

SOIL AND STONES SOULS AND SONGS



STUDY GUIDE

SOIL AND STONES SOULS AND SONGS

Soil and Stones, Souls and Songs is an exhibition which attempts to convey and translate the various narratives and anxieties found in the realities, cultural production, and contemporary thought within the Asian Sphere. These narratives and anxieties are impact of the changes brought about by China's transformation over the past decades and are felt throughout Asia as well as the global community.

The exhibit is divided into chapters:

SOIL AND STONES

This chapter exposes the audience to the multi-faceted understandings of the soil. It depicts the physical and the concrete vis-à-vis the spiritual and conceptual elements as fundamental elements in defining a nation such as Peter Kennedy and John Hughes's *On Sacred Land*, presenting the dislocation of Aboriginal communities in Australia. The case study curated by Qu Chang talks about the correlation of soil and history towards the identity of Hong Kong.

SOULS AND SONGS

This chapter analyzes the feelings of anxiety in the region through phenomena connected to the resurgence of nationalisms with all their founding myths, insistence on ethnicity, territory, common stories and souls manifested in the fractured social body of Asia. New representations of these nationalisms have surfaced based on romantic views influenced by Chinese Neo-Confucianism and a long standing obsession with historical humiliation and vindication in relation to the West or Japan over past idyllic civilization in their respective countries or on previous (and often contested) moments of glory and collective tragedy. Such ideological and instrumental use of history and national narratives are opposed by the contributors to this exhibition.

This is a study guide for the exhibit *Soils and Stones, Souls and Songs*. It aims to make the various works more engaging and interactive towards the viewers, as well as to help the audiences gain a deeper understanding of the exhibit.



Edgar Talusan Fernandez
Our Lands Are Marked for Destruction...And We With Them, 1979
 Gift of the Catholic Bishops' Conference Episcopal Commission on Tribal Filipinos

EYES AND STORMS / OUR LANDS ARE MARKED FOR DESTRUCTION

Simryn's Gill's work is composed of aerial photographs of open-pit mines in Australia. Open-pit mining is a type of mining which strips a layer of a type of rock that contains important minerals including metal. This type of mining happens all around the world—one of the deepest gold mine in the world is located in Johannesburg, South Africa.

These photographs are not meant to be political statements, but they take into consideration the 'alarming beauty'. Although these realities are devastating, the work is depicted in a such a way that it almost makes the pit mines peaceful and solemn. However, Gill does believe that mines are something to be alarmed about, but she states that it's almost a separate part of her.

Edgar Fernandez's work is heavily connected to Gill's. Open-pit mining requires site preparation and clearing before actually developing the extraction project. The poster is heavily loaded with messages about safeguarding the homes and the land of the indigenous Filipino groups, in order to protect and save their lives. From the images, to the text, it effortlessly sends a message to its viewers about the implications of mining and logging and how it affects the environment and the people living in them.



PRESCHOOL

Taking care of our environment is very important. We need the plants and the animals in nature in order to live, the same way they need our help to survive. Draw imaginary machines that can heal the land, like a car that absorbs the Earth's smog instead of using gas. Have them watch a film about land preservation and saving the environment, such as the film: *The Lorax*.

After watching the film, ask them if they can imagine living in a world full of plastic, never being able to see a real tree or flowers. They have to understand that they need to take care of the Earth's resources so that kids like them will be able to see the beauty of nature and the environment in the future.

ELEMENTARY

Mining and logging are industries that yield both good and bad things. The pros include efficiency and faster operations. However, the cons are losing a whole eco system, vegetation is completely stripped and after the project, miners leave the site empty and barren. Also, problems of pollution and drainage are causing ¹AMD or acid mine drainage, which occurs when sulfide-rich rocks are exposed to water and air, and then leaks into streams and pollutes life along water sources.

However, there have been recent frameworks that have been discussed about the concept of Responsible Mining. It considers the safety of the miners and the public as it uses pods to dispose of cyanide, letting the sun biodegrade the chemicals before introducing it to the ocean. Even if this does provide more safety regulations, there are still risks.

