

**Panel 16**  
**Beyond Text: Film and Art**

**The First Glance of the New Era:  
On Memories—Narratives of Growth in Singapore's Independent  
Documentary Film in the New Century**  
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As a localized iteration of the global "New Documentary Movement," Singapore's post-millennial documentary boom intertwines with intergenerational shifts. The rise of post-independence national subjects as societal pillars has reconfigured sociopolitical discourse, wherein the crisis of postcolonial "fragility narratives" is increasingly supplanted by localized coming-of-age discourse. To exemplify this narrative paradigm shift, the paper focuses on the works of Eng Yee Peng, who is adept at adopting ethnographic methods to reveal traumatic memories and historical misrepresentations suppressed by the modernisation process; and the works of Tan Pin Pin, who, through the archaeology of the silence of the public sphere, reweaves absent images of the national narrative into a polyphonic history. By drawing on memory research theories and appropriating the narrative framework of the Western bildungsroman, these new Singaporean documentaries, on the one hand, expand the boundaries of Southeast Asian non-fictional images through forms such as essay films, oral history, and dialectical montage when revisiting the repression, misrepresentation, occlusion, and fiction of the past. On the other hand, these new documentaries gradually transform from an a priori narrative of recollection to a future action plan concerning multiple social subjects, signifying the transition of Singapore's cultural imagination from anxiety over national fragility to mature subjectivity. Finally, the paper also focuses on non-Chinese narratives in Singaporean documentaries in the new century to illustrate the incompleteness of the narrative paradigm shift described above.

**Biography**

Zhang Zhaowenzhe is a graduate student in the Department of Chinese Studies at National University of Singapore. Zhang's research interests lie with the literature and arts of the Chinese community in Southeast Asia.