

Rewound Trading Legacies

Eddie Choo Wen Yi

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This written component is part of my MFA thesis project.

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Abstract

This thesis project comprises a single-channel essay film that explores the circulation and reconfiguration of industrial production, technology, and authority across spaces and histories, through multiple overlapping narratives that trace both dominant and minor histories and the conditions under which knowledge, visibility, and value are structured, mediated, and translated.

The film is created using Super 8 film (digitised), a digital camera, and a smartphone, with post-production and editing carried out digitally. It is presented as a digital projection with stereo speakers and a subwoofer in a black-box screening environment, with a wooden bench facing the screen that seats up to four viewers. The narrative takes shape in seven languages, with English subtitles provided throughout.

This written component complements the artistic practice by contextualising the essay film, reflecting on methods, and tracing connections between conceptual ideas and their presentation. Within this project, the essay film functions as the primary medium, while the written component acts both as support and critical reflection. It serves as an emancipatory tool to engage with hierarchies, reveal overlooked histories, and explore the structures through which knowledge, visibility, and value are organised, ensuring that both components inform and reinforce one another.

The work was exhibited at Kuva/Tila as part of Kuvan Kevät 2025, Academy of Fine Arts, Uniarts Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland, from 17 May to 15 June 2025, offering viewers a comprehensive engagement with the artistic component through screenings.

The thesis project is supervised by Salla Tykkä, Professor in the Time and Space study area, and advised by Grégoire Rousseau and Jani Ruscica. The examiners are Maija Timonen and Nora Sternfeld.

Introduction

Rewound Trading Legacies grew out of two connected experiences: my upbringing as the child of a farmer in Malaysia and my current position as a Master of Fine Arts student in Helsinki. My father worked as a farmer, and decades later I came across Super 8 cameras produced in Penang, Malaysia by the German Bauer family under Robert Bosch GmbH—devices manufactured there in the 1970s–1990s but that were never really marketed in Malaysia. Now, in Finland paying into the MELA farmers' insurance system as a grant-supported artist, I occupy a space between agricultural and artistic worlds, a position in which I do research.

This project began to take form when I requested any archival material of the Bauer super 8 camera that was made in Penang Malaysia. Getting a refusal email from Historical Communications at Robert Bosch GmbH in Germany with a photo that is not related at all to the super 8 camera leads me into the question about absence archives. My research journey started with the displacement of this Super 8 camera as a thread of archival absence, leading to wider and multiple directions in a larger context related to diaspora, migration, and power structures. I tend to create work that resists a single perspective. Through the absences I encountered in the archive, I began to see gaps and fragmentations as space of creative possibility. In my artistic practice I use essay film and multilingual storytelling as methods of research.

By layering narrative storylines drawn from my personal history and research journey, readings of the script in seven different language dialects paired with video footages, reshot family photographs made with the Bauer Super 8 camera, and soundscape elements such as ambient transit noise and the rolling sound of the Super 8 camera, I construct a space that embraces incompleteness and allows multiple themes and perspectives to coexist within a single film.

For me, my film is a method for exploring multiple temporalities. I propose the use of theory and practice within this project, drawing on Édouard Glissant's concept of opacity (1997), Jacques Derrida's work on trace and archive (1995), Edward Said's analysis of spatial power (1994), Ng Kim Chew's notion of orphanhood in Mahua literature (2022), and Pia Arke's archival interventions (1997) to generate a space that allows multiplicity without closure, which is central to my methodology.

Rewound Trading Legacies and this thesis operate as complementary research forms, both of which embrace incompleteness and multiple thematic storytelling. My research does not claim closure; it continues to unfold as a conversation with absent archives and linguistic hierarchies that shape broader diasporic experience.

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This Master's thesis is dedicated to my father,
whose years of work on the farm shaped my childhood
and
became a source of strength
for me.

Research Across Absence

This chapter opens with several constellations, beginning with *Material: from Oil Painting to Wood Carving to Essay Film* and extending to *Writing the Self* and *Absence Archive* as points of departure. Through these trajectories, I trace how I first entered and gradually formed the project.



Figure 1. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist

Material: from Oil Painting to Wood Carving to Essay Film

I moved to oil painting at a private institution in Malaysia, then spent two years working freelance, carving cement for renovations and theme parks. Later, I pursued sculpture in Taiwan, completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Taipei National University of the Arts, Fine Arts school, one of the most competitive programs, specialising in wood carving. My BFA graduation project in Taiwan, *Dynamite* (2017), embodies conceptual rigor and material engagement. Rejecting commercially sold Taiwanese wood, I collected driftwood from rivers and dams across Taiwan, cutting and joining fragments with elastic bands made from tires. This labour intensive process was motivated by ecological and political realities, namely the illegal logging in Indonesia and Malaysia supplying Taiwan's furniture industry, highlighting my disconnection from Taiwanese materials and my search for ethical and material resonance. Since then, I have become increasingly aware of how material choices shape thematic concerns and function as a reference point in my artistic practice.

Upon moving to Finland, I entered the Finnish integration programme, which combined language learning, work culture training, and social orientation. The programme revealed how educational background and intellectual capital shape immigrants' pathways, some toward higher education,

others toward vocational or service-based roles. I learned Finnish mainly through interaction with classmates who did not speak English and documented these experiences in a zine, *Minulla ei vielä uutta unelmaa* (2019), reflecting adaptation and resistance while affirming my continued commitment to artistic practice in a new country.

I continued my studies at the University of the Arts Helsinki, completing a second Bachelor of Fine Arts in the Time and Space department. My BFA thesis project, *Säde Huussissa* (2023), is an interactive video installation built almost 1:1 to mirror a dry toilet at a summer cottage in Sääntio, Varsinais Suomi. The shape of this structure is very specific and unlike anything I had seen elsewhere in Finland. The installation creates an intimate space, inviting viewers to enter a spatial and temporal passage. Building on this, I began to consider how architecture and DIY built forms shape a sense of belonging. The choice of materials, local wood and construction techniques, revealed how industrial and production systems inform domestic and familial spaces. From this, I started to think about how industrial products and materials carry histories, economies, and social structures, and how these in turn shape family narratives and everyday practices. *Rewound Trading Legacies* emerges directly from this line of thinking, extending the spatial and material concerns of *Säde Huussissa* into moving image, sound, and archival investigation. The installation logic of inhabitable structures became a method for thinking through the essay film, where space, materiality, and temporality intersect to situate personal experience within broader historical and structural frameworks.

My artistic research emerges from lived experience and collective history, driven by a desire to understand how power, trace, and narrative are constructed and circulated. I do not follow a single linear methodology. Instead, I move across film, writing, archival research, and live encounters. I understand artistic research as a way of thinking through life itself, engaging it as a living field of inquiry.

Mind the Gap (2021) marks my first attempt to interweave two languages within a single channel video. Malay and Finnish pronunciation and enunciation resonate closely for me, as they are the national languages of the countries in which I was born and in which I currently reside. Yet I often experience both languages as formal instruments of administration, and I find their use outside institutional contexts somewhat unfamiliar.

My subsequent BFA studies in the Time and Space study area shifted my practice from sculpture to analogue film. Courses in 16 millimeter hand developing and an unanticipated encounter with a Bauer Super 8 camera made in Malaysia by Robert Bosch during my Erasmus exchange in Kassel Germany 2022 became pivotal.

In *Rewound Trading Legacies*, I use Finnish to explain MELA¹, as well as to articulate the connections between my artistic research, grants, and pension insurance contributions. The film then shifts into Malay before returning to Finnish. By placing these languages in immediate succession, I

¹ MELA is the Farmers' Social Insurance Institution in Finland. It also supports artists' work and provides social security contributions through collective labour arrangements. See <https://www.mela.fi>

intentionally unsettle the spectator and complicate comprehension. English subtitles appear only in selected sections. I invite viewers to confront unfamiliar linguistic terrain and to experience the discomfort of partial understanding.

Rupture, fracture, disjunction, discontinuity, and gap repeats throughout my research. These terms reflect the conditions of absent archives, inaccessible institutional records, and fragmented family histories and origins. They are not only conceptual frameworks but lived realities that shape both the form and methodology of my practice.

Writing the Self

Writing has been central to my practice even before the formation of my artistic work. I see writing as 自己與世界的交流對話 (a dialogue between myself and the world); through this dialogical process, I articulate my emotions and situate myself within contemporary social, political, and cultural constellations, including histories of displacement and industrial production. During my studies in Taiwan, I engaged extensively in writing, including poetry, essays, and exhibition reviews, driven by personal interest rather than institutional demand. This sustained engagement shows that writing functions for me as a mode of inquiry. I approach writing as a process closely related to drawing. Both involve observation and the translation of what is perceived into form. In writing, this translation takes place through language. It is a process of depiction, as interpretative rendering. Writing enables a movement within depiction toward understanding.

Writing operates as a method of observation, reflection, and articulation, allowing experiences, thoughts, and feelings that are not otherwise easily expressed to take form. It is a practice in which the unconscious meets the conscious. By externalising unarticulated thoughts and allowing them simply to exist on the page, writing becomes not only reflective but also constitutive, creating the conditions under which understanding becomes possible. It has consistently served as a method for perceiving what I describe as 'constellations of the world': the connections and paths between events and happenings.

Temporality is crucial to this process. Writing provides a space in which I can stay with what I do not yet understand, making room for reflection and hesitation. It grants the distance and duration necessary to engage deeply with themes that provoke my curiosity, while also supporting shifts in perspective. In this way, writing becomes both a method of inquiry and a means of navigating my relationship to the world.

I first encountered Augustine of Hippo through David Kishik's *Self Study: Notes on the Schizoid Condition*, particularly in the opening chapter *What Is Autophilosophy?* where Augustine writes, '**I am working hard in this field, and the field of my labour is my own self. I have become a problem to myself**' (Kishik 2023, 3). This formulation resonates deeply with my experience of self-questioning. At the same time, reading Kishik's text produced a distinct sense of smallness, as many of the quotations and philosophical references, often drawn from what is considered mainstream philosophical discourse, reveal a noticeable absence of voices from the Global South,

especially Southeast Asia. This absence reflects the uneven conditions of knowledge production that determine which experiences are recognized as theoretical and which remain marginal.

Growing up in Malaysia from the 1990s to the 2010s, I inhabited a social environment that emphasised success and usefulness, while everyday struggles and personal uncertainties were often dismissed as unimportant. Within this framework, my own difficulties were frequently suppressed or internalised, leading to forms of self-censorship that shaped how I understood and presented myself. Over time, this produced a fundamental question about who I am and what it means to exist within what we call society.

This question intensified during my studies in Taiwan, where I encountered others navigating similar tensions within dominant narratives and mainstream histories. There, I began to recognise the significance of field research and Mahua literature. I describe this as a rediscovery because these elements had already been present in my life in Malaysia, yet their importance to my artistic practice only became visible after I left that environment. The experience of displacement in Taiwan allowed me to see that what I had framed as an individual problem is structurally shared and articulated through the condition of the 'oversea Chinese' diaspora.

Now, based in Finland and working within an academic context, this realisation has taken on methodological urgency. Autophilosophy or autotheory emerges not only as a conceptual framework but also as a necessary practice within my artistic research. It allows me to engage with what I have long encountered in literature across poetry, essays, novels, and informal writing, where the loneliness of being is persistently articulated. These works, across generations, languages, and geographies, demonstrate that minor personal histories are often dismissed as unimportant, yet remain essential to understanding broader conditions of existence.

Within this context, my own practice of writing becomes an intervention that seeks to articulate a situated voice from Southeast Asia within a field where it has often been absent, and to affirm that such histories carry theoretical significance. I understand essay writing within my artistic practice as precisely this movement from the personal toward the theoretical. Writing becomes a method of tracing connections between myself, my family history, industrial production, politics, migration, displacement, and diaspora. It is through writing that these elements begin to form constellations, fragmented yet interconnected, through which I begin my research. Through this process, I aim to create a point of resonance for others who struggle to situate themselves within the conditions of displacement, particularly when existing frameworks do not yet reflect their lived experience.

