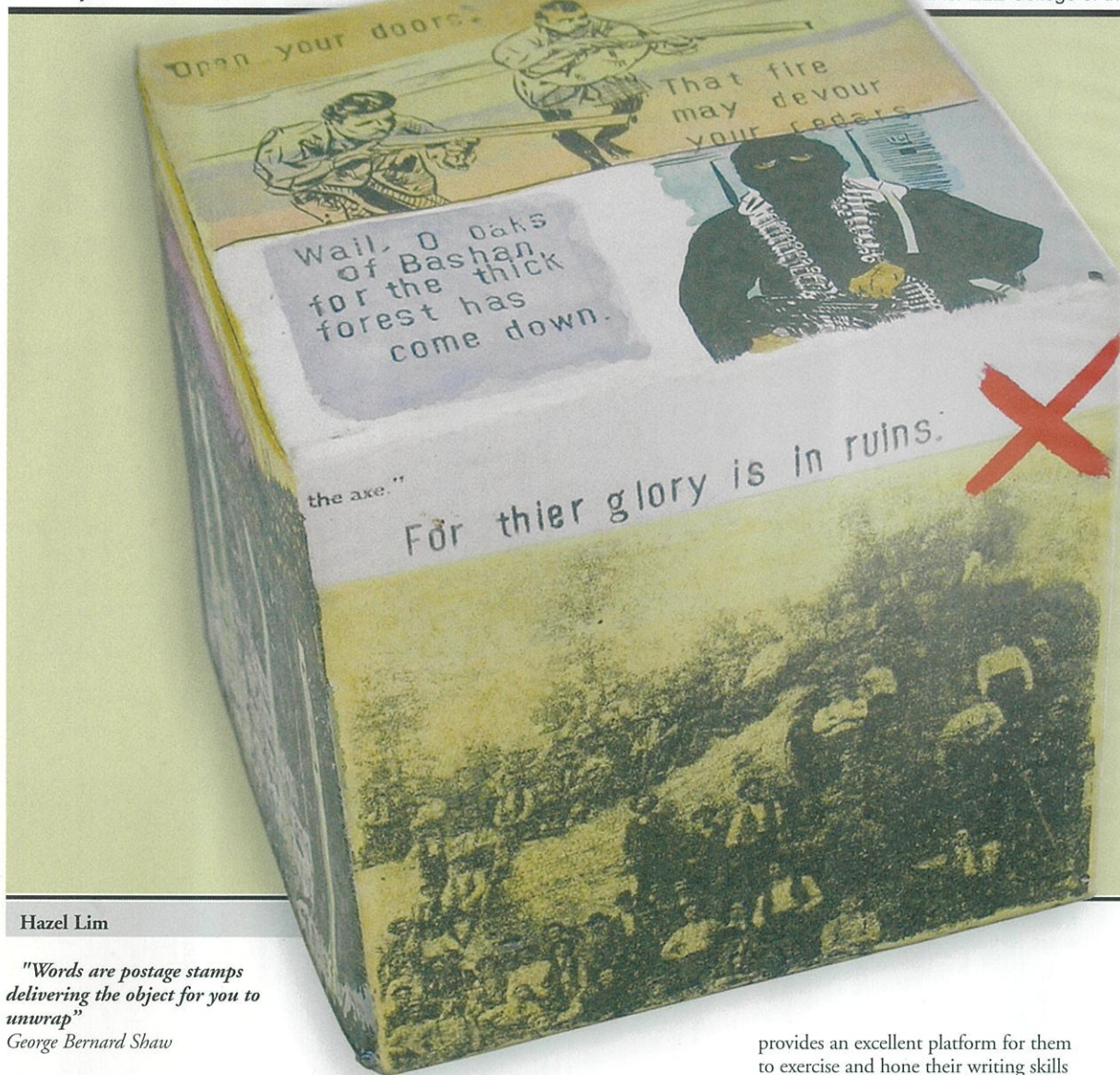


The Praxis Press

Faculty of Fine Arts

LASALLE College of the Arts Singapore Catalogue of Events 2006-7 Project Space First Edition 2007



How To Open an Article

Hazel Lim

"Words are postage stamps delivering the object for you to unwrap"
George Bernard Shaw

1. I am not sure about you, but I've always been aware of a constant 'discord' waging in the compounds of the college.

Overheard in one critique session (from lecturer to 'victimised' student, naturally): "What's the significance of text in your visuals? You are a Visual Arts student, why aren't you allowing your images to communicate, rather than using excessive words?"

A colleague attempting to drum this into my head when I complained aplenty: "Why are you writing so much!? Just DO your works!" (and of course, 'works' here refer to visual images and not text)

Extracted from the confused brain-labyrinth of the regular art student: "Why must I explain my works so much?! My works speak for itself! I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT!!!"

Ah... the never-ending Image vs. Text tussle...

2. One fine afternoon, Milenko with a twinkle in his eyes said to me: "Hey lady, we have some money for a Project Space paper", and my first thought was, "Oh dear!!"

The Project Space, conceived in June/July 2006 as a pet baby gallery project, an obscure space, a room of small proportions, a miniature of a respectable art gallery, a cradle room for experimental, 'under-construction' art, now wants to grow up and have a voice.

Tucked away in a quiet, lush corner of the school, the Project Space is not a perfect gallery at all. Converted from a computer room, it's interior smells funky at times, has a sloping roof outside that lets sliding rain drown my

shoes outside the corridor space, and the grass patch outside - a horbed of vicious mosquitoes constantly attacking my ankles. It is a treacherous space to walk to, but... what started out as an imperfect, insignificant oblong white room, had over the span of 12 months (I am counting ahead to May 2007) staged some impressive 18 exhibitions and performances.

So, "Oh dear!!" might have been my initial reaction but I contend that since Project Space has almost grown out of its fetus stage, it has to speak somehow. And that marks also the birth of The Praxis Press.

3. The Praxis Press is made up of a collection of reviews, interviews, comic strips, reports and anecdotes written by Fine Arts students of all levels. It actually sort of worked in a pyramidal structure, not quite unlike the pyramid sales for beauty products and health supplements. Milenko is the initiator for the Praxis Press (whom the name of the paper also owes itself to), who went on to acquire an ubiquitous apprentice like myself to breathe down the necks of 3 student representatives, Pamela Khong (Foundation student), Jacqui-Rae Cai (Level 1 student) and Susie Wong (Masters student) - all of whom I must give my thanks to - lest they collage me into their nightmares as hazel-faced Tyrannosaurus Rex!... They in turn were given the license to breathe down the necks of some other 18 students or so who were to contribute their writings to the Praxis Press.

I gathered this makes for a really interesting experience for all of us.

For Pamela and her Foundation student counterparts, the Praxis Press

provides an excellent platform for them to exercise and hone their writing skills before they proceed to their Arts Management programme in the next academic year. Set as a writing assignment for them, these Arts Management specialisation students not only get a go at writing and interpreting art, but also an opportunity to understanding art outside the classroom.

Jacqui and Susie's round-up group of artist-writers (or writer-artists) displayed their talents not just in image-making, but also in the active reflection and critiquing of artworks, articles written about the various shows infused those featured works and exhibitions long past with a renewed surge of energy and new perspectives. The memories of these exhibitions would otherwise have been forgotten and discarded as pieces of artworks were taken down from the Project Space and replaced by the next show, and all we risked remembering were vague recollections of images of the artworks displayed, washed down with copious amounts of muruku, potato chips and soda consumed.

Some of these students obviously struggled with the writings, for now being placed in a position of critic/writer,

instead of producer or participant, entirely shifts the aesthetic attitudes one has towards the artworks. It calls for a repositioning of one's views and perspectives and certainly this proved to be an immense challenge for many of them, such as Robert Guth, Rizman Putra, Maxine Chionh and Jon Chan, who nonetheless gave us very incising and honest accounts and reflections of the exhibitions they were involved in.

A few of these articles are certainly also testaments of the creative approaches these writers adopted towards their assigned writings. In particular, Susie Wong, who had lamented to me how difficult it was to get Rirkrit, the Thai artist, to give her a straight answer in her interview with him, had resorted (mostly out of desperation I suspect) to creating a fictitious Rirkrit based on what/how she thinks he might answer her questions. A little schizophrenic I must say, but a wonderfully insightful article it is.

What I also find of particular pleasure in when reading through the submissions where some of the writers' subtle nuances in their vocabulary that seem to speak volumes to me (for the fact that I know them quite well) as well as spin-offs of minor tales and narratives embedded in the larger writings themselves, such as the charming Stone Soup story in Susie's interview with the fictitious Rirkrit, as well as the almost gruesome and abject

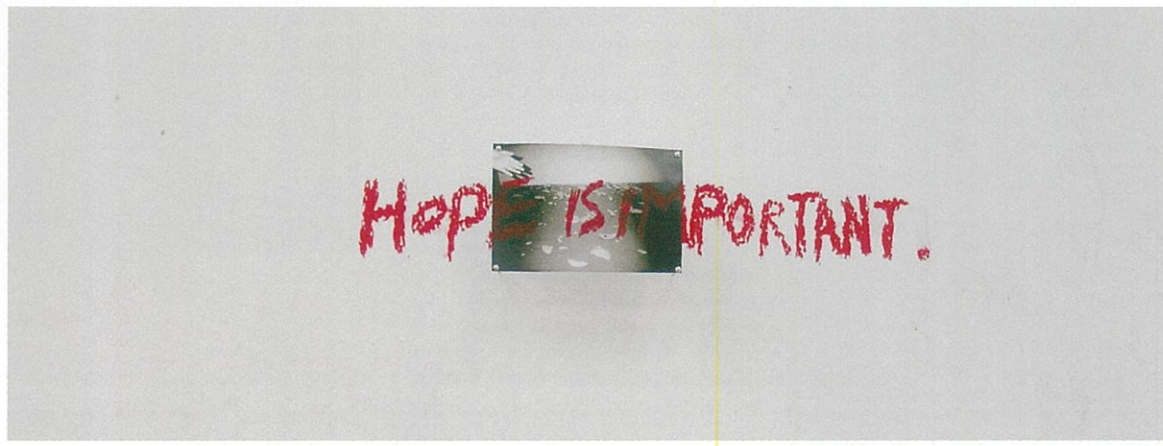
rat-prints tale mentioned in Ian's conversation with Soo Min in Liang Yan and Kris's article about the "Out of Print" exhibition.

4. Now, back to my first point... The tussle between Image and Text... Is one more important than the other? Should one override the other? Or should it be a point of contention in the very first place?

If I may take the example of Chinese characters, each of which were derived from scribbles made from images seen and observed and thereby evolved into the scripts used and recognized today, we could say that the image and text cannot do without each other.

The Image gave us language sensibilities, inspiring us and moving us with the desire to speak of it, to name it, to describe it. Language on the other hand, lends the image the weight, the historical mass and volume and multi-layering the image with an added magnitude of signs and meanings.

Words may trivialise and distort in some instances (as images do) but we cannot deny that words play an enormous role, and in this context here, helping us recall and make sense of the artworks housed at the Project Space, not quite unlike postage stamps that made it possible for us to recollect the bigger packages or articles which are about to be unwrapped.



