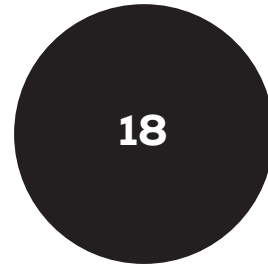




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Katarzyna Bojarska

History's Future According to Fiona Tan

The question of the archive is not [...] a question of the past. This is not the question of a concept dealing with the past which might *already* be at our disposal or not at our disposal, *an archivable concept of the archive*. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow.

Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*

- Remember?

- No, I don't remember, remember?

Fiona Tan, *History's Future*

Reconstructing history from images and as an image for use in the present – for individual and communal life – is a task that I find in the works of the Dutch artist, documentary filmmaker, and director, Fiona Tan. The artist poses questions about where fiction lurks in facts, how one achieves self-awareness by thinking with and acting on images, how images express and modify ourselves, where we get our self-awareness from, and the certainty of being who we are – the ones who both have and make history. What is history as a common project, a project that I co-create as an agent, and that creates me as a subject? In this article, I will make an attempt to reconstruct the future of a certain (hi)story as imagined by Tan in *History's Future* (2016)¹, her first feature film. I will analyze it in relation to *May You Live in Interesting Times*, a television documentary from 20 years earlier, in which the artist, starting from the history of her own family, takes her first steps across the minefield of memory and identity.

Fiona Tan was born in 1966 in Pekanbaru, Indonesia, the daughter of a Chinese father and an Australian-Scottish mother. Her parents emigrated to Australia, where she grew up. She went to study in Amsterdam, where she lives and works until today. One of her most important recent exhibitions is *Geography of Time*, shown in 2016 and 2017 at the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, the Tel Aviv

Museum of Art, and the National Museum in Oslo. On the occasion of the latter, the Norwegian Parliament presented her photographic project *Vox Populi Norway*, the first of a series of collective portraits of cities and countries created by the artist with the use of photographic matter gathered from the inhabitants.²



Fiona Tan, *May You Live in Interesting Times*

One can locate an autobiographical foundation in virtually all of Fiona Tan's works. This, I would argue, grows out of the artist's sense of misplacement or displacement, either in the medium or in history, and from her ceaseless movement among people. It is the result of encounters with them and their histories, with histories people had been deprived of, which she finds in archives. I call this an emphatic autobiographical approach, in which the story of one's own life becomes a space for the lives of others, especially those whose "own" stories have been muted or erased. As such, it is a manifestation of relationality and multidirectional memory which, by creating critical, self-aware narratives about the past, courageously points to overlooked analogies and builds bridges between different experiences of oppression and violence; it is a project in which every encounter with the history of the other is an occasion for the transformation of one's own story.³

Fiona Tan attentively and patiently watches and listens to the voices and images of people – those they have created themselves and those that have been taken of them (often without their consent, often with violence), as well as to the histories of images that emerge and call for attention. One of her recent works is the video installation entitled *Nellie* (2013), a portrait of Cornelia van Rijn, Rembrandt's illegitimate daughter, who, at the age of 16, left the Netherlands for Batavia (today's Jakarta). Tan approaches this biography in a relational way, seeing it as a reflection of her own story: she tells the tale of the artist's daughter, a woman who chose an opposing path of emigration to Tan herself. A woman who, according to Tan's visual fantasy, led a lonely life far from the empire and her family.

These images and stories would not have surfaced were it not for Fiona Tan's constant search of archives, and her scrutinizing of their aesthetics and politics (or the aesthetics of their politics). She is an "anarchival" artist, an anarchist in the archive, struggling with the institution, reinterpreting it, pointing to the countless

traps and violence of linear narrative and chronological order. Her works, although usually subtle and ambiguous, aim at undoing this logic of ordering the past, and are aimed against tradition and authority. Like other anarchival gestures, they can be light, funny, at times parodic, but never devoid of political, subversive, or critical power.⁴ Tan is a multimedia (and, in a way, monothematic) artist – a historian without papers, but armed with a camera.⁵ She is also one of the artists who in recent years have taken the step from the visual arts to cinema (feature film). She takes seriously the blurring of the boundaries between artistic genres, as well as those between media and identities. She stubbornly returns to the questions of porous identities, of representations that deceive and disillusion, but also that inflict violence and destroy, and of memories that can be redemptive and murderous, authentic and deceptive.