Drawing extends this process into a visual and spatial register. I begin to 'draw' by mapping, creating timelines, and producing forms of cartography to make the constellations of events and materials I have collected legible. This serves as a method of observation, depiction, and constellation-making. Writing, in turn, functions as a process of organising, allowing research journals and lived experiences to emerge in verbal language. From this writing, essays take shape and form the script of the essay film. The essay film then materialises these constellations temporally and experientially, recomposing fragments from archives, journals, essays, and drawings into a moving, relational form in which theory, absence, and observation co-exist.

Absence Archive as a Starting Point

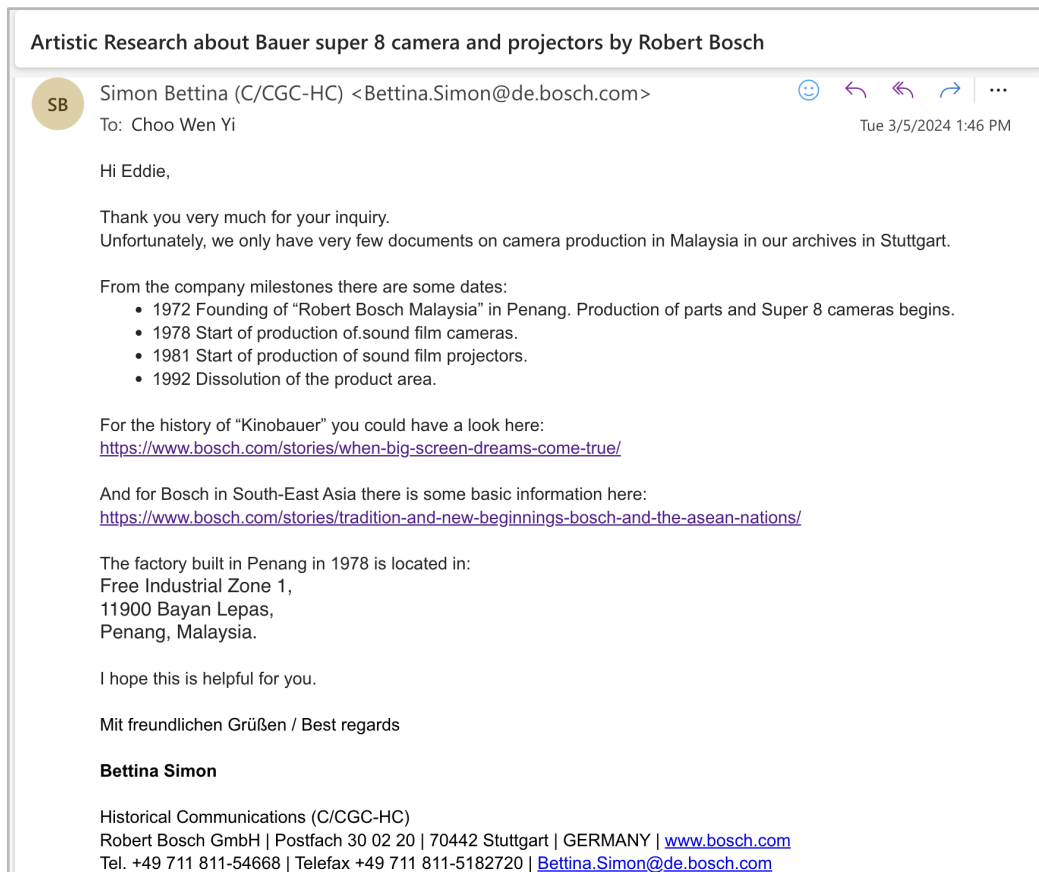


Figure 2. Email response from Historical Communication, *Robert Bosch GmbH*. Screenshot taken by the artist

A decisive moment in my research occurred when I found a broken Super 8 Bauer camera in Kassel, manufactured in Malaysia by Robert Bosch GmbH. My attempt to trace its history revealed a striking absence. While the Bosch website's history page acknowledges Bauer Kino, it does not mention the Super 8 cameras produced in Malaysia (Bosch 2026). This lack of mention raised questions about what institutions consider historically significant.

Jacques Derrida argues that 'there is no political power without control of the archive' (Derrida 1995, 4). The archive determines what becomes visible and legitimate. Confronted with this gap, I began constructing my own timeline that interweaves Bosch's industrial history, Malaysia's pre- and post-independence development, and the growth of my family's timeline. The act of assembling this timeline was not merely supplementary research; it became an artistic gesture. Instead of repairing the archive, I exposed its instability. Édouard Glissant's concept of opacity reinforces this position (1997, 189-194). If archival logic seeks transparency, opacity asserts the right to remain partially unknowable. The absence of documentation surrounding the Malaysian Super 8 production is therefore not resolved in my film but sustained as a generative space, allowing gaps and fragmentation to exist, much like the orphanhood of Mahua literature in the world (Ng 2022, 卷一 現實, 「此時此地的現實」——重探「馬華文藝的獨特性」).

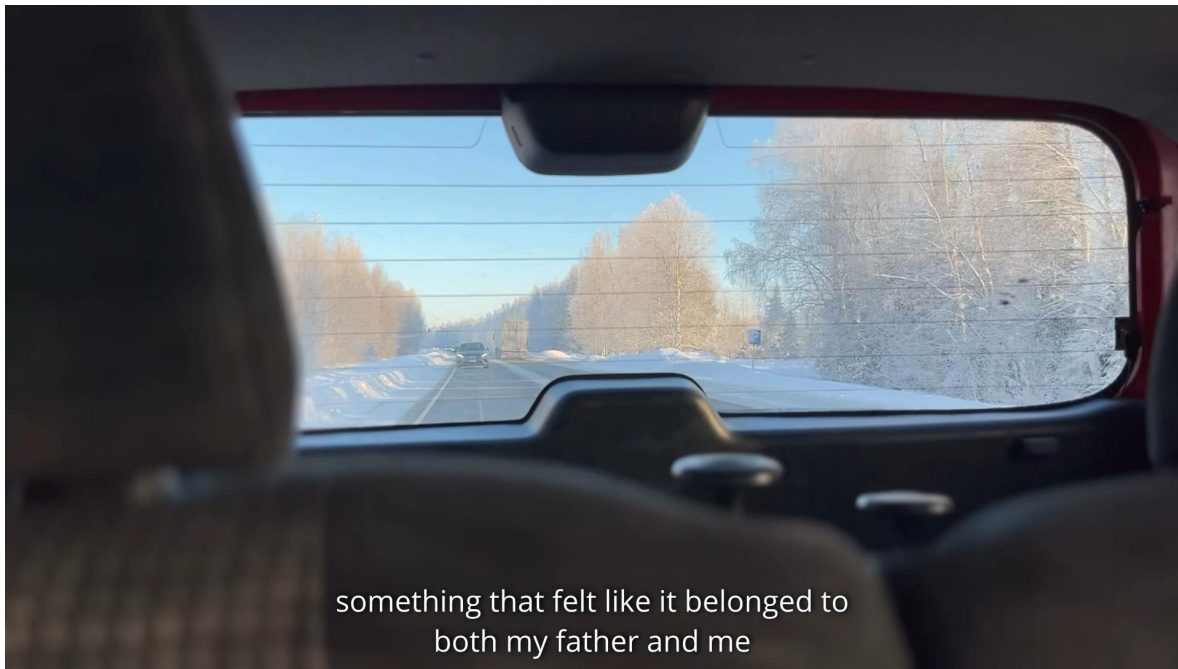


Figure 3. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist

Rewound Trading Legacies is the gradual crystallisation of artistic and intellectual inquiry that has developed over years of material experimentation, cross-cultural displacement, engagement with power structures, and archival investigation. In tracing connections between Bosch, my father, the Bauer Super 8 camera made in Malaysia, and German brand products manufactured in Malaysia, I confront the absence of archives, not only of my family but of Malaysian society more broadly. I simultaneously navigate a disjointed relation to Finland, where I now reside while pursuing my Master's degree and participating in local systems, including receiving grants for this research and contributing to the Farmers' Social Insurance Institution - MELA.

II

Language, Culture, and Identity

Language carries heritage, ancestral memory, and cultural inheritance (傳承), extending across generations and transcending national borders. In my family, Hakka formed part of my father's childhood inheritance, while Cantonese became the language of my upbringing, illustrating how 傳承 can shift and transform across time and space. As Stuart Hall argues, language functions as a signifying practice through which cultural meanings are produced and circulated (Hall 1990, 222-225). I was born and raised in Malaysia, a multiracial country shaped by histories of migration and colonial influence. As a Malaysian outside the Malay majority, I have the right to speak, learn, read, and communicate in my mother tongues, including Cantonese, Hakka, and other languages like Mandarin, Malay, and English.

In Malaysia, there is a term for this practice of mixing multiple languages in everyday speech, known as Rojak language. Rojak is a well-known Malaysian salad, literally meaning 'mixture' in Malay. The dish combines a variety of ingredients, including fruits like pineapple and mango, vegetables, and fried dough, all tossed together in a sweet, spicy, and nutty sauce. Just like the dish, Rojak-language describes conversations where different languages are mixed together, often in a lively, messy, yet richly expressive way (The Star n.d.). Navigating five different dialects in daily life was a common skill for me while living in Malaysia. Switching seamlessly between three Chinese dialects, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Hakka, felt natural, and sometimes we even mixed all five languages into a single sentence, especially during family conversations. Even now, living abroad, when I text, call, or chat with my family, I often use broken English mixed with Cantonese, Mandarin and Hakka, as well as Malay.

Growing up with multiple mother tongues, Cantonese, Hakka, and Mandarin, and embracing the rojak-language mentality, I developed the ability to move fluidly and intuitively between languages. This multilingual practice reflects how postcolonial societies like Malaysia, shaped by colonial histories and the coexistence of multiple languages, encourage fluidity and hybridity in everyday speech. In such contexts, languages are lived and negotiated through everyday practices. At the same time, formal linguistic regimes, particularly national languages, continue to structure access, confer legitimacy, and reproduce social hierarchies. As Hall (1990, 222–25) suggests, cultural identity in postcolonial contexts is always in process, formed through histories of power and hybridity, while Alastair Pennycook (1998, 30–31) emphasises how language practices themselves become sites of negotiation, creativity, and social meaning.

I am the fifth generation of my ancestors who migrated from what was then the Republic of China to the Malay Peninsula, likely in the 1920s or 1930s, before Malaysia gained independence from British colonial rule. I am the third generation since my grandparents to claim Malaysian citizenship. Identity emerges not as a fixed inheritance but as a relational process across

generations and spaces, shaped by both family histories and broader sociopolitical contexts (Hall 1990, 222–25).

Family and Dialect Roots

As mentioned above, on my father's side, Hakka was the primary language spoken in his family while he was growing up. On my mother's side, Cantonese is her mother tongue and the primary language spoken in our family home, as my mother does not speak Hakka. My father grew up speaking only Hakka with his parents and siblings. His family mainly worked on farms, including rubber, fruit, and vegetable farms. However, he did not pass Hakka on to his children. At home, my siblings and I primarily spoke Cantonese. Consequently, while Hakka was the language of his childhood, it was not a language I grew up using.

Experientially, Hakka sounds harsh to me, likely because of the context in which I heard it spoken. Farm work in Malaysia, located near the equator, often takes place under extreme heat and communication tends to be brief and functional. On my father's farms, the sharp, clipped Hakka exchanges among the workers conveyed a sense of urgency that cut through the scorching midday sun. Cantonese, in contrast, is the language I associate with domestic life and emotional expression. I used it at home with my parents and siblings, where words carried weight and meaning was expressed fully.

Chinese Writing System as Cultural Bridge

Chinese writing operates differently from alphabetic systems, as it is highly visual-spatial. Sound does not structure the system in the same way as in alphabetic writing. Written Chinese is non-linear and relies on recognising characters as whole units, while alphabetic systems depend on decoding sounds letter by letter. Readers must identify the shape, structure, and components of each character to access its meaning and pronunciation (Boltz 1994, 7–10, 33–37). In this system, decoding requires visually analysing each character's strokes and spatial arrangement rather than translating letters sequentially into sounds.

Chinese characters encode meaning directly, functioning as symbols that connect across dialects. My early learning of characters, through practicing the brushstrokes for even the simplest ones, made me realise that reading and writing Chinese is not just about sounds but about understanding abstract symbols and the visual forms that carry meaning.

Chinese writing is also trans-dialectal. One character may be pronounced differently in Cantonese, Hakka, or Mandarin, yet its meaning is preserved. This system allows shared literacy across space and time, uniting diverse communities without enforcing spoken standardisation.