Managing Editor:

Milenko Prvacki
Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts

Creative Editor:

Hazel Lim
Lecturer, Faculty of Fine Arts

Associate Editor:

Michael Tan
Part time Lecturer, Faculty of Fine Arts

Contributors

Faculty of Fine Arts

Foundation Students

Nuraifa Bte Ahmad
Kristiansen Ross Ryan
Wong Liang Yan
Pamella Naomi Khong Yan Wen
Yasmeen Bte Shamsudin
Mohammad Farhan Bin Rassemi

Undergraduate Students

Chionh Jin Li Maxine
Zuriana Bte Hashim
Lee Pei Shan Julie
Jacqui Rae Cai Shiqin
Tan Scow Wei
Hsiung Lu Fang
Tan Pei Yi Deborah
Jon Chan Wei Wen

Postgraduate Students

Rizman Putra Ahmad Ali
Susie Wong Sui Foun
Robert Ern-Yuan Guth
Arthur Wong Laing Ming
Chang Jinchao

Alumni

Gilles Massot
Safaruddin Bin Abdul Hamid
Chua Ek Kay
Kim Jeremieczyk
Contributing Copyeditor

Staff

Richard Berry
Rofan Teo
Hazel Lim

ABOUT THE FACULTY OF FINE ARTS

With its established history offering one of LASALLE's pioneering programmes, the Faculty of Fine Arts provides the most rigorous and professional training for full-time practice as a professional artist. The Faculty emphasises reflection and self-evaluation, demanding enquiry, commitment, self-discipline and a level of collaborative work. It houses undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Painting, Printmaking, Sculpture, Art Photography*, Drawing* and Graphic Novel*.

* New specialisations in 2007. Subject to validation.

4. Assessment procedures.
5. Postgraduate Seminar.
6. Any other business.



Self-Caricature

Arthur Wong Laing Ming

Who came up with the idea of having Project Space?

In the last 5 years, LASALLE has expanded enormously, both in the number of programmes and in the number of students. The physical space has been shrinking, and with it our gallery, exhibition space. At some point last year, the students did not have a space to show or to experiment. There was a sense of "creative unrest" building up among the students of all levels.

After talking to Prof. Alan Lourens (the Pro-Vice President) about the issues, we came up with the idea to "create" a space which did not exist before and which would be specifically for the students of Fine Arts.

Is Project Space a substitute for Earl Lu Gallery to showcase students' work?

If we look at the exhibition character of the Project Space, it is clear that it is not an elitist space but rather an experimental one and with much less financial investment than the Earl Lu Gallery. You could say it is more of an underground space.

Are there any problems in the process of making Project Space a reality?

I felt that after the decision was made to realise this, everything went smoothly, this including the "pregnancy", "delivery" and the production of shows.

Is Project Space an art gallery?

It can be classified as such, but not only as a gallery, it is a space where the students can experiment with visual possibilities and prepare themselves for their own independent activities after finishing their studies.

What sort of ideas would you want to see the student 'experiment' with?

I do not feel the need to prescribe what experiments students should engage in. I do want to be surprised too.

What type of show/exhibition will be shown in Project Space?

We conceived of a programme, or rather a structure, which could include everything that "smells" of a visual situation, in question or comment. The second layer of that structure is that this space should include students from all the levels, from Foundation and Undergraduate to Postgraduate students.

So, what we ended up with is an assortment of shows that included paintings, sculptures, prints, video works, installation, sound sculptures, performance, drawing, mixed media projects and a wide range of hybrid artworks. We leave it up to the students to decide how they invest themselves into the given space.

Can the Project Space be a space for the students to work with fellow friends from other faculties? Can it be an experimentation ground for interdisciplinary art?

Of course it can be a collaborative, interdisciplinary venue as well, all of such ideas are much welcomed. It is really up to the students to decide what they want to do and how they want to share this space.

What is the Project Space about?

I would say it is a light box that is at the service to the students. And that is a hard job, to light it, even more!

What if the students come up with radical and political commentary works? Is there any censorship involved?

We have yet to set up a commission or a board that administers censorship, and we are not planning to either. I think that every opinion is welcomed; we are social beings and should be concerned with everything that happens around us. However, in my opinion, a better place for political sentiments is the parliament, the press or the streets, rather than a gallery.

Who can participate in Project Space?

We have created a platform, primarily for the students but also the LASALLE staff who would show at the beginning of every year so as to show the students who they will have to deal with for the next 3 to 4 years! Also the alumni with whom the Fine Arts Faculty maintains in close contact with, members of various projects/artistic organizations, visiting lecturers, anyone really who can contribute to the experience of the students.

Is there a need for a space like Project Space in an art institution?

We obviously find that there is. Just as actors, dancers and musicians need the stage, the visual artists need a space which would allow them to project and present their visions.

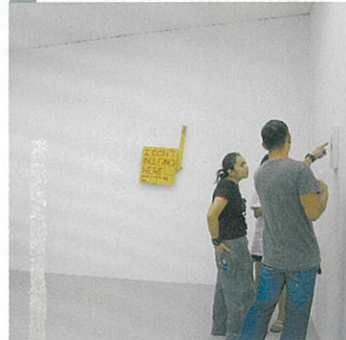
What is the vision for the project space?

To constantly "occupy" that space with works which are the root of some future actions of our students, to prepare them for independent practice, to widen the horizon and possibilities for various works. And finally, through guerilla approaches, distancing and detaching ourselves from the usual, comfortable practice is made possible. In conventional spaces, conventional things happen and the Project Space is not that.

project space

Will there be a project space in the new LASALLE campus?

Yes, definitely. It will be part of the ICA space but it will still remain for use by students, staff and alumni. This time, however the usage of the space will be extended to all students of LASALLE and not only just the Faculty of Fine Arts. In addition, it will be available to the public too. We will select an additional "white box" space, which will serve only our students from the Fine Arts.



About Project Space

Pamella Naomi Khong

Some people say that first impressions are critical; I say they are way overrated. My name is Pamella and I'm finishing my foundation year at LASALLE in the Fine Arts faculty. For our specialisation project (Arts Management), I was to interview Prof. Alan Lourens, Pro-Vice President, regarding his thoughts and sentiments towards the Project Space.

Coming back to first impressions, this would be the first time I would have spoken to Prof. Lourens, and if I

might add, he was very easy going and not at all what I would have imagined a Vice President would be. He invited me into this office and we dove right into the interview. When asked about his sentiments towards Project Space, he gave me this enthusiastic and encouraging answer: "It's a great space, actually any space that allows for both undergraduate and postgraduate works to be showcased is fantastic, not to just showcase works that are completed but also to showcase experimental and 'works-in-progress'."

Prof. Lourens also stressed that the Project Space is an "important avenue" because we are currently situated at the

Mountbatten campus where there is not enough gallery space for works to be on display. And it is here that Project Space is a great avenue as a space for creative works. Prof. Lourens also made sure to include that once we move to the city campus, there will be many more galleries but Project Space will still remain as a vital space for the students.

Prof. Lourens also happens to be a performing artist and he plays the Low Brass. In light of this, I asked if he thinks that Project Space could also be an interdisciplinary space for students from all faculties to use as an informal platform to showcase their individual

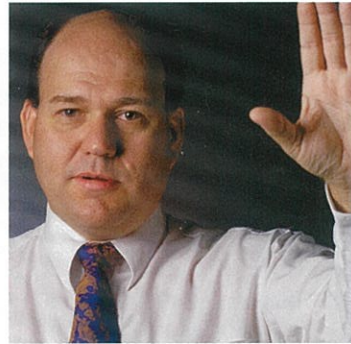
talents collectively. He was very keen on this suggestion. He said, "Integration is essential and in the near future, perhaps interdisciplinary projects involving different faculties could take place at Project Space."

Then I asked what was, according to Prof. Lourens, a difficult question. I asked if the students should have artistic control of Project Space or should the lecturers? He smiled and proceeded to say that it is "important for students to know that they have all artistic freedom in what they choose to do but they also have to take responsibility for what they put up there. I don't like anonymous art." He went on to say that while students are given artistic freedom, it is the lecturers who have the experience and expertise in their respective professional fields, therefore it is crucial for students and lecturers to work hand in hand to put up a great show. With this, he quipped, "Students have the passion, lecturers have the experience."

For my last question, I asked what he would like to see more from Project Space. He was quick to say, "More experimental works, works-in-progress, new ideas... it's a fun environment and so, whatever goes!" He also added on that works should not be "consequence free".

All in all, I thought it was a very pleasant interview. Prof. Lourens said this in closing, "Project Space generates energy in and around campus. LASALLE has an amazing future, it's a great place to learn and we are moving forward. The optimism on campus is extremely encouraging."

We are exceptionally grateful for Prof. Lourens's contribution to the inaugural issue of this magazine and I leave you with this: when I asked Prof. Lourens for his opinion about the arts scene in Singapore and how it has been receiving more attention of late, he said: "I feel good about that!" And it is exactly this optimism that we need to have more of around campus.



A Fine Arts Faculty Staff Show, 16 - 31 August 2006

A Review on Obscurity

Tan Seow Wei

Unintelligibility, inconspicuousness and uncertainty mark the language of obscurity. The very quality of obscurity seems objectionable, for it eludes transparency and clarity. A world without clarity is deemed confusing or even nonsensical. On the other hand, according to Henrik Lagerlund, we humans seem to be drawn to the obscure as well. In fact, it was declared that the "postmodern world has become obsessed with obscurity and nonsense" and it cannot be more apparent in the theme for this exhibition - Obscurity without the nonsense.

To make sense of this obsession first requires a severance of the correlation between the obscure and the nonsensical. Equating the unobtrusive with something of no value is in itself questionable.

"It does not take sharp eyes to see the sun and the moon, nor does it take sharp ears to hear the thunderclap. Wisdom is not obvious. You must see the subtle and notice the hidden to be victorious." says Sun Tzu, the famous author of 'The Art of War'.

Indeed, there are elements of beauty and truth that lie within the obscure, but it takes a wise one to seek them out. More often than not, uncovering the subtle and hidden could be more meaningful than reading the already obvious.

In the same light, contemporary artists are interested in expressing themselves in more obscure methods. Stating the obvious is passé. There is this need for reflection, deliberation, to look beyond the surface, for both the artist and the viewer. When there is neither certainty nor absoluteness, it allows for ambiguity and freedom of interpretation.

The exhibition, Obscurity, echoes this spirit. Artists articulate the notion of obscurity in varied interesting ways - be it the subject matter, use of concepts, or treatment of the artwork.

Paradoxically, obscurity needs not be obscure. Obscurity is obvious in Khiew Huey Chian's "Shadow Boa" and "Casual Acquaintances". Details are almost unnoticeable when one throws a glance at his what-seemed-blank raw canvases. Only upon scrutiny, can one discern the faded gesso markings on them. With minimal details and limited information, Khiew challenges the viewer to trust their own instinct and see beyond appearances.

In a similar fashion, Abdul Rashid Gapur's "Finding Focus" reveals a faint silhouette of a person in an obscure dark charcoal drawing. Stripped of the "loud and bright", Rashid's obscurity defines a "true place" where one seeks "comfort of low light, warmth of darkness, security of quiet". As how Aldous Huxley goes, "I'm afraid of losing my obscurity. Genuineness only thrives in the dark. Like celery."

If celery thrives in the dark, how about

agar-agar? Ye Shufang's "More Miscellaneous Uses of Agar-Agar" is a tongue-in-cheek attempt to re-enact Brancusi's "Endless Column". On the pedestal lay two stacks of wobbly agar-agar made from dessert moulds - the column nowhere in sight. Uncertainty clouds the mind as one muses over them. Obscurity unquestionably thrives where agar-agar is.

Likewise, in Vincent Leow's "House", the imperfectly known is playfully conveyed through a latch padlock resting on a wooden canvas frame. Only can sharp eyes pick out the engraved word on the lock - HOUSE. The joy of discovery is instantaneously overshadowed by incomprehensibility: Does it then make the padlock the house? Or is the house a painting rather? There are infinite questions, of which none would be answered.

