BENILDEFILM
SPECIAL EVENTS

I Did it My Way

Artistic Risks and Spectacles of Erasure in Southeast Asian Cinema

Curated by Patrick F. Campos

May 14–17, 2025

BenildeFilm Screening Room

Southeast Asia Artistic Freedom RADAR

ARTS EQUATOR

BENILDEFILM

SCHOOL OF NEW MEDIA ARTS

DE LA SALLE-COLLEGE OF SAINT BENILDE

Schedule

May 14
WEDNESDAY

OPENING CEREMONY
Curatorial Overview with Patrick F. Campos
Panel Discussion about Artistic Freedom with ArtsEquator
02:30–4:30 PM

Spotlight on Martyn See

Singapore Rebel, 2004
Nation Builders, 2006
Speakers Cornered, 2007
Said Zahari's 17 Years, 2007
Dr. Lim Hock Siew, 2010

5:00–7:30

May 15
THURSDAY

Money Has Four Legs
Maung Sun, 2020
2:00–4:00

Chanthaly
Mattie Do, 2012
4:30–6:30

May 16
FRIDAY

Chanthaly
Mattie Do, 2012
12:00 – 2:00

Curatorial Overview+Q&A
with Patrick F. Campos
2:30–3:30

Money Has Four Legs
Maung Sun, 2020
4:00 – 6:00

May 17
SATURDAY

Mentega Terbang
Khairi Anwar, 2021
3:00–5:00

CLOSING CEREMONY
Panel Discussion about Artistic Freedom with ArtsEquator
5:00–6:00

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CURATORIAL NOTE

Patrick F. Campos

There is something profoundly absurd about the phenomenon of karaoke-related killings in the Philippines involving the belting of Sinatra's "My Way"—a moment of performance, communal, ruptured by violence. The song's refrain summons a promise—a triumphant arc of self-determination and resistance to conformity, however tenuous. Yet, this promise bears its tragic inverse when expressive release meets an unpredictable policing force.

In Southeast Asia, where the line between expression and transgression is often perilously thin, what does it mean to insist on one's way?

The program takes this grim phenomenon as an impulse and a metaphor for the broader mechanisms of censorship, intimidation, and mob silencing across the region. Much like the tension between the karaoke singer's bravado and the fatal intolerance one does not realize awaits, the films in the program expose the by turns darkly comic and utterly cruel dynamics between assertion and reprisal, where the risk of saying too much too peculiarly, unmindful of the unwritten code of arbitrary offense, is met with consequences as brutal as they are bizarre.

Cinema across Southeast Asia has long negotiated uneasy terrain, shaped by a history of authoritarian governance, colonial afterlives, religious orthodoxy, intolerance to ethnic difference, and state developmentalism. In such a situation, films can be censored or censured, filmmakers brought to court or jailed or disappeared, and filmmaking remains a delicate dance between speaking and surviving.

The films in this program—by Mattie Do (Chanthaly, Laos), Maung Sun (Money Has Four Legs, Myanmar), Khairi Anwar (Mentega Terbang, Malaysia), and Martyn See (selected documentaries, Singapore)—are not easily grouped. They are personal, yet political; fragile, yet unyielding. They crystallize forms entangled with their national contexts, where the idea of "sensitive content" constantly shifts.

If these films diverge in style, genre, and mood, they are united by a deep commitment to freedom and so dare to test and breach thresholds in its name.

The program focuses not on works of open defiance, but of considered risk, of wagers on the possibility of speaking otherwise or out of turn. The filmmakers here do not announce resistance; instead, their works cultivate a language of insinuation, irony, subterfuge, and negotiation perceived or functioning as subversion. Formal minimalism, tonal ambivalence, satiric humor, or genre camouflage are not simply artistic choices; they are also tactical, born of constraint, and sharpened into tools of articulation.

They highlight the spectacles of erasure by choosing to render the persistence of those who continue to speak within systems designed to mute. Thus, the program invites viewers to consider what is at stake when artists risk the saying and unsayable. In exploring documents and narratives that slip in the cracks of the architecture of draconian state policies and irrational cultural taboos, these filmmakers ask what freedom means and how it must be invented, reshaped, defended.

THE FILMS

Martyn See Spotlight

I Did It My Way pays tribute to Martyn See, who inflected the early years of Singapore digital cinema, then on its way to cultural revival, with contrapuntal and courageous unruliness. His starkly minimalist documentaries, made in a country where political dissent is pathologized, are confrontational and surreptitious, reasonable and provocative, in equal measure, staking a claim for memory through testimony and rendering visible the silences that underpin the city-state's sheen of order.

