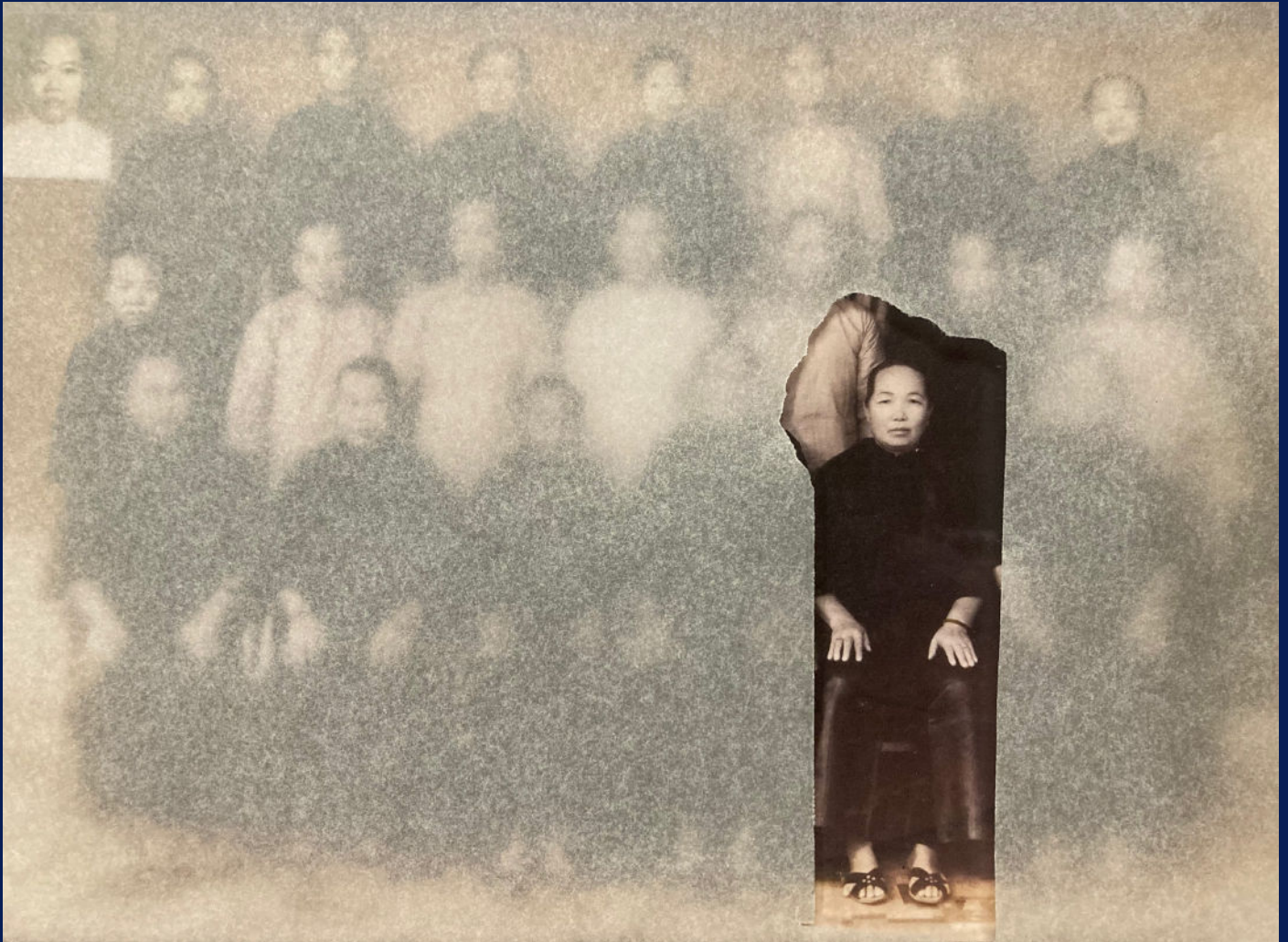


KADIST

PRESS KIT



THREADS OF KINSHIP

MERCEDES AZPILICUETA, GAËLLE CHOISNE, XYZA CRUZ BACANI,
YEE I-LANN, CHEN JIALU & SELF-COMB SISTERS, TARIK KISWANSON,
MA QIUSHA, ASHMINA RANJIT, RISHAM SYED,
SAWANGWONGSE YAWNGHWE, HU YINPING

