

Projek SISI TV: A Basic Guide On Experimental Cinema Involving Media Arts Collectives In Southeast Asia

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Abstract

In every major city in Southeast Asia, especially Kuala Lumpur, where the populace is constantly exposed to sensational mainstream media that is entertainment, it is undoubtedly difficult to find support and acceptance for producing experimental cinema on your own (DIY). Most Malaysians find the phrase "Experimental Cinema" to sound "foreign". The question "What is it? What does any of that matter to me? What exactly are you doing? Therefore, the purpose of this writing is to provide some basic guides concerning experimental cinema. We are all aware that this diverse area of cinematic art defies easy categorization, and the DIY attitude of experimental art honors the humble personal opinion. The goal is to learn about the SISI TV Art Project, which consists of a number of collective experimental video works in Southeast Asia, specifically in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, and to observe and hear from various viewpoints, collectives with various backgrounds, as they share the joy and bravery that experimental filmmaking has brought them. May it motivate us to share the fun with one another.

Keywords: Experimental Cinema, Media Art Collective, Contemporary Arts, Southeast Asia

Introduction

Experimental cinema is an effective filmmaking method that originates from cinematic conventions and explores non-narrative, alternative and traditional forms of narration. An experimental film is a film that experiments with several aspects of the filmmaking process, such as visual or audio editing, filming techniques, and even strange films, such as delivery methods. A film that has stylish editing or a film without a story. The spectrum of experimental films is very broad. The genre includes different types of projects with different messages, styles, and purposes.

There are experimental films that are produced even though the project is more experimental and has a shorter duration. This is partly due to many experimental films being produced with low budgets or the fact that most experimental films were never intended for mainstream appeal or were commercial in nature.

From another angle, it refers to anything that goes against conventional narrative and cinematic conventions. There is no requirement for a plot or for the existence of characters. Messages can actually be sent in any format. It could be profound or unremarkable, fascinating or boring. In other words, anything may apply.

Experimental cinema has long been produced by creative artists with imagination and free thinking in producing a work. This is because they are free to make creative decisions that are "unacceptable" in the world of narrative film. The film is able to express emotions, ideas, concepts, and anything literal or abstract imagery through paired editing and through the creative use of sound design. Experimental films can also ignore the technicalities and focus only on the creative process.

Experimental Film Guides You Need To Know

Experimental films that you need to know and see for yourself on how and why such films have a unique film recognition

Table 1

List of Western Experimental Films From 1921 until 2011

No	Title	Artist	Year	Genre
1.	Rhythmus 21	Hans Richter	1921	Short Film/ animation
2.	Un Chien Andalou	Luis Bunuel dan Salvador Dali	1929	Short Silent Film
3.	Movement Drawing No.1	Oskar Fischinger	1947	Short Film/ animation
4.	Ereserhead	David Lynch	1977	Horror/ Indie
5.	Koyaanisqatsi	Godfrey Reggio	1982	Documentary/ Experiment
6.	Chronos	Ron Fricke	1985	Documentary/ Short Film
7.	Alice	Jan Svankmajer	1988	Fantasy/ Adventure Film
8.	Paowaqqatsi	Godfrey Reggio	1988	Documentary/ Music
9.	Stellar	Stan Brakhage	1993	Noncamera-based Animation/ Abstract Film
10.	Samsara	Ron Fricke	2011	Documentary/ Music

Table 1 shows a list of good films that should be watched and referred to for those who wants inspiration to produce good quality experimental films. Most of these films were made through freedom, personal expression and the social environment. Therefore, the importance of experimental cinema relies on the level of creativity and opinion by the artist in his film creation, especially in hard-to-understand genres. However, it is still considered a strong artistic medium practiced by a lot of artists; a distinct art form in terms of pure expressionist potential.

An Introduction to Experimental Cinema in Southeast Asia

The journey of an artist's career moving in a group is not a new thing. It is a strategy for being active, thinking, discussing, and even becoming a pillar of direction as a group. But it's actually more fun. When faced with the definition of collective, we can simply assume that collective is group cooperation to achieve a common goal. In an effort to ensure that the collective is still relevant and plays a role in the current context, *SISI TV* is an art project that features four contemporary art collectives as an event in the discourse of Experimental Film. This project combines works from four Southeast Asian collectives, which are Tumbuktikus (Malaysia), Markaz (Malaysia), Kutub Tiga (Indonesia) dan Offshoot (Philippines) under the management of Kapallorek Artspace.