Watch the film *The 33* and discuss the difficulties that miners face. Watch the movie *The Last Mountain* and deliberate on the problems the families have to face during and after the mining operations. Put your heads together and come up with ideas on how you can help as students.

COLLEGE

Mining and logging are industries that are often situated in indigenous locales.

These industries impact the environment in many ways, from the economy, to its ecology. In a group, research about Indigenous tribes that have been in this situation in the Philippines as well as tribes around the world, compare their situations to each other, and make a report to share their stories to the class.

¹ [Source](#)



He Xiangyu
Wisdom Tower (A Pretty Girl), 2013
Courtesy of the artist and White Space Beijing

WISDOM TOWER

He Xiangyu's *Wisdom Tower* is aptly named so because Xiangyu used his own wisdom teeth as materials for the artwork.

PRESCHOOL

Let the students study the tower. Have them recognize that it is made out of gold and human teeth. Explain to them that this is an example of a pagoda, which is seen in countries across Asia such as China and Japan. These pagodas were used to preserve sacred relics such as bones and writings. By using building toys such as Lego or Mega Blocks, ask the students to construct their own version of a wisdom tower. Or have them make it with recycled paper by following [these set of instructions](#).

ELEMENTARY

Give the students a background on Buddhism as a religion and as a culture. Watch this seven-minute video on [the Three Teachings – Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism](#).

Here are some more examples of pagodas:

The **Toji Pagoda** in Japan was once the tallest structure in Japan till it was destroyed in 15th century.

The **Silver Pagoda**, which can be found in Phnom Penh, Cambodia houses the Emerald Buddha and other relics of Buddha made out of bronze, gold and diamonds.

The **Sakyumani Pagoda** of Fogong Temple was raised by the Emperor Daozong in 1056. This temple was built on his family's home.

As the tower is inspired by pagodas, ask them to look at various pagoda designs from all over Southeast Asia. Using an assortment of Art Materials let them design their own pagodas.

COLLEGE

Discuss with the students the philosophical significance of a pagoda to Buddhism. What is poetic about using one's own set of wisdom teeth to build such tower? Have them write a paper about the best piece of wisdom they've come across in their life that they'd want to share.



Toji Pagoda



Silver Pagoda



Sakyumani Pagoda



Prabhakar Pachpute
Broken Varaha, 2016
Courtesy of the artist

BROKEN VARAHA

This piece by **Prabhakar Pachpute** was inspired by the story of *Varaha*, one of Vishnu's avatars. He rescues the goddess *Bhudevi*, who, in the painting, is represented as the earth.

The story can be read through [this link](#).

PRESCHOOL

Let them stand in front of the wall and take it all in. Ask them to enumerate some of the characters they see in the painting (such as the manager, the map, and the boar). Have them describe what they see and let them tell you what the possible story is, or what these characters have to tell. And then tell them the story of *Varaha*.



Meschac Gaba
Hubert Maga (perruque MAVA musée d'art de la vie active), 2010-2011
Courtesy of the artist and Kadist, Paris and San Francisco

HUBERT MAGA

(PERRUQUE MAVA MUSÉE D'ART DE LA VIE ACTIVE)

Meschac Gaba's piece is made of braided artificial hair pieces on a metal mannequin bust.

PRESCHOOL

Ask them if they know how to braid and state what other materials can be braided like ropes and maybe even shoelaces. Have them braid each other's hair, and if they don't know how to, teach them. And then ask them what they think the figure is without telling them that it is made of hair. Now tell them that it is and have them imagine what it would be like to wear a wig that looks exactly like Meschac Gaba's Hubert Maga. And then have them draw a wig using various coloring materials.

Also, explain to them that sometimes people wear wigs for their jobs, such as British lawyers and judges wear white wigs in the courtroom to bring authority, formality and to distinguish members of the legal society from the other members. However, people also wear wigs for vanity.

COLLEGE

Tell them about a little bit about the history of Benin and ask them to research on Hubert Maga and why the installation was named after him.



Sheela Gowda
Breaths, 2002
Courtesy of Sunitha and Niall Emmart

BREATHS

Sheela Gowda's *Breaths* consists of red strings bundled and wrapped around together by black muslin cloth smeared with charcoal. The piece contains 18 logs placed on a table, each with varying lengths and sizes.