◇OCTOBER 11, 2025 — JANUARY 10, 2026

◇OPENING ◇N FRIDAY, ◇OCTOBER 10, 2025

CURATED BY

Shona Mei Findlay, Yuan Fuca, Marie Martraire (KADIST) in conversation with He Art Museum curatorial team

ARTISTS

Mercedes Azpilicueta, Gaëlle Choisine, Xyza Cruz Bacani, Yee I-Lann, Chen Jialu & Self-Comb Sisters, Tarik Kiswanson, Ma Qiusha, Ashmina Ranjit, Risham Syed, Sawangwongse Yawngnhwe, Hu Yinping

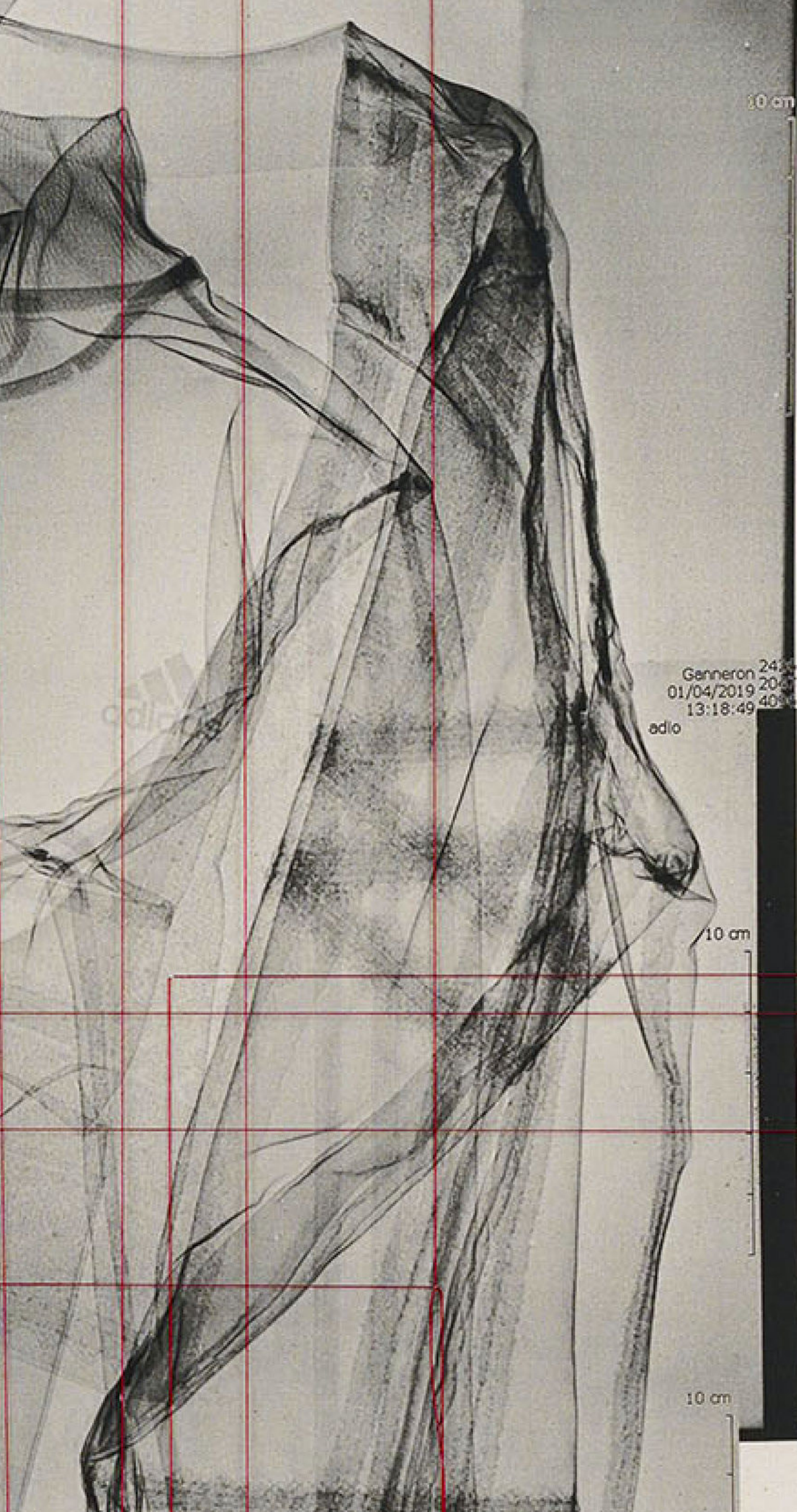
The exhibition *Threads of Kinship* departs from the history of the Self-Comb Sisters, women from the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong Province, China, in the early 20th century, who made a radical decision to remain unmarried. Choosing communal living over traditional family structures, they sustained themselves through mutual support networks and silk production, an industry that was flourishing in the province. This act of resistance subverted the authority of Confucian social norms over women's identities, bodies, and futures, which were often tied to their roles as wives or mothers.