This experimental cinema project features film works from these four collectives directly in response to their ideas environment, individually and collectively. However, it is united under one umbrella of creativity that utilizes the use of computer technology as a practical artistic medium. This project is an effort to promote new media art forms such as video art, animation, film, music, and interactive art. It is a container in visual language for young people who like to experiment freely. These four collectives are actually made up of visual artists who are active in various exhibitions both domestically and internationally.

Tumbuktikus (Malaysia)

A collective made up of three artists, namely Shahrul Hisham Tarmizi, Haris Abadi, and MF Sabran. This collective exists based on a digital art platform that emerged when the world was faced with the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally, Tumbuktikus created a virtual exhibition space that featured artists from Malaysia and abroad by supporting artists to produce virtual works as a new platform for exhibiting. Indirectly, they are no exception to also take the opportunity as a collective with its own uniqueness by emphasizing videos that are free to experiment without thinking about commercial matters.



Figure 1: Shahrul Hisham Ahmad Tarmizi, The harbinger 1920px x 1080px, 30 fps Animation 2020

Shahrul uses loop animation to show the idea of repetition as the main method of his artwork. This repetition gives it standard characteristics. In Muslim culture, we know that dhikr is repeated, as a certain method to get closer to God. Likewise, in this context where Shahrul performs the same role. It is a way to get closer and know yourself because he is also looking for a relationship with God. God is invisible, but all our senses can feel His manifestation through beauty, and it will be in our innermost self. The beauty of Shahrul's intention is evident through poetry, stories, and Islamic literature. He built his own myth with a portrait of himself as a hero who travelled such a long journey, and it is all manifested in his animated works.

Markaz (Malaysia)

Established in 2018 by Amsyar Mat Yatin, Zulkefli Jais, Aiman Saror, Amri Ibrahim, Amzar Ibrahim, Afiq Zainal, Lukman Bahari, and Abie Rahmat. Their project, which is based in Klang, investigates the relationship between the conventional and the experimental in the physical world. By fusing several skill sets and purposefully highlighting individual identity, this can increase the possibilities of what can be accomplished. Video, installation, sound, photography, printmaking, painting, murals, archiving, and public involvement are frequently used in their works. It is a non-profit organisation that brings together artists and experts from other fields to support the concept of art in an urban and cultural setting.



Figure 2: Experimental Video Artwork by Markaz, a collective entitled “Operation Into 2020”, which was produced in 2019

The viewer invents the story of the artwork as a result of Markaz's truthfulness, which creates a surreal scenario that places them in a living situation. In order to demonstrate the site-specific artwork, events at the location allow the audience to participate as actors as well. The narrative clearly combines ludicrous activities that make the audience anxious with a poetic dialogue between them and the object.

Kutub Tiga (Indonesia)

Pioneered by Banung Grahita and Erik Pauhrizi is a collective that is no stranger to playing its role as a group that explores a lot with video and film art. Actively moving since 2019, Kutub Tiga is more inclined to experiment with aspects of art aesthetics, a visual language based on movement in the production of their works. Kutub Tiga started their first experimental film project in 2020, titled *Sang Seniman*, written by Banung Grahita and Erik Pauhrizi. We know that the third pole is related to the concept of Everest as the highest point on earth. But in this case, the third pole is related to the centre of video art, film, and other animations that we know have two central poles. The one in the west is the US, and the other is in Europe. The concept is that they want to build a conceptual centre for video art, film, and animation as the other polar reaction.