Writing, in this sense, acts as a cultural bridge, enabling communication and identity formation beyond local dialect and sound. Chinese characters encode meaning directly, enabling speakers of different dialects, such as Cantonese, Hakka, and Mandarin, to generally recognise the same text even when they pronounce it differently or occasionally use slightly different words. This shared

system of symbols connects individuals across linguistic boundaries while still reflecting subtle dialectal variations.

Language, Politics, and Social Context

“Language would reveal the differing degrees in this hierarchical organisation”

- Poetic of Relation by Édouard Glissant, Transparency and Opacity.

While it is neither my mother tongue nor the national language, Mandarin, and thus not compulsory in the same way, it is nonetheless regarded as an important heritage language within Chinese-medium educational contexts. Speaking or writing in Mandarin signals a connection to Chinese heritage and carries social recognition in particular educational and community contexts. In Malaysia, the national language, Malay, dominates official institutions and public life, while heritage languages such as Mandarin or Tamil exist in non-compulsory spaces that can nonetheless confer cultural legitimacy and identity. I will unfold the role of Mandarin, as well as Mahua literature and related Sinophone contexts, more fully later, particularly in relation to how it intersects with my personal experiences, my script, and the narrative of my essay film in the chapter *Research Across Absence*.

Although the dialects I speak share the same Chinese characters in writing, they differ widely in pronunciation, rhythm, and expression, which affects how humour and meaning are conveyed. Humour and tone are embedded in social and cultural contexts, shaping interaction and understanding, as how everyday communication depends on shared norms, social cues, and the performative negotiation of meaning. State power, language policy, and social hierarchies determine which speech forms are valued and which are marginalised, reflecting the persistence of colonial linguistic ideologies (Bourdieu 1991, 66-69). From my own experience, humour varies across dialects: a joke in Cantonese often does not translate into Mandarin or Hakka, particularly when it relies on homophones unique to the dialect. I frequently encounter this when navigating social situations in large groups where multiple dialects are spoken.

Tones and Expression

Tones define meaning in the Chinese dialects I speak. Mandarin has five tones, Cantonese has nine, and Hakka has six. In these dialects, tone functions as an invisible layer of expression, shaping rhythm, mood, and subtle emotional nuances in speech. Each dialect shapes a different aspect of my identity. I speak Cantonese, Mandarin and Hakka in different contexts, and each carries a unique emotional register.

In my film *Rewound Trading Legacies*, I use Cantonese to capture the intimacy and emotion of personal memory. The first part is a conversation with my father about his choice to become a farmer. Here, Cantonese conveys intimacy and emotion. The rhythm and tonal shifts underline the personal resonance of my father's words. The narration carries the weight of his choice, expressing a strong, independent desire to work on his own terms and stay free from others' control.

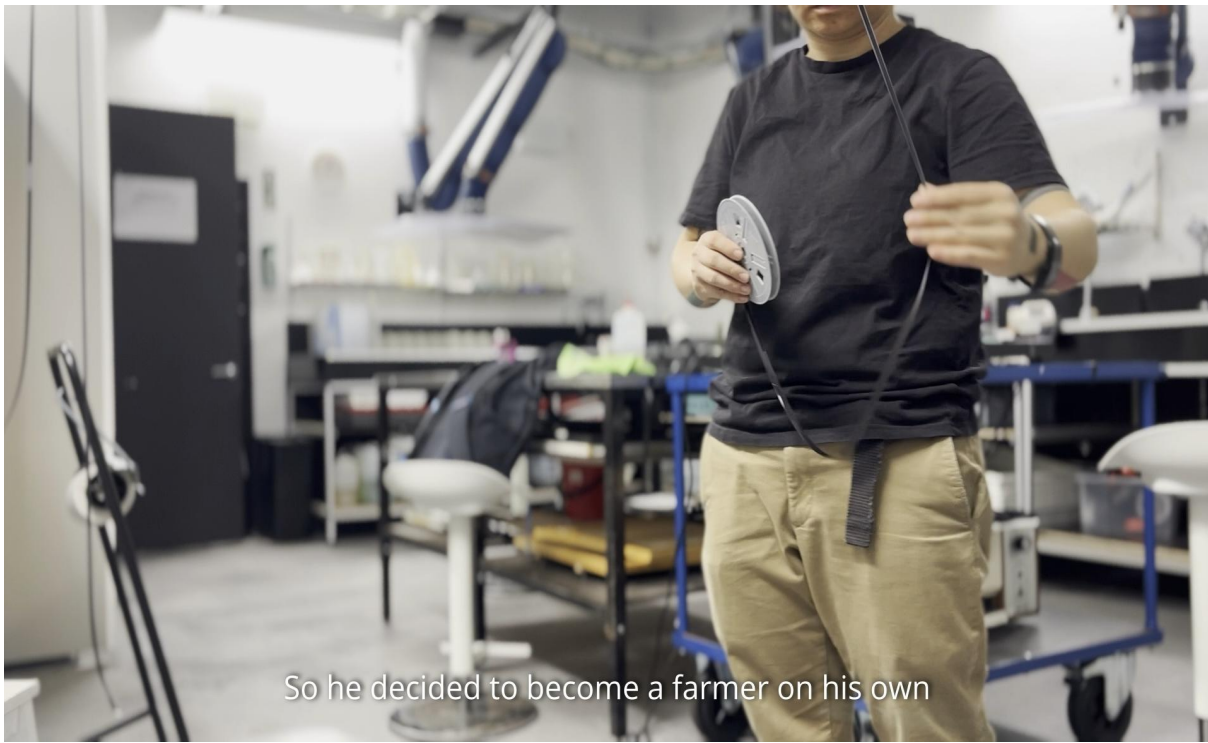


Figure 4. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist

Cantonese narration (with English subtitles):

幾年前 我問過我老豆
I asked my father years ago
點解佢會成為農夫
why he became a farmer
或者佢係唔係有得選擇先成為農夫
or if he had a choice in becoming one
佢話佢好細個就出嚟幫人打工
He said he started working for other people when he was very young
佢話佢已經聽夠其他人叫佢點做嘢
He said he was tired of people telling him how to do things
所以佢決定自己做農夫
So he decided to become a farmer on his own

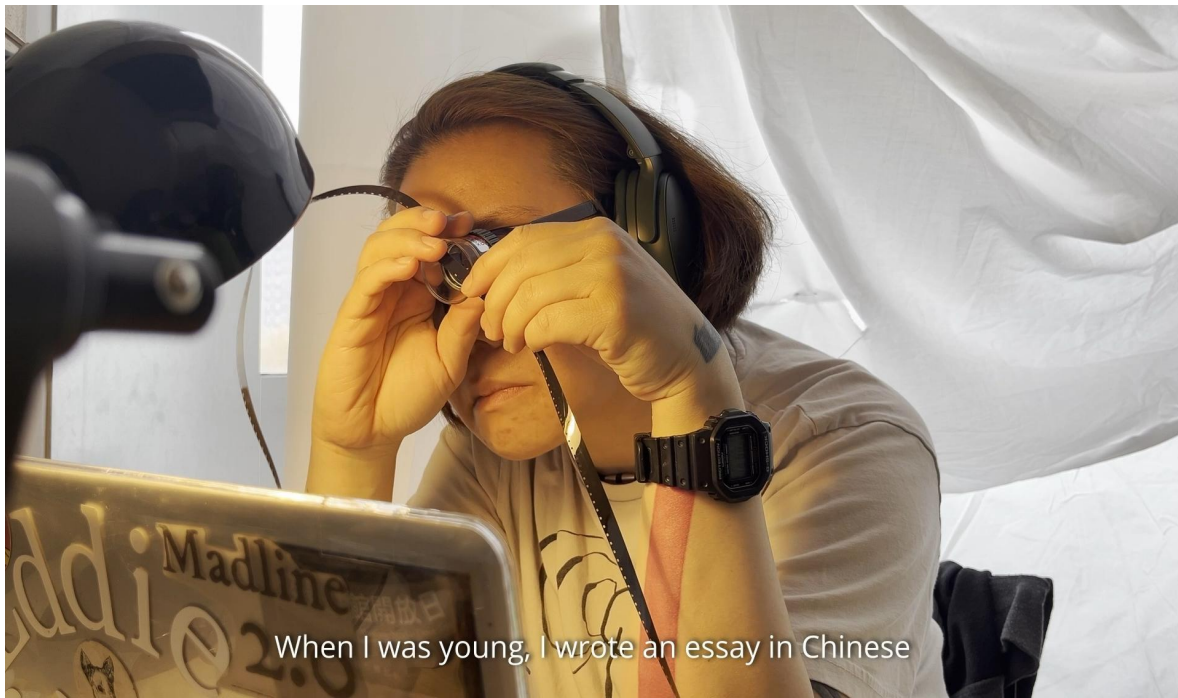


Figure 5. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist

By contrast, Mandarin in my script often takes on a more administrative or formal tone, reflecting school, ambition, and the imagined future. In the film, I include a childhood essay I wrote in Mandarin about my ambition, which shows how language shapes expression differently:

Mandarin narration (with English subtitles):

小時候我寫過一篇華文作文，
 I wrote an essay in Chinese when I was young
 題目是《我的志願》
 titled My Ambition
 當其他人都想成為老師、醫生或警察
 While others dreamed of becoming teachers, doctors, or police officers,
 而我卻選擇了描寫關於農夫的生活
 And I chose to write about the life of a farmer
 甚至還畫了一幅戴著草帽、拿著鋤頭的農夫圖
 I even drew a picture of a farmer wearing a straw hat and holding a hoe

In this context, Mandarin emphasises narrative structure, ambition, and engagement with school. Cantonese, on the other hand, carries the expressive, emotional depth of lived experience and personal choice. Through these contrasts, the film shows how language is not only a medium of communication but also a lens through which identity, emotion, and memory are articulated.

Mahua Literature and Sinophone

In this subsection, I will discuss Mahua literature, which is often categorised as part of 'overseas Chinese' or diasporic Chinese writing. However, such classifications risk flattening its historical and

political specificity by framing it primarily in relation to China as a cultural centre or imagined homeland. The label 'overseas Chinese' casts the writing as derivative or peripheral, implying that its primary reference point is external instead of being grounded in Malaysia's local realities. In doing so, it can obscure the particular conditions under which Mahua literature is produced: within a postcolonial nation-state where Chinese is not the national language and where writing in Chinese remains structurally precarious. Mahua writing does not orient itself toward China as an origin or destination, but emerges from negotiations within Malaysia's multilingual and politically stratified context. Unlike Taiwan and Hong Kong, where Chinese functions as a national and institutional language, Mahua literature is shaped by ongoing questions of legitimacy, access, and survival within a nation-state formed through British colonial rule and later ethnicised language policies.

Writing in Chinese in Malaysia is therefore never neutral. It is continuously entangled with issues of recognition, censorship, and self-positioning within both national and familial structures. Many Mahua essays and literary texts carry a subtle but persistent sadness: a searching for belonging, a desire to be accepted and acknowledged, and a recurring uncertainty about one's place within the nation, the family, and intimate relationships. This affective tone often manifests as restrained loneliness, one that cannot, and perhaps should not, be fully revealed in public. Historical silences, such as the *13 May incident*², which remains absent from Malaysian school textbooks, recur as unspoken undercurrents in Mahua writing, shaping how memory, fear, and self-censorship are negotiated on the page.

Contemporary Mahua literature faces renewed vulnerability amid the growing cultural and linguistic influence of China. Local Malaysian Chinese usage is increasingly replaced by standardised vocabulary aligned with mainland Chinese norms, for example, the replacement of 巴士 (bus), a term shaped through colonial-era English contact, with 公交, a mainland Chinese abbreviation for public transportation (Ng 2022, 自序——現實的詩意, 詩意的現實). Such shifts may appear minor, yet they reveal the fragility of Malaysian Chinese as a living, localised language under geopolitical pressure. In this sense, Mahua literature occupies a more endangered position than Sinophone³ writing in Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan, where Chinese is institutionally dominant. By contrast, Sinophone writing more broadly encompasses Chinese-language literatures produced outside mainland China, highlighting diverse regional and diasporic experiences that negotiate Chinese language and culture in relation to local histories and social realities. Preserving Mahua literature is an act of cultural continuity and a form of resistance against linguistic

² The May 13 Incident refers to violent ethnic riots in Kuala Lumpur on 13 May 1969, primarily between Malay and Chinese communities, which led to a state of emergency, the suspension of Parliament, and ultimately the New Economic Policy (1971) that entrenched ethnically structured governance and affirmative action for Bumiputera communities.