The urge to identify the hidden is literal in Ian Woo's "I Searched

Everywhere but I Couldn't Find Mont Sainte-Victoire". The title suggests his painting a representation of Mont Sainte-Victoire. But alas! To the confounded viewer, it is nowhere to be found.

Not to be upset though, for the search is more rewarding in some other's works. A lone cherry blossom stands erect in one of Ernest Chan's prints from "The Garden Series". Just as one thinks nothing could be more blatant in this exhibition, one suddenly stumbles on a dead phoenix at the base of the plant, mistaken as its shadow.

Lurking is another beast; half emerged from the wall of the Project Space. Bound with yellow strips of fabric and draped over by a patterned cloth, the only clue that gives away its identity is its distinctive horn at the snout. The deliberate act of wrapping and covering up in Salleh Japar's "Untitled: Trophy", conceals a rhinoceros within.

In Hazel Lim's "Wasted Hues", daubs of acrylic paints in three separate transparent casings are contained and padlocked. She inscribes beautiful obscure poems on them, bestowing character to each of the colours - red, blue and purple. Her intimate engagement with paint is evident, at the same time private.

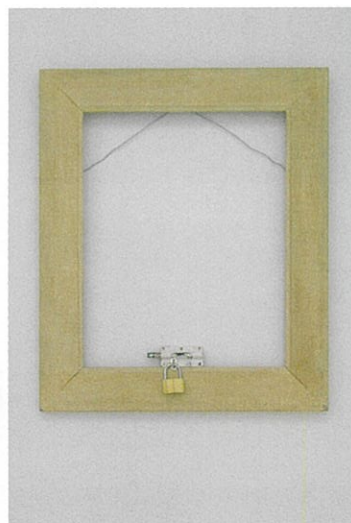
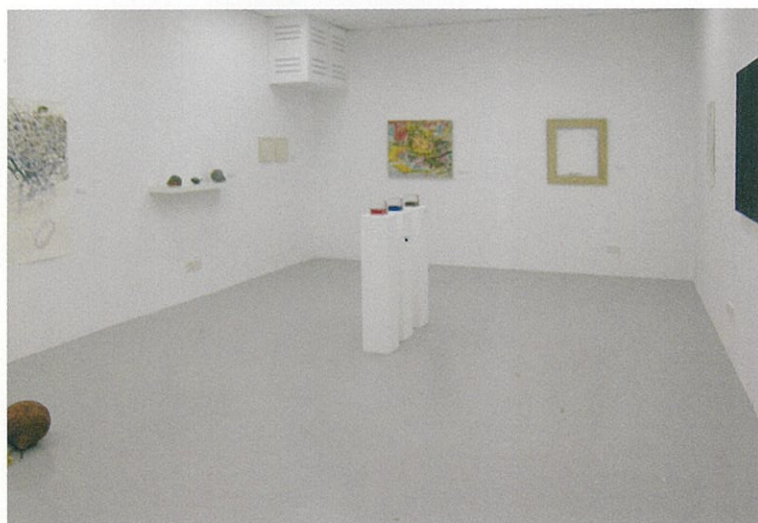
On the contrary, Zainudin Samsuri's gigantic top with its whip seeks to unleash the child within himself. "Self Portrait" is a statement of his belief that "there is a child in each and every one of us" and, albeit suppressed, is possible to release.

A mesh of complex identity issues remains latent in Ahmad's "Tanah Ku Punya/Tanah Ku Beli (Soil I Own/ Soil I Buy)". The clay that he has to buy to create his ceramic pieces is placed in contrast to those that are readily available in the land he owns in Malaysia. This comparison investigates his emotions and thoughts as a Malaysian living in Singapore.

For Luis Lee, who resides in rural rustic Changi, obscurity is his garden. It brims life, rages chaos such that it is often too overwhelming for anyone to get a grasp of what is going on in his garden. Fittingly titled "Obscure", his work is an expression of his genuine experience in his garden.

What happens then, when you try to represent the obscure but it takes on intangible forms? "Now You See It, Now You Don't" is Milenko Prvacki's answer. His drawing is an attempt to represent obscure concepts such as "events, memories, meanings, dreams and truths", only to find that they exist "as mirages, fatamorganas, unclear and fragmented images".

On an ending note, obscurity offers many exciting possibilities of discovery, only if one cares enough to contemplate on them. Dismiss it and you miss out on the gems. Next time before you holler "Nonsense!" upon an obscure piece of art, remember, "Obscurity has another tale to tell".



Vitamins ABC

Yasmeen bte Shamsudin

Vitamins – essential ingredients in moderate amounts for normal growth.

A, B and C – the very first three letters of the alphabet.

And so Vitamins ABC was the name given for an exhibition, which was held in 2006, a showcase of works done by Foundation students from the Faculty of Fine Arts. A rather simple yet eye-catching name indeed. So what were the artworks being featured in the exhibition?

The opening of Vitamins ABC was at 5pm on the 4th of October. Students from the campus and outsiders were invited to the exhibition from the 4th to the 13th of October. Held at the Project Space, Vitamins ABC showed a selection of 2-Dimensional and 3-Dimensional works by Foundation students from the Faculty of Fine Arts. It was curated by the lecturers from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Rashid Gapur and Luis Lee.

For the 2-Dimensional works, Still Life Drawings, Negative Space, Contour and Landscape paintings were featured. These 2-Dimensional works were actually a headstart to the basics of drawing and painting. Being greenhorns that we are, little did we realise that all these basic visual skills relate to everything around us in our everyday lives. The lecturers hone our skills and train us to see and observe things that we formerly did not pay much attention to.

For the Still Life project, A2 cartridge paper was used and charcoal was the medium. Although Still Life was the very first drawing assignment given by lecturer, Rashid Gapur, the outcome of the works exhibited were, I thought, pretty amazing!

There was also a Negative Space project where I thought was an assignment that certainly tested the patience of many and also resulted in many students having sleepless nights. Basically, what we had to do was to shade the negative space in between the leaves of trees and its surroundings. Yes, it sounds really simple but it was definitely a time consuming and energy draining assignment!

Featured in this exhibition was also a contour project where soft toys were used for an assignment. A2 cartridge paper and charcoal pencils being the medium, we had to portray the mass of the soft toys by using thin and thick lines. In my opinion, this assignment was rather interesting as it allows one to have full control over the medium in rendering size and volume of the objects.

One of the assignments that many students enjoyed was the Landscape painting project. For this assignment, we studied the different shades and tones of green and then transferred that study into an acrylic painting, where we exercised our skills in mixing and using various tones of green to render the landscape.

All in all, I must say that the 2-Dimensional works exhibited were superb and a great start for the Foundation students who would be majoring in the different courses in the Faculty of Fine Arts in the next academic year.

Other than 2-Dimensional works, 3-Dimensional works were also showcased. They were 2 projects, namely the Sphere and the Wire project. The Sphere was an individual assignment where students had to make a sphere with the dimensions 30cm by 30cm out of small cubes. The dimensions of the cubes had a range from 2cm by 2cm to 5cm by 5cm. The ideas in forming the sphere were indeed interesting but a terribly grueling experience! Each student had their own way of forming the sphere which made every sphere look unique in its own way but the formation of each of these small cubes were a great test of our patience and creative skills too.

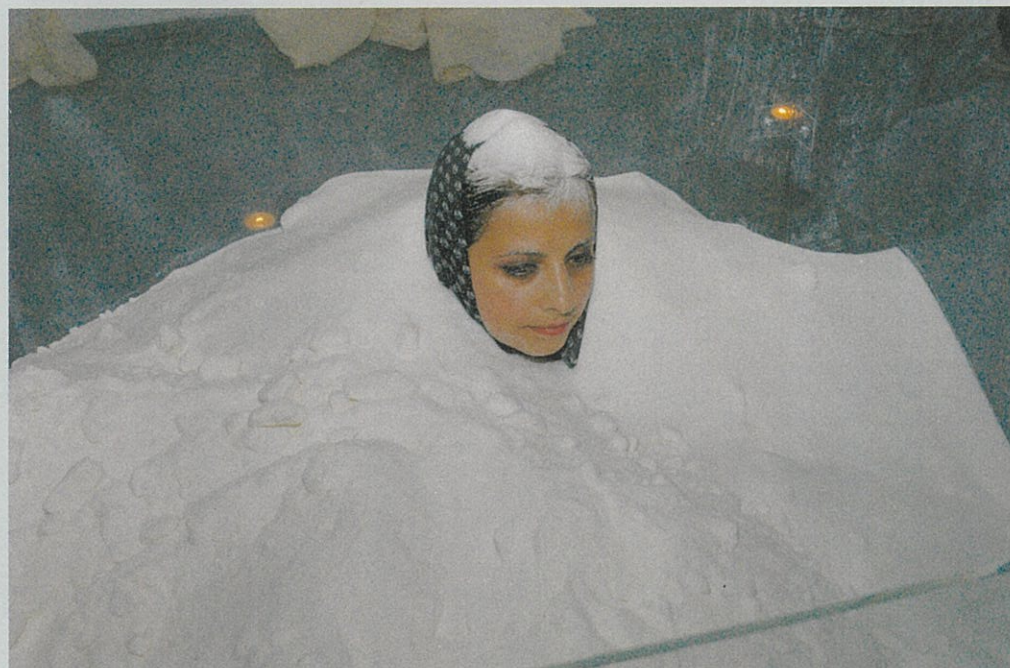
Last but not the least, there was the Wire project, which was a group work. The theme for the Wire project was fruits. Wire sculptures such as durian, chilli, dragonfruit and banana were magically transformed out from mere wires and exhibited inside the Project Space. The Wire project was certainly a time-consuming project but nonetheless, sculptures exhibited were all magnificent and very well received. In fact, many visitors were so impressed with the intricate wire works that most of the wire sculptures were sold during the exhibition.

Vitamins ABC was certainly a good understanding of what the Faculty of Fine Arts will entail. Although the works were all done by Foundation students, they were all very impressive and amazingly put together. I am certain, with these students' great potential, they will be able to go very far given the opportunity and time.

How Much Sugar is Enough To Bury A Woman?

This performance is an attempt to combine the elements of facts and myths to raise awareness of female crisis, sentiments and how issues of stereotypes, social and cultural conventions limit the distinctiveness of individual identities and freedom of women.

This work is about how women are trapped by all kinds of iconographies and social codes through social, cultural, religious or political influences and how they desire to escape conditioning, especially in the context of the contemporary Islamic culture in Iran.



My in-Discreet Agenda

Robert Ern-Yuan Guth

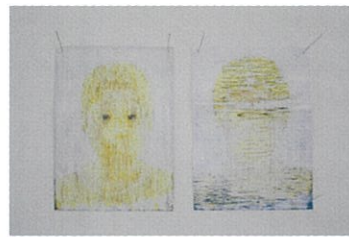
Firstly, I'm going to make it quite clear that the photographically printed floor tiles by me were my favourite works in this show. Not because they were any good but because we all have a duty to believe in and support our own progeny.

This necessity of being a mother bear defending her offspring against all comers is what makes writing about

shows in which you are represented hard. As a reviewer it means that I am limited to the middle ground - not able to praise to extremes without appearing verbose and arrogant (as I was in the first paragraph) and not able to fully damn a show as it contains one of my babies or for fear of appearing overly modest and self-deprecating.

Having made the preceding position statement you can now put it aside and proceed to the review proper.

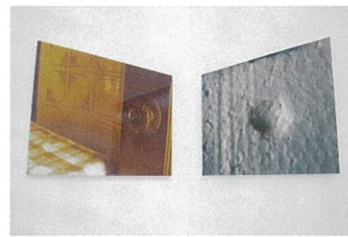
To my mind the particulars of the work are unimportant as I have already stated what I liked best and why. Any further comments are going to be equally filtered through my personal likes and dislikes. The idea that my opinion is worth anything to you seems laughable, as is the other idea of a reviewer being an objective observer who comments from a point of information and knowledge. The other reason reviews are written is



equally redundant - to encourage you to visit an exhibition - when it's been over for three or four months.

