**Academic Seminar (106.2)**

**The Edge of Representation: Rethinking Photographs of Rural India**

Speaker: Dr. Kathleen L. Wyma (Department of Fine Arts, University of Hong Kong)

Abstract:

This talk analyses the photographic work of Tamil Nadu-based photographer and filmmaker Binu Bhaskar and the Delhi/Karnataka-based artist and activist Arunkumar HG and their respective engagements with the ongoing rural crisis in India. Drawing on Chantal Mouffe’s theory of agonistic art practices I consider how Bhaskar’s on-going series *Farm, Farmers, Workers* (2008- ) and Arunkumar’s *Guardians* series (2015) create a dynamic space of interaction through which accepted beliefs about rural life may be interrogated, tested or adjusted and new associations can be cultivated. In casting their images as critically minded portraits, I suggest that the political efficacy of their photographic endeavours rests on establishing a connection with the identity of the rural worker rather than with their occupation. Although the work of these two artists plays with the visual idioms of documentary photography any trace of utility is driven asunder by their production, presentation, and reception as art objects. Once set within the precincts of the art gallery or museum, their work encourages new ways to think about life beyond the pale of the urban and to productively offer innovative strategies for positioning the photograph not as evidence but rather as an agent in a bid to reclaim social and political representation for rural India.

Date: 14 June 2018 (Thursday)

Time: 4:30 – 6:00 pm

Venue: Room 716, General Studies Building, TAIPEI TECH

Chair: Dr. Valentin Nussbaum

(Associate Professor, Graduate Institute of Art History, National Taiwan Normal University)

Speaker’s bio:

Kathleen Wyma is an art historian and independent curator who specialises in modern and contemporary Indian art and photography. She completed her Ph.D. in 2007 at the University of British Columbia with a thesis entitled *The Discourse and Practice of Radicalism in Contemporary Indian Art 1960-1990.* In addition to her curatorial endeavours Wyma regularly contributes articles and exhibition catalogues on Indian contemporary art, her most recent publication “Poetics and Procrustean Possibilities” was written for the exhibition *Zakkir Hussain: The Procrustean Bed* held at the Guild Art Gallery (Mumbai) in December 2017. She is currently an Assistant Professor in Fine Arts at The University of Hong Kong.

Co-organised by:

The Department of English, National Taipei University of Technology

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