

# Who do you think you are?

An international interdisciplinary symposium on the boundaries of Asian identities

# ATM18

10am 16 October 2018  
- 5pm  
The Whitworth

Asía Triennial  
Manchester

MANCHESTER  
SCHOOL OF ART



Produced by Manchester  
School of Art, Faculty of Arts  
& Humanities, Manchester  
Metropolitan University

Image: Masumi Saito  
'In Praise of Shadow' 2016.  
Taken by Koya Yamashiro

# Sixteen Days Fifteen Venues

## HOME

Tony Wilson Place  
Manchester  
M15 4FN

## Manchester Craft and Design Centre

17 Oak St  
Manchester  
M4 5JD

## Manchester Cathedral

Victoria St  
Manchester  
M3 1SX

## Castlefield Gallery

2 Hewitt St  
Manchester  
M15 4GB

## Gallery Oldham

35 Greaves St  
Oldham  
OL1 1TJ

## Bury Art Museum & Sculpture Centre

Moss St, Bury  
BL9 0DR

## Manchester Art Gallery

Mosley St  
Manchester  
M2 3JL

## The Holden Gallery

Manchester  
School of Art

Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University,  
Grosvenor  
Building  
Cavendish St  
Manchester  
M15 6BR

## MMU Special Collections

All Saints Library  
Manchester  
M15 6BH

## The Whitworth

Oxford Rd  
Manchester  
M15 6ER

## Manchester Museum

Oxford Rd  
Manchester  
M13 9PL

## Alexandria Library

247 Wilmslow Rd  
Manchester  
M14 5LW

## Portico Library

57 Mosley St  
Manchester  
M2 3HY

## Partisan Collective

19 Cheetham  
Hill Rd  
Manchester  
M4 4FY

## The Manchester Contemporary

Manchester  
Central  
M2 3GX

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@triennialmcr #ATM18  
[www.asiatriennialmanchester.com](http://www.asiatriennialmanchester.com)



# Who do you think you are?

The Whitworth Gallery  
16th October 2018, 10am – 5pm

An international interdisciplinary symposium on the boundaries of Asian identities

What does it mean to be Asian today? How can we begin to define negotiate, negate or remodel the boundaries of this vast continent in relation to identities and issues of gender, race, community, ability, borders, conflicts or their intersections? Why are Asian narratives often marginalized in discussions on race? To what extent is the migratory experience central to Asian identity? What are the myths surrounding Asian migration and how do they perpetuate pervasive stereotypes? How far have we moved on from colonial terms such as, 'near', 'middle' and 'far' when we frame Asian identities in relation to Western geo-ethnography? How are Southeast and East Asian women and non-binary people represented in conversations about race and feminism?

We have invited a host of international artists, curators and academic scholars to engage with some of the above questions (but not limit their responses to these).

As one of the many performative reiterations of this year's Asia Triennial, the symposium will centre on visual culture that does not only celebrate Manchester's diverse communities but will interrogate and attempt to respond to the provocation, ***Who do you think you are?***

***Who do you think you are?*** is a reframing of the ambiguous and impossible demand so often encountered by people of colour in a post-industrial, multi-cultural city in the UK, Where are you [really] from? The provocation invites artistic, cultural and political responses to narratives around Asian identities, their intersection with present cultural preoccupations on the nature of identity, organised around dialectics of gender and sexuality; community and migration; technology and humanity.

The day will conclude with with a performance by artist Venuri Perere.

# Who do you think you are?

The Whitworth Gallery, Grand Hall  
16th October 2018, 10am – 5pm

**09:30** Coffee and registration

10:00 Welcome by Professor  
Tim Brennan

10:20 Alnoor Mitha

10:40 Dr Emma Roberts

11:00 William Titley

**11:20** Coffee Break

11:40 Jung Me Chai

12:00 Professor Rina Arya

12:20 Anjum Malik

12:40 Amina Ansari

13:00 Professor Jai (Jagjit)  
Chuhan

**13:30** Lunch @ The Whitworth  
Cafe

14:30 Tomasz Wendland

14:50 Valentina Gioia Levy

15:10 Fon And Fa

15:30 Qasim Riza Shaheen

15:50 Venuri Perera

16:10 The symposium  
will conclude with a  
performance by artist  
Venuri Perera

**17:00** Closing

# Abstracts and Biographies

## Professor Tim Brennan

Tim Brennan, Professor of Art and Head of Department of Art at Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University will give a welcome to the day, and a short reflection on Asia Triennial Manchester and its theme of 'who do you think you are' and...who he thinks he is.

