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Researching the Moving Image in Southeast Asia: Candour and Contingency

This panel reconsiders film theoretical concerns with epistemology and ontology in light of both peripheral histories, and contemporary practices, of the moving image in Southeast Asia. Western film theory tends to regard the camera as an apparatus of capture. Reality, insofar as it may be caught, can thereafter only be depleted. What alternatives are there to this narrative of survival? How does reality inhabit the moving image, and how might this vary from place to place? Might it not be produced and reproduced – by accident, by possession, by serendipity or contrivance? Can the staged be opposed to the candid? And how do local understandings – and histories – of performance, sound, style, or technique, affect the image's epistemological amplitude? A performance recorded on DV, for example, may owe less to conventions of screen acting than to much older, even unconscious, cultural competences shared by those before and behind the camera. The theatre of consumption may be just as important as that of production. This panel invites analyses of Southeast Asian screen culture – contemporary or historical – that explore how local media histories have shaped new uses of new technologies, and how they might recalibrate the epistemological scale of the moving image.