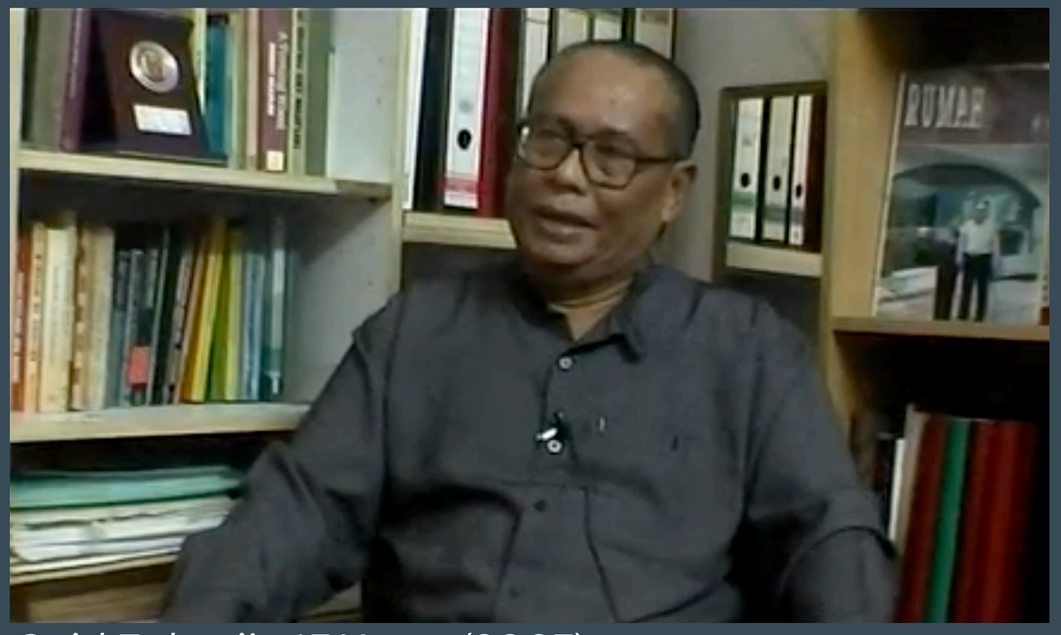
Included in the program are five of See's films, namely *Singapore Rebel* (2004), *Nation Builders* (2006), *Speakers Cornered* (2007), *Said Zahari's 17 Years* (2007), and *Dr. Lim Hock Siew* (2010).



Speakers Cornered (2007)



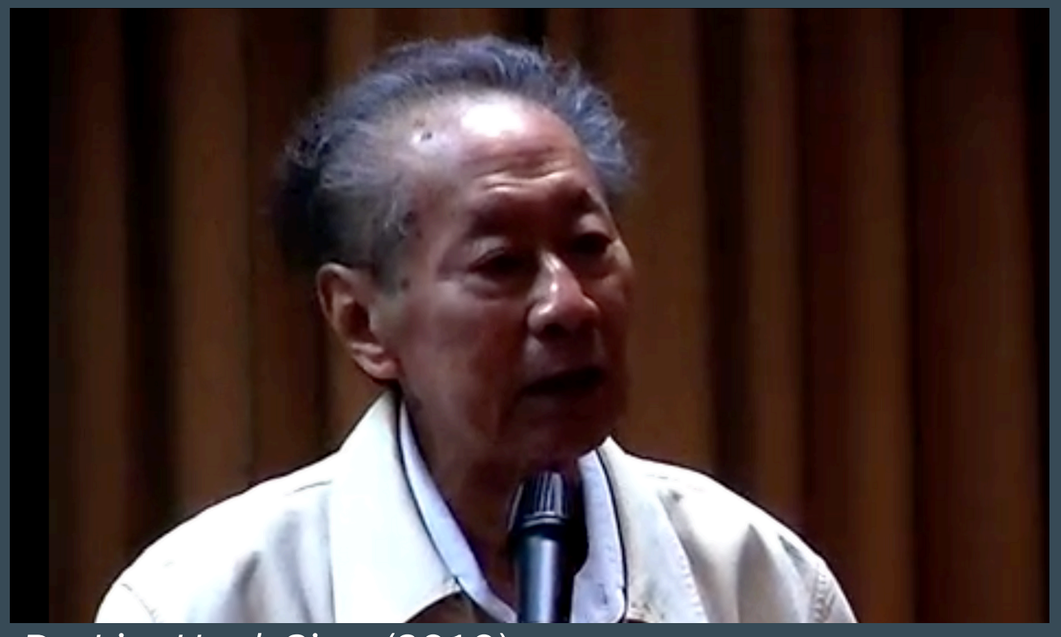
Singapore Rebel (2004)



Said Zahari's 17 Years (2007)