Fiona Tan, *May You Live in Interesting Times*

In *Shooting Images, Throwing Shadows*⁶ Ernst van Alphen, analyzing the historical and dialectic operations of images in Fiona Tan's works, claims that they do not contain reality, but rather that reality – as we experience it – is made of images and remembered as an image. Therefore, reality and image are never self-sufficient; they remain mutually dependent, just like memory and imagination, which work together for a common cause: the reconstruction of the past and the construction of identity.⁷ The recurrence of visual motifs in Tan's work, actually any movement at all, is not structured in one direction (forward); rather, it is in constant migration,⁸ which disrupts the fluidity of time; it is movement in which memory becomes a matter of the future – imagination provides possible images of the present, which is already 20 or 30 years old and has become the past.⁹

Professional Foreigner

Where are you?
If you are beside me, why can't I see you?
What do you mean by nobody's nowhere?
Is there no nowhere?
John Berger, in a letter to Fiona Tan

Commissioned by Dutch public television in 1997, Fiona Tan made a documentary film about her family's history, entitled *May You Live in Interesting Times*.¹⁰ The title echoes a Chinese proverb (or rather a curse uttered at a foe): a wish for misfortune and disorder in the life and personal history of the other. The narrator of the film is the artist herself (as has already been said, the daughter of a Chinese father from Indonesia and an Australian mother with a Scottish background), who sets out on

a journey to meet her roots, to visit her relatives, to look at them and talk to them. She is less than 30 years old and struggling with a worrying sense of non-belonging, a lack of identity and lack of space or story in which to settle. Her expedition only intensifies this sense of detachment and makes her claim she is a "professional foreigner." Any attempt at self-definition fails. When she asks one of her relatives whether he considers her to be Chinese, and he answers yes, she suspects he does so out of politeness – the desire not to harm her or exclude her from the family. Tan realizes that her identity is determined by who she is not; however, her siblings find this condition liberating: being a riddle of sorts – one who does not "look" like an identifiable member of a group – can be comfortable and pleasant. When you are not immediately recognized, you can play with who you want to be. Identity is thus an infinite process of writing and overwriting the fragments of one's narrative, which often makes sense only after a while, belatedly.

The camera examines the artist's face: where is that face from? Together with the narrator/protagonist we look at cupping and acupuncture therapy, a scene which distances us because Tan herself feels distant from the tradition that she is supposed to be part of. The question, then, is how to become part of a community by choice, and whether this community can claim us. Do we have the right to its past and pathos? Tan says that what began as a search turned into a search for the search itself. She hoped that filming would be a process that helped her identify her identity, to see herself as a part of a larger whole – a meaningful particle. Meanwhile, while searching, she realized not only that the search failed to point her in the right direction, but that the search itself remained suspicious: what was she actually looking for, penetrating the stories and images from her relatives' pasts and their places of origin?



Fiona Tan, *May You Live in Interesting Times*

An important stage on her journey is Java, where Fiona Tan hopes to find out what it meant to be Chinese in Indonesia. She is particularly interested in the history of the persecution of the Chinese minority in 1965-1966, which affected her father's family.¹¹ One of her paternal uncles still lives in Java; others are scattered around the world. In the film, the artist puts together photographs



Fiona Tan, *May You Live in Interesting Times*

and documents, as well as a record of her meeting with her father's eldest living brother and his wife Rosa. Her aunt tells her that the people of the West called them "yellow Jews," excluded people without a home. The artist immediately grasps this theme and holds onto it, as if she had finally managed to get to the source of this inherited ambivalence, the legacy of paradoxes and fears.

The family trauma associated with persecution and violence returns powerfully in a conversation with the artist's mother. In front of her daughter's camera she is only able to present a very emotionally modest narrative, to which the artist reacts with disappointment, demanding a more detailed and engaging story like the one she has already heard from her mother off-camera. Her mother, however, admits she does not feel comfortable sharing intimate details in public, as it might be painful for (or against the will of) Tan's father. She does not feel "authorized," and is clearly embarrassed by the presence of the camera – its mediation between her daughter and herself, as well as between herself and the past trauma. When the intimate is about to become public (and thus too vulnerable), the mother withdraws. Tan, on her part, decides to include this moment of crisis in the film, as further – perhaps the most poignant – proof not only of her problems with the past and belonging, but also with the passing of the narrative and the affective mediations of her own loss and non-belonging.