The term "Self-Comb Sisters" derives from a hairdressing ritual the women adopted to mark their vow of celibacy. Traditionally, shutouli (梳头礼), or hair-combing ceremony, symbolized a girl's passage into womanhood and marriage. The Self-Comb Sisters reclaimed it, combing their own hair rather than being styled by elder women, as a declaration of independence, redefining womanhood not through marriage, but through chosen kinship rooted in mutual care and solidarity.

Building on this legacy, *Threads of Kinship* brings together the work of a dozen contemporary artists who (re)imagine kin-making as a generative force, one that holds histories while spinning new, emancipatory futures.



Yee I-Lann, *Like the Banana Tree at the Gate A Leaf in the Storm*, 2016



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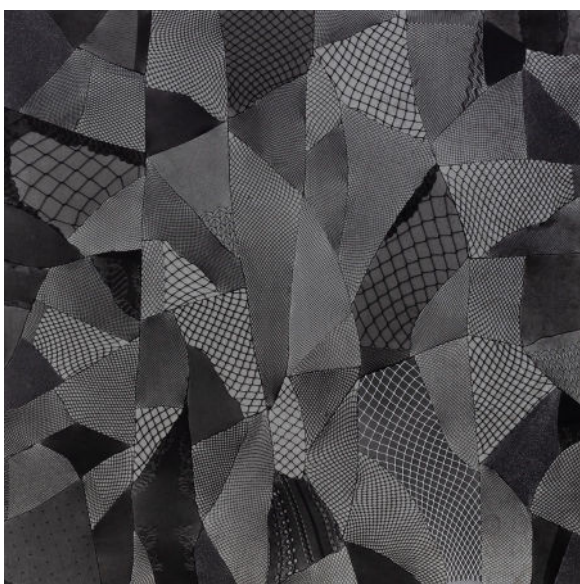
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Hu Jinping, *Potatoes Grow on Trees*, 2025



Ma Qiusha, *Wonderland-Eros No. 3*, 2020

The works reflect how kinship extends beyond bloodlines or state-sanctioned definitions of family, emerging instead through acts of autonomy and solidarity. Among migrants, workers, and those pushed to the margins, kinship becomes a strategy for survival. Whether forged through care, protest, everyday gestures, or memories, kinship is not only a personal or cultural practice but a deeply political one that considers how we live together, support one another, and shape our futures in uncertain times.