PRESCHOOL

Charcoal is used as an alternative to wood fuel, by bundling up wood barks together, or even old coconuts, wait till it almost turns into ash. After this process, it's used for all sorts of activities such as barbecues. Then ask them to draw a tree on a sheet of paper and enumerate the different uses of trees. This activity should help them realize how important trees are.

ELEMENTARY

Discuss the ecological importance of trees to a specific area. Have the students enumerate the uses trees have in the same specific area. You can also have them watch the film: *Fern Gully: The Last Rainforest*, or *Wall-E*—both movies talk about the destruction of Earth and nature and the importance of its protection before it's too late. What do they think will happen after returning to Earth? Is it possible to restart an ecosystem?

COLLEGE

Charcoal is useful in everyday life and it is one of the more economic ways to start a fire without using gas. However, in a commercial scale, this could bring enormous problems to the forest's ecosystem. The bright red strings inside the charcoal-coated muslin cloth brings up a "bleeding effect" which suggests that these "logs" once belonged to a living organism, and not just a tree. Research what indications or signs plants can give you to indicate that they are alive.



Mariana Castillo Deball
Untitled, 2014
 Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City

UNTITLED

Mariana Castillo Deball's work is a reaction to a Mexican advertisement for anti-psychotic medicine. In the original, it was said that 'Schizophrenic patients sometimes hide behind a mask of psychotic withdrawal, which can make them inaccessible to therapy' and the tagline being: 'Remove the mask of the psychotic patient'. Masks are used in Mexico in traditional dances as well as different ceremonies.

Here are some examples of traditional Mexican masks and their purposes:

The **Pascola**, or the old man of the ceremony is the host of traditional celebrations. There cannot be a feast without a Pascola as his dance mediates between the community and the gods. This is traditionally worn on the back of the head when he is representing a human and on his face when acting like an animal.

The **Hermit Mask** is used in a Pastorela representation, when they dance with unmasked women. ²They play the hermit who travels to Bethlehem and in his journey, meets devils who try to distract him.

These **Wrestling Masks** aren't that traditional, but they have been considered into the Mexican culture as these represent the color and the vibrancy of their people. Lucha Libre has been in the Mexican culture for many years and is one of the more popular forms of masks.

PRESCHOOL

Give them a brief history of the use of Masks in the Mexican culture and using different materials such as recyclable paper plates, have them create their own masks.

COLLEGE

Schizophrenia is a mental disorder that completely affects a person's thoughts, feelings and behavior by having multiple and varying personalities. It is caused by an imbalance of chemicals in the brain that include dopamine and glutamate. Discuss the background of the piece and talk about Deball's reaction. Talk about the significance or the meaning of turning the mask backwards. What was the reaction the artist wanted to convey about the anti-psychotic medicine? Also, talk about the importance of social awareness about mental illness and its stigmas.



Pascola



Hermit Mask



Wrestling Masks

² [Source](#)



Tuguldur Yondonjamts
Fin Soup & Black Lemon, 2010
Courtesy of Francis J. Greenburger collection, New York

TUGULDUR YONDONJAMTS

Tuguldur Yondonjamts' works portray the escalating tensions between China and Mongolia. It examines the current relationship of China and Mongolia in relation to the Mining Industry. Tensions have been rising as China takes interest in excavating Mongolia's soil. However, Mongolia refuses to agree as it tarnishes the sacredness of their lands. Take note of the materials that the artist used, as well as how he used them.

PRESCHOOL

Sharks are one of the most intimidating creatures in the ocean, they are fierce predators that are oftentimes made as the "bad guys". Ask the students about their feelings about sharks, if they find them fascinating or not. Also, ask the students if they would like the idea of making Shark's Fin soup. Tell them that in order to make this, fishermen have to remove the fins of the shark and dispose of the rest of the shark. Since the shark no longer has its fins, it can't move—and if it can't move, the shark cannot survive. Ask them how they would feel about it if they were in the place of the sharks.

ELEMENTARY

Have them look at the *Secret Mountain of Falcons* and let them study the patterns on it. Are these random patterns or do they form a shape or outline? Ask them what the red tinge on it implies and explain to them what a Falcon is and its importance to Mongolia. Then ask the students to think of other animals with distinct patterns on their hide/skin/scales/feathers. Using an assortment of art materials, ask them to create their own pattern based on other animals.