"What do you feel when you look backwards?" Tan asks one of her aunts living in Europe. "I don't look back," she immediately responds. "I've always had a lot of children to take care of. They leave you no time to think about what was – you concentrate on what is and what will be. It was difficult, but I don't go back to it, it doesn't matter." Of course, Tan knows that it matters, as does the decision not to "go back," and she therefore includes this scene in the film. Even if we consciously leave the past behind, we are not able to eliminate its impact. By not looking back we cannot see the image that is behind us, but neither do we annihilate it – it does

not cease to determine the shape of the images we produce. The dialectical thinking of the artist can clearly be seen in the example above: she shows that even if we decide to go back to what was – as she does when making the documentary – its meaning does not have to be revealed in an obvious, certain, or unambiguous way. Neither returning nor failing to return will save us; what matters is the sum of ideas, longing, desire, helplessness, and the urge for meaning.

Refugee from the Past

Emigration does not only involve leaving behind, crossing water, living amongst strangers, but, also, undoing the very meaning of the world and – at its most extreme – abandoning oneself to the most unreal which is the absurd. [...] To emigrate is always to dismantle the center of the world, and so to move into a lost, disoriented one of fragments.

John Berger, *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos*

According to critic Lynne Cooke, Fiona Tan's work (Cooke concentrated on the 1999 video work *Facing Forward*) can be productively read through the prism of the 1960s/1970s film work and ethics of French filmmaker and ethnographer Jean Rouch, as he radically redefined the meaning of the documentary and the operations of fiction:

Fiction is the only way to penetrate reality [...] the whole problem is to maintain a certain sincerity towards the spectator, never to mask the fact that this is a film. ...Once this sincerity is achieved, when nobody is deceiving anybody, what interests me [...] is the introduction of an imaginary, of the unreal. I can then use the film to tell what cannot be told otherwise.¹²

In order to penetrate and analyze reality Tan has, for years, used images reassembled by the power of her imagination. She has used the potential of fiction to create a sincere bond with her spectators and, together with them, to reach places that are inaccessible to other – perhaps all – forms of storytelling.

Two decades after making a film about "herself," Fiona Tan migrated into the realm

of reflection on the power of identity and fragile ruptures in her first feature film, *History's Future*, whose script she co-wrote with British film critic Jonathan Romney. The protagonist of the film is a man without memory. As the artist herself stated, she was inspired by the memory of reading a book she found in her mother's library, *The Man with a Shattered World* (1987),¹³ written by the famous Russian psychiatrist Alexander Luria, who analyzed cases of memory disorder. One of them involved a man who could not forget anything; another – a former soldier who, as the result of injury, lost not only his memory, but also language. A further experience that Tan evokes in the context of her early work on the film is her own work-related travel and witnessing of the world in crisis, looking at its various forms.¹⁴



Fiona Tan, *History's Future*

The film opens with credits, then the lights go on in a movie theater and we see a man sleeping in a chair. Suddenly this frozen frame loses its stillness: everything starts to move, but backwards, as if time (and with it the picture and sound) had begun to run in the opposite direction. This is the first sign that the story will not be told conventionally, or will not even be "told" at all. This moment of surprise may set the paranoid imagination going, suggesting that something has gone wrong, something has broken down, and that, as spectators, we have lost the ground under our feet, found ourselves in crisis. And indeed, I think this is what the artist wanted us to face affectively – a sense of anxiety and recognition of the scenarios that we involuntarily activate in such a moment of crisis. But then all comes back on track, although the beginning of the film proper is another moment of rupture. As the result of physical assault, the protagonist experiences serious head injury and ends up in hospital with total memory loss; he knows neither his name nor history. He becomes an MP, a missing person, Mr. Nobody. As much as this experience involves suffering, it also turns out to be an opportunity to write one's story anew, to reject the past and present stored in personal and public archives. When, after a period of rehabilitation, no less confused and humiliated than after his accident, he returns home, he realizes momentarily that this is no "home." With no memories, no sense of attachment, or even ownership of what he should feel entitled to, he remains merely a screen onto which his life is projected. The life inscribed in the decor of his home or in photos from summer holidays is a ready-made – all he