³ The term "Sinophone" was notably theorised by Shu-mei Shih in her book *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader* (2013) and in earlier essays, where she defines it as Sinitic-language communities and cultural production located outside China and on the margins of Chineseness. The concept began gaining academic traction in the late 1990s and early 2000s, primarily within literary and cultural studies.

homogenisation. It preserves a history shaped by labour migration, colonial entanglement, and local adaptation, independent of any singular national centre.

This distinction became deeply personal to me during my years of study in Taiwan from 2013 to 2018. On the surface, I appeared linguistically and culturally legible. I spoke Chinese, read the same characters, and moved through academic spaces without the friction usually assigned to foreignness. Yet I remained subtly out of place. I was often perceived as overseas Chinese, grouped alongside Hong Kong students or Macau students, a categorisation that never fully fit.

My roots are not in mainland China, nor are they oriented toward a return. I was born and raised in Malaysia, and my identity is shaped by a particular sense of belonging formed within its multilingual and unequal linguistic landscape. Identity, for me, is not an abstract category but a lived negotiation of language, history, and place. It is shaped by growing up in a nation where the Chinese language exists alongside Malay and English within unequal linguistic and ethnic hierarchies, where language carries both intimacy and structural limitation. My belonging is therefore not anchored in a distant homeland but in the layered realities of Malaysia's postcolonial context. To be named overseas Chinese was to be pulled into a lineage and political imagination that did not account for the local histories, silences, and negotiations that formed me.

At the same time, I could not deny the inheritance I carry. My family history bears traces of earlier migrations and of decisions made by ancestors whose movements were shaped by labour, colonial economies, and survival, not by national allegiance. This inheritance is not a stable identity but an unresolved condition, one that surfaces through accent and experience. Studying in Taiwan made this tension more visible. I was neither fully foreign nor fully at home. The space between languages sharpened my understanding of Mahua literature as something that develops through both proximity and distance, shaped by multiple linguistic currents yet grounded in local lived realities. What matters is less the backward tracing of origins than how we continue to live and adapt within inherited conditions, and how literature provides a way to remain with that uncertainty instead of resolving it.

Mahua Literature As Orphanhood Writing

Writer Ng Kim Chew (黃錦樹), born in Johor, Malaysia in 1967, is a prominent Malaysian Chinese writer and literary scholar whose career exemplifies the structural condition he analyses. After leaving Malaysia for Taiwan in 1986, he pursued Chinese literature at National Taiwan University, completed a master's at Tamkang University, and a doctorate at National Tsing Hua University. He is now a professor in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at National Chi Nan University. His long-term residence outside Malaysia reflects both the marginalisation of Malaysian Chinese literature within the nation-state and a second layer of orphanhood: the scholar's own diasporic condition within foreign institutional frameworks. Ng characterises Mahua literature as 'orphanhood writing.' By orphanhood, he does not refer to literal parentlessness but to a structural condition of cultural non-belonging: a literary formation unable to return to an ancestral homeland, unable to be fully incorporated into the Malaysian nation-state, and unable to secure

stable recognition within established national literary canons (Ng 2022, 自序——現實的詩意，詩意的現實). Orphanhood thus names a condition of suspended legitimacy, a writing that persists without institutional guardianship. Just as Malaysian Chinese literature cannot be fully incorporated into the Malaysian nation-state's cultural infrastructure and remains unrecognised within stable national literary formations, scholars working on it often operate at the margins, navigating limited archives, institutional recognition, and uneven academic networks. This is not unique to Malaysian Chinese studies but resonates globally, revealing how postcolonial and neocolonial structures continue to shape intellectual labour and leave scholars at the periphery of their own national institutions, even in formally independent countries.

Sinophone debates

As theorised by Shu-mei Shih, the Sinophone designates Sinitic-language cultural production located outside China and is positioned in tension with a China-centric literary framework (Shih 2013, 3–7). However, the institutional consolidation of Sinophone studies has largely taken place within United States academia, where theoretical authority and disciplinary visibility are concentrated. Ng critiques this US-centered framing, arguing that it risks reproducing new hierarchies of knowledge production even as it seeks to decentre China (Ng 2022, 自序——現實的詩意，詩意的現實). Within this configuration, Mahua literature occupies an ambivalent position: it is neither fully incorporated into Malaysian national literature nor securely positioned within a Sinophone framework structured by metropolitan academic institutions. Ng's analysis becomes clearer when contrasted with Hong Kong, where sustained government funding for literary awards, publishing initiatives, and archival preservation, alongside committed academic criticism, has allowed literary production to benefit from relatively consolidated infrastructures of recognition, whereas Mahua literature lacks comparable state endorsement, archival centralisation, and critical consolidation, making its marginality not merely aesthetic or thematic but infrastructural (Ng 2022, 香港—馬來亞——熱帶華文小說的兩種生成，及一種香港文學身份).

This structural marginality creates a second layer of orphanhood for the scholar: just as Mahua literature exists in a fragile and constrained cultural space, scholars working on it must navigate another form of diaspora, shaped by the uneven distribution of academic resources, institutional recognition, and critical support. This condition is not unique to Malaysian Chinese studies but resonates with scholars worldwide, reflecting how intellectual labour in postcolonial or formerly colonised contexts often occurs at the periphery of their own national institutions. Even in formally independent nations, academics frequently face self-censorship, limited resources, and exclusion from the mainstream academy, revealing the lingering structures of colonialism, now often reproduced through neocolonial academic hierarchies. In this sense, the scholar's position parallels the very orphanhood they study: the fragility, rupture, and persistent marginality of cultural production remain deeply embedded, both in literature and in the institutional frameworks that sustain it. It is within these circumstances, as a Malaysian Chinese artist living in Finland, that I undertake this thesis, navigating the infrastructural marginality of linguistic pressures

while situating my research at the intersection of diasporic literary analysis, and archival exploration.

Learning Beyond Mother Tongues

Malay is Malaysia's official national language, while Finnish is one of the official national languages of Finland. Because Malay is not my mother tongue, I have always felt a certain distance from it; Finnish occupies a similar emotional position. Yet Malay and Finnish share structural features that made them easier for me to learn once I focused on each language's internal logic. Both lack grammatical gender and articles, simplifying noun usage. Both also have relatively transparent morphology, allowing meaning to be inferred from affixes and root forms. Core sentence structures are predictable: Malay uses Subject-Verb-Object word order, and Finnish, though more flexible, often follows the same order in neutral contexts. Finally, both provide clear and regular cues for parsing verbs, with Malay relying on particles and context rather than tense-conjugated verbs, and Finnish using systematic suffixes to mark grammatical relations. These shared features helped me recognise patterns and internalise the logic of each language more efficiently.

In this way, language itself becomes a gatekeeper to resources, shaping who is granted access to support and who is left out. As an immigrant in Finland who is not fluent in Finnish, I have experienced discrimination in administrative contexts such as social services and health care service. These experiences illustrate how linguistic competence is socially evaluated, often reflecting inequalities inherited from colonial language hierarchies (Pennycook 1998, 9-10). Integration programs often operate as one-way systems, expecting newcomers to adapt while rarely acknowledging their linguistic and cultural roots. This underscores how language functions as governance as much as communication in postcolonial, multilingual contexts (Ngũgĩ 1986, 4-13).

My relationship with German evolved differently. Inspired by my father's admiration for Bosch products, I developed a fascination with Germany and German culture. I learned German in 2015 while studying in Taiwan, believing it would teach me precise rules about language and culture. Yet when I lived in Germany, I realised that real-life communication was messier and more dynamic than classroom lessons suggested. The 'precision' I had learned in the classroom reflected formal linguistic capital, which Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1991, 79-82) describes as socially recognised competence that grants authority and access.

As a postcolonial, multilingual subject navigating German, I found myself in an in-between space, a zone where my classroom lessons, everyday interactions, and multilingual background all came together. My multilingualism meant that I approached German not from a single linguistic framework but from a space shaped by multiple languages, echoing Homi K. Bhabha's notion of a third space as a site of negotiation and hybridity (Bhabha 1994, 37-39). In this space, learning is never simply about memorising vocabulary or grammar rules. I had to discern the meaning of words in context, understand how sentences could shift depending on who I was speaking to, and express myself in ways that felt authentic. It was a space where fluency was negotiated, where I could experiment, make mistakes, and gradually discover my own voice in the language.

This in-between space revealed both the authority of German and the possibilities it opened. The language carries rules, expectations, and social power, yet in daily life I could bend, adapt, and creatively negotiate it. Being in this hybrid position allowed me to encounter dominant linguistic norms without being fully confined by them. Bhabha describes such positions as producing a hybrid subject, one whose identity is shaped through negotiation between multiple linguistic and cultural frameworks (Bhabha 1994, 37-39). In this way, the in-between space became not only a site for learning a language but also a space where identity, expression, and belonging could be actively explored and reshaped.

While my experience with German revealed how linguistic authority is negotiated in everyday life, a similar but more structural dimension became apparent when I wrote my thesis in English. In this context, language was no longer simply a tool for communication or mutual understanding. It became a system that governs legitimacy, defines who is recognised as a knowledge producer, and determines who has the authority and the right to speak and be heard in academic spaces.

English as a Colonial Academic Language

English functions as the academic writing language of my Master of Fine Arts thesis, specifically within the artistic writing component. Writing in English, I often feel detached, as if observing my own work from an outsider's position. This sense of distance reveals how English continues to operate as a colonial language, enforcing norms of legibility and authority even within practices that claim decolonial intentions.

This detached position resonates with my artistic research method, particularly in the process of writing my ethnographic journal in English. The method itself occupies an in-between space, bridging lived experience and academic analysis, personal reflection and institutional expectation, observation and interpretation. Through observing, documenting, and transforming collected materials into an intellectual and analytical component, I find myself compelled to prove my legitimacy in a distinctly colonial manner. The demand to translate lived experience into academic justification reproduces a system in which knowledge must be rendered readable, explainable, and verifiable according to dominant norms yet it is precisely within this in-between space that creativity, critical reflection, and hybrid perspectives emerge.

As Édouard Glissant observes, colonial power demands transparency, insisting that the subject must always explain and make itself legible within dominant epistemic frameworks (Glissant 1997, 189-194). Writing my thesis in English situates me within this demand, where I am expected to justify myself, my methods, and my history through a language that carries institutional authority. This process exposes how colonial structures persist through academic language, even when the content seeks to challenge them.

Language as Cartography: An Essay in Script Form

In *Orientalism* and later in *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said defines imaginative geography as the production of space through discourse, desire, and power, presenting space as constructed and shaped by these forces, not as neutral territory (Said 1978, 49–53; 1993, 3–15). Geography is narrated and shaped by projection. In Said's formulation, imaginative geography operates primarily at the macro level of empire, nation, and colonial authority, structuring how the West represents and dominates the East. Yet imaginative geography can also function at a micro level, within family memory, aspiration, and inherited longing. My project extends this concept into diasporic subjectivity. I examine how longing and multilingual experience produce an internal cartography that contrasts with imperial mappings of territory.

The script of *Rewound Trading Legacies*, operates as a multilingual reflection structured in essay form around archive, migration, labour, and apparatus. English constitutes the largest portion of the script and serves as its structural spine. Malay and Finnish occupy roughly equal but smaller roles, grounding the narrative in familial intimacy and pragmatic survival. Cantonese, Mandarin, and Hakka appear more sparingly, each carrying concentrated emotional and cultural weight. This distribution involves more than quantity. Each language performs a distinct psychological function and contributes to a layered interior landscape, with meaning articulated differently in each tongue.

English dominates the analytical and historical framework. Its tone is reflective and essayistic, carrying my inquiry into apparatus theory, my correspondence with Bosch, and my migration between Malaysia, Germany, and Finland. In English, I negotiate between personal experience and structural history. It is the language in which I am cautious and measured. Within this register emerges the refrain, 'Yes, I have achieved my dream.' The statement signals recognition. It feels like an alignment between aspiration and material reality after years of displacement.