## Alnoor Mitha

From a radical feminist response to European exotic fantasies of South Asia, to a spectacular public procession that invites us to explore how communities evolve through shared rituals, ATM18 reframes existing narratives around Asian identities as they intersect with contemporary debates around gender and sexuality, community and migration, technology and humanity.

Focusing on young and mid-career artists from South Korea, Japan, Thailand, China, Sri-Lanka and the UK, while fostering international and local curatorial collaborations and new partnerships, ATM18 seeks to question how Asian identities are constructed and understood in an accelerating world of mass migration, disputed borders and conflicting ideologies.

**Alnoor Mitha** is Founding Artistic Director of Asia Triennial Manchester. Born in Uganda, East Africa, he is a researcher, writer, curator and cultural producer, and is currently a Senior Research Fellow at Manchester School of Arts & Humanities. He is the author of numerous works exploring international biennials/triennials including exhibitions

in public spaces, cultural change and power, critical notions of identity, transnationalism, and pre and postcolonial cosmopolitanism. Key research achievements include the notable impact of new acquired knowledge in the field, bridging multiple artistic and cultural strands. Mitha studied fine arts at the University of Wolverhampton under the distinguished sculptor, Anish Kapoor.

He is an authority in South Asian contemporary art, having founded Shisha (2001-2011) the international agency for contemporary South Asian crafts and visual arts. He has programmed emerging and mid-career international artists in the country including, Rashid Rana, Imran Qureshi, Subodh Gupta, Shilpa Gupta, Shamsia Hassani and many more. He has also produced around 15 scholarly books on contemporary art from Asia. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA).

## Dr Emma Roberts

### **Poised Between East and West: Painters of the Philippines**

This illustrated paper examines the changes in painting practices and subject matter in the Philippines from the 1820s until the present as Filipino artists questioned 'who they are'. As a colony of Spain and the USA, and then a republic, artists had to consider their personal identity and public role as artists. From Damian Domingo's depictions of regional 'types', Juan Luna's immersion in European academic traditions, to Fernando Amorsolo's sexualisation of female labourers, artists can be seen to interrogate their position as Filipino Asians and as artists. *(continues to the following page)*

# Abstracts and Biographies

**Dr. Emma Roberts** is Programme Leader of BA (Hons) History of Art & Museum Studies at Liverpool John Moores University, UK. Roberts gained a Ph.D. in Art History in 1997 from the University of Liverpool on the topic of the sculptor, Barbara Hepworth and is author of *The Liverpool Academy: A History and Index* (1997) and *The Public Sculpture of Cheshire and Merseyside* (2012). She was for ten years a Visiting Lecturer at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. In her spare time, Roberts is a lecturer in History of Art on board cultural cruise liners worldwide.

## William Titley

It's an illusive, slippery something.  
Me today you tomorrow, a fickle friend.  
We, as in me and I as in you. A repetitive yet slightly out of earshot rhythm of becoming.

**William Titley** is a Senior Lecturer/Course Leader for the MA Fine Art at UCLAN, Preston. He is a co-founder and director of 'In-Situ', a non-profit arts organisation in East Lancashire. He is a PhD candidate at MMU and adopts artistic research methods by making work in the place where he lives, which could be considered a form of auto-ethnographic artistic research. His research analyses social artistic processes from the perspective of the artist, adding to debates around what social arts practice is, and what its limits are in its original social context and systems of dissemination.

Image below: Still from *Ryohaeng* by IM Heung-soon



## Jung Me Chai

### If You Are Not A Bird

#### 1. *destroy*

Kill Mother (KILL patriarchy)  
‘The best thing, according to Sophocles in *Oedipus at Colonus*, would be to not be born.

Emil M. Cioran, *The Trouble with Being Born* (1973)

#### 2. *transcendental illusion*

- Women refugees from North Korea, Ryeohaeng, Heung-soon Im
- Chimeras, Frame, Crucifix, Jimok Choi
- Narcissism as masochism, Instrument I, Hyungkoo Lee

#### 3. *imagine*

What would you do if you were a bird?

**Jung Me Chai** is the director of DISKURS Berlin. From 2011 to 2014 she has worked as project manager for the project “Transfer Korea - NRW “ at the NRW Kultursekretariat as well as an assistant curator at the Kunstmuseum Bochum. She has curated exhibitions such as *No More Daughters And Heroes*, Aram Art Gallery, The Goyang Cultural Foundation, Korea // Organ Mix, Total Museum, and Korea // Kleines Affektchen (Part Film, Video, Performance), Museum Bochum. she has been invited as a guest curator for 4th Mediations Biennale, Poznan. She has contributed articles to, among others, the well-known art magazines *ArtNow*, *Nobless* and *Wolgan Misul*.