needs is to take it for granted. However, this ready-made is alien (if not repulsive) to him. All the bonds that would link him, or at least help him come back, have disintegrated. His wife – a stranger who is willing to help – only intensifies this sense of fiction when she tells him the reassuring story of a happy past illustrated with images of a common life, and projects the equally happy future awaiting them. He does not recognize this life as his own, to such an extent that when he accidentally ends up on the couch in his neighbors' living room, he feels "perfectly" at home there and fits the image.¹⁵ Fiona Tan creates excellent, suggestive visual sequences, scenes, and faux-images – powerful language clichés which get to the heart of what is happening: the most fundamental crisis, the crisis of one's foundations. Completely detached, deprived of memory and also emotion, he is numb and senseless – so desperate that he yearns for something else and goes to get it.

So he heads out to get a newspaper, but leaves for good. He merges into the world. Tan leads him "home" through numerous places that evoke ambiguous associations and meanings from collective memory, arranges encounters with people and their stories, and throws him into set-ups – scripts, intrigues, and roles. The protagonist changes before our very eyes, becoming a lost vagrant,



Fiona Tan, History's Future

a cunning manipulator, a bon vivant involved in a romance, and a citizen lost in a political intrigue. The artist weaves unobvious (though highly suggestive) archival material into her film: Occupy movement footage; Arab Spring street protests; demonstrations on the streets of Spain and Greece; the wreck of the Costa Concordia; shots from shops where customers chase bargains; abandoned buildings; unfinished construction projects; and fragments of recorded conversations with people talking about their fears and hopes.¹⁶ We do not know what the relationship of these fragments is, nor do we know what they actually mean within the fabric of the plot. What we feel, however, is the intensity of these crisis moments, these scenes from turbulent collective life. Tan offers many possibilities without favoring any of them. The protagonist is therefore an observer and participant, a fool who, having no memory and no knowledge of common history, is able to perceive and understand it better than all the smart people, or Benjamin's Angel of History who stares at the catastrophe piling up.

Fiona Tan seems to be saying that history's future will not be saved in the archives, nor in the stories and images sanctioned by the authorities, but that one should rather look for it in the people/bodies that have fallen out of form, in the scarred people. Their incompatibility clarifies what it is they are supposed to "fit" into, and then to question the unquestioned nature of the way things are. The poster for *History's Future*



Fiona Tan, *History's Future*

shows the unclear, blurred face of the protagonist, a face that could not become a still or a portrait. I interpret this in the following way: this man not only lacks a single, distinct image, but the pictorial trace he leaves behind can only be blurred because we are dealing with a professional refugee from memory – a man with many possible futures. If, for T. S. Eliot, a man was a "heap of broken images" – and his poetry, *The Waste Land* specifically, seems to be an important point of reference in and inspiration for *History's Future* – in Tan's work the images are further dispersed, and their integration is not a value in itself. That is why she shows us a series of unrelated episodes and encounters, in each of which the protagonist rehearses not only a different way of telling a story, in different scenery, but also a different self. He moves swiftly between languages, places, and styles and forms of being; he escapes not only from the past, but also from a future determined by a fixed past. One could therefore ask: who is a man without memory and an awareness of his belonging as a historical figure? Is he – unburdened by fixed narrative – really privileged as a subject of historical knowledge? Is he the chance for a different witnessing and understanding of the relationship between events, for a different hearing, enabling us to shape stories without recourse to the inherited (remembered) and transmitted principles?

Fiona Tan allows us to "entertain" various possibilities. Forgetting oneself appears to be emancipatory – after all, the past and memory are burdens and threats. One never knows whether their emancipation is forever, or whether the past will return and recur as a blow. Even if unremembered (or unconscious), it may nevertheless determine the shape of our future lives: it will be acted out and repeated involuntarily. Opening up unlimited possibilities is therefore accompanied by the fear that what will begin to be created will either be a lie or mere repetition.