Instead consider what you might be able to take to the next show of this kind that you visit.

In a broad conceptual sense, the most interesting aspect of the show is that it is of photography made by artists who do not primarily work in the medium. Projects of this kind are great as they show what's possible with a medium that is being explored for its



representational potential with the minimum technical, theoretical and historical baggage. This sort of treatment of the medium allows for a wide range of different explorations into its nature. As an overall experience it allows the viewer to engage with many different views of photography quickly.

So Remember - defend your works against all comers and look for what you can learn from examining the curatorial vision, not just the pieces when visiting exhibitions.



A performance by Sufian Hamri, 24 January 2007



Impermanence

Zurianah Bte. Hashim

Impermanence / In Permanence, a performance executed by Sufian Hamri, customarily acknowledged by his street moniker TraseOne, was held at the Project Space on January 24 this year. As the appellation suggests, TraseOne, who is undertaking his BA (Hons) Painting, aimed to delineate his personal interpretation on the "life-span" of art work in public spaces, as opposed to institutions, through his performance. Veritably, the essence of the show was abstracted by the conception that Trase himself has been progressively active in the local graffiti scene, ergo it is often natural for him to be contending with restricted walls in municipal areas, among other places.

TraseOne, in his performance, solicited the adverse roles of the artist, who is prevalently driven by passion, and the "remover", whose job is to expunge the art from the wall. In Impermanence / In Permanence, which lasted for approximately 30 minutes, he commenced by characterising as the graffiti artist, complete with the street muralist garb and a spray can in one hand. Following that, there was a prodigious shift in personification in which the artist underwent a retraction and emerged as the "remover" - the one who is in authority to whitewash the graffiti or mural from the walls. Thus, there is the emergence of the catechism which Trase possibly wishes to evoke from the audience - what happens when both painter and remover coalesce?

Aptly, the set of words, Impermanence and In Permanence, which TraseOne had depicted on the wall using premade templates, expresses his sense of disquietude towards the state of transient art in public places. If the audience disregarded the inherent meaning and riveted solely on the

visual facet of the words, they would notice the consonance of the process of the slight, albeit effective, manipulations of Trase's spray painting/whitewashing to the adaptability of the artist - how fairly yielding is he when it comes to altering and toying with diversiform roles?

Impermanence / In Permanence also sheds light on the vacillating issue of the emulous natures of art - that which is eulogised in museums, galleries and the like, and art that is not glorified by institutions, thriving instead without the slightest worry of accessibility for the most common of commoners.

Admittedly, such antagonistic abstractions gave rise to the question of the artist and the treatment of his work. For instance, TraseOne's works would more often than not, need exhaustive documentation, for they are almost never left in an immutable state - indeed, they are routinely coated quite superciliously over with a new layer of paint to give way to "newer" creations.

All the same, would it be too recondite to propound that the original painting has not been fully eradicated, if at all? - that art, in any form, exists in a fixed duality - dissimulating in both ephemerality and in permanence due to another layer of paint?

TraseOne's performance may have been put together in a languorously uncomplicated fashion - undoubtedly, majority of the audience caught on his premeditated simulation. The guilelessness of it was perhaps what made the show fairly emphatic, roping the audience in with its methodical easiness. Impermanence / In Permanence was located on the basis of paradoxical whims, puns and the dynamism of the roles that an artist inherits. It is an indication also of how everything - of art - is teetering on the severe edge of cyclical treachery.

An Ink Painting Exhibition, 18 April 2007

5 CHARACTERS

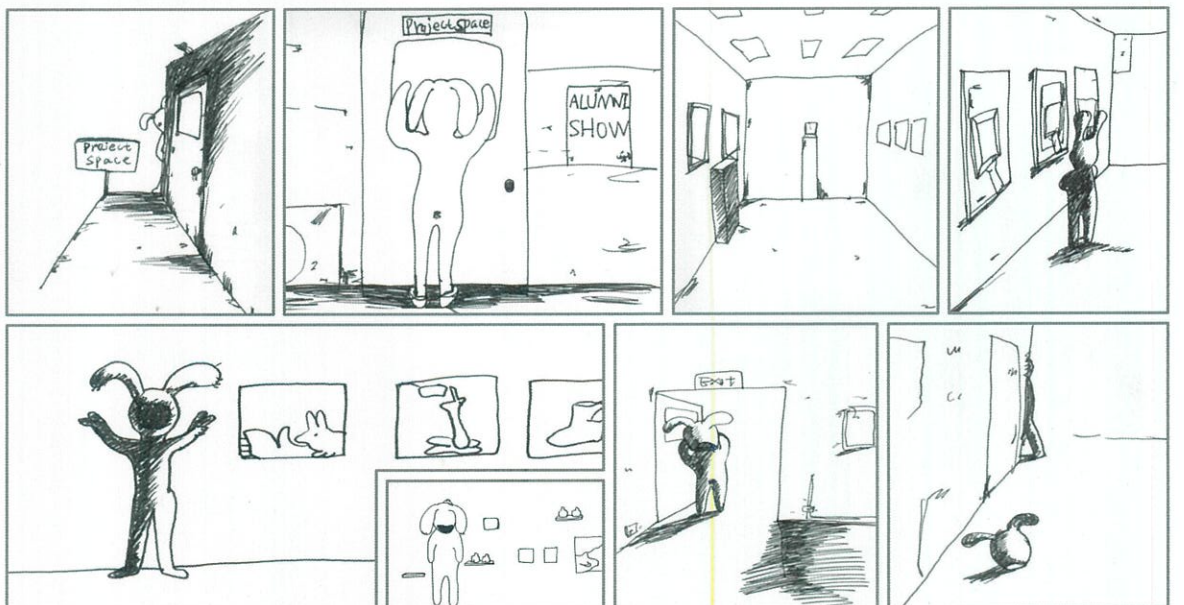
Chua Ek Kay

This exhibition showcased five students who attended two semesters of an Ink Painting workshop conducted by one of Singapore's foremost Chinese Ink Painter, Chua Ek Kay. Through his experience, students got to know the history and development of art using this medium. They were exposed to its basic fundamentals through demonstrations and hands on sessions with Mr. Chua. Towards the last few weeks, students experimented with the medium and these works are the outcome of this workshop. 5 Characters, as the title implies, is the result of five Fine Arts students having five distinctly different ways of expressing their ideas using the medium of ink.

This workshop was specially designed for undergraduates interested in the ink culture. The study was closely focused on the history of 20th century Chinese ink painting and its evolution to the current epoch. Discussion revolved generally around the approach of its historical importance, stylistic development and analysis of masters' works. Another major part of the teaching was the practice of calligraphy and the basic rules of landscape painting which included the swift vehicle of building up a stronger and more expressive embodiment of line work and a compact nature of composition. These two are the most important components of the art of Chinese ink painting. Students are required to learn to be as authentic as the "xie-yi" style ink painting technique based on the "School of Shanghai" teaching. This particular methodology was taught through demonstrations during the workshop. It is very similar to western Expressionism and is open to various conceptual possibilities as a contemporary art medium. At the same time, students are also encouraged to experiment based on their knowledge from their major study and synthesise this with the skills learnt from the ink painting workshop. Such exploration will not only widen the scope of their creativity but will also help to enrich the context of Ink Painting as a contemporary art genre.



Comic Strip by Chang Jinchao



Pefection

Maxine Chionh Jin Li

The Pefect Competition was the brainchild of German artist, friend and teacher, Dirk Fleischmann. His was the first artist talk of the first semester of our first year in LASALLE that we had attended – it really could not get any more propitious than it was.

If we had gone into the auditorium as eager-beavers, we surely emerged as stunned antelopes caught in the headlights. There was Dirk, a distinctive-looking man with his buzz cut, in his trademark dark glasses and perennial white attire, speaking of his kiosks, trailer rental, chicken egg production, solar power installation on the rooftop, game show, etc. At the end of it, we were quite convinced that by some strange mistake, we had wandered into a business lecture when we had been expecting a presentation of artworks by an artist. Still slightly dazed, we signed up for his workshop and that was where the learning really began.



We discovered the brilliance of his ideas and the sharp wit involved in his projects that blur the line between 'art' and 'non-art' undertakings. He paid us several studio visits, during which I had the privilege of hearing him further expound his theories and explorations on time-related processes, on incognito artworks garbed in business suits, on profitability and re-investments in subsequent projects, on leaving things to kismet, fortuity and accident. His is the realm of calculated risks, transactions with his audience and a good deal of improvisation which we really admired – leaving things not that neatly tied and bound so as to allow the elements of surprise and flexibility to shape the final outcome of the artwork. I will never forget that lift of his eyebrows and the smile on his face on the very morning of our presentation, when he sagely said that I should take the risk and leave my props where there was absolutely no shelter. Prior to that day, there had been torrential rainstorms for the whole of the past week, and my props were six heavy tables covered in

paper that I did not think I could have afforded to get wet, nor were they easy to relocate. His idea was to take a gamble and leave them where they were; come rain, hailstones or fire, we would respond accordingly later. I worried half to death, but no, it never did rain.

Dirk's workshop was held over the course of the September-October period of 2006, where he first introduced the theme of "The Pe[r]fect Competition". Different notions of competition were discussed, and ideas about the dynamics of its relationship to ecology, economics, politics, music, sports, games, ethics and art being parleyed back and forth amongst ourselves. He also cited several artists such as Feng Mengbo, Superflex,



Marcel Duchamp, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Lee Wen and more, to provide a rudimentary framework for our first few meetings. The desired outcome was for us to develop projects based on our understanding and interpretation of competition as an artistic mode of interaction with an audience.

Held in conjunction with the workshop were individual studio visits, as well as email correspondences when Dirk was away in Korea from December 2006 to the 1st of March

2007. What was very special for us was helping out in his external projects, like "Stop Show" that was held in GasHaus. Seeing him staging an artwork in the flesh was really a very different experience than seeing only a documentation of it. Another thing that we were very thankful for was him taking a deeply personal interest in our artworks – those studio visits he made and his astute observations on our works as well as on our learning environment, having come from the art academy in Frankfurt himself, were all deeply appreciated.

Everything finally culminated in a two-hour long affair on the 5th of March 2007, where the four of us, Yasee, Claes, Charlene and myself, with Dirk as the co-ordinator and

participants, one of them blindfolded while the other was muted. The objective was for the 'dumb' to lead the 'blind' through a pathway to retrieve a piece of paper with the word "TEN" written on it, and the prize was a spanking new ten-dollar bill. Yasee's game is integral in forwarding her thesis for the degree programme she is currently enrolled in, where her handmade masks and other props contribute to her ideas of happiness and the mockery of it.

Claes Eriksson's "High Score" began as a one-man performance piece as he compulsively rolled two enormous, fixed dice to get the highest possible score of 12. It was slated as a durational performance that mocked the notions of victory and loss, while indulging in purely addictive gameplay. Playfulness, absurdity and physical movement were gleefully indulged in by Claes as well as some students and staff members of LASALLE, who were amused by the performance and wanted to try it out themselves. Made out of cloth wrapped over a flimsy wooden skeleton, what was left of both dice after much throwing around was a heap of broken wooden planks and felt, as still in its final resting place as it was turbulent in its being thrown about.