## Professor Rina Arya

### Who do you think you are?

Identity is a fluid thing. Sometimes the variables of one's identity align, other times, less so. Being British and South Asian were historically viewed as being incompatible because of the radical cultural differences between them. The challenges of each generation of South Asian migrants are different and involve balancing acts between establishing their identity in the diaspora whilst also pledging allegiance to their cultural heritage. This paper examines the impact that Brexit has had on rethinking cultural identities within modern day Britain and the implications this has on roots and a sense of rootedness.

**Rina Arya** is a Professor at the University of Huddersfield. She has published widely on post-war British art and the visual and material culture of religion. Author of *Francis Bacon: Painting in a Godless World* (2012) and *Abjection and Representation* (2014), she is currently working on a study of cultural appropriation in a Hindu context.

## Anjum Malik

### I am always from somewhere else.

Born in one continent of parents from another growing up in yet another, has meant that I belong and do not belong wherever I am. Where are you from, really? Is a question I am asked regularly, no matter which part of the world I happen to be in, my answers come from a multiple choice I have been given. They depend on who I am that day, how I feel....playful, awkward, difficult, stubborn, friendly, open, closed....

It is a freedom and restriction I exploit as an artist, through my poetry, scriptwriting, performances, exhibitions. Multiple heritages are a treasure toolbox I have been handed by life. I love playing with it.

**Anjum Malik** is an established scriptwriter, poet, artist and performer, has written several much-acclaimed original scripts for BBC, ITV and theatres in UK, and shown word-based exhibitions in art galleries. Specialising in fact to fiction, she works with true stories of real people. Previous jobs include police officer, interpreter, sales person, business owner and Kathak dancer. She was born in Saudi Arabia and has lived in Pakistan as well all over England. Anjum is multi lingual and currently based in Manchester, UK. She is a fellow of the Writing School, Manchester Metropolitan University and is represented by David Higham Associates.

## Amina Ansari

### Beyond physical borders: The Art and Life of Amina Art Ansari, South Asian diaspora artist

Amina Ansari will be highlighting her experience without borders. Visits to different countries, Art and how it made an impact or affected her. Attitudes need to change to bring change intentionally for reputable artists to come forward under the banner of art. From all kinds of hardships to achievements to more barriers. From socially awkward and 'different' young lady, who walks and talks in a strange, enthusiastic childlike manner, observes the world, questions it and differ from Logics V emotions. *(continues to the following page)*

# Abstracts and Biographies

The aim to bring about a minor revolution from stereotypes in every day's environment to extremes with communication barriers and bridging gaps from West to East.

**Amina Ansari** (from Pakistan) has a background in Fine Arts, Events and as Director of Communications for a charity, in learning ESOL and IT. She is strongly committed to diversity and equality combined with an understanding of many different cultures. Looking to make use of her experience to help others, reflecting the artist's mentality from negatives into positives. She is very enthusiastic about combining Western and Eastern artistic forms through her works. The mysteriousness of being visible or invisible with all architecture/pattern traits that the both world offers. She studied at Central Saint Martin's, London College of Printing in London and National College of Arts in Lahore and has two paintings at Windsor Castle in a collection to mark Her Majesty the Queen's Jubilee.

## Professor Jai (Jagjit) Chuhan

### Refuge at Gallery Oldham and Remodel: Painting Studio at HOME

Jai's paintings isolate the human form in room-like spaces, arenas for exploring the body as politicized territory, focused or blurrily glimpsed, in configurations reflecting her interests as a woman and Indian-born British artist living in multicultural cities. The people portrayed are anonymous or known including self-portraiture. Figures often seem confined, suggesting psychological tensions in symbioses of male and female, home and 'unhome'. Fluid layers of colour enhance depiction of themes such as refuge, informed by transcultural aesthetic lineages.

*Refuge* at Gallery Oldham 15 Sept - 24 Nov premieres new paintings by Jai Chuhan. Remodel: Painting Studio at HOME 15 - 21 Oct presents Jai making paintings in HOME's main gallery, within her creation of an evolving sculptural installation, encouraging visitors to create artworks, engaging with guests including life models, dancers Bisakha Sarker and Kali Chandrasegaram, international curator Adam Carr and writer Rina Arya.