The absolute lack of identity is a political and historical scandal – something difficult

to imagine and to bear outside the space of art. As Jill Bennett convincingly argues, "the rejection of identity as an organizing trope"¹⁷ in aesthetic space opens up opportunities for different politics and other ties, relationships, community, etc.:



Fiona Tan, *History's Future*

in the absence of identity attributes that enable us to firmly locate affiliations, we are forced to consider how these are constituted through affects and perceptions, some entrenched, some volatile, some malleable. If the question of relations "beyond identity" is an important dimension of political inquiry, it is an area in which aesthetics may prove itself indispensable.¹⁸

Therefore, she calls for a migratory aesthetics which is concerned with connectivity and relationality, and as such is understood by Bennett as a "response to the limitations of identity politics in both institutional and aesthetic terms."¹⁹ And so, aesthetics proves to be indispensable where politics – in its traditional form – produces effects not only of its urgency, but also – and more importantly – exclusivity.

Bennett's essay on migratory aesthetics was, for me, an important point of reference in thinking about Fiona Tan's work – although Bennett does not write about Tan's work – not only because she is concerned with aesthetic projects shaped by the experience of migration (even if they do not refer to this experience directly), but above all because she understands aesthetics as an epistemic project, having a special relationship with time (historical experience) and the pursuit of truth. Art, in Bennett's view, creates spaces for political thinking, although the politics of art, following Jacques Rancière, are always contingent and vague – in other words, they are not imposed by the artist and are not controlled by her.²⁰ Tan eagerly resigns control, instead introducing and confusing numerous tropes. There are 20 years between her documentary about the crisis of her own identity and the feature film essay about the crisis of identity in a world engulfed by disintegration. During those years, the artist searched archives, travelled, looked at images of people and events, and extracted and criticized the policies of memory and the organization of the past. She expanded the field of her own reflection and the range of visual means she has now at her disposal.

In *History's Future* everything disintegrates: reality and imagination, the symbolic and the somnambolic, imaginary possibilities and unrealized scenarios, the facts and fictions of life. The film ends with a conversation between the protagonist and a taxi driver. "What now?" he asks the driver, and the driver remains silent. The seemingly absurd dream-logic that organizes the film



Fiona Tan, *History's Future*

also equips it with the extraordinary power and weight of the event and the message. One after another, moments full of passion and pathos emerge, at times unbearably pretentious or painfully real (one does not exclude the other). The artist seems to reject the dominant paranoid style of thinking and shifts focus towards other ways of organizing meaning. Her politics of aesthetics, as Jill Bennett puts it, "redirects us away from an obsession with access to the truth of what really happened (as the only basis for political action), toward the imaginative development of other possibilities (past and future)."²¹

History's Future does not tell the story of the accelerating political or ecological catastrophe, but rather it shares a strange mixture of feelings that characterize living in permanent crisis, among the signs of destruction and places of the remembrance of destruction. Europe – as a single body, a formation, a historical entity – is moving towards an uncertain future, with loud protests, images of civil upheaval, economic collapse, and state violence in the background. This is where the political intervention of Fiona Tan's project is most vividly felt. I understand it as an intervention that is not concerned with documenting or commenting on historical or social reality, but which consists of "reorganizing affects to redetermine a perceptual landscape,"²² in which historical problems and forms overlap with the present and come alive within it on new terms. Questions that can be asked, then, are: in what sense is the MP's "madness" different from our normal condition? And how is the fear he feels different from ours?

The artist encourages us to watch the film many times, and to experience it anew each time: to reassemble the images and contexts, wondering where they come from and what they are aiming at with the stories they evoke. She encourages us to take seriously the "fool" who is our guide in this world of scattered images – to trust him, giving up our confidence along with the certainty of our hopes and fears.