My artwork, "Martyred", was held in the clearing just in front of the school canteen. I was riding on the idea of using art as a license for soft torture. My original intention was to have three participants scrape a rough wall with their tongues, which would quickly have them essentially painting the surface with their own blood. However, the final plan was to have three participants pitted against each other and armed with only their tongues, they were asked to paint a designated panel fully with thick Milo syrup as quickly as possible. (The prize being a can of iced Milo). There was provocative licking, smudging, drooling and kneeling, burning humiliation and very sore tongue muscles at the end of it. One of the three participants decided to drink a copious amount of syrup, then waited for a winner to be announced, before proceeding to shove his hand down his throat in a bid to cover the panel with regurgitated syrup, instead of painting it with his tongue. Although nothing more than a small pool of saliva came



out of his attempt, his panel was unique in its pristine whiteness, with only faint handprints evidencing his efforts, while the other two panels bore striking visual links with blood paintings and abstract works.

Charlene's "Trash it!" presentation had evolved from a traditional marble game to a contemporary version that used the physical studio space and the personal belongings of art students to constitute the necessary conditions of the game. The participants took random objects in the studio, such as actual canvas paintings, an easel, a metal chair and table, a box of crayons and a Mandarin orange and tried to pitch them as closely as possible to a defined area. A chalk-drawn line and circle designates the playing field in a traditional game of marbles. In Charlene's version, the third-storey studio window marked the line that players threw the objects over, and the curb of the pathway three stories below became the chalk circle to aim for.

Throughout the course of developing and realizing this project with Dirk, we finally began understanding that there were so many more twists and turns, so many more ways in which art could be used as a vehicle for investigation, meditation and expression, so many different guises that art can be bedecked in. He had certainly given us glasses to crystallize the bewildered, myopic state of our initial reaction and response to his works, as well as rainbow-tinted lenses to see the world and art, in as many new ways as possible.

curator, staged our works at various venues on school grounds. Misunderstandings, parody, hyperbole, imperfection and farce were fully intended, while conventional paradigms of success-failure, victory-loss, meaningfulness-absurdity were subverted and realigned.

"Hear your happiness, take for me" was the game conceived and executed by Yasee Poh. There were six to eight teams per session of gameplay, where each team was made up of two



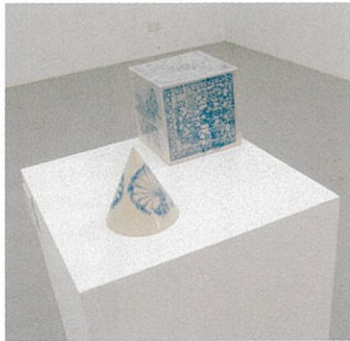
Out of Print

Kristiansen Ross Ryan & Wong Liang Yan

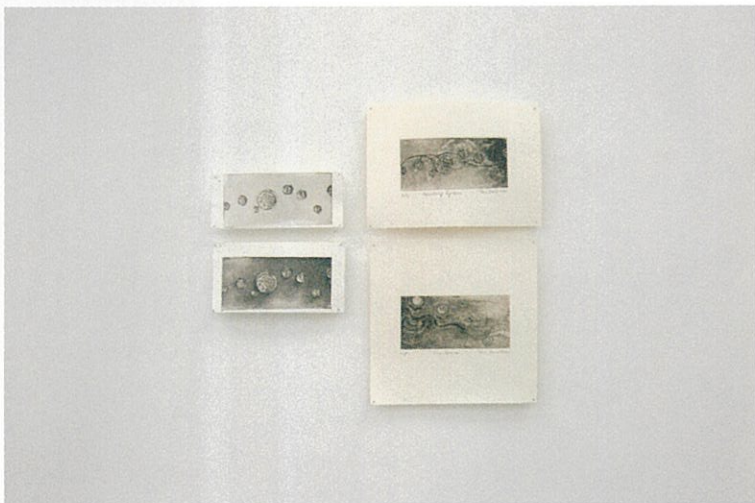
My fellow classmate LY was given the liberty to do a brief interview or should I say more like a 'throwing questions session' with Ian Woo, Programme Leader for Undergraduate Studies with the Faculty of Fine Arts, LASALLE, who is also the curator for the 'Out of Print' exhibition. The 'Out of Print' exhibition was held at Project Space from 31st January to 14th February 2007. This exhibition was a showcase of works by Galtd Wong, Julie Lee, Leong Soo Min and Shariefah bte Shamsir, all of whom are current students from the BA(Hons) Printmaking programme.

LY: What was behind the inspiration for "Out of Print"?

Ian Woo: "Out of Print" was inspired by the students' enthusiasm for the art of printmaking. It is a pun of the actual meaning of an item that is no more in print, a book distribution that is discontinued. The other meaning would be about the concept of taking print out of its traditional context of presentation.



there are many rats that hang around food stalls. These pests are killed everyday, which resulted in the rubbish containers being filled with them. The awful thing was that the rubbish collectors don't come very often, which resulted in a terrible odour at some point in time. So the solution was to gather all the dead rats, lay them out on the road and get the traffic to go over them! Of course, as time goes by, the squashed rats simply dried up and became part of the debris of the road. I mean, is that printmaking or what! That was such a brilliant story, the imagery was just fantastic!



LY: Do you think the exhibition has helped to promote printmaking in general?

Ian Woo: Many came to the exhibition, but I am not sure how the show would convince people to be printmakers. I think printmakers are a special breed of people - temperamental, meticulous, patient, incredibly sensitive, emotional, most of them are really beautiful people, saint-like... all artists are saints!

LY: What was the process of selection? Were there any memorable moments during the exhibition?

Ian Woo: I had the help of Azlina Adam, the print technical officer to help choose the works, I think they all are great. But if you want me to cite one thing that stood out in the exhibition, I think it would be the details of a conversation that I had with one of the printmakers about Malaysian rats. We were talking about how good the food was in Malaysia, and this particular student, Lim Soo Min, mentioned that in Malaysia,



LY: What contributed to the success of "Out of Print"?

Ian Woo: I think it would be the print students, the lecturers and the technical officer's enthusiasm and belief in the medium.

LY: Has printmaking progressed over the years?

Ian Woo: I think it is important to not associate the medium to progress in relation to artistic ideas. If you are interested with artists that are progressive, you will find ways to get your ideas across whether it is with print and any other medium. I could give you examples about prints in terms of techniques through the years, but that does not equate to the success of print in relation to the context of our surroundings. I think the word progress is also suspect, progress in methodologies does not necessarily mean that we know how to make interesting art out of it.

LY: Finally by ending my set of questions, is there any advise to anyone curious or keen to take up or may already be pursuing printmaking?

Ian Woo: Like all other art forms, it is a life of discipline and dedication, sickness personified. You have to want it 'so' badly.



H.A.M.

Rofan Teo

From being the central character in Tiramisu, a rock band fusing art with rock music, and Manic Jango to being Sontol Al Loyo, Rizman Putra has been adopting multiple identities ranging from comic yet discerning mimicry of stereotypical views of Malays to posing in photographs as glam rock stars. Using his body as a form of text, he imitates the idiosyncrasies and distinct traits of the characters, which he effortlessly puts on and sheds, not unlike the flamboyant apparel and garish props he employs in his performances.

Clad in his signature and unshorn hair, Rizman transformed from a pseudo Bono in the cool rock band in his installation, "Sontol Al Loyo", to a chuckling hen in "Hyperbolic Alpha Male: The Dance", a performance at the Osaka Asia Contemporary Dance Festival 2007, and even to an androgynous figure in the video footage of "Hyperbolic Alpha Male: The Instruction Manual V.1" doing pole dancing. He may appear clumsy and uncoordinated when he first took possession of a pair of trousers in his appearance at the Osaka festival - he seemed bewildered, awkwardly looping the attire over his head while suggesting the inconvenience and discomfort they brought. It by no means became increasingly apparent the artist was merely testing the boundaries of the wear, since eventually he slipped on the trousers and gyrated with ease and dexterity, leaving any doubts he was being shackled or confounded by the garment. Tying shoelaces attached to runners from his fingers, his playful manipulation of the footwear resembled the work of a competent puppeteer satiated by the mastery of his Art.

His latest performance 'Hyperbolic Alpha Male' at Project Space was clearly a departure from the repertoire of his works; given to tensions emerging between the play of words and images or sequence of events, while focusing on the critique of male gender stereotypes.

Rizman swaggered into Project Space, sporting a cowboy hat on his blonde wig and a shocking pink tog as

he puffed his cigar. Propped against the wall behind him was 'MALICE' scrawled and cut on bold red material. He stubbed his cigar and appeared to be systematically hammering the phrase on the wall, instead it ended up as an anagram, deriving from an arbitrary act of selecting 'M-A-L-A' until he realised that the inhibition of cognition in the language and replaced the senseless word with 'M-A-L-E'.

The fastening of the coherent phrases evoking our fixation with meanings generated from the cognition of words, immediately crystallising the notion of violence with the masculine identities. It is not hard to be conscious of the origins of the gender stereotype, which occupy our imagination in old Hollywood movies where the bravado of chivalrous knights and cowboys are demonstrated from their prowess in weaponry and fighting. The masculine stereotypes incarnate in our superheroes, including Superman and Batman, which remain a popular form of visual culture, though gender was argued to be mere socio-psychological construct.

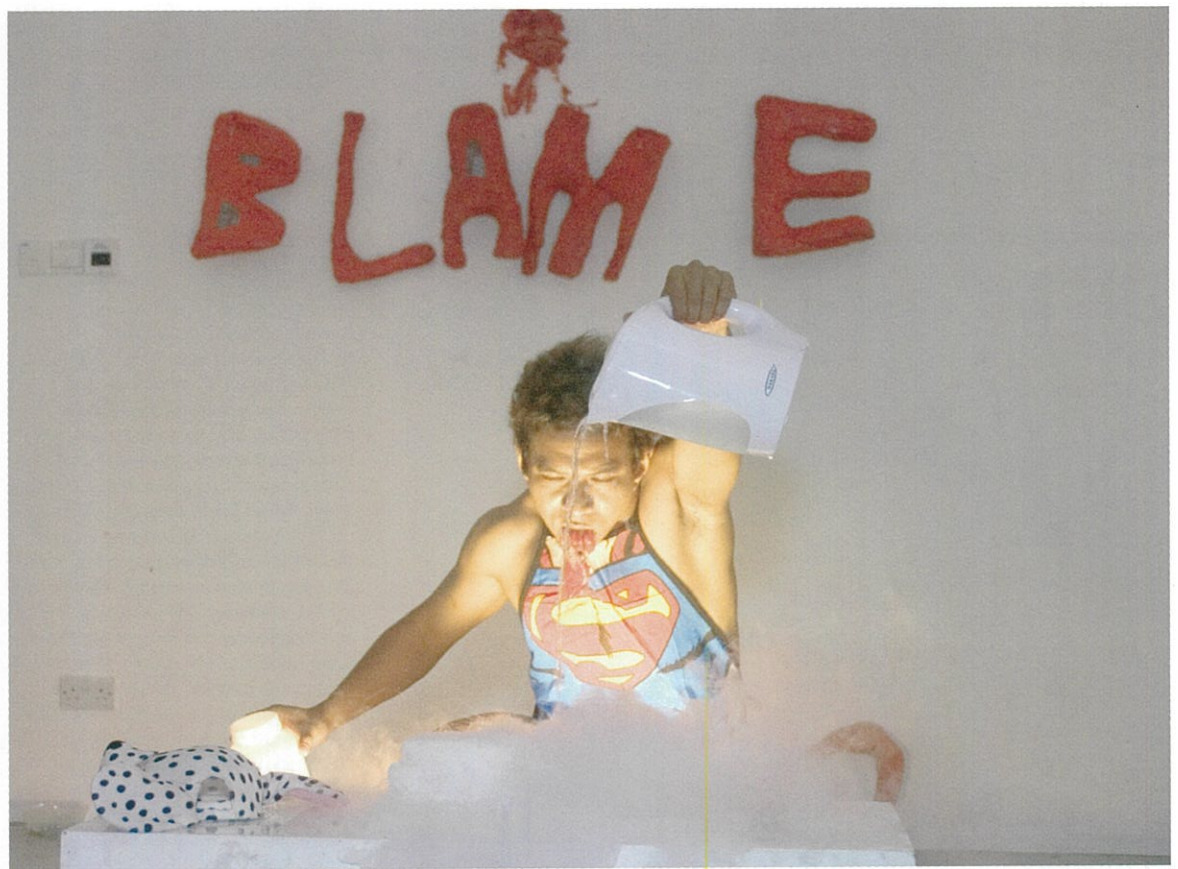
While the phrases might explicitly assign the nexus between violence and masculinity in the performance, the scenes Rizman enacted, portrayed transmutable Superhero identities with skin deep social satire. Rizman's impersonation positioned him with established pop artists, American artist, Cindy Sherman and Japanese artist, Yasumasa Morimura who digitally inserted themselves or staged elaborate settings and lavishly detailed costuming in photography to transform into the likeliness of the character depicted. Here, the artist did little to conceal the artifice of his performance. Rather than costumed in a skin-tight latex suit, our mediocre hero donned a flaccid apron with the ubiquitous 'S' Superman moniker, which pretentiously simulated the hero's macho six packs, betraying his own disguise in the parody, while at the same time, suggesting the flimsy idealism of heroism in the male identity. The question of masculine identity was further brought to question, when Rizman briefly affixed the word 'LAME' on the wall at a juncture of the performance.

