Southeast Asia is a curious part of the world where multiple histories and geographies overlap. On the one hand we are at the cutting edge of the immediate present, yet the past - and it is an ancient past, mind you - informs our political, cultural and economic choices till today.

Being a Southeast Asian, or an ASEANist, today means having to re-connect with these overlapping geographies and histories and coming to terms with the cosmopolitanism that is inherent in our nations as well as ourselves. But this also means having to transcend the narrow and parochial perspectivism of ethno-nationalist discourse that has become our postcolonial inheritance.

One avenue for such change happens to be art, and I would argue that the process of re-connecting with our multiple histories and geographies is as much the task of the artist as it is that of the politician, technocrat and geographer.