At the time of shooting *History's Future*, Fiona Tan worked on two other video projects, *Ghost Dwellings I-III* (2014) and *Apocalypse* (2014). She filmed in the United States, Japan, and Ireland, recording devastation and destruction, disintegration, the end of social utopias, and the failure of historical fantasies: Detroit – a bankrupt city; Cork – in which the financial crisis of 2008 interrupted numerous housing investments; and Fukushima, in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami. The artist did not create didactic documents, but rather poetic, meditative impressions. In *Apocalypse*, with the help of the camera she meticulously studies the medieval tapestry *L'Apocalypse d'Angers* (1373-1383), exhibited in the French Château d'Angers. She examines the details and texture almost obsessively. These images are accompanied by text moving like the "bars" of a news feed, stock market data, election data, or meteorological data.²³



Fiona Tan, *History's Future*

Fiona Tan does not so much warn us of the coming catastrophe, but makes us aware of what is already happening; she makes us feel it by showing it as estranged but analogous with the familiar. She creates an intricately composed visual archive, the dynamics of which are determined by constant multidirectional movement and the affectively charged poetics of loose associations. This meditation on catastrophe is as ambivalent as the total loss of memory: absolute horror is combined here with absolute hope, powerlessness with a sense of creative power. In the face of total disintegration, the future of history finally seems to be open.

Similar emotions drive the manifesto written by the French intellectual collective Catastrophe, published on September 22, 2016 by "Libération":

We were growing up in an impasse. Surrounded by sentences driven by anxiety which, like drugs, have accumulated in our young minds. As children, we were learning the world and, at the same time, the coming end of the world: every day we listened to the news of the dark siblings Debt and Crisis, whose shadows remained in our heads. [...] Because everything is over, everything is possible.²⁴

Footnotes

1 *History's Future* was shot in Amsterdam, Paris, Dublin, Barcelona, Athens, Leipzig, Berlin and London. It starred Mark O'Halloran, Denis Lavant, Christos Passalis, Rifka Lodeizen, Anne Consigny and Johanna ter Steege among others.

2 *Vox Populi* is an archival photographic project by Fiona Tan, which she began in Norway in 2006 and continued in London, Tokyo, Switzerland, and Sydney. The artist collected photographs depicting the inhabitants of cities/countries and made collective portraits by embracing the "voice of the people." The images were both portraits as well as snapshots of family events, holidays, etc. In galleries the project is presented as a constellation of images on a wall, as well as small books (I saw the London part, in an exhibition in the Photographers' Gallery in 2012). These portraits include many repetitive views and images suggesting they are the ones that bind and define a community: how one looks and how one presents oneself in an image, how one sees oneself, and how one sees others (or who one sees as the other). Individual parts of the project are named after cities/countries, but we almost exclusively see their inhabitants.

3 I wrote about the emphatic, relational autobiography in: *Autofotobiografie W.G. Sebald* [*W. G. Sebald's Autobiographies*], *Pierścienie Sebald. Studia o poetyce, pamięci i podróżach* [*Rings of Sebald: Studies in Poetics, Memory, and Journeys*], eds. Przemysław Czapliński and Kornelia Kończal (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Badań Literackich PAN, 2018 [forthcoming]). See also: Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

4 See Elisa Adam, Alessandra Ferrini, "The Anarchival Impulse", *Mnemoscape* 2015, no 1, <https://www.mnemoscape.org/single-post/2014/09/14/Editorial-%E2%80%93-The-Anarchival-Impulse>, as well as Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art.*, Steidl/International Center of Photography, New York-Göttinge 2008, Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse", *October* 2004, no 110: 3–22 and Ariella Azoulay, "Archive", trans. T. Haran, in: *Political Concepts. A Critical Lexicon*, <http://www.politicalconcepts.org/issue1/archive/> accessed January 20, 2018.

5 In *The Shape of Evidence* Sophie Berrebi writes about the bringing together of historians and artists in the epoch which, after Annette Wiewiorka, she calls "the era of the witness," i.e. a time when testimony is no longer associated solely with an individual need, but is a social requirement, a service for the community, a kind of imperative, and a duty. Historians reach for other discourses about the past in order to reinvent "writing history" so that the past can still be recorded and interpreted. Berrebi mentions so-called professional historians' practices of intertwining personal themes, self-reflection, changing perspective, and freeing themselves from the corset of academic discourse. As examples of this tendency she mentions *Histoire des grands-parents que je n'ai pas eus* (2012) by Ivan Jablonka and *L'Histoire à part égales* (2011) by Roman Bertrand (217), and locates among them the artistic practice of Fiona Tan, whose work counteracts what the critic considers to be the paradox of the digital age, namely "amnesic recording" – the continuous, uninterrupted, forgetful recording and storage of "everything" (218). Sophie Berrebi, *The Shape of Evidence: Contemporary Art and the Document* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2014).

