

WONG HOY CHEONG



RE : LOOKING
2002-2003

Pal dvd / 36 minutes / edition of 4 / collaboration with
Mohamad Arifwaran. Courtesy the artist and Valentine
Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur.

Born in Penang, Malaysia in 1960, Wong Hoy Cheong studied in Malaysia as well as the USA graduating with a BA in English literature from Brandeis, an MA in Education from Harvard and an MA in Fine Arts from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He returned to Malaysia and quickly gained a national and international reputation as a painter, installation and video artist. He has taught at The London Institute / Bandar Utama College, Malaysian Institute of Art and the University of Massachusetts, USA. He was Artist-in-Residence and Visiting Fellow at a number of art institutions and Universities including, The Australian National University, Central St. Martins, London, and Goldsmith College, University of London. He has also taught at the Center for Advanced Design in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. His work has been shown in major international exhibitions such as the 'Second Asia Pacific Triennial' (1996), 'Cities on the Move' (1997-99), and in the Gwangju Biennale (2000), Venice Biennale (2003), and Liverpool Biennial (2004).

Critical themes underpinning his work have been history, indigeneity, ethnicity, migration and postcolonial identities, as well as issues of social justice. His monumental early project 'Of Migrants & Rubber Trees', which encapsulated his own family's history, was an example of the strategies the artist employs to suggest new approaches to history and the need to reassess constantly the supposed objectivity and authority of history.

Wong Hoy Cheong's 'RE: Looking' in this exhibition explores, among its other themes, colonialism and the role of the media in shaping opinions, utilising counter-factual information in a

fabricated 'documentary' supposedly broadcast by the imaginary Malaysian Broadcasting Company 'MBC'. 'RE: Looking', which was shown in the 'Z.O.U.' exhibition at the Venice Biennale of 2003 curated by Hou Hanru, is a video and a website (www.relooking-mbc.com) and is also an installation where people watch the supposedly real documentary in a living room setting. It purports to examine the impact of the former 'Malaysian Empire' on a post-colonial Austria. 'RE: Looking' used only one professional actor Mohamad Arifwaran.

Wong Hoy Cheong has said that: 'the work is meant to challenge how we perceive the real and the fake, and the perceived histories on both sides of the divide – the former "colonizer" and the "colonized". This is even more disconcerting for Malaysians. Some people found the "de-victimizing" of Malaysia's real history – of once being the colonized, the victim – politically incorrect.'

(Wong Hoy Cheong interview with Gerhard Haupt and Pat Binder <http://www.universes-in-universe.de/islam/eng/2004/09/wong/index-print.html>)