Malay shifts the tone toward intimacy. When I speak Malay, I move closer to my father, to fruit farming, to manual labour and parental aspiration. The language carries soil and generational continuity. Finnish introduces a pragmatic and bureaucratic register of pension systems, livelihood structures, and survival within institutions. In Malay, I am embodied and nurturing. In Finnish, I am formal and restrained. German appears briefly yet symbolically, especially in the coincidence that Bauer means farmer, introducing irony between industrial authorship and agricultural labour. Cantonese carries conversational immediacy and my father's autonomy. Mandarin evokes childhood aspiration and educational formation, while Hakka surfaces as a dense echo of ancestral continuity.

These shifts produce subtle variations of selfhood. The same 'I' becomes analytical, intimate, restrained, or playful depending on language. The geography of the script unfolds not only between nations but between linguistic states of being. In this way, imaginative geography moves from representation of territory to representation of self. Identity itself becomes spatially structured through language.

Germany in my script functions partly as an imaginative geography. My father speaks of Berlin and Bosch with admiration despite never having visited. Germany becomes a projected site of modernity and aspiration. The Bauer Super 8 camera embodies this projection, manufactured in Malaysia yet culturally coded as German. Here, imaginative geography obscures labour histories in the Global South, masking material production beneath narratives of European origin. By foregrounding this contradiction, I extend Said's critique beyond colonial discourse into the terrain of late industrial capitalism and global supply chains (Said 1978, 54).

In my work, the script foregrounds fragmentation. Language shifts function like montage cuts, fragmenting and reconnecting histories of labour, migration, and production. If Said exposes how power narrates space, I extend this to ask how language fragmentation in a diasporic context maps lived experience (Said 1978, 54). This approach is further informed by Bhabha's notion of hybrid, fragmented identity spaces, which emerge in the negotiation between multiple cultural and linguistic frameworks (Bhabha 1994, 2). Malaysia and Finland are not merely locations but emotionally charged terrains shaped by work, bureaucracy, and survival. The movement between languages embodies displacement while revealing inheritance. Writing the essay in script form allows me to treat language choice itself as an analytical gesture. The multilingual structure ultimately maps an internal geography shaped by longing, history, and absence. If Said exposes how power narrates space, my work asks how space is lived within a diasporic body.

Speaking Nearby and Linguistic Opacity

In conversation with Nancy Chen, I draw on the artist Trinh T. Minh-ha articulating the concept of 'speaking nearby instead of speaking about' (Trinh 1992, 435). This approach resists explanatory mastery and instead positions the filmmaker in proximity to, rather than above, her subject. It is not merely a stylistic choice but an ethical orientation.

This concept resonates with the multilingual structure of my film. The seven languages shift without warning and without translation. Accessibility is uneven. Viewers may understand fragments through the English subtitles, but only partially due to the film's shifts across multiple languages. Language, as a standardised system, cannot fully capture subjective experience; one can only approximate, or speak nearby, emotion and memory. Each spectator brings a different linguistic and cultural framework, resulting in multiple interpretive possibilities.

Images, words, sounds, and silences therefore possess rhythm and meaning independent of narrative explanation. Filmmaking becomes, in Trinh's sense, a performance that questions its own language (Trinh 1992, 436). The refusal of linear transparency aligns with Glissant's defense of opacity as a condition of relational identity (Glissant 1997, 189-190).

Translation Always Betrays

In every culture, there are words that we cannot translate fully. For example, in Finnish, 'sisu' refers to a unique form of courage, resilience, and determination that goes beyond ordinary willpower. It

describes the ability to persist and endure in the face of extreme adversity, a quality that is deeply embedded in Finnish culture and identity (SuomiSanakirja.fi n.d.; Wikipedia 2025). While English words like 'grit' or 'perseverance' capture parts of its meaning, none fully convey the cultural and emotional depth of *sisu*.

In my film, I deliberately employ multiple languages across the narration and dialogue. This methodological choice reflects the complex historical and technological entanglements that shape the research. By incorporating several languages, the film foregrounds layered histories and diverse forms of knowledge that circulate across cultural and technological contexts. By layering languages, I convey the coexistence of multiple temporalities, cultural perspectives, and personal histories in my research. This approach allows the audience to engage with the work's richness and complexity, revealing the multiple dimensions of its narrative.

Translating between tonal or intonational languages and non-tonal languages inevitably introduces gaps, particularly in emotional and affective nuance encoded in pitch, tone, and prosody. Cantonese, Mandarin, and Hakka encode meaning not only lexically but also through pitch contours, which shape perception and emotional interpretation in ways that cannot be fully captured in translation. These linguistic characteristics make translation inherently imperfect and reveal the power dynamics embedded in language.

In the final section of my film, I combine seven languages to create a multilingual montage that reflects how language carries social structures, labour, inheritance, and bureaucratic authority across time and place. The figure of the farmer functions as a subject through which these structures are revealed, while the movement between languages embodies displacement and negotiation within a diasporic experience. Each language embeds a distinct layer of meaning, capturing both practical labour and emotional history, and together they map an internal geography shaped by relational inheritance.

The script excerpts include (with English subtitles):

Malay

Kami berdua bekerja dengan tangan kosong sendiri untuk tanam buah-buahan kami sendiri.

We both work with our bare hands to cultivate our own fruits

Finnish

Satomme riippuu markkinahinnasta

Our harvest depends on the market value

Cantonese

而耕作嘅過程就係睇我哋投入咗幾多資源

And the cultivation process is based on the resources we put into it

Mandarin

然而 作為一個藝術家和農民 我們都沒有穩定的收入

Yet, as an artist and a farmer, we both lack stable income

Hakka

至少在我父親嘅年代係咁樣嘅

At least that was the case in my father's era

German

Es herrschte lange Stille in unserem Gespräch, nachdem ich sagte: 'Ich glaube, ich bin genau wie du, Papa!'

There was a long silence in our conversation after I pointed out that 'I think I am just like you dad!'

In the Malaysian context, translating Cantonese or other dialects into English situates the work within layers of colonial and postcolonial linguistic hierarchies. English, as the language of colonial administration and education, functions as a medium of institutional power. Translation through Malay and other Chinese dialects reflects additional hierarchies, as Mandarin, despite being a regional lingua franca, also exerts dominance over smaller dialects such as Cantonese. This multilayered process highlights how language mediates power, repression, and exclusion, echoing Gayatri Spivak's concern with translation as a site where the subaltern is rendered inaudible or misrepresented (Spivak 1993, 87).

The impossibility of fully faithful translation thus becomes a productive methodological principle, revealing the opacity of language and history emphasised by Édouard Glissant, in which meaning is not fully transparent and resists total comprehension (Glissant 1997, 189). By intentionally making listening challenging for the audience, my work foregrounds tensions between intelligibility, power, and memory. The difficulty in parsing multiple languages mirrors the violence and selectivity of archives, which often serve imperial and industrial interests, deciding whose voices are preserved, whose histories are visible, and whose are silenced (Hartman 2008, 11).

In this sense, using multiple languages in my film becomes a deliberate strategy to engage with histories marked by absence and denial. Drawing on Derrida's ideas of traces and spectrality in archives (Derrida 1995, 11), I understand that what is missing or haunted in historical records still exerts presence and demands ethical attention. By layering languages, tonalities, and moments of partial intelligibility, I create both an aesthetic and methodological approach that allows me to represent the entanglements of colonial, neocolonial, and extractive industrial practices in historical memory, highlighting the incompleteness and opacity of archival and historical narratives.

In contrast, I seek to understand my artistic practice and its methodologies in language as a form of emancipation. Drawing on Glissant's notion of the rhizomatic⁴, I embrace fragmentation and absence, make room for contradictory narratives, and attend to oral memory, rumour, affect, and

⁴ Glissant develops the rhizome concept in relation to diaspora, language, and creolization, emphasizing relationality and opacity, whereas Deleuze and Guattari's original formulation focuses on abstract, philosophical multiplicity and non-hierarchical structures (Glissant 1997, 11; Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 3-25).

silence. In doing so, my practice resists coherence and closure, rejecting total explanation and refusing transparency as a measure of validity (Glissant 1997, 189).

Building on these reflections on language, history, and the negotiation of authority, the next chapter, *Inheritance Apparatus*, turns to the material traces of these entanglements through the Super 8 camera, the Brauer brand produced in Malaysia by Robert Bosch. Here, I follow the object from my father's unread Bosch manuals and projection practices in Germany to local labour, Sinophone histories, and the minoritisation of knowledge, tracing its intersections with personal histories.

III

Inheritance Apparatus

From Bosch Manual Booklet to Ways of Knowing

This chapter unfolds through fragments, returns, and temporal jumps. This form reflects both my working method, which draws from research journals, timelines, and lived experience, and the conditions of the histories I address, which are marked by absence, displacement, and uneven visibility.



Figure 6. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist

Rewound Trading Legacies opens with a monologue before the title, which introduces my father's relationship to objects and reliability:

My father is a big fan of Bosch products,
especially the Bosch Power Tools series;
despite his illiteracy,
he trusts their reliability,
even though he can't read the manuals.



Figure 7. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist

This monologue presents my father's knowledge as rooted in experience and practice, emphasising lived understanding over written text. He develops a deep trust in the objects he uses, learning through repeated practice and embodied experience instead of written instructions. His knowledge arises not from choice but from circumstance: necessity and limited access shaped the ways he engages with the world. While originally a condition of poverty, in the context of this film and my research it becomes a form of resistance to the epistemic hierarchies that privilege textual authority in academic and archival frameworks. The power tool manual remains untouched. My father never asked anyone to read it for him, and I can only guess that he learned to use the tools by asking the seller or through trial and error.

To him, study and education often seemed impractical, distant from the work that earns a living, which is why he always asked me to graduate and get a job. Developing my artistic practice while watching my father navigate knowledge in this way has been a struggle. I now recognise that struggle as a source of insight, prompting me to question conventional structures and embrace a mode of writing shaped by lived experience.

This way of knowing, learned through hands and observation, reveals the subtle power of experience and challenges established hierarchies of authority. Manuals, archives, and academic frameworks often assume literacy and textual mastery as the gatekeepers of expertise, yet my father's trust in tools shows that reliability can exist beyond these systems. What appears at first as absence or limitation is, in fact, a different mode of knowledge, one that is embodied and practical. It emerges from direct engagement with materials, the iterative processes of trial and error, and attentiveness to real-world conditions. This knowledge relies on sensory perception and the lived consequences of action, demonstrating that expertise can be distributed across practices and does not require codified systems to be valid.

In thinking through how knowledge circulates beyond textual authority, I turn to Shu-mei Shih's formulation of Sinophone as Sinitic-language communities positioned outside dominant cultural centres (Shih 2013, 30). This allows me to think of embodied, non-textual ways of knowing not as lack but as positional forms of survival and engagement. Similarly, Aihwa Ong's analysis of Malaysian factory women shows how bodies are disciplined into global capitalist logics through practices that exceed written instruction and formal education (Ong 1987, chap. 8 *Neophyte Factory Women and the Negative Image*), underscoring that regimes of learning are always already entangled with structures of power and exclusion.

Germany : The Projection

My fascination with Berlin emerges less from direct experience than from my father's admiration for Bosch and his stories about the fall of the Berlin Wall. In *Rewound Trading Legacies*, Germany appears less as a location and more as a constellation of values, conveyed through tools.