6 Ernst van Alphen, "Shooting Images, Throwing Shadows," *Art in Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 48-57, online: <https://fionatan.nl/publication/shooting-images-throwing-shadows/>, (accessed January 20, 2018). van Alphen also writes about Fiona Tan's archival practices in his *Staging the Archive: Art and Photography in the Age of New Media* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014), chapter *Emergence*, 37-40, 45-52.

7 Van Alphen, *Shooting Images*, 49.

8 Ibid., 52. On migratory aesthetics see Jill Bennett, "Migratory Aesthetics: Art and Politics Beyond Identity," *Art and Visibility in Migratory Culture*, eds. Mieke Bal and Miguel Á. Hernandez-Navarro (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012)

9 In this context van Alphen analyzes *Linnaeus' Flower Clock* (1998).

10 The Dutch IKON organization commissioned 10 Dutch filmmakers to make 50-minute documentaries, which were broadcast in the winter of 2000-2001. Among the artists were Heddy Honigmann (from a Peruvian family of Holocaust survivors), Vuk Janic (from Sarajevo), and Fatima Jebli Ouazzanin (from Morocco).

11 Sukarno, the founder of independent Indonesia and the first president of the

country, was removed from power at the time. A junta led by Suharto was introduced. The military coup d'état was suppressed while the Communist Party of Indonesia that was accused of carrying it out was violently persecuted by the Chinese. It is estimated that more than 500 000 people died and more than a million were imprisoned. See Colin Brown, *A Short History of Indonesia* (New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2003).

12 Lynne Cooke, "Fiona Tan Re-Take," *Fiona Tan, Scenario* (Amsterdam: Vandenberg & Wallroth, 2000), 31. Rouch's statement is quoted by Cooke after *Anthropology-Reality-Cinema: The Films of Jean Rouch*, ed. Mick Eaton (London: British Film Institute, 1979), 8.

13 English translation of a work originally published in Russian in 1971 as *Potieriannyj i wozwraszczonnyj mir*.

14 See: Thomas Humphrey, "Fiona Tan On The Intersection Of Her Art, Film And HISTORY'S FUTURE," *Screenanarchy*, February 4, 2016, <http://screenanarchy.com/2016/02/rotterdam-2016-interview-fiona-tan-on-the-intersection-of-her-art-and-historys-future.html> (accessed January 20, 2018).

15 An interesting context for thinking about this kind of personality crisis or disorder can be found in French philosopher Catherine Malabou's book *The New Wounded: From Neurosis to Brain Damage*, trans. Steven Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012). The author analyzes the thin line between disorders that affect the victims of social and political trauma (war, terrorist attacks, domestic violence, etc.) and the victims of brain damage (as a result of diseases such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's). In the light of new research, so-called "organic trauma" and "cultural trauma" do not differ that much, which leads to the conclusion that nature and politics should not be considered in isolation, as has long been the case.

16 Fiona Tan recorded conversations in various places around the world, asking - as she claimed in conversation with Sasja Koetsier - her respondents the same questions including: What would you do if you woke up one morning and could not remember who you were? If you are going on a journey, what three things would you take with you? What do you love/hate about your life?

17 Jill Bennett, *Migratory Aesthetics*, 112.

18 Ibid., 123. Bennett also stresses: "If aesthetics is to be more than a nostalgic refuge for conservative art theory, it has to function with greater impurity and within what Deleuze and Guattari term the "cramped space" of contemporary culture; that is, not the space made available within the institution for major art, but the lived space, in which we encounter exclusion, confinement, marginalization, difference, and change." 119.

19 Ibid., 109.

20 Ibid., 123.

21 Ibid., 119.

22 See the artist's website: <https://fionatan.nl/works>.

23 "Puisque tout est fini, alors tout est permis," *Libération* September 22, 2016, http://www.liberation.fr/debats/2016/09/22/puisque-tout-est-fini-alors-tout-est-permis_1506625. Quoted by Marek Bieńczyk, "Słowo wstępne," *Katastrofy i wypadki w czasach romantyków*, ed. Marek Bieńczyk (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Badań Literackich PAN, 2017), 24.