**Jai (Jagjit) Chuhan** is an Indian born British artist who studied at UCL Slade School of Fine Art. Her paintings have been exhibited internationally including in Italy, Sweden, Belgium, China, Singapore and in the UK including at Tate Liverpool; Barbican, London; Ikon, Birmingham; Arnolfini, Bristol; Watermans Arts Centre, London; Commonwealth Institute, London; Horizon Gallery (Indian Arts Council in the UK), London; Liverpool Biennial; Asia Triennial Manchester. Her paintings are in collections including Arts Council Collection; University of Liverpool Art Collection; Cartwright Hall, Bradford; Grosvenor Museum, Chester; Usher Gallery, Lincoln; Tate Archive. She is a Professor at Liverpool John Moores University.

Image below: Jai Chuhan, *Refugee Girls*, 2016



## Tomasz Wendland

Tomasz Wendland studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (History of Art) and Alanus Kunsthochschule Alfer/Bonn in Germany. He received his Ph.D. from Dartington College of Arts (Plymouth University) in Great Britain. He is Professor at the Academy of Arts in Szczecin in Poland and Chairman of Mediations Biennale Foundation's management board.

## Valentina Gioia Levy

### The exotic west and the ambiguity of the otherness

Starting from the dialectical principle affirming that all things are determined by their internal oppositions the presentation focuses on the concept of otherness as a key to understanding the self and social identity. The intervention proposes an overview over the 'exoticization of the west' from the concept of "occidentalism" to the recent works of Asian artists like Eddy Susanto and Kyungah HAM and Italian artist Romina De Novellis.

**Valentina Gioia Levy** is an independent curator and art writer based in Rome. Since 2010, she collaborated with a number of museums and art galleries and cultural institutions around the world. In 2014, she coordinated a curatorial program for the National Museum of Oriental Art that aimed to present key Asian artists and practices. Since 2014 and 2017 she has been the curator of the visual arts program of the Festival of Villa Ada in Rome. Between 2014 and 2015 she curated two collateral shows of Kochi - Muziris Biennial (Fort Kochi, India);



in 2015, she was guest curator of the first edition of Something Else OFF Biennale Cairo (Egypt) and in 2016 she was guest curator of the XII edition of Dak'Art Biennial (Senegal), under the direction of Simon Njami. In 2016, she was also co-curator of LAM360, Land Art Mongolia Biennial (Ulan Bator, Mongolia) and co-curator of Mediations Biennial Poznan (Poland). In 2017, she has been a contributor for Arts and Globalization Pavilion during the 57th Venice Biennial and in 2018 she co-curated with Rikke Jorgensen the program "Art & Connectography", a collateral event of Manifesta 12 promoted by Arts & Globalization Platform.

Since 2015 she also teaches History of Contemporary Art and Design at Accademia Italiana, School of Fashion and Design in Rome. Currently, she is the curator of the collections and exhibitions of Valeria Costa Piccinini Heritage Fund (Rome, IT) and the chief curator of Giudecca Art District Project that she co-founded with Pier Paolo Scelsi (Venice, IT).

Image above: Still from Two letters and a postscript, 2017 by Qasim Riza Shaheen

# Abstracts and Biographies

## Fon And Fa

### To be Thai Again

Fa and Fon will be presenting on their new on-going project in which they will present the experience of growing up as second generation modernised Thai women, having migrated to England at a young age had caused them to distance themselves from their Thai heritage disabling their ability to communicate in their mother tongue. Exploring the cause, effect and issue of losing one's identity and the pros and cons of being predominantly exposed to western culture from a young age, further discussing how conflicting social morals, contrasting domestic teachings and the split of affection for dual nations has shaped a new race of the 'white washed asian' zeroing in on the next generation of young Thai's, not truly fitting in either category of being Thai nor British, rather to be within and without.

This study would be a very personal depiction of their life in England and how this has led to them deciding to act on doing the exact reverse and to instead become 'immigrants' in their own motherland and venture back to one's roots, in order to answer the complex question; who do you think you are?

**Fa and Fon** are London based artists/designers working across a wide range of media, heavily influenced by today's modern pop and digitalised culture. Fon is currently studying at Central St Martins cultivating her understanding of design technological practice, whilst Fa is in the process of experimenting and extending her study of physical materials, together they combine a satisfying mix of digital formats alongside a tangible study, whether it be a blend of



clothing formation with film production and directorial, or a sculptural mass study alongside performance, all the while, highlighting on current world issues of the digitalised era, their art hugely effected by Asian origins and cultures.