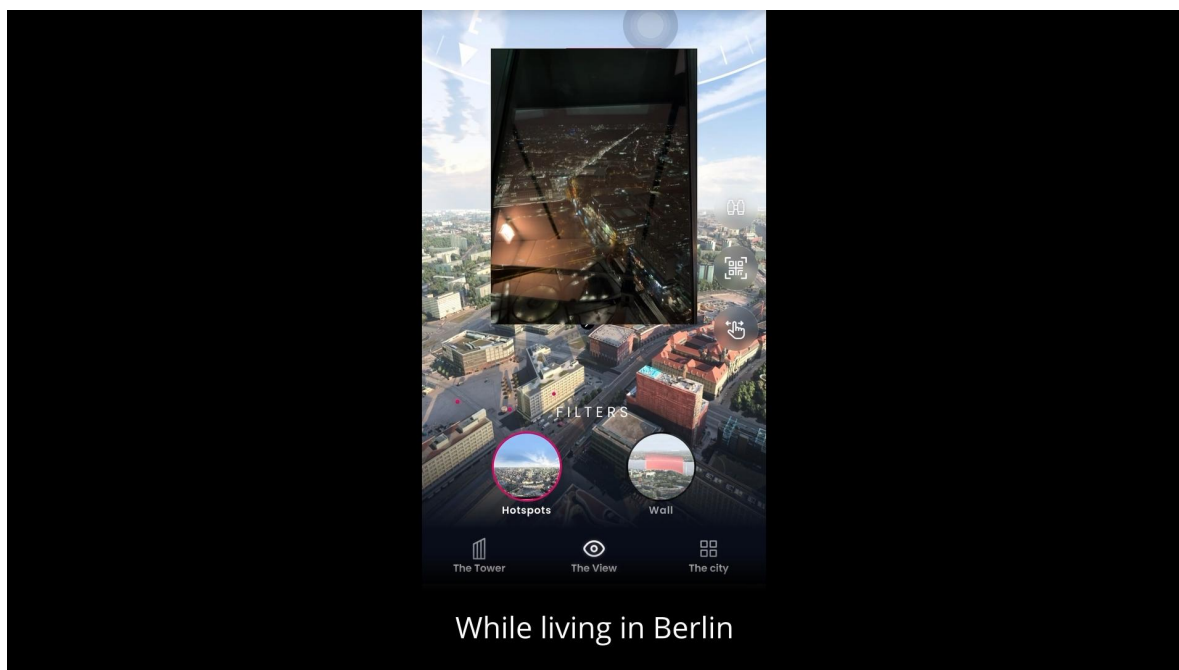


Figure 8. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist

Germany enters the film with the title and my narration, framed as a desire, a dream of living in Berlin inherited from my father's admiration for Bosch. Visually, Berlin appears briefly as a small night-time image recorded with my own camera, lasting approximately eight seconds within a 23-minute and 48-second film. The image occupies less than a quarter of the frame, accompanied by a 3D simulation of the Berlin Wall, showing the former gates separating East and West Berlin. This brief visual fragment functions as a subtle presence, linking Berlin with imagination and inherited desire instead of serving as a spatial anchor or asserting placement.

Labour, Sinophone Histories, and Minoritisation

In the 1970s, following the *13 May incident*, Malaysia entered a period of economic restructuring. The creation of the Bayan Lepas Free Industrial Zone⁵ in 1972 marked the country as a site of production, emphasising manufacturing over creative authorship. My family history unfolds inside this same period, though no photographs remain. I resist structuring this research as a linear narrative from discovery to conclusion. The histories I encounter, whether familial, national, industrial, or colonial, unfold along fragmented, intersecting paths that defy linear progression. They intersect, disappear, and reappear. Writing through montage allows these relations to remain unresolved.

Shu-mei Shih names Sinophone communities as Sinitic-language communities positioned outside China and minoritised within local contexts (Shih 2013, introduction, 1-16). This formulation allows me to think of Sinophone Malaysia not as diaspora oriented toward a centre, but as a condition produced by migration, colonial governance, and racial management.

The *13 May incident* is a prohibited topic in Malaysia; it is effectively off the books. This prohibition functions as a form of governance, delimiting what can be spoken and remembered within both official historiography and everyday life. Throughout my childhood, I was taught not to speak about the racial inequalities I witnessed. Even though Malaysian Chinese, Malays, and Malaysian Indians all hold citizenship, I grew up hearing remarks like 'Go back to China' throughout my childhood. At the time, however, 'China' itself held no referential clarity for me; at seven years old, in 1995, it remained an abstract and unintelligible construct.

⁵ The Bayan Lepas Free Industrial Zone (FIZ), established in 1972 in Penang, Malaysia, attracted multinational electronics firms and helped transform the region into a high-tech manufacturing hub, often referred to as the 'Silicon Valley of the East,'

Apparatus



Figure 9. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist

The Bauer Super 8 camera was manufactured in Malaysia by Robert Bosch, a fact I first discovered while in Kassel, Germany. Its production in Malaysia had been absent from the narratives I knew about Super 8. This discovery redirected my attention toward the industrial and social contexts in which the camera was produced, opening questions about labour, migration, and infrastructural networks beyond Europe.

In 2025, at the European media art festival in Osnabrück, Germany, I staged a live performance reflecting on the production and use of the Super 8 camera. I presented my own cameras alongside archival photographs shared by the Bosch Stiftung.



Figure 10. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist

The performance is framed by a repeated quote from Vilém Flusser: “**Apparatuses are part of a culture; consequently, this culture is recognizable in them**” (Flusser 1983, chap. *Apparatus*, 22). In relation to Flusser, I pose the question: How do we recognise an apparatus that we produce but never use?

As mentioned in the previous subsection *Labour, Sinophone Histories, and Minoritisation*, The Bayan Lepas Free Industrial Zone, established in 1972 in Penang, is a major Malaysian manufacturing and export hub, near Penang’s port and airport, exemplifies infrastructure as spatial governance (Easterling 2014, chap. 1, *Zone*). Production halls, worker housing, ports, airports, and limited public services quietly distribute mobility and restriction. Infrastructure does not only move goods but it also sorts bodies.

Bodies themselves become archives when formal documentation is absent: in the repetition of hands fastening components, in the posture learned under fluorescent light, in fatigue carried back to rented rooms at the edge of the zone. An apparatus organises labour, time, and mobility, distributing visibility unevenly. Spaces teach position; glass office buildings stand apart from windowless production halls, while expatriate managers occupy landscaped compounds and migrant workers share narrow apartments nearby.

If apparatuses are part of culture, as Flusser suggests (Flusser 1983, chap. *Apparatus*, 22), which culture does this apparatus observe and reproduce? The Super 8 camera was marketed for family intimacy, yet its production relied on labour largely absent from this frame. At the time, much of this labour was local, though today production has shifted elsewhere; in this work, I focus specifically on the conditions of production during that earlier period. Images circulated in Europe and North America, saturated with Eurocentric perspectives, while the labour and lives behind production remained invisible. To reproduce more images of Germany in my film would risk

participating in the overexposure of some worlds at the expense of others. Instead, I focus on the infrastructures that make images possible but rarely appear within them.

At the very beginning of my research, I reached out to the Bosch Stiftung, requesting access to archival materials related to the Super 8 cameras produced in Malaysia. My request was refused; they provided only a single photograph of the factory construction building. I later incorporated this image into a live performance at EMAF 2025 in Osnabrück, Germany, and the refusal itself became material for my film's script. This refusal marked the start of a difficult research journey, in which I did not know how to proceed. Confronted with the absence of archival records, I realised that such gaps are not neutral: the lack of documentation enacts a form of visual violence, structuring what can and cannot be seen. I approached the missing history as a generative space, a site where new forms of inquiry, narrative, and audiovisual composition could emerge. The gaps guide the structure of the essay film, shape the layering of sound, and inform the movement across languages.

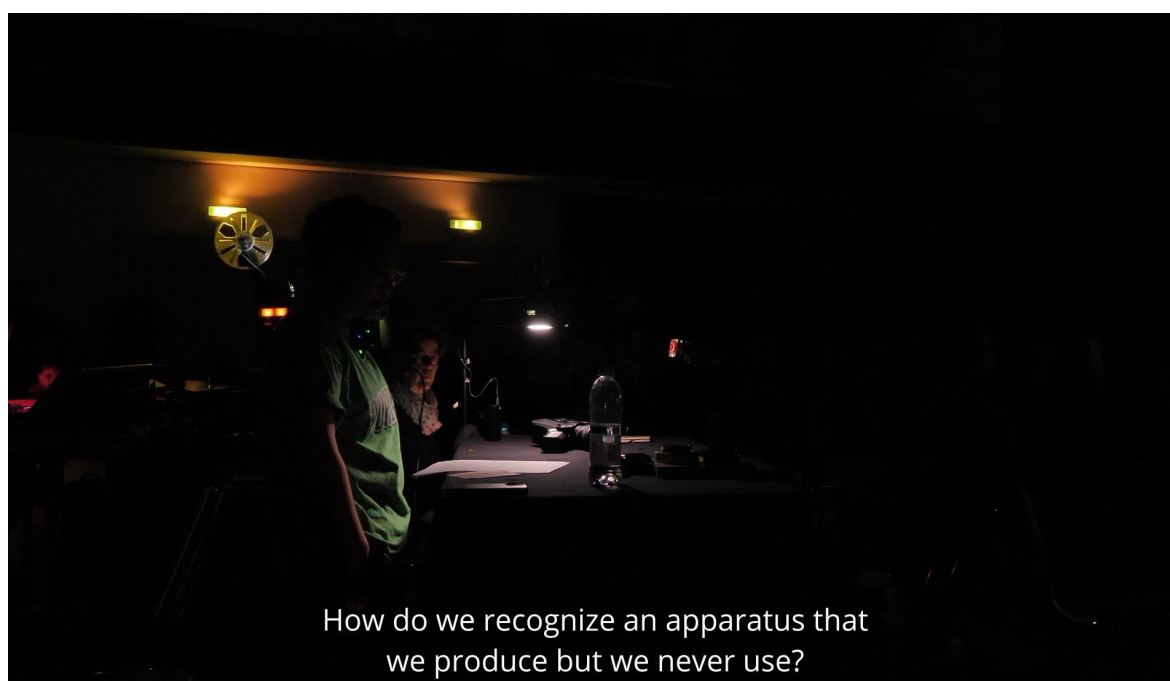


Figure 11. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Shot by Salla Tykkä

Screen Ratio as Apparatus

My essay film, which runs approximately 24 minutes, incorporates multiple aspect ratios: horizontal 16:9, 4:3, and vertical 9:16 in portrait orientation. The digitized Super 8 footage appears primarily in the standard 4:3 ratio, sometimes cropped and sometimes presented in overscan to reveal the full frame, including its edges.

The 16:9 footage was shot with a digital camera. The vertical 9:16 sequences were shot on a mobile phone. And, the 4:3 sequences appear only in black and white and consist of four scenes. The first is a handheld shot, held in a fixed position, looking at a branch of photographs. The second is digitised Super 8 footage panning across a photograph of my parents, moving in and out

through zoom. The third is a digital camera shot looking through the viewfinder of the Bauer Super 8 camera, panning across a black and white family photograph. The fourth returns to digitised Super 8 footage presented in overscan, revealing the full frame, including its upper and lower edges, so that spectators can perceive the film strip as material.



Figure 12. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot, digitized Super 8 film), 2025.

Photograph by the artist

My intention in incorporating these different formats is to reveal the development of image technologies and viewing habits. I grew up with a 4:3 television screen, later shifted to 16:9 computer monitors, and now primarily encounter images through 9:16 phone screens. By moving across these ratios, the film traces technological shifts while also transitioning between projection screen, television, computer monitor, and phone. Although the history of screen ratios is not the central theme of the film, I include these shifts to signal an awareness of material, medium, and format. The changing ratios subtly situate the viewer within layered temporalities of media consumption, even as the film's primary focus remains on apparatus, labour, and relational opacity.

Aspect ratio is not neutral; it determines what can enter the frame and what remains excluded, echoing the broader infrastructural and archival exclusions addressed in this thesis.



Figure 13. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot, digitized Super 8 film), 2025.

Photograph by the artist



Figure 14. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot, digitized Super 8 film), 2025.

Photograph by the artist



Figure 15. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot, digitized Super 8 film), 2025.

Photograph by the artist

Framing Presence, Producing Absence: Super 8 and the Geopolitics of Domestic Vision

Introduced in 1965, Super 8 became the dominant amateur home-movie format in Europe and North America until approximately 1980, after which it gradually declined with the rise of videotape systems such as VHS, which enabled easy re-recording and overwriting of content. Technically, Super 8 film is a one-time-use analog medium with a frame size of 5.46 × 4.01 mm. It was sold in plastic light-proof cartridges containing centred supply and take-up spools preloaded with 50 feet (15 m) of reversal film intended primarily for home projection. The cartridge system was promoted as one of the fastest-loading film systems ever developed, allowing insertion into the camera in less than two seconds without directly feeding the film or loading film manually. (Wikipedia, 2026).

