



Photograph from the Agfa Advertising Archive, 1950s/60s. Collection Museum Ludwig

FIONA TAN (b. 1966, Indonesia ID/ IDN) is internationally recognised for her photographic works, video and film installations in which explorations of memory and time are key. She represented The Netherlands at the Venice Biennale in 2009 and has participated in Documenta 11, and numerous other international biennials. Her work is represented in esteemed public and private collections. As the 2019 winner of the Spectrum Prize for Photography her work is currently on show in the solo exhibition *Goraiko* currently at the Sprengel Museum, Hannover.

I remove one of the orange A5 envelopes from a shelf at random. Attached to the front of the envelope is a small colour photograph, and above that a handwritten letter and number. The 6×6 original negative is stored inside. The image I'm looking at is a medium format shot of a woman posing with yellow flowers. This is clearly a staged photograph taken by a professional photographer. The woman's expression is appealing but also disingenuous, managed. Although the resulting image is well lit, colourful, and professional, it's also generic and impersonal. The image reminds me of the photos on my mother's knitting patterns when I was a girl. What comes to mind is the word *gaaf* — colloquial Dutch for neat or perfect. What am I looking at? What is the photograph's relevance today? And perhaps even more pertinently, what am I *not* seeing? The starting point for my photography exhibition — *Gaaf* — at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne.

As the fluorescent tubes flicker on, I am confronted by rows and rows of A5-format envelopes. I'm told that although this forgotten archive has been stored here in the museum depot for over 40 years, no one has ever really had a look at it.

Fiona Tan