The exhibition places particular focus on textiles as both material objects and symbolic vessels, much like silk was for the Self-Comb Sisters. Across cultures and centuries, textiles have clothed and protected bodies, preserved memories, and told stories of migration, loss, trauma, and survival. Yet, they have also circulated as commodities traded across empires and are now embedded in global supply chains, driving migration and labor systems, fueling (colonial) economies, and contributing to environmental degradation. As such, textiles bear the marks of care, resistance, and heritage, as well as those of extraction, exploitation, and circulation.

Centering non-Western narratives and lived experiences, *Threads of Kinship* is a meditation on how solidarities are formed, how histories persist, and futures are imagined. It reminds us that kinship is not only inherited but continually forged and stitched together through acts of care, resilience, and imagination.

In this weaving of kinship and textiles, of rituals and survivals, the project reminds us how the softest threads hold the strongest forms of resistance.

This is the first iteration of an exhibition that will be presented at He Art Museum in Spring 2026.



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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Mercedes Azpilicueta

Mercedes Azpilicueta (b. 1981, La Plata, Argentina) is a visual artist, poet, and performer based in Amsterdam. Calling herself a “dishonest researcher,” she navigates through multiple references and fields—from art history and literature to pop music and street culture—to create works that weave together real and imagined characters from the past and present. These figures—dissident lives and trajectories she fell in love with—include feminist, queer, migrant, and exiled individuals who haunt her scripts, performances, textiles, and videos. They manifest as voices, shapes, texts, traces, and memories, forming layered stories that never indulge in cold reverence or archival fascination. Azpilicueta also engages the body with all its flaws and potentials as a space for strength and vulnerability, resistance and care. Many of her objects are made with craft-based, “poor” materials or handmade techniques, frequently associated with women’s domestic labor and with subaltern knowledge. These recycled or natural materials carry the (violent) histories of their trade, exploitation, and circulation. Her objects can be activated as props, scores, set pieces, or mnemonic devices—each offering a way to connect with lived experience, memory, and collective struggle.

Gaëlle Choisne

Gaëlle Choisne (b. 1985, Cherbourg, France) considers the complexity of the world, its political and cultural disorder, whether it be the over-exploitation of nature, its resources, or the vestiges of colonial history, where Creole esoteric traditions, myths, and popular cultures mingle. Her projects are conceived as ecosystems of sharing and collaboration, pockets of “resistance” where new possibilities are created, notably with the Temple of Love project. Initiated from Roland Barthes’ original essay on love, *Fragments d’un discours amoureux* (1977), Choisne adds a political dimension to the concept of love by paying homage to invisible bodies, minority and fragile souls, and dispossessed hearts. Temple of Love is an evolutionary project defining itself through its modes of appearance and genesis according to its invitations and its location.

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Xyza Cruz Bacani

Xyza Cruz Bacani (b. 1987, Bambang, Philippines) is an interdisciplinary artist and writer based in New York. Her experience as a second-generation domestic worker in Hong Kong has informed her practice, grounded in documentary-style photography, and her engagement in less visible, erased, and underreported world events. Devoting an important part of her career to documenting the lives of communities related to migrant labor under global capitalism, and now climate change, she has also worked in the Philippines to cover various crises. Among others, she covered the 2017 siege of Marawi, a city devastated by the Duterte administration's military campaign against the "radicalization" of Islam. Bacani has become a prominent public figure in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, working beyond the fields of art and photography in social justice projects. Her artistic accomplishments are documented by the Philippines House of Representatives under House Resolution No. 1969.

Yee I-Lann

Yee I-Lann (b. 1971, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia) often uses photography and photomontage to examine the turbulent geopolitical history of Southeast Asia's archipelagos, engaging with colonial and neocolonial legacies, structures of power, and historical memory through a visual language that foregrounds critical forms of storytelling and resistance. Surfacing histories and knowledge that counter dominant narratives in Malaysian culture, Yee employs a complex visual vocabulary drawn from historical references, popular culture, archives, and everyday objects. She has recently begun working collaboratively with sea-based and land-based communities as well as Indigenous mediums in Sabah, Borneo.