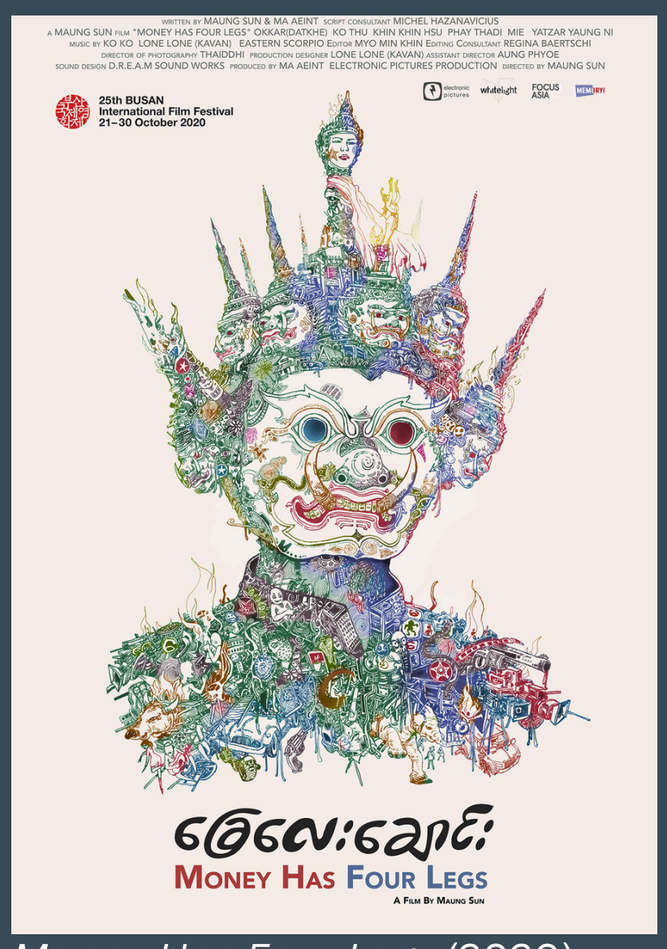
Nation Builders (2006)



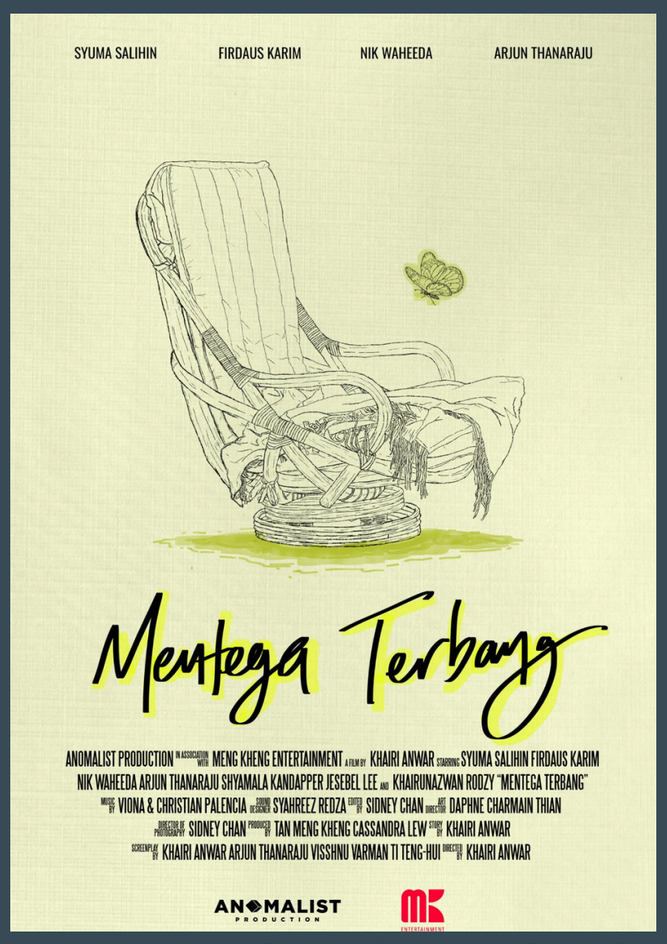
Dr. Lim Hock Siew (2010)



Chanthaly (2012), dir. Mattie Do



Money Has Four Legs (2020), dir. Maung Sun



Mentega Terbang (2021), dir. Khairi Anwar

THE FILMS

Feature length

I Did It My Way also presents films from Laos, Myanmar, and Malaysia, nation-states with demonstrably different historical, political, and cultural contexts, exploring the specificities of artists' strategies and negotiations.

Mattie Do's *Chanthaly* (2012), the first Lao horror feature and a landmark in the country's still-emergent film culture, deploys the supernatural to excavate hidden griefs and familial control, doubling as a meditation on gendered obedience in a tightly monitored society.

Maung Sun's *Money Has Four Legs* (2020), completed before the military coup in Myanmar, uses satire and reflexivity to chronicle a culture under siege, with its irreverence now retroactively weighted by tragedy. It asks, with riotous results: what happens if an ambitious artist abides by the state's idea of a good film?

Khairi Anwar's *Mentega Terbang* (2021) dramatizes a young woman's spiritual curiosity with tenderness and restraint, only to be met with an inordinate public backlash and a ban in Malaysia—underscoring the volatility of religious discourse in the public domain and the regimentation even of the most profound questions of personal faith.

CONVERSATIONS

As part of the program, a talk on the research and selection process of the curation and the significance of each film especially as doorways into thinking about artistic freedom in the region will be given by Patrick F. Campos, followed by a short Q&A.

ArtsEquator team members will join the conversation, sharing case studies, providing insight into the experience of different countries in Southeast Asia, and offering an overview of regional trends based on their research. Participating team members are Adrian Jonathan Pasaribu (Indonesia), Katrina Stuart Santiago (Philippines), Linh Le (Vietnam), Zikri Rahman (Malaysia), and ArtsEquator Co-Founder and Head Researcher Kathy Rowland (Singapore/Malaysia).

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