Rizman built on the caricatures on the Superhero as the performance



unfolded. He implied a semblance of a superhuman feat of flying from the billowing clouds of smoke diffusing from the dry ice. Yet, the blatant pouring of water producing the effect reduced his gallantry and formability into a futile mirth. The notion of an idealised Superhero was further ridiculed when the artist still in character with Superman, covered his face with a dog's mask, dangling a piece of meat and panting like a mutt in heat. Yet, one was disposed to find the lambasting of the masculine identity semantic, since the performance was interspersed with muscle flexing virile personas.

He finished his act with a brutal destruction of a paper mache guitar, assaulting the instrument with enough rage and vigour to smash it into pieces, simultaneously recalling the word 'MALICE' which he earlier implanted on the floor. The performance came full circle, returning to the starting point when he suggested that the connection of violence and masculinity. It remains to be questioned the means with which we could summon a coherent interpretation of the masculine identity, though meanings would often be consolidated by words or language, at times faltering with the autonomy of the artist's body as countless possibilities for being text.



Questions for the duly authorised Our Story of the



Susie Wong Sui Foun

From 6th to 15th February, a workshop was held at LASALLE with Rirkrit Tiravanija, an artist of healthy renown in the field of relational art practices. The workshop began with a cook-in that early morning that was initiated, proposed and volunteered by Master's student, Dana Lam. The workshop then began to spin off this axis, and with the endorsement of Rirkrit, the practice of cooking on a daily basis with Dana's now-famous French enamel orange pot took off. To add intrigue (if that was what it was), a stone was added to the soup. Where the stone was found and who located this stone or whether it added more to the soup or dish is the stuff from which legends are born. The workshop was also inspired by the Story of the Stone Soup (see appendix, right). As Rirkrit was unable to meet the deadline for some questions, I have addressed my questions to one who was duly and tacitly acknowledged (and if not appointed formally, or at least tolerated to some degree) as an impersonator of Rirkrit. He was there on the first day of the workshop to the last day, and was

spotted looking like and mimicking Rirkrit.

Apart from the cook-in during lunch (such as miso soup, four-treasure chicken, banana pudding) at the LASALLE campus (Master's studio space), the cook-ins were steered by Rirkrit into a series of dinners at each of the participants' homes. It was at this point that Rirkrit cooked his Thai dinners for everyone. Other participants also contributed their epicurean delights to the dinner table - stuffed chicken, tomato spaghetti, salads, chng teng. Typically, Rirkrit and students spent the day marketing and going to homes to prepare, cook and then ingest the food. New social spaces were created for participants to mingle with the extended social network, like the participants' families, in a convivial mood (nothing less than over good food).

The by-now celebratory mood ended with a massive steamboat affair at the Earl Lu Gallery, in which each participant had to cook up a soup broth for an entire new audience. The whole workshop was recorded in real time on video cameras. This was projected at the Earl Lu Gallery, and later at Project

Space. Rirkrit plans to have it uploaded onto YouTube.

Some questions were put to the tacitly authorised Rirkrit persona who stresses that this is the way Rirkrit would have answered them himself:

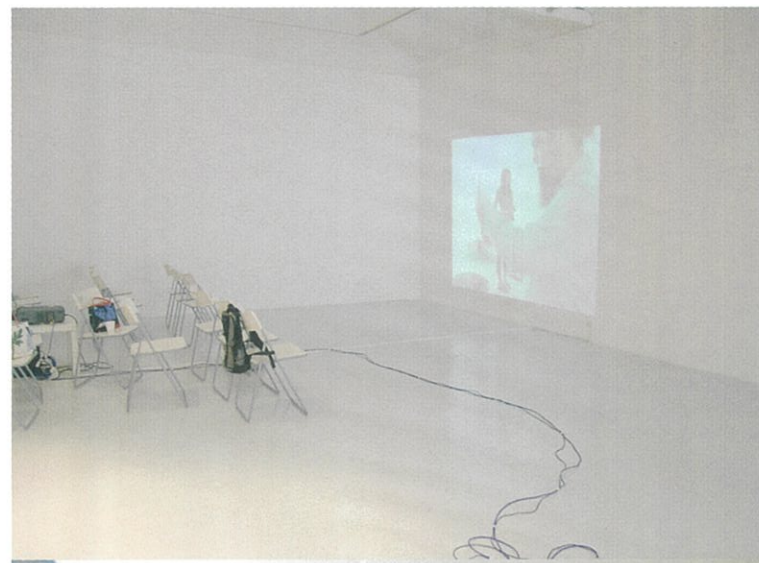
1. How and why was cooking chosen as the entry point to this workshop? Share with us the sequence of events which led to this, if the events in any way were factors in the choice.

It's not that food was chosen for the workshop - rather food chose the workshop as a way of facilitating interaction with the participants. People from all over were part of the group. The cooking, eating and food stories that were part of the first meeting of the workshop set a course that was natural to follow for the rest of the process.

2. Why is there a stone in the soup? What is the story behind it?

There are two interpretations of the Stone Soup story that we discussed. One is that by cooperation, a great end can be the result. The other more cynical view was that if you can sell "the

ed Rirkrit persona Stone Soup



The Stone Soup Legend

Source:
http://www.fairbanksfoodbank.org/about/stone_soup.html

There exists a tale, handed down from times long ago, of two travelers on a pilgrimage. Hungry and tired from a long day's journey, they come to a small, impoverished, medieval village, where they decided to rest by the side of the road. One of the travelers builds a small fire, upon which he places a large pot, while the other, having drawn water from the town well, fills the pot and places into the vessel a simple stone. As the two men sit by the fire, bringing their "stone soup" to a boil, the local villagers become inquisitive of the curious antics of these strangers. Eventually, several townsfolk decide to investigate the matter and approach the two travelers to engage them in conversation.

Shortly thereafter, there is heard the sound of merriment, as the visitors, who turn out to be quite friendly, share their tales of the lands and people they have met throughout their journey and pilgrimage with the local villagers.

Finally, a young boy asks the travelers "But why, pray thee, are you boiling a stone?"

One of the pilgrims replies, "So we may eat stone soup."

"It must be terribly bland!" says an old woman. "But I have a cabbage, which will add some flavor!"

"And I, some carrots, which will add color!" says another villager.

"Some potatoes!" offers another, until, shortly, by the contribution of a little by many, a hearty stew was made, upon which the entire village and the weary pilgrims dined... and while doing so, shared their tales, talents, and camaraderie throughout the night.

The very next day, the travelers (who by now could be called "strangers no more"), continued their journey, leaving the little town, and its people, behind. But the villagers never forgot them, and the lesson they had learned. In fact, during the hardest of times, in such a time as this tale, that little village thrived, because the townsfolk never forgot how to make "stone soup".

Such is the legend of the "Stone Soup Story".

big lie" so that everyone has an investment in the myth, great things can be done on false foundations. Both of these statements have been made about relational ascetics.

3. It seems like an all-fun and a sort of non-thinking process; but is there a serious upside to it? What are you thinking about as we proceed to go about our duties in cooking and eating (if there is a duty to eating)?

While cooking food, I think about the food and the cooking. To do otherwise would be inconsistent with my duty. There is of course a duty to eating as well, it is the duty of the guest. Without that duty, there can be no duty for the host.

4. In other words, how much of the workshop is managed and how much is left to "go with the flow"?

You were there, you know the answer. We were aiming at a showing at the end and we got there.

5. You have been labeled a Buddhist monk and someone who cooks and offers Thai food in his work. Does your workshop eventually resemble a

retreat - whether it's spiritual or culinary (as I am now aware - eating well means a state of well-being). If not, what are the differences?

Who labeled me a "Buddhist monk"? I have never taken the orders of the priesthood even temporarily. The word "retreat" is also loaded in this setting. The workshop was a workshop. People came together to work and learn.

6. It had also been described that your choice of Thai food is to offer a space for cultural hybridisation. Can you elaborate?

No. What people take away with them is a taste in the mouth, not a discourse on cultural hybridisation. All of the dishes I cook have their own stories and histories. Phad Thai was declared a national dish in the middle of the 20th century as part of a campaign for national pride.

7. You have described us as curious students - yet you rarely answered our questions, at least to our satisfaction. Is this Zen? Can you recall instances during this workshop when you carefully avoided answering a question?

Have you been satisfied with the cooking?

8. What do you yourself take away with you from the workshop, if it's true that an artwork never ends?

I have gained weight during my time here. Bits will remain in my system for a long time - ideas will remain in circulation as well. But "never" - never is a long time.

9. Finally how do you manage any poseur?

I give them my imprimatur.

Answered!

Jacqui-Rae Cai Shiqin

What do you think of Project Space?

SW: It is an Incubator for new ideas and new experiments. It's really a happening place, which seems to be bubbling and frothing with artworks "fresh from the oven". The Project Space is definitely a good starting point for students to showcase their works. At the same time, it creates an awareness of fellow schoolmates' works and allows for greater interactivity.

TT: It seems like an abandoned room sited at a forsaken corner in the school. But cool lah.

AZ: An accessible platform for LASALLE students to exhibit their works.

Is the venue appropriate and accessible?

LF: If you mean appropriate in an informal sense, then yes. The fact that it's located in a tin-shed/container sort of building creates a sense that these works can be taken not-too-seriously. It's not as formal as an official gallery, and it's not the artist's studio either because the artworks come from other parts of the school, if you get what I mean, so it's an interesting 'in-between' place.

It's definitely accessible from the Level 2 tin-shed studio (haha) but for the public visitor from elsewhere it's kinda hard to find because it is tucked at a corner of the school.

TT: Ya, it's not too bad. Anywhere is fine as long as you guys can get our lazy ass off the chair.

AZ: Yes, but only to LASALLE students.

What is your response to the exhibitions?

TT: Mostly Fine Art students' work. Is that meant to be?

SW: I find most works raw and experimental, which does not necessarily mean they are bad. That makes them highly interesting and unusual as a result.

How often do you go for exhibitions?

AM: As often as I hear about them...