COLLEGE

Ask them to take a look at *Antipode Suit 2* and *Copper Mining Sites of Mongolia*. Ask them what the connection between these two works is. Ask the students to research on the history of mining in China and Mongolia, and relate it to both art works. Also, have them look into what miners wear and why they wear them.





The Mystical Reality by Sulaiman Esa and Redza Piyadasa
Curated by Simon Soon

THE MYSTICAL REALITY

These might seem like every day items you would see when walking in the street or even at home, so why are they in a Museum? This original exhibition in 1974 exhibit caused quite a stir in the Asian conceptual art scene. **Redza Piyadasa** and **Sulaiman Esa** questioned the ideas of reality, matter and objects in Asian philosophies and spiritual systems.

ELEMENTARY

Enumerate the things they find mystical or items that seem to have a magical impact on them, but seem ordinary to others. Why do they find it so?

COLLEGE

Francis Bacon was a British philosopher who took up Aristotelian ideas. He is known for establishing the claims of Empiricism, that when people experience something, they rely on their senses. Another British philosopher named John Locke, restated the importance of the senses and further explains that the human mind is a blank slate or a tabula rasa. And the only way we can imprint knowledge is through experience, with the use of our senses.

With this in mind, how can we give meaning to ordinary items? Taking a look around the exhibit, did the experiences that the artists went through have any effect on the items that made it worthy to be in a museum? Talk about a specific item that they've associated memories and moments with.



Pio Abad
Imelda as Maganda (The Beautiful One), 2015
Courtesy of the artist

SOME ARE SMARTER THAN OTHERS

Pio Abad's piece depicts Ferdinand Marcos as Malakas, and Imelda Marcos as Maganda.

PRESCHOOL

Tell the students about the story of Malakas and Maganda and how they came to be.

ELEMENTARY

Let the students observe the painting, ask them if this is how they imagined Marcos and Imelda would look like. Now give the students a brief background on the Marcos Family (Who they were, what they did, and where they are now). Remind the students of the story of Malakas at Maganda and discuss the different characteristics of the modern-day Malakas and Maganda.

COLLEGE

Discuss with the students the political significance of the work as well as the implication of the title *Some Are Smarter Than Others*. Research further on who made the original painting and the idea of myths as discussed by Roland Barthes. Ask them to write their reflections on a sheet of paper.

Here are some links to the history of Ferdinand Marcos and his family:

[Ferdinand Marcos Biography: State of the Regime and Downfall](#)

[Imelda Marcos Biography](#)

[Ferdinand Marcos in Asian History](#)

SOIL AND STONES, SOULS AND SOUNDS

ARTISTS

PIO ABAD • MARIANA CASTILLO DEBALL • TRƯƠNG CÔNG TÙNG • KAWAYAN DE GUIA • JIMMIE DURHAM • SULAIMAN ESA
JOSH FAUGHT • EDGAR TALUSAN FERNANDEZ • MESCHAC GABA • SIMRYN GILL • SHEELA GOWDA • ION GRIGORESCU • TALOI HAVINI
HE XIANGYU • HO SIU-KEE • JAMES T. HONG • PETER KENNEDY & JOHN HUGHES • JANE JIN KAISEN • KYUNGMAN KIM
SOYOUNG KIM / KIM JEONG • OCEAN LEUNG • LI BINYUAN • LI RAN • JOSÉ MACEDA • PRABHAKAR PACHPUTE • REDZA PIYADASA
PRATCHAYA PHINTHONG • JAE OON RHO • SHITAMICHI MOTOYUKI • CHULAYARNNON SIRIPHOL • WALTER SMETAK • VALERIE SNOBECK
SO WAI-LAM • TREVOR YEUNG • TUGULDUR YONDONJAMTS • DOMINIQUE ZINKPÉ

EXHIBITION RUN

6 SEPTEMBER -
4 DECEMBER 2016


STUDY GUIDE MADE BY


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10.00am - 6.00pm

Sunday

10.00am - 2.00pm