Super 8 functioned not only as a camera format but as a complete product and service system. Cartridges were sold together with prepaid envelopes for laboratory development and return. This integrated chain of camera, film stock, and chemical processing depended on a substantial consumer market capable of sustaining both manufacturing and post-production infrastructure. Projection was not part of this service chain. Families needed to own a separate Super 8 projector in order to view the developed reversal film at home. Domestic viewing therefore required an additional technological investment. The sustainability of Super 8 depended on markets in which households could afford not only cameras and film, but also processing services and projection equipment. Such a consumer infrastructure was concentrated primarily in Europe and North America (Wikipedia 2026).

The later transition to VHS marked a structural shift. Videotape eliminated the need for chemical processing and separate projection equipment by combining recording and playback in a single system using the VHS player and television. VHS also allowed easy re-recording and overwriting of content, a feature that Super 8 could not provide. This combination of technologies made making and watching home movies easier and led to the decline of Super 8 by the late 1980s (Wikipedia 2026a; Wikipedia 2026b).

The Bauer Super 8 production line took shape in Penang, Malaysia, in 1973, following the opening of the Bosch factory in the Free Industrial Zone in 1972. Cameras assembled there travelled mainly to European and North American markets. Distribution patterns placed these devices within global circuits of export while everyday use in Malaysia remained limited. (Bosch 2024). Eugen Bauer GmbH, founded in 1905 and later, in 1934, becoming a subsidiary of Robert Bosch GmbH, was known as Kino-Bauer and produced home and cinema film projectors in Germany (Bosch 2024). The name 'Bauer,' meaning 'farmer' in German, resonates unexpectedly with my own biography: my father worked as a fruit farmer for much of my childhood in Malaysia. The convergence between Bauer as a German industrial brand and Bauer as an agricultural occupation forms a conceptual hinge in this research.

This resonance became more layered when my research project *Rewound Trading Legacies*, which later developed into this master's thesis project and resulted in the essay film, was supported by the Finnish Art Society. At the same time, I contributed to MELA (Farmers' Social Insurance Institution) through MYEL pension and accident insurance as a grant-funded artist-researcher in Finland. The figure of the 'farmer' thus appears across industrial, familial, and institutional contexts, linking German industrial production, Malaysian agricultural labour, and my present artistic labour.

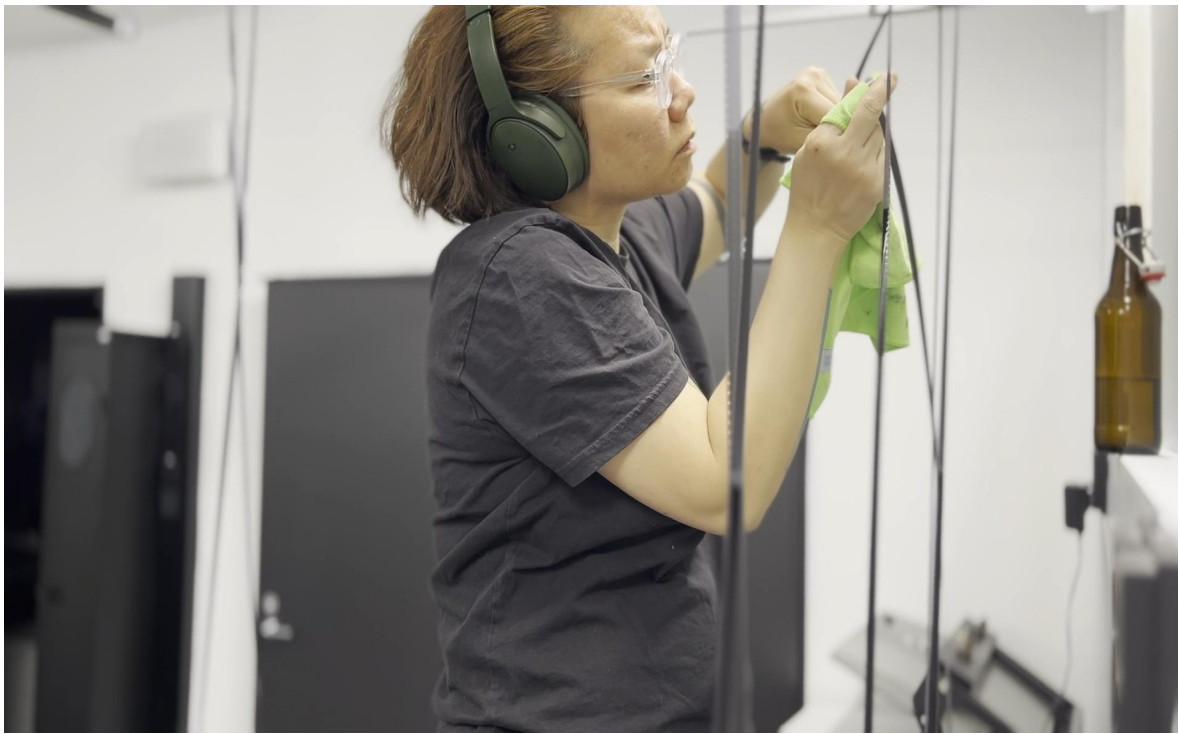


Figure 16. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist



Yet, as an artist and a farmer,
we both lack stable income

Figure 17. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist



Figure 18. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist

The Super 8 apparatus reveals how visibility is structured through a division between production and representation, presence and absence. Manufactured in Malaysia yet culturally coded as German and circulated within Euro-American domestic life, the camera embodies a geopolitical asymmetry in which the labour sustaining images is rendered invisible. This structural separation resonates with Edward Said's concept of imaginative geography in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* (Said 1978, 49; 1993, 27). As discourse organises what can be imagined across imperial territories, the Super 8 apparatus structures what can be seen in domestic space. The camera makes visibility material; Said's framework shows how representation makes it discursive.

IV

Essay Film as Method: Opacity, Audiovisual, and Archival Absence

From Archive to Artistic Research

In 2022, during a six-month internship with the *lumbung Radio* team at *documenta fifteen* in Kassel, I became immersed in the infrastructure of a large-scale international art exhibition. *lumbung Radio* is an inter-local online community radio part of *documenta fifteen*. It's an open online broadcast that comprises an inter-local network of distinct radios and audio practices. *documenta fifteen*, the 15th edition of the international contemporary art exhibition held in Kassel, Germany in 2022, was curated by the Indonesian collective *ruangrupa*. Observing organisational structures, attending internal meetings, discussions and interacting with artists revealed how institutions frame and legitimise knowledge. The experience made visible the mechanisms through which histories are selected and narrated.

This institutional exposure led me to explore alternative and activist archives such as *Asia Art Archive*, *The Black Archives*, *ROMA MoMA*, and *Centre d'art Waza*⁶. These initiatives challenge dominant archival hierarchies by foregrounding marginalised narratives. While at the Fridericianum⁷, one of Europe's earliest public museums, I encountered practices that challenge institutional authority. These encounters sharpened my awareness that archives are not neutral repositories but political structures shaped by power.

Sound, Collective Practice, and Rhizomatic Structure

Toward the end of *documenta fifteen* in autumn 2022, I joined the *Station of Commons*⁸ collective, coordinating *lumbung Radio*. This experience transformed my understanding of sound as both medium and method. Working collectively emphasised non-hierarchical exchange and attentive listening. Knowledge arises through dialogue, taking a rhizomatic form where multiple entry points coexist without a central authority. We have collaborated on several projects, and I was able to contribute my voice despite holding the lowest formal education among the members. This was a

⁶ *Asia Art Archive* is a Hong Kong-based research platform for contemporary Asian art; *The Black Archives* is a Dutch archive preserving histories of African diaspora activism; *ROMA MoMA* is a Rome's contemporary art hub for experimental practices; *Centre d'art Waza* is a Kinshasa-based space supporting socially engaged artistic projects

⁷ The Fridericianum served as the main venue of *documenta* since its first edition in 1955 (Fridericianum n.d.; *documenta* n.d.).

⁸ *Station of Commons* is an ongoing collaborative initiative on digital commoning practices, initiated in February 2020, investigating the reappropriation of technology within public space and questioning centralized knowledge and data infrastructures. (<https://www.stationofcommons.org/>)

completely different working experience for me. Through this collective practice, I gained a deeper understanding of non-hierarchy structure, which has directly helped me formulate my research *Rewound Trading Legacies*.

Rewound Trading Legacies unfolds through intersecting layers of the narrations, silences, the ambient transit soundscape, and the mechanical sounds of the Super 8 camera. The alternation between dense multilingual narration and extended silence produces a rhythm that mirrors the fragmented process of archival discovery.

Essay Film as Research Strategy

The essay film functions as research by sustaining multiplicity. It lets personal narrative intersect with theoretical reflection, brings archival fragments into contact with speculative reconstruction, and treats sound as analytical material, not mere background atmosphere. Instead of presenting finalised conclusions, the film stages inquiry. The viewer encounters dispersed elements, images, sonic traces, linguistic shifts, and gradually assembles meaning.

The structure resembles a research journal translated into audiovisual form. The process of searching, editing, and revealing becomes visible within the work. By resisting seamless communication, my film refuses the mainstream ideology of transparent knowledge transmission.

Artistic Influences

In October 2021, exhibitions at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art introduced me to works by Pia Arke, Arthur Jafa, and Mika Rottenberg. I was especially struck by Pia Arke, whose integration of research and autobiography revealed how artistic practice can interrogate colonial history and identity simultaneously. After encountering her work, I bought the book - *Tupilakosaurus: An Incomplete(able) Survey of Pia Arke's Artistic Work and Research*, which demonstrates how artistic practice and writing can frame identity through questions such as 'Who am I?', 'What am I doing?', 'Where am I?', 'Why am I here?', and 'How did I get here?'. This deeply resonated with my own efforts to locate myself as a migrant artist integrating into Finnish society while also attempting to trace my ancestors' undocumented route of migration. It encouraged me to speak for myself, assert my position as an artist, and pursue both artistic practice and research.

In the video works of Arthur Jafa, particularly through the use of found footage, he shows how juxtaposition can expose structural violence while revealing unexpected connections between disparate images. His compositional logic clarified how juxtaposition itself can function as critical analysis. Inspired by Jafa's approach, I employ juxtaposition in *Rewound Trading Legacies* as a method of thinking, bringing together archival fragments, personal materials, and historical references to reveal relationships that might otherwise remain unseen. The film gathers several thematic threads around the figure of the farmer. These threads connect my father's labour as a farmer in Malaysia, the embodied cultivation and sustained work shared between artists and

farmers, and the social insurance contributions I make through MELA in Finland based on this research. Another layer enters through the Super 8 camera produced by Bauer. The company name echoes the German word for farmer, forming a linguistic and symbolic link between industrial production and the labour histories that shape both personal experience and collective experience. These threads interweave alongside minor family narratives, multilingual voices, and archival absences, while soundscapes of machines, transport, and silence punctuate the sequences, creating gaps that demand active attention from the viewer. I did not fix the script in advance; it evolved throughout the editing process, allowing the temporal and spatial relations between sequences to emerge organically. This approach reflects my broader thesis concerns about fragmented histories and relational knowledge. The montage functions as a method of thinking, where juxtaposition and parallel sequences reveal connections and ruptures without imposing closure, which asserts that the right to remain partially unknowable is essential to relationality and understanding in complex cultural and historical contexts (Glissant 1997, 189).

Sound as Archival and Temporal Layer

Mika Rottenberg's emphasis on mechanical sound and labour without explanatory narration foregrounded the embodied dimension of industrial production. Her approach reinforced my interest in machine sound as a conceptual element, allowing it to function as more than background sound.

In my film, the abrupt yet fluid shifts between seven languages create a layered auditory field in which comprehension continually fluctuates. At moments, the film withdraws into silence, here, silence becomes dense and tangible, highlighting the solidity of absence.

After extended multilingual narration, these silent passages create space for reflection. The viewer inhabits uncertainty and relies on the English subtitles in these moments. Listening shapes the experience. When the spoken language remains unfamiliar, the voice continues as sound without direct comprehension. The emotional charge stays bound to the original spoken language, while the subtitles carry the narrative through reading. In this condition, feeling arises through the viewer's own interpretation, shaped by distance from the vocal texture of the language.

