



## MEDIA CONTACT

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**CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts releases *Why are they so afraid of the lotus?*, a new book informed and inspired by the work of filmmaker, writer, and composer Trinh T. Minh-ha**

***Why are they so afraid of the lotus?*—the second title in the Wattis Institute’s annual book series, *A Series of Open Questions*—is available for purchase beginning June 10; pre-order now at [wattis.org](http://wattis.org)**

**The Wattis Institute celebrates the release of the new book with a virtual launch event and illustrated talk by curator and artist Astria Suparak titled [Asian Futures, Without Asians](#) (June 10 at 5 pm PT)**

**Press interested in promotional copies of the book can contact [tlott@cca.edu](mailto:tlott@cca.edu)**

**San Francisco, CA—Wednesday, May 19, 2021—The [CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts](#) announces *Why are they so afraid of the lotus?*—the second volume in its annual book series, *A Series of Open Questions*. Informed and inspired by the work of filmmaker, writer, theorist, and composer **Trinh T. Minh-ha**, the book is co-published with Sternberg Press and distributed by the MIT Press, and will be released on June 10. It is available for pre-order now at [wattis.org](http://wattis.org).**

On June 10, at 5 pm PT, curator and artist **Astria Suparak** joins the Wattis Institute for [Asian Futures, Without Asians](#), a virtual talk and launch event celebrating the release of *Why are they so afraid of the lotus?* Suparak discusses the implications of not only borrowing heavily from Asian culture, but decontextualizing and misrepresenting it, while Asian contributors are simultaneously excluded. Her lecture is interspersed with visual examples from popular American science fiction movies and TV shows, from the 1970s through today.

### **More on *Why are they so afraid of the lotus?***

*Why are they so afraid of the lotus?* uses Trinh’s work as a point of departure to explore questions related to cultural hybridization and fluidity of identity, digital and migratory aesthetics, memory and landscape, decentered realities, feminist

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approaches to storytelling, meditations on death and myth, post-coloniality and decolonization, and women's work as related to cultural politics.

The contributions to *Why are they so afraid of the lotus?* embody Trinh's own weariness around categorization and investigate the ways production can come from and be based in positions of unknowing. The book includes a broad array of contributions, including never-before-published *Paragraphs* from writer and poet **Renee Gladman**; *Chronology*, featuring photography by the late artist **Theresa Hak Kyung Cha**; new digital artwork by artist **Ranu Mukherjee**; new writings from CCA faculty and reading group members **Shylah Pacheco Hamilton**, **tamara suarez porras**, **Astria Suparak**, and **Kathy Zarur**; and a cover designed by artist **Divya Mehra**.

Edited by Wattis Deputy Director and Head of Publications **Jeanne Gerrity** and Curator **Kim Nguyen**, *Why are they so afraid of the lotus?* is a result of a [year of learning from the work of Trinh T. Minh-ha](#) in the company of reading group members Abbas Akhavan, Naz Cuguoğlu Cacekli, Jeanne Gerrity, Shylah Pacheco Hamilton, Viêt Lê, Ranu Mukherjee, Kim Nguyen, McIntyre Parker, Dorothy Santos, tamara suarez porras, Astria Suparak, James Voorhies, Christine Wang, and Kathy Zarur; and informed by a series of public events.

### **More on A Series of Open Questions**

Published in partnership with Sternberg Press and distributed by the MIT Press, the Wattis Institute's annual reader, *A Series of Open Questions*, provides an edited selection of perspectives, images, and references related to the Wattis's year-long ["On our mind"](#) research seasons. Separate from the Wattis Institute's exhibition program, each research season is dedicated to reflecting on a single artist's work and the questions that emerge from it through small-scale reading groups and a series of public programs that explore a diverse and varied ecosystem of other artists and related ideas.

Each volume of *A Series of Open Questions* includes newly commissioned writing by members of the research season's intimate reading group, as well as text and visual contributions by a diverse range of other artists and writers. The title of each reader takes the form of a question and becomes, as new books are published, a gradually evolving series of open questions. The first book in the series—[Where are the tiny revolts?](#), released in 2020—was informed by the work of Bay Area poet and novelist Dodie Bellamy. The third book in the series, inspired by Chilean artist, poet, and activist Cecilia Vicuña, will be released in 2022.

Previous books from the Wattis publication program have included [Dodie Bellamy is on our mind](#) (2020, co-published with Semiotext(e)), [David](#)

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[Hammons is on our mind](#) (2018), and [Andrea Fraser: 2016 in Museums. Money. and Politics](#) (2018, co-published with the MIT Press and Westreich Wagner Publications).