Image above: by Joey Barlow

## Qasim Riza Shaheen

Qasim Riza Shaheen presents a series of Snapchat recordings in which he engages with the act of embodying the songs of playback singers and the mimetics of the actor in South Asian fillm cultures, namely, the subconscious imitating of others, including extending that to the realm of desire. Appropriating the 'wallah' lineage and using the frame of social media applications he queers and questions modes of representing power, love and desire. By lip-syncing recognisable songs he defamiliarises them, thereby subverting expectations. In this presentation 'Qasim Filmwallah' we hear a recording of him thinking out loud as we experience his temporal works, as the snapchat stories disappearing from public view after 24 hours while, at the same time, being archived.

**Qasim Riza Shaheen** is a British artist and writer based in Manchester. Working across participatory performance, installation, film and photography, Shaheen's practice explores memory, autofiction, aspects and ideas of beauty, sexuality, love and, more broadly, what are fundamental concerns about human nature. He is currently Associate Artist at HOME in Manchester. His work has been exhibited and programmed widely, including at Asia Contemporary Art Week, New York; MAC in Birmingham; Southbank Centre, London; Brighton International Festival; Victoria & Albert Museum, London and at Liverpool Biennial. In 2018, a book *The Last Known Pose: Essays and Reflections on the Work of Qasim Riza Shaheen*, edited by Mary Ann Hushlak and Monica B Pearl, was published by Cornerhouse Publications. His website is: [www.qasimrizashaheen.com](http://www.qasimrizashaheen.com)

## Venuri Perera

Recently, there has been an increased interest in and funds for artists from 'transitioning' countries. More independent artists from these regions are being invited to international festivals and travelling to perform work creating global networks and communities. I will unpack issues surrounding 'representation' when being programmed in international festivals as a South Asian artist from a post conflict or 'transitioning' context and how I negotiate this position / framing, as opposed to a very different positioning when making work for local audiences.

**Venuri Perera** is a Colombo based choreographer and performance artist. Her work has dealt with issues of violent nationalism, patriarchy, borders and class.



Primarily trained in Kandyan Dance she was a member of the acclaimed Chitrasena Vajira Dance Company for 13 years. In 2008, she completed her Post Graduate Certificate in Dance from LABAN Centre, London where she received the Michelle Simone Award for Outstanding Achievement in Choreography. Primarily a solo artist, she has worked collaboratively with choreographers, theatre directors, sound and visual artists in Europe, South and East Asia since 2004. Her works have been featured in performing and visual art festivals including Arts Basel, Singapore International Festival, Zurcher Theatre Spektakel, Dhaka Arts Summit, Colombo Art Biennale, Kyoto Experiment. She has participated in international residencies in Indonesia, India, South Korea, Sydney and Nepal. Venuri was curator of Colombo Dance Platform 2016 and performing arts curator for South Bank Centre's Women of the World Festival, Colombo edition. She is currently a visiting lecturer at the University of Visual and Performing Arts.

### Performance by **Venuri Perera:** **Passport Blessing Ceremony**

Passports have varying degrees of power. While certain citizens can visit almost anywhere in the world without any hindrance, travel is heavily restricted for many others as their nation's passports are less powerful. This satirical 'ceremony/modern ritual' is triggered by the intrusive processes these citizens have to face before entering another country, that perpetuate inequality based on citizenship.

Image above: Isuru Perera. Venuri Perera performing Kesel Maduwa at Colomboscope Festival 2015

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a red sleeveless dress, is captured in a dynamic, low-to-the-ground pose. She is leaning forward with her hands near her face, looking towards the camera. Her shadow is cast prominently on the light-colored wall behind her, mirroring her pose. She is wearing colorful bangles on her right wrist and blue nail polish on her fingers. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

ATM18 simply would not be possible without the extraordinary collective effort of all our partners across the city and indeed the world – our funders and venues, all the artists, curators, researchers, academics, volunteers and, of course, our audiences.

Special thanks go to the team at The Whitworth, for all their generous support in the production of this symposium.

Our thanks go out to all of you. See you next time!

## Festival Team

**Artistic Director:** Alnoor Mitha, MMU

**Production Director:** Katie Popperwell

**Senior Communications Officer:** Susan Ferguson

**Producers:** Tom Emery, Anjum Malik,  
Jessica Spencer, Nuria Lopez

**Symposium producer:** Dr Mary Ikoniadou

**Chair:** Professor Sarah Perks, MMU

**Design:** Instruct Studio

ATM18 is supported by Arts Council England, Manchester Metropolitan University, HOME, Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, The Confucius Institute, the Korean Arts Council and the University of Creative Arts.

Image: 'In Praise of Shadow' 2016.  
Photo Credit Koya Yamashiro