How do you suggest we organise/curate better shows?

LF: It would be good if there could be a short write-up accompanying each exhibition explaining how the works are put together by the curator. Sometimes it seems a little haphazard and hard to make sense of the exhibition as a whole.

SW: 1. Involve more students. It is by no way an "exhaustive" selection process. I think the theme and title of each show should be made known beforehand and a call for submission requested. It would be great if everyone feels that the Project Space is OUR Space and they can try to work for it to exhibit their works.

2. More publicity. Get more people to be interested in it, not just from our Fine Arts Faculty.

3. Better location.

4. Proper gallery sitting, to ensure that works are safe and that the doors to the Project Space is not locked up all the time, even when there is a show going on inside.

5. Provision of a short synopsis on the theme of the show would be helpful.

SF: We should publicise the exhibitions more. I'd like to see at least short explanations about the works featured to further appreciate the intentions of the artists with regards to the theme of Project Space. Actually, I like the small crowd, and personally, I'm calling it 'The Indie Gallery'.

AZ: Have more exciting themes and perhaps also prepare catalogues for the people who visit.

Complete the following: "I think Project Space is ..."

LF: ...a good start and a great idea, but it can expand to include student-curated shows, and if the space can be a little bigger, that would be good too.

TT: ... cool...way too cool....

AZ: ... supportive.

Art or Appetiser: what attracts you more, the exhibition or the reception? If the reception, then how can we make the exhibition stand out better?

LF: The exhibition :) I prefer to look at the exhibits when there are less people.

TT: Both. The reception is ok, at least there are refreshments. There is room for improvement, and I am hunting for WINE !

Jacqui-Rae Cai's

TOP 10 Favourite Exhibitions

- ▲ 1. Ripcord (best reception!)
- ▼ 2. The Alchemist
- ▲ 3. Obscurity
- 4. Out of Print
- ▼ 5. The Pefect Competition
- ▲ 6. Sonto Al Loyo
- ▲ 7. Discreet Images
- 8. Outstanding
- 9. Mixed Media
- ▲ 10. Masters in Fine Arts Alumni show



How do you hear about the exhibitions?

TT: Milenko or Ian, who will always open the door and shout to whoever's in the way.

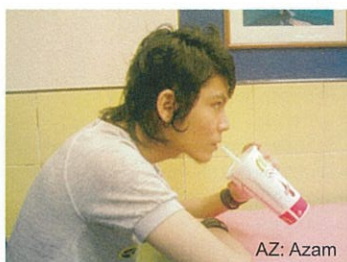
LF: Usually word-of-mouth or through the posters outside the Level 2 studio.

Do the exhibits meet your expectations of Project Space?

LF: I had no expectations of what Project Space would be like. It was a novel concept to me to begin with.

What would you like to see in Project Space?

JH: We should have interactive games between lecturers and students in Project Space, and I would like to see Hazel Lim featured in Project Space.



Works by Richard Berry, 9 – 23 May 2007

Numbers presents a series of photographic investigations of numerical sequences undertaken in 2006 by Richard Berry. A specific work 1-99 is also assembled as an artist's book to be published by LASALLE's Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore.

1-99 presents a single composition comprising a series of photographic observations defined by a straightforward numerical structure, the numbers one to 99. This work is a compilation of independent investigations by two artists, Michael Abrahams and Richard Berry.

NUMBERS

Richard Berry

The starting point for this work was a simple and fairly mundane decision between myself and a friend, Michael Abrahams, at an exhibition in London. We were looking for a way to keep in touch and to maintain a creative relationship that had been interrupted by my relocation to Singapore.

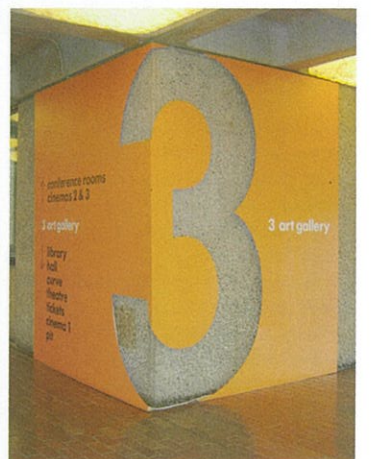
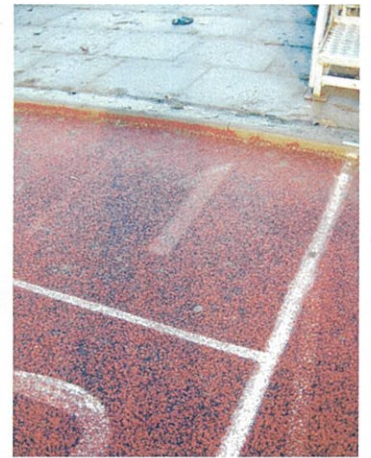
The original objective was to create an artist's book. The simple structure – the numbers one to ninety nine – was agreed as the basis for a visual narrative. The structure offers an intrinsic logic and framework to mediate the contribution for the two of us. As far as the source material of the number sequence is concerned, Michael Abrahams made the odd number images, and my contribution is to the even numbers.

The artist's book will be published in the near future. The book will adhere to a set of principles and structures agreed at the outset and is part of an ongoing series of works broadly concerned with alpha-numeric sequences. This exhibition uses the images made for the book. The context of the juxtaposition of a work made by two contributors is aimed at reflecting observations derived from their surroundings – London/Europe Singapore/Asia. More importantly is the interaction of two sensibilities and the resonance of individual aesthetics towards a work that aims for a unifying integrity.

However, this exhibition is primarily an opportunity to present a series of personal investigations using the material collected for the artist's book as a starting point but developing personal observations and extending into territory not envisaged in the original discussion.

Up until five or six years ago, I managed to maintain a limited output as a scenographer. As both the nature and intensity of my academic career has progressively precluded the opportunity to commit to active participation in theatre-making, the pursuit of an outlet for the intrinsic need I have always had to wrestle with visual communication has become a fairly desperate imperative. While the basis of my theatre works was by definition a collaboration with others towards a public output, the real value to me was the process, the investigation and those precious moments of self-discovery and creation. So, I have taken the opportunity to subvert this collaboration – or at least divert the primary intention – into my own backwater of work-in-progress investigations. Inevitably, I have fallen back to recurring themes.

The influences of my mid-20th century European art school education are all too clear – a continued interest in the use of collage and the dynamic of the repeated image – have been, and I suspect will continue to be, prevalent in my meager output.



Rizman Putra

The world consists of many masters, when one says they possess a Masters in something that means they hold a second or further degree from a university or other academic institution. This is how I am going to start this article, and I am not sure why, but at the end of this article these earlier lines will mean something when we reach the end.

I was assigned to write about a show that I was involved in last September, simply entitled 'Master of Arts Fine Arts: Works-in-Progress', and technically, I have the liberty to write the article in the format of a review, a report, an interview or a critique. This article may be in a form of a review, but of course I have to rely on my weak memory, which is based on conversation, observation or the critiques that I have attended since last semester. The information here may not be precise, but nevertheless, this is going to be based on the deepest and honest views in regards to the works in the exhibition. I will not write about all the artists but a selection of them, which I feel close to somehow.

Firstly, to avoid being labelled a masturbator or an egoist, I will avoid commenting on my own work, but that is not the point, I will play my part as an observer in order to make this article possible and accessible for art readers.

The existence of Project Space first and foremost has proven to be a space that possesses a strange energy. This energy inhibits this room, which one can neither call a gallery nor an exhibition room. At times, the space reminds me of an incubator.

The works presented in this show are eclectic, varied and often located at a foetus stage. Well, that is typical for a work in progress show, however, thematically, the works showcased here are raw and unpolished, and that is the beauty of Project Space. It provides the opportunities for students to make mistakes, which is vital to art making.

Robert Guth presented a scanned photographic image on a natural ground, the image composed of a loose grass patch, random twigs and used construction gloves positioned on the lower left of the glossy AO size lambda print. This work represented a viewpoint of a visitor who is trying to address his personal existence on a foreign soil. In the process of investigation, he developed a strong degree of connection with man-made waste amongst the natural landscape. The excavation and analysis proved to be an attempt for himself as an artist to understand and make sense of his existence in relation to this foreign land. And this process proved to be the strong point in this work.

Next to Guth's image, Arthur Wong presented a rather whimsical installation of an 'ongoing' knitted garb, which is connected to a mundane-looking plastic bag. Looking at the work, in order to understand where it is coming from, Wong has somewhat mentioned his personal mission or concealed desire to champion femininity in one way or another. This performative/installation work is a prime example of how Wong has developed a strategy to blurring gender and its pre-conceived activity. The sensation of knitting creates an imaginary conversation between Wong and the society in regards to the role of a 'man' who is connected with femininity.

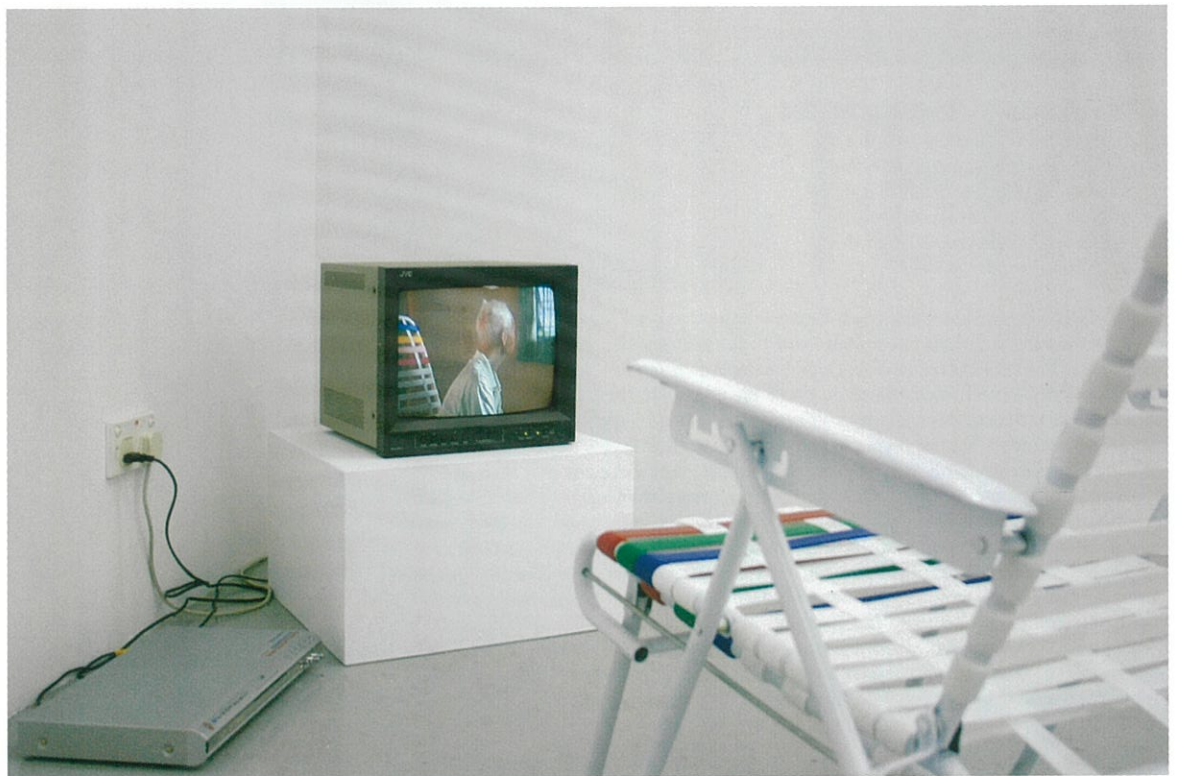
Positioned on top of a pristine white pedestal, is Chang Jinchao's 'elastical doodle'. It was a graphite drawing, against a plain white background, of an oddly shaped figure looking dishevelled and being punched by strange elongated arms. Jinchao is trying to provide a caricatured commentary on violence; his depiction of men in general can be seen as a form of warped elastical figurine in an offbeat pose or situation. The irony arises in the contrast between the medium or presentation and the concerns it is trying to address. Jinchao is experimenting with the notion of violence by adopting a raw child-like play in this drawing. This examination of subject and medium further questions the transition between childhood and adulthood or displacement of the in-between.