Chen Jialu

Chen Jialu (b. 1992, Dongguan, China) lives and works in the Pearl River Delta. Since 2020, she has explored the forgotten history and traces of communities of Self-Comb Sisters in the Pearl River Delta from the Xijiang River valley in southern China, to Southeast Asia. Her project Gupouk explores and documents the ruins of Self-Comb Sister houses and creates works that provide different narratives and experiences, exploring autonomy, the connection between people and the land, and deconstructing society's norms through sensibility.

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Tarik Kiswanson

Tarik Kiswanson (b. 1986, Halmstad, Sweden) is an artist, poet, and writer based in Paris. For two decades, he has explored notions of rootlessness, metamorphosis, and memory through his interdisciplinary practice. A legacy of displacement and transformation permeates his works and is indispensable to both their form and the modes of sensing they produce. While retaining an attachment to the intimate and personal, his work speaks to universal concerns and to social and collective histories of rupture, loss, and regeneration. Kiswanson's oeuvre can be understood as a cosmology of related conceptual families, each exploring variations on themes like refraction, multiplication, disintegration, levitation, and polyphony through their own distinct language.

Ma Qiusha

Ma Qiusha (b. 1982, Beijing, China) often creates biographical and context-specific works, including video, photography, painting, and installation. Overarching themes in her work are the conflicts and dilemmas encountered in daily and ordinary experience. Others include intergenerational gaps, as well as the signs and symbols of the complex socio-cultural transformations that occur in recent high-speed urban life, which deeply affect personal and collective memories within society. Bringing together relationships, objects, structures, and stories as a way to subvert dominant readings of their histories, her works stand out as increasingly crucial documents of China's tensions and its political and social shifts.

Ashmina Ranjit

Ashmina Ranjit (b. 1966, Kathmandu, Nepal) is Nepal's leading figure in the conceptual and performance fields, as well as an emblematic voice in South Asian feminist art making and activism. From the time of the revolutionary civil war in the 1990s and early 2000s, Ranjit produced several interventions/performances in public space (in the royal quarters at the heart of Kathmandu), widely remembered beyond the art circles, highlighting the ongoing violence, class struggle, and gender issues that were at the forefront of society's upheavals at the time. Her impact has gone far beyond the art community and has participated in national debates, marking a rare case in which performance, and art in general, manages to engage in public intellectual and political debates. After the establishment of a democratic republic in Nepal, Ranjit pursued her work with a particular focus on women's issues across the country, on subjects such as menstrual discrimination and violence against women.

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Risham Syed

Risham Syed (b. 1969, Lahore, Pakistan) is a Lahore-based artist whose work draws attention to the enduring effects of colonialism, global trade histories, and changing cultural identities in Pakistan today. Though trained as a painter, she often moves beyond the canvas, incorporating stitched textiles, found objects, and images into layered installations. Her family stories and the city of Lahore frequently appear—not just as settings, but as ways to reflect on history, urban transformation, and how memory is passed down, altered, or forgotten across generations.

Sawangwongse Yawngkhwe

Sawangwongse Yawngkhwe (b. 1971, Shan State, Myanmar) works from a place of exile, where personal memory and political history converge. A descendant of the Yawngkhwe royal family, his grandfather, Sao Shwe Thaik, served as the first president of the Union of Burma following independence in 1948, before dying in prison after the 1962 military coup. Yawngkhwe's family fled, first to Thailand, then to Canada, where he came of age far from the landscapes that continue to shape his work. His painting and installation practice draws on family archives, tracing lines between intimate inheritance and national trauma. Portraits, maps, and textiles become vessels through which he unravels the official narratives of Myanmar, revealing the gaps, silences, and recurring violences that structure its past and present.

Hu Jinping

Hu Jinping (b. 1983, Luzhou, China) works fluidly across sculpture, performance, textiles, and long-term community-based projects. Her work often focuses on everyday labor, especially that of overlooked women. In 2015, she developed *Hu Xiaofang*, a collaborative project involving elderly women from her hometown to create soft sculptures through which to tell their stories. More than a support network, *Hu Xiaofang* imagines a new kind of economy—one where creativity is shared and artistic labor is taken seriously. Hu often adopts roles and personae as part of her practice. One of her alter egos, Qiao Xiaohuan, is a fictional sculptor who deliberately makes art that follows market trends, using the proceeds to support her more experimental work. Hu treats art not just as an object, but as a tool to connect people, rethink value, and imagine other ways of living.



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CURATORS

Shona Findlay

Shona Mei Findlay is a Singaporean curator based in San Francisco. She is currently Curator of Asia Programs at KADIST. Her recent projects include *A Woman You Thought You Knew*, and exhibitions and programs featuring artists such as Wang Tuo, Pio Abad, and Jeamin Cha. Previously, she was part of the founding team of the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Residencies Programme, Singapore, and worked on *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia*, part of the UBS MAP Global Art Initiative at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. She participated in the De Appel Curatorial Programme. Her curatorial practice engages with feminist and decolonial frameworks, focusing on Southeast Asian and diasporic perspectives. She is particularly interested in how artists navigate memory, displacement, and transnational belonging through material and embodied forms.

Yuan Fuca

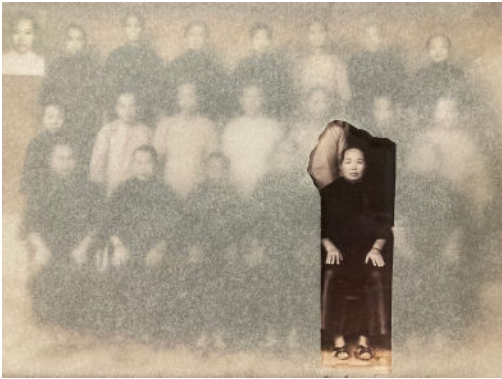
Yuan Fuca is a writer and curator based between China and the United States, and the Associate Program Director for China at KADIST. Recent projects include *As She Descends* (forthcoming at Aranya Art Center) and newly commissioned works by Chen Tianzhuo, Tao Hui, Hu Wei, Peng Zuqiang, Shen Xin, Payne Zhu, Tang Chao, Tan Jing & Zheng Ke, and Zhang Wenxin. Previously, she was the founding Artistic Director of Beijing's MACA Art Center, leading its launch (January 2022), where she curated the opening exhibition *The Elephant Escaped*, solo exhibitions for Patty Chang, Tong Wenmin, and Shao Chun, and the digital series *Bare Screen* and Future Host's podcast *Scripture*. She co-founded Salt Projects (2016–2019), a curatorial studio and gallery space based in Beijing, the non-profit organization Initial Research in New York, and she is the founding editor of Heichi Magazine. Her curatorial research follows myth as matter, kinship as care, and ritual as spatial script—inscribing Chinese sacred landscapes and their transnational echoes. Her writing appears in Artforum, ARTnews, BOMB, Flash Art, Frieze, among others.

Marie Martraire

Marie Martraire is a researcher, curator, and arts professional, currently serving as KADIST's Collection Director and pursuing a PhD in Film and Moving Image Studies at Concordia University, Montreal. Formerly Director of KADIST San Francisco, researcher-in-residence at MMCA Seoul, and program manager at the Asian Contemporary Arts Consortium, she has co-curated exhibitions and film programs with artists such as Milena Bonilla, Jeamin Cha, Yin-Ju Chen, Dina Danish, Li Ran, Arin Rungjang, Emilija Škarnulytė, Sriwhana Spong, and Hong-Kai Wang. Her work examines artists' engagement with histories and futurity, seriality and fiction in artists' films and videos, and often draws from decolonial, feminist, and media theories. Her thesis project sits at the intersection of contemporary art and video cultures in the age of streaming, with particular attention to the proliferation of versions in forms, narratives, and formats.

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PRESS VISUALS



Chen Jialu & Self-Comb Sisters, *Sisterhood House's Collective Photo*, 2024, Penang, Malaysia. Photo provided by Salma Khxoo



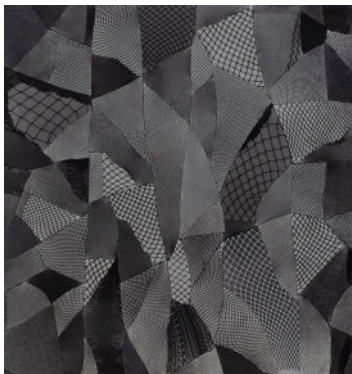
Ashmina Ranjit, *Hair Warp - Travel Through Strand of Universe, 8*, 2020. Courtesy of the artist, KADIST collection



Tarik Kiswanson, *Passing*, 2020. Courtesy of the artist, KADIST collection



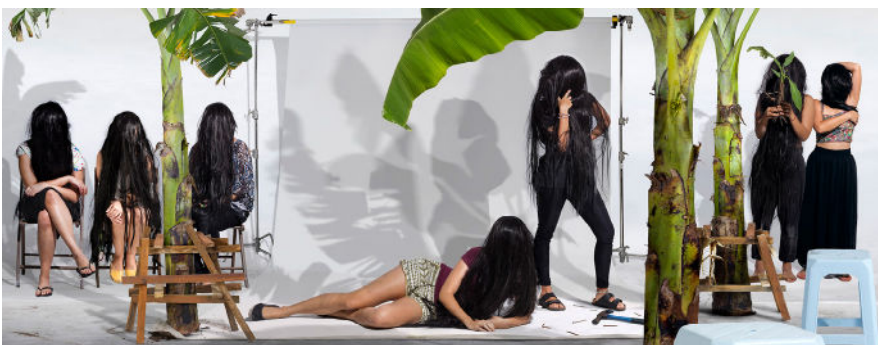
Hu Yinping, *Potatoes Grow on Trees*, 2025. Commissioned by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art. Courtesy of the artist and Magician Space



Ma Qiusha, *Wonderland-Eros No. 3*, 2020. Courtesy of the artist, KADIST collection



Risham Syed, *Ali Trade Center Series IV (with Buddleia)*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist, KADIST collection



Yee I-Lann, *Like the Banana Tree at the Gate A Leaf in the Storm*, 2016



Xyza Cruz Bacani, *Three Generations*, 2018. From the series *We Are Like Air*, 2013-2018

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About KADIST

KADIST is a non-profit contemporary art organization that believes artists make an important contribution to a progressive society through their artwork, which often addresses key issues relevant to the present day. Dedicated to exhibiting the work of artists — from more than one hundred countries — represented in its collection, KADIST affirms contemporary art's role within social discourse, and facilitates new connections across cultures. Its local hubs in Paris and San Francisco organize exhibitions, physical and online programs, and host residencies. KADIST stays apprised of developments in contemporary art via a global advisor network, and develops collaborations internationally, including with leading museums, fostering vibrant conversations about contemporary art and society.

About the He Art Museum

Located in Shunde, Guangdong, China, He Art Museum (HEM) is a family established, non-profit private art museum designed by Tadao Andō. Focusing on the culture and arts in modern and contemporary period with an international vision, HEM is devoted to present compelling art exhibitions, as well as diverse and open cultural activities. With its unique qualities, HEM hopes to establish a hub of communication to explore the integral values of cross-cultural exchange.



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Threads of Kinship

Exhibition from October 11, 2025 to January 10, 2026

Press preview: Friday, October 10, 2025, 5–6pm

Opening: Friday, October 10, 2025, 6–9pm (free admission)

Exhibition hours: Wednesday–Friday, 11am–7pm, and Saturday, 3–7pm (free admission)

Two events will be organized as part of the exhibition, in partnership with La Déferlante and AWARE: Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions (dates and details to come).



Bastardie, 2024, KADIST Paris. Photo : Vinciane Lebrun