

**PRESS**

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## Ho Rui An The Ends of a Long Boom 17/7 – 10/10 2021

Press conference: Fri 16/7 2021, 10 am  
Ho Rui An in conversation with Anne Faucheret: Fri 16/7 2021, 5 pm  
Opening: Fri 16/7 2021, 6 pm

Curator: Anne Faucheret

*The Ends of a Long Boom* is the first solo exhibition of Singapore-based artist Ho Rui An in Europe. It comprises video installations from the artist's most recent bodies of works, alongside new artworks created for this exhibition.

A common thread in Ho Rui An's essayistic practice is its analysis of the insidious pervasion of neoliberalism into all regions of the earth and all realms of life, from the political economy, to our social imaginary, and even to our sense of time. In *The Ends of a Long Boom*, Ho further investigates the complex ramifications of late-capitalist ideology in the media and in cultural production. Editing together fragments of films, documentary images, and discourses, the artist creates a polyphonic narrative that reframes certain historical events and the Western-monitored writing of history. More specifically, he traces the racialized and complex relations between the "East" and the "West", as well as among East Asian nation-states, while emphasizing the persistence of imperialist legacies.

In July 1997, just before the outbreak of the so-called Asian financial crisis, American futurists Peter Schwartz and Peter Leyden published the essay "The Long Boom: A History of the Future, 1980–2020" in *Wired* magazine, outlining a "radically optimistic" scenario of sustained economic growth and increased global integration from the 1980s up to 2020—a scenario that never came true. Now here we are in 2021, one year after the end of the golden era Schwartz and Leyden falsely predicted, and one year after the outbreak of a global pandemic. The disastrous current context imbues the title of the exhibition, *The Ends of a Long Boom*, with a certain irony, especially because the response to the pandemic around the globe has continued to hold up the fantasy of a renewed and more equitable capitalism against the ongoing backlash against neoliberalism.

The overall expansion of the free market in the last decades, as Ho shows, has not been paired with all-encompassing freedom, openness, and noninterference, but rather with multifarious ways to convince or constrain the people. In the race for deregulation, pioneering economist Adam Smith's "invisible hand" has, since the Cold War, given way to other figurations within the new political economy, such as the "visible hand" of the developmental state or the student body.

Against this backdrop, *The Ends of a Long Boom* does not try to predict the future or identify with any post-truth statements. Rather, it goes back and forth between past and present, sometimes lingering in "the past of the future" to tell the polyphonic stories hidden behind the official ones. In his precisely staged lecture-performances and installations, Ho navigates between storytelling, iconographic inquiries, economic analyses, and journalistic investigations, sometimes following a relentless logic and sometimes jumping or drifting—but always employing a subtle wit. Mixing economics literature and newspapers' front pages with Hollywood film productions and museum displays, the artist simultaneously addresses diverse layers of human understanding and imaginaries, and shows how fiction and ideology work together—or even condition each other.

How do we read ideological narratives in media representations and cultural production? How do they inform (or should we say, outperform) the reality we live in? And which mechanisms of domination do they legitimate and which alternative stories do they obscure?

In *The Ends of a Long Boom*, Ho tackles these complex issues across six artworks:

*Asia the Unmiraculous* (2018–2020) speaks about the Western conception of Asia and the so-called East Asian miracle—the rapid economic growth of the Four Asian Tigers between the 1960s and 1990s, which ended with the crisis of 1997.

*Student Bodies* (2019) begins with the students of Satsuma and Chōshū who were sent to England to learn the ways of Western liberalism in the 1860s and who later returned to Japan to take up key positions in the newly centralized Meiji government.

*2027* (2021) restages and endlessly stretches short sequences from the Hollywood sci-fi film *Children of Men* (2006) to examine the differential representations of apocalyptic futures.

*The Long Boom* (2021), on the contrary, literally pins down Schwartz and Leyden's ideological mirage by printing their words on the floor.

Positioned right in front of the exhibition's entrance, *ULTIMATE COIN TEST CHINA HIGH-SPEED RAIL* (2018) appropriates an internet meme in which a standing euro coin is balanced on the ledge of a window in a high-speed Chinese train, to test the train's stability; Ho transforms this video footage into a loop where the coin never falls, commenting on the illusion of capitalist (and technology-driven) stability.

Finally, the performance *The Economy Enters the People* (2021), which will take place in September 2021, takes a closer look at the relations between Singapore and China following the attempt of the latter to assimilate a market economy into its party-state apparatus.

### Artist's biography

**Ho Rui An** is an artist and writer working in the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance, and theory. Working primarily across the mediums of lecture, essay, and film, he probes into the ways in which images are produced, circulate, and disappear within contexts of globalism and governance. **Ho** has presented projects at the *Bangkok Art Biennale*, 2020; *Asian Art Biennial*, Taichung, 2019; *Gwangju Biennale*, 2018; *Jakarta Biennale*, 2017; *Sharjah Biennial*, 2017; *Kochi-Muziris Biennale*, 2014; Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris, 2020; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2018; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2017; NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore, 2017; and Para Site, Hong Kong, 2015. In 2019, he was awarded the International Film Critics' (FIPRESCI) Prize at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen. In 2018, **Ho** was a fellow of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program.

### Performance

**Ho Rui An. The Economy Enters the People (2021)**

Sat 18/9 2021, 7 pm, Halle G, Museumsquartier Wien

Since the late 1970s, the Chinese government has dispatched thousands of officials to Singapore to study its economic and social policies. The city-state was crucial in reshaping the political imagination of an entire generation of Chinese leadership in a time when "the economy" had replaced class struggle as the primary subject of governance. In *The Economy Enters the People*, **Ho Rui An** re-examines this history of encounters between the two countries—one set into motion by the post-socialist turn toward the market economy—against the present-day crisis of late capitalism.

## The exhibition at a glance

*Ho Rui An. The Ends of a Long Boom*

CURATOR: Anne Faucheret

EXHIBITION VENUE: **kunsthalle wien** Karlsplatz, Treitlstraße 2, 1040 Vienna

EXHIBITION DATES: 17/7 – 10/10 2021

OPENING HOURS: Tue–Sun 11 am–7 pm, Thu 11 am–9 pm

The admission to **kunsthalle wien** Karlsplatz is free.

## Press contact

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