Susie Wong's drawing displayed such enigmatic and ghostly shades of a portrait of an anonymous aging man. This particular drawing raised the question of life and death, and Wong's intimate and honest declaration of a simple subject of humanity left me with a subtle glimpse of how fragile we are.

Max Kong is interested in dealing with painting surfaces. In this particular painting (which reminds me so much of a Lego pad), Kong organised a structure for his work and all one can see on the surface are circular white dot reliefs on a white canvas. This cold and stark presentation is an ode to the joy of painting. Kong has a way of creating works which are emotionless and detached, which I think is his strength. His quick-and-easy methodology in creating a piece of painting is something one can definitely learn from.

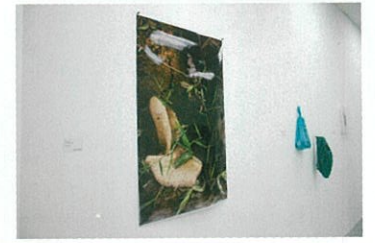
Most of the works featured in the exhibition are by artists who have been practising their craft for a while, and some of the works displayed here show great potential in the future. There are some who just placed their works because they were told to (pointing finger at myself) by their supervisor.

We Are Masters of The Universe



Returning to my opening thought about possessing a Master's degree. My point is: it is not about how qualified you are in your field of work; it is more about how conscious you are in understanding the level of your work. True to that fact, I do not see my fellow course mates as students in an institution. Rather, we are all artists in a common struggle to find reasons to what we do and, hopefully, our creations may somehow connect to and communicate with the rest of the world.

To end this pathetic article with the song 'We are the World' would be rather cheesy. I will just end this with something more random: we are all masters our own universe and what we create may work for some and may not work for others. Whether you are a master or an apprentice (the latter is in fact cheesier than the first one), we do certainly share the same path.



In a Pixie's World

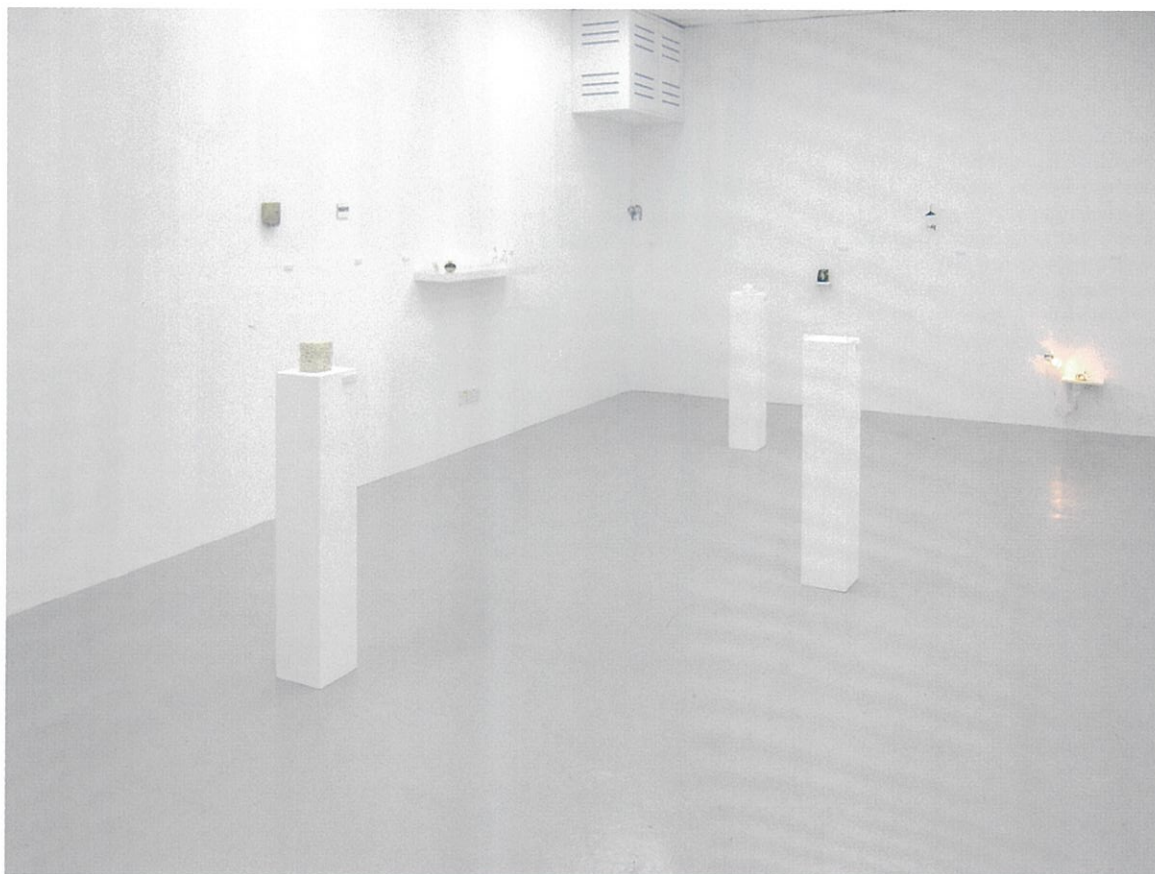
Julie Lee Pei Shan

Miniature, held on 2 to 11 August 2006, marked the opening of the new gallery space in LASALLE, a space which went on to provide a platform to showcase Fine Arts students' works.

In the pristine, whitewashed space called Project Space, Miniature seemed to have transformed the room into a surrealistic setting whereby the works were small in scale, filled with stories to tell. Curated by our very own Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Milenko Prvacki, the exhibition featured the different works by the BA (Hons) and the MA programme students. As the title suggests, all the works in this show addressed the notion of scale, and its insistence in smallness, in spite of sometimes overrated glamorous and monumental-sized art works.

In this exhibition, the works are very much experimental and contemporary in nature, and at the same time, being very true to its own. From small scale ceramics and prints to installations, each artist responded creatively to the theme, Miniature.

Chris Quack, for instance, exhibited a dried up, tiny dandelion encased in an acrylic box. The idea of having a tiny, wilted flower in a plastic case, despite its smallness and insignificance, is poetic and beautiful. Rather than seeming like a lifeless dandelion, it speaks about the beauty of impermanence in the most subtle manner. Being a time-based work, it encapsulated the meaningful process of the life cycle of the tiny flower, which at that moment, exposed its fragility and vulnerability.



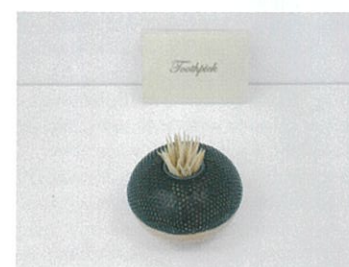
Junaidi Iskandar Wa'eei used items that are reminders of our everyday life. He purposefully-arranged toothpicks in what seemed like a toothpick holder and placed a display note, "Toothpick", stressing upon the fact that these are toothpicks in a toothpick holder. What I questioned most about the work is why the artist actually placed the display note "Toothpick" beside the actual item, as if the audience needed further assertion on the definition of these sharp-ended wooden sticks. This

work reminded me of "The Treason of Images" by Rene Magritte where the text at the bottom of the painting suggested that the painting of a pipe is really "not a pipe". Familiar connotation seems to thread through both works whereby it questions our senses. It speaks about how our senses and perceptions may tend to be the source of our delusions, and indicate to us signs and symbols programmed as part of our perception. Small may this work be, it does speak aloud.

Whilst canvases seem to be a usual surface for painters to daub his paint on, Mahen Pereira chose the medium of canvas, sans the paint, to manipulate into shapes and forms. In this work, he captured delicate traces that suggest the sensitivity of wear and tear, and subsequently resulted in a dialogue created that is investigatory in nature. This work is what I thought to be a monumental representation of time and space.

Another artist, Jon Chan, created a 'mini' comic box that was inscribed with text from the bible and fragmented imageries he randomly picked. Unlike any other comics that comes with plots and characters, Jon's comic has a 'déjà vu' quality to it. Without consciously constructing a story, the story creates its own whereby the images shared no link to the text, whilst seeming like they were strung together with much ease. Jon's work contemplates on the heavy idea of Armageddon in society by employing the use of a light-hearted comic, perhaps to question our individual involvement in society and if we "truly do care?"

This exhibition brings to light the perspectives in miniature by various artists that proves to be light-hearted and intriguing. And while one walked through the entire exhibition, it is as though one is like a giant, towering over the many things that we tend to overlook under our feet, while at the same time, realising how small we really are.



Mixed Media

Deborah Tan Pei Yi

Mixed Media was an exhibition in Project Space curated by Khiew Huey Chian, artist and lecturer at LASALLE. The title of this show pretty much speaks for itself, as all the works by students from the various levels of the BA(Hons) programme consisted of the fusion of different materials.

As you enter Project Space, a sculptural piece situated somewhat in the middle of the exhibition seems to catch your eye. A work done by Wang Jian Jason, Untitled, looks rigid from afar, but as you draw closer to the work, the treatment of the Styrofoam used to produce this work compels you to take a closer look.

Some of the artists used found objects in their work, and here I shall talk briefly about my work, which employed the use of personal everyday objects to create a video clip. In the video clip, moving images of objects, such as a bird-cage with a key hanging on the inside, swinging back and forth, a box filled with little mementos, and revealing little notes, are filmed. The layering of images in this video clip creates a sort of ambiguity and the association of objects used to evoke an uncanny quality in the work.

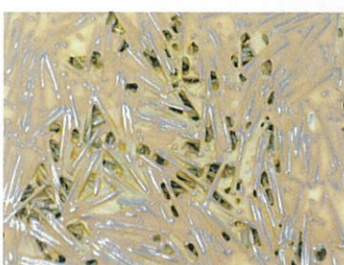


Mohammed Zulkarnaen B Othman, a well-known graffiti artist, picked up found objects and broke the boundaries of painting. With his use of the objects and the accompaniment of the text, "Untitled", he endowed upon the objects a new meaning and instilled his own notions. Another artist who transcended the boundaries of painting as an act of simply applying paint on a stretched canvas is Kankanige Mahen Walter Perera. Mahen showcased a series of works mounted on the wall. He uses paint (together with other media) and applies them onto a canvas, and transforms them into sculptural pieces. The functionality of the canvas is no longer merely to be painted on, but now demonstrates its ability to take form.

The colours in this exhibition seemed to be more subtle, but were balanced by brighter colours from a few works. One of them was Zulkarnaen's found object, painted yellow and with text painted over in contrasting red. Poh Yah See, a painter, showcased her set of works that hung on the wall, packed in a plastic sleeve. Her works seem to relate very much with childhood experience, with her subject being 'the circus' and cartoon characters from 'Animaniacs' and 'Felix the Cat'. Her works aimed to evoke a sense of happiness with the colours she uses - the pastel-coloured stripes, the contrasting reds, yellows and baby blues.

This exhibition displayed a wide variety of works unbounded by a sole material and technique evident in the works of the various students.

20 - 29 September 2006



Class One

Alchemist

Maxine Chionh Jin Li