Together with my collective and sonic practices, these influences deepened my understanding of layering and fragmentation in the use of sound. Montage in both audio and visual dimensions does more than organise images and sounds aesthetically; it actively constructs overlapping layers of meaning, becoming both a method of thinking and a mode of response. By juxtaposing images, sounds, and multiple languages within a non-linear narration, montage enacts inquiry itself, allowing histories and positionalities to coexist without privileging any single perspective. It functions simultaneously as a research tool, a strategy of reflection, and a means of articulating complexity beyond linear narration.

Archival Absence as Aesthetic Strategy

Again, my essay film, in this context, becomes the only form capable of holding this tension between visibility and erasure, sound and silence, language and its limits. It allows research to remain open, relational, and resistant to totalising explanation. This return to opacity brings the chapter back to the concerns articulated in Chapter *Language, Culture, and Identity*, where language was already positioned as unstable, partial, and historically entangled.

The non-linear structure of this writing and of the essay film itself is not a stylistic experiment but a methodological necessity. Just as the archive cannot provide a seamless narrative of industrial history, migration, or personal experience, the thesis refuses to impose coherence where rupture persists. My epistemology is informed by archival documents, object, sound, language, artistic influence, and collective practice, reflecting the epistemological condition I investigate. Knowledge emerges in fragments, across geographies and temporalities. In this research process, personal, collective, and historical experiences coexist, creating a space where understanding develops dynamically and relationally. The film thus becomes both the subject and method of the thesis. It embodies Glissant's opacity not only thematically but structurally, resisting transparency as a dominant demand of academic discourse. In doing so, the project argues that discontinuity, multilingualism, silence, and archival gaps are not obstacles to knowledge production; they are its very conditions (Glissant 1997, 189).

Academic hierarchies

Throughout my research journey, route and trail have emerged as central thematic concerns. I use 'route and trail' not merely as metaphors of movement but in dialogue with Jacques Derrida's notion of the trace, where meaning is never fully present but constituted through absence, deferral, and relational marking (Derrida 1977/1998, *Part I, chap. 2, Linguistics and Grammatology*). Route signifies directed movement shaped by historical and economic structures, while trail suggests the residual imprint of passage that remains after movement has occurred. Together, they describe both lived migration and the material inscriptions of labour and displacement.



Figure 19. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist

This comes from my personal history and the labour I witnessed in my father's life as a farmer. I saw the immense effort he put into cultivating the land, yet the outcomes depended on market prices and external forces beyond his control. This taught me how much labour can remain unrecognised and undervalued, not due to lack of skill or dedication. As agriculture shifts toward industrialised agriculture, small farmers like my father continue to struggle. Difficult and underappreciated journeys such as my father's parallels the orphanhood Ng Kim Chew identifies in Malaysian Chinese literature (Ng 2022, 卷一 現實, 「此時此地的現實」——重探「馬華文藝的獨特性」). Just as Mahua literature confronting the impossibility of return to an ancestral homeland, absorption into the Malaysian nation-state, or secure recognition within any stable national literary formation, my exploration of physical and metaphorical trails in my artistic practice enacts a form of intellectual and aesthetic diaspora, tracing histories, materials, and cultural dislocations across geographies. As a Malaysian Chinese, I grew up not only reading Mahua literature in newspapers but also living within the social and institutional structures that shaped its production and reception, which deeply informed my sense of cultural identity and explains why I quote and engage with Mahua literature in my work.

In my film, these routes are enacted through shifts in seven languages, including Finnish, English, Malay, Cantonese, Hakka, Mandarin, and German, and through the layering of research documentation within the script alongside personal material captured on Super 8 reshoots of family photographs. Movement is central in the film, with scenes in cars, motorcycles, trains, and on foot placing the viewer on the road alongside me. The viewer inhabits the journey as it unfolds through nonlinear, partial, and contingent movements. This condition echoes the sense of orphanhood that runs through Mahua literature and reflects my own positionality as someone still searching and tracing a spirit that remains difficult to locate (Ng 2022, 卷二詩意, 尋找詩意——馬華新詩史的一個側面). This ongoing movement also exposes the institutional refusals and bureaucratic opacity encountered throughout my research process. The gaps, detours, silences

and repetitions in the film are not merely aesthetic choices but correspond to actual absences, denied, and fragmented infrastructures that shape the production of knowledge.

Intellectual labour and marginality

This condition, much like the structural orphanhood identified by Ng Kim Chew in Malaysian Chinese literature, reveals a second layer of displacement: a condition that both Ng and I encountered in negotiating the uneven distribution of academic resources and institutional recognition (Ng 2022, 自序——現實的詩意·詩意的現實). In this sense, my position is not only geographically diasporic but epistemically displaced. The displacement operates at the level of knowledge production itself: archives are unevenly distributed, theoretical authority is concentrated in metropolitan centres, and institutional validation often depends on alignment with dominant academic frameworks. The necessity of pursuing research outside my country of origin, the reliance on foreign archives and funding bodies, and the absence of comprehensive national archival infrastructures are not accidental circumstances but structural symptoms of global asymmetries in knowledge production. My displacement is therefore not only spatial but epistemological, a condition in which the authority to narrate history, to define categories, and to legitimise inquiry remains unevenly allocated. As Raewyn Connell argues in *Southern Theory*, intellectual labour remains unevenly distributed along historical lines shaped by colonial power, with theoretical authority concentrated in metropolitan centres while peripheral regions struggle for epistemic recognition (Connell 2007, Part I, *Northern Theory*). Similarly, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's analysis in *Decolonising the Mind* reminds us that colonial and neocolonial systems continue to shape language, education, and cultural production long after formal independence (Ngũgĩ 1986, 4). By epistemic, I refer to the structures that govern the production, validation, and circulation of knowledge, what I previously described in the chapter *Inheritance Apparatus* as the systems that determine whose histories are archived, whose concepts travel, and whose narratives acquire legitimacy. Epistemic displacement therefore exceeds physical migration; it describes a condition in which one's intellectual labour is shaped by external frameworks of authority and recognition.

Rewound Trading Legacies, embodies multiple layers of orphanhood: of personal and familial history, of cultural and national displacement, and of intellectual labour in transnational contexts, interweaving language, material practice, and movement. This approach resonates strongly with Édouard Glissant's notion of opacity, the poetic of being, in which meaning is never fully transparent and resists total comprehension (Glissant 1997, 189-194). Opacity, as Glissant articulates, asserts the right to irreducibility and refuses total transparency within systems that demand comprehension and classification. It does not signal obscurity but the ethical recognition that meaning cannot be fully translated or absorbed into dominant interpretive frameworks. As I discussed in the chapter *Language, Culture, and Identity* under the subsection *Translation Always Betrays*, this opacity reflects the limits of language and history, underscoring how translation and interpretation inevitably conceal as much as they reveal.

Epilogue

Ultimately, I refuse closure as the ending of this master's thesis. While the thesis concludes here, the research it engages with continues. Drawing on Mahua literature and its exploration of orphanhood and displacement (Ng 2022, 卷一 現實, 「此時此地的現實」——重探「馬華文藝的獨特性」), Édouard Glissant's concept of opacity, which allows histories, bodies, and traces to remain partially unreadable (Glissant 1997, 189-192), and Jacques Derrida's critique of the archive as a structure of authority and exclusion alongside his notion of the trace as absence inscribed within presence (Derrida 1995, 11), my project foregrounds how meaning emerges in the gaps and silences of archival and personal material. Edward Said's analysis of spatial power highlights how institutional and colonial configurations of space govern bodies, and visibility (Said 1994, 60), while Pia Arke's work integrates the history of colonialism into her own practice and visual archives (Arke 1997). Together, these frameworks illuminate a diasporic body's desire to inhabit spaces shaped by history and inherited narratives through artistic practice.

Its multilingual structure records these experiences without claiming completeness. Both the essay film *Rewound Trading Legacies* and the written thesis function as research methods and as forms, enacting a practice that refuses closure. The film and thesis embrace fragmentation, silence, and opacity, allowing historical, familial, and institutional traces to remain partially unreadable and unresolved.

My research specifically critiques class, displacement, and archives, while also interrogating the global cultural and social impositions by Europeans that produce economic exploitation. *Rewound Trading Legacies* initiates reparative work, revealing documented absences while pointing toward further research. The questions raised here remain open and point toward further research on how other Global South epistemologies address displacement, archival residue, diasporic bodies, and histories. The research continues beyond the thesis.



Figure 20. Eddie Choo Wen Yi, *Rewound Trading Legacies* (film screenshot), 2025. Photograph by the artist

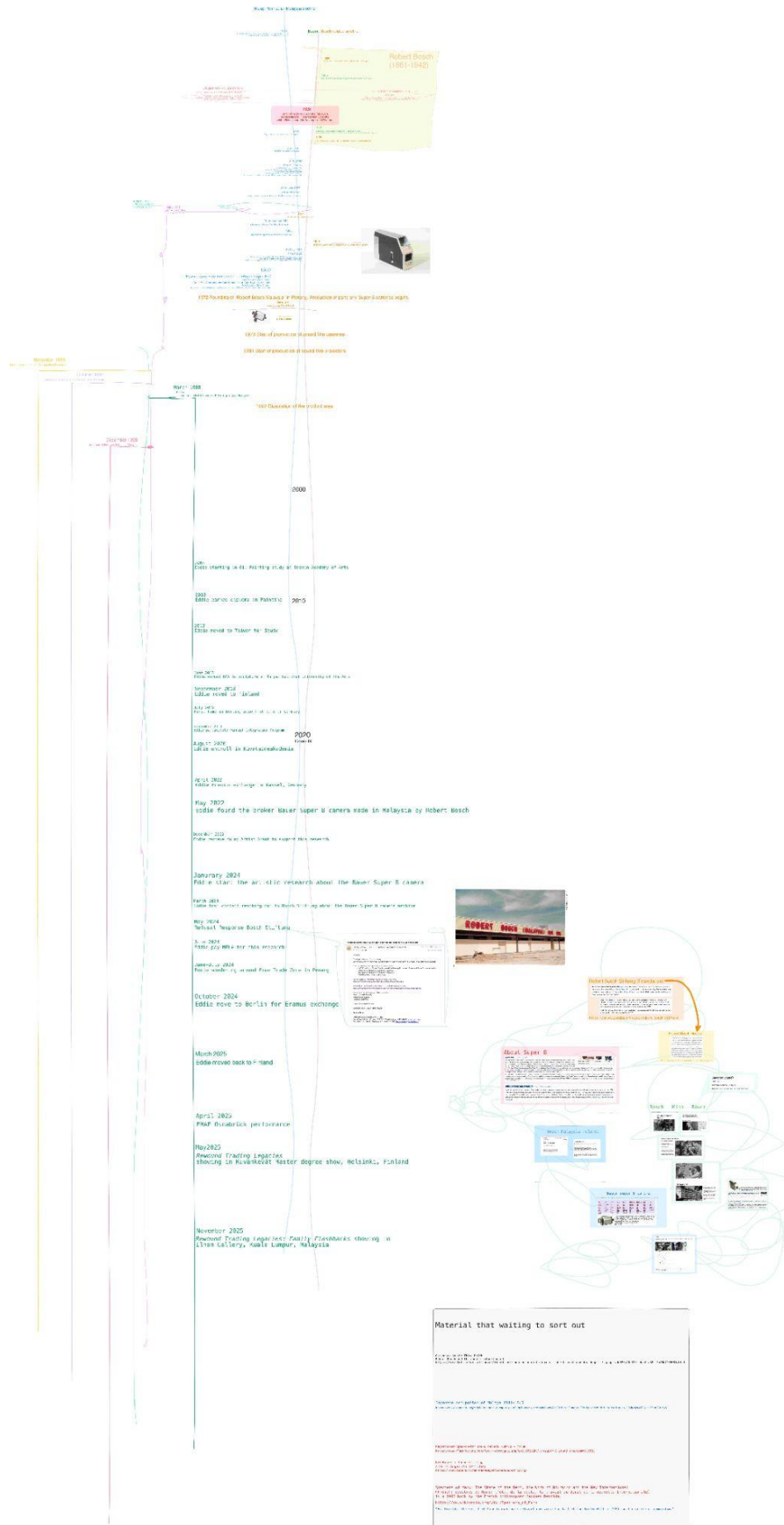


Figure 21. *Rewound Trading Legacies* research timeline cartography. Created and owned by the artist

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