*Why are they so afraid of the lotus? (A Series of Open Questions, vol. 2)*



CCA Wattis Institute and Sternberg Press,  
2021  
Paperback, 256 pages

**Edited by:** Kim Nguyen and Jeanne Gerrity

**Contributions by:** Divya Mehra, Leslie Marmon Silko, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Julio García Espinosa, Sky Hopinka, Ranu Mukherjee, Tisa Bryant, Katherine McKittrick & Alexander G. Weheliye, Frantz Fanon, Christina Sharpe, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Simone Browne, Astria Suparak, Christine Wang, Camille Rankine, Kathy Zarur, Dionne Brand, Renee Gladman, tamara suarez porras, Wendy Xu, Amy Fung, Shylah Pacheco Hamilton, Steffani Jemison, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and Angie Morrill, Eve Tuck, and the Super Futures Haunt Collective.

**Design by:** Scott Ponik

**Price:** \$15.00

**About CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts**

Founded in 1998 at California College of the Arts in San Francisco and located a few blocks from its campus, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts is a nonprofit exhibition venue and research institute dedicated to contemporary art and ideas. As an exhibition space, it commissions and shows new work by emerging and established artists from around the world. Recent solo exhibitions include *Jeffrey Gibson: Nothing Is Eternal*; *Lydia Ourahmane: صرخة شمسية Solar Cry*; *Cynthia Marcelle: A morta*; *Vincent Fecteau*; *Abbas Akhavan: cast for a folly*; *Akosua Adoma Owusu: Welcome to the Jungle* (which traveled to the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans); *Diamond Stingily: Doing the Best I Can*; *Rosha Yaghmai: Miraclegrow*; *Adam Linder: Full Service* (which traveled to Mudam Luxembourg); *Ken Lum: What's Old is Old for a Dog*; *Henrik Olesen: The Walk*; *Melanie Gilligan: Partswholes*; *Howard Fried: Derelicts*; *Laura Owens: Ten Paintings*; *Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys: Tram 3* (which traveled to MoMA PS1); *Josephine Pryde: Lapses in Thinking by the Person I*

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*Am* (which traveled to ICA Philadelphia and earned Pryde a 2016 Turner Prize nomination); *K.r.m. Mooney: En, set*; *Sam Lewitt: More Heat Than Light* (which traveled to Kunsthalle Basel and the Swiss Institute, New York); and *Ellen Cantor: Cinderella Syndrome* (which traveled to Künstlerhaus Stuttgart). A recent group exhibition, *Mechanisms*, traveled to Secession in Vienna in an expanded form entitled *Other Mechanisms*.

As a research institute, the Wattis dedicates an entire year to reflect on the work of a single artist, which informs a regular series of public programs and publications involving the field's most prominent artists and thinkers. The 2020–2021 season is dedicated to the poet and filmmaker Cecilia Vicuña; past seasons featured Joan Jonas, Andrea Fraser, David Hammons, Seth Price, Dodie Bellamy, and Trinh T. Minh-ha.

The Wattis also hosts an annual Capp Street Artist-in-Residence, one of the earliest and longest-running artist-in-residence programs in the country, founded in 1983 by Ann Hatch as Capp Street Project, and incorporated into the Wattis Institute in 1998. Each year, an artist comes to live and work in San Francisco for a semester, teaches a graduate seminar at CCA, and presents an exhibition. Recent participants include Raven Chacon (2020–2021), Hồng-An Trương (2019–2020), Abbas Akhavan (2018–2019), contemporary (2017–2018), Melanie Gilligan (2016–2017), Carissa Rodriguez (2015–2016), Nairy Baghramian (2014–2015), Claire Fontaine (2013–2014), Ryan Gander (2012–2013), Harrell Fletcher and Kris Martin (2011–2012), Paulina Olowka and Renata Lucas (2010–2011), and Abraham Cruzvillegas (2009–2010). For more information, visit [wattis.org](http://wattis.org).

### **About California College of the Arts**

Founded in 1907, California College of the Arts (CCA) educates students to shape culture and society through the practice and critical study of art, architecture, design, and writing. Benefitting from its San Francisco Bay Area location, the college prepares students for lifelong creative work by cultivating innovation, community engagement, and social and environmental responsibility.

CCA offers a rich curriculum of 22 undergraduate and 11 graduate programs in art, design, architecture, and writing taught by a faculty of expert practitioners. Attracting promising students from across the nation and around the world, CCA is [one of the 10 most diverse colleges in the U.S.](#) This year, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked CCA as one of the [top 10 graduate schools for fine arts in the country](#).

Graduates are highly sought-after by companies such as Pixar/Disney, Apple, Intel, Facebook, Gensler, Google, IDEO, Autodesk, Mattel, and Nike, and many have launched their own successful businesses. Alumni and faculty are often recognized with the highest honors in their fields, including Academy Awards, AIGA Medals, Fulbright Scholarships, Guggenheim Fellowships, MacArthur Fellowships, National Medal of Arts, and the Rome Prize, among others.

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CCA is creating a new, expanded college campus at its current site in San Francisco, spearheaded by the architectural firm Studio Gang. The new campus design will be a model of [sustainable construction and practice](#); will unite the college's programs in art, crafts, design, architecture, and writing in one location to create new adjacencies and interactions; and will provide [more student housing](#) than ever before. For more information, visit [cca.edu](#).

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