Contemporary art (UGCA) Beijing, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, two of his works have been acquired for permanent archives at the United States Library of Congress. The prestigious Oberhausen International Film Festival, Germany in 2015 honoured him with a PROFILE.