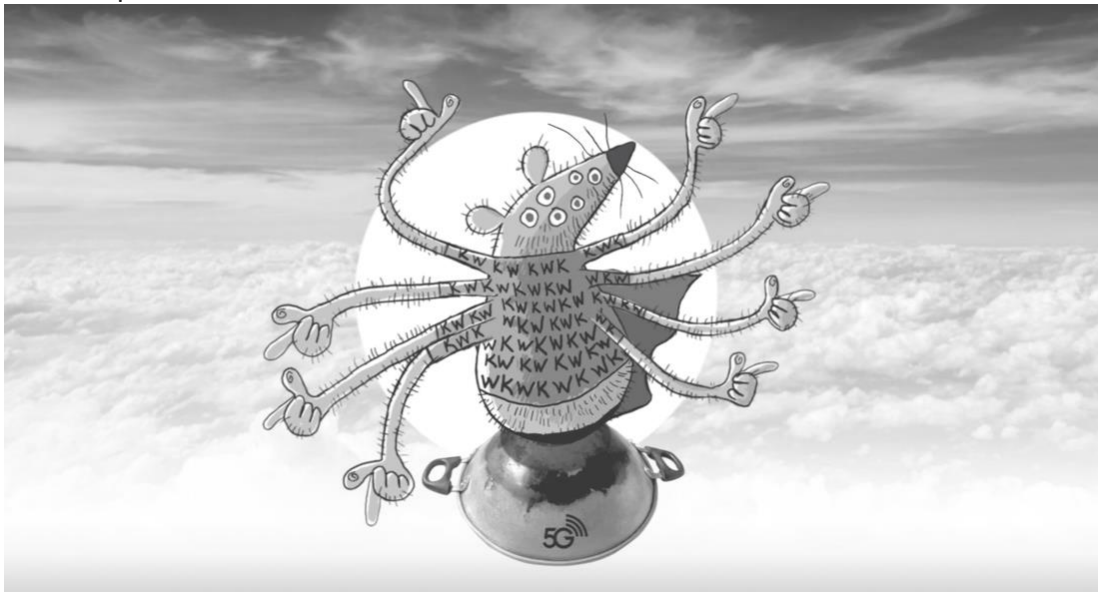


Figure 3: Banung Grahita, *Big Big World*, Single Channel Digital Animation, 1440 px x 1080 px, 30 fps, 2021

Banung Grahita is present with the characteristics of an artist who is critical in the field of art and social issues relevant to current life, but with a playful approach and parody using visual signs. He uses animation as a medium and as a language to be more relevant. He spoke about environmental issues with "*Seeing the World of Dead Trees*" (2011); *Cycles*" (2013) for the relational power of the gaze built from the wide-ranging view of "*The Eyes of Do-The Eyes of Don't*" in 2013. In "*Perception Algorithm*", Banung explains how our insight is consistently formed from the information we take in through our digital footprint. This is who we are now and how we present ourselves.

Offshoot (Philippines)

A group of independent artists joined by Paulo Alexis Catolos, Raymund Amonoy, Jomar Galutera and Ana Fajardo. Their collective is based in Calabarzon, Philippines and aims to foster collaborative art projects across different mediums, including video, GIF, installation, photography, and sound. The group's *Project Space Pilipinas 2021* exhibit arm initiative, "*The Year of Magical Thinking*" emerged as a response to one's need to find community at a time of physical confinement and isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has prompted them to rethink the way of making art that is bound by a sense of belonging and connection.

Additionally, it aims to create content that explores the different historical negotiations that penetrate into the society and influence the current political and public imagination.



Figure 4: Fragments (a study) Video Art by Offshot Collective, 2022

This work titled *Fragments (a study)* by Offshot, brings the history of black memory to light. First Lady Imelda Marcos envisioned Metro Manila as the Cannes of the East, hosting an amazing festival and cultural display: The Manila International Film Festival (MIFF). She decided that the festival could only be inaugurated at a specific site with the construction of the Manila Film Center. For Imelda, who is the wife of the most powerful man in the country, the Manila Film Center, which later proved to have cost the Philippine government around \$25 million in its construction, was attainable even if it was only a last-minute decision. About 4,000 laborers were at work around the clock, their hands putting together the monumental structure. However, misfortune struck when, in the midst of this construction frenzy, the roof structure collapsed, drowning several workers in the concrete. This tragedy has given them the question: When a monument has collapsed, do our memories of the remembered people or the ideas they symbolize slowly fade with them?

Conclusion

As a result, the combination of these four collectives is an appreciation of art that brings the artist's work to explore the theme of "similarity" as a form of hope, dream, discussion, and criticism in various techniques and processing of ideas. It is intended to open up new opportunities in digital integration and cyberspace. Of course, this kind of collaboration is seen as a cultural access point in the observation of localization as well as transactions, thus bringing cultural themes within the boundaries of a more urban and fashionable tradition.

This SISI TV project is a very effective platform for bringing together and discussing works of art that have the characteristics of experimental cinema. Regional artists have the space and opportunity to express thoughtful and independent ideas in the production of artwork. Mediums such as film, video, animation, GIF, augmented reality, virtual reality, and the like are now a popular medium for the younger generation in Southeast Asia, especially to express themselves through the exploration and experimentation of the latest technology. So, along with the modernization of the 21st century, it is possible that a virtual digital platform is one of the most efficient methods of exhibiting works of experimental cinema. May these efforts

carry long-lasting virtues in facing the challenges of globalization along with the development of technology and human life as a whole.

The major finding of the study is that the 'Experimental Cinema' is highly significant to the Contemporary Art field, especially for the New Media Art process. Unlike the typical conventional art, the phases and loops of art thinking method can be adjusted to suit a variety of experimentation, and each step can have multiple stages that lead to new ideas. The existing knowledge of polemical debate about the nature of avant-garde and the future of radical or experimental film, contributes to the contemporary debates about film, video art and new technology.

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