

ROUNDTABLE

Power to the People: Myanmar Artists' Responses to Repression

Coordinator

John Piper

Roundtable Description

A facilitated panel discussion on 'Art and Resistance' is proposed. The panel will involve three Myanmar artists whose creative output (in different media) are responses to human rights violations, the effects of protracted conflict on civilians, personal experiences, including of persecution and seeking refuge and memories (and trauma) of loss.

Their works - produced subsequent to the 2021 coup d'etat - can be viewed as 'Arts of Resistance'.

Background. The artist panelists will be drawn from some 20 + artists featured in a forthcoming book on art and resistance (working title: 'Burmese Arts of Resistance'; publication date June 2026). With creative coordination under-taken by an exiled Myanmar musician, the book is a collaborative under-taking between Myanmar artists, the Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC) and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA).

Themes. The specific themes presented at the panel discussion by the artist panelists will reflect intended book chapters. Inter alia, chapter themes may include accountability, justice, memory, loss, exile and healing. Note: While these themes are emerging from the qualitative research emerging from extensive interviews with Myanmar artists, it is not presently possible to specify the exact themes that will be subject of presentation and discussion. Due to travel restrictions affecting some of the artists, nor it is possible at this time to identify which artist featured in the book will be positioned to be a panelist - this will however be confirmed in line with the conference organisers' needs. It is intended that the individual artist panelists will speak to the themes that best reflect their artistic intentions and will also touch on the risks and precarity that accompany their commitment to their creative work. The panel is intended be accompanied by powerpoint visuals, referenced during the presentations and discussions, illustrating the art works of the artist panelists and other artists who are featuring in the book.

Reflexivity. The personal experiences of the artist panelists and how these have informed and shaped their creative processes and views on the power and impact of artistic expression in response to human rights violations and conflict in Myanmar will be the recurring thread in the presentations of the artist panelists and the subsequent facilitated discussion.

Keyword: Arts, Creative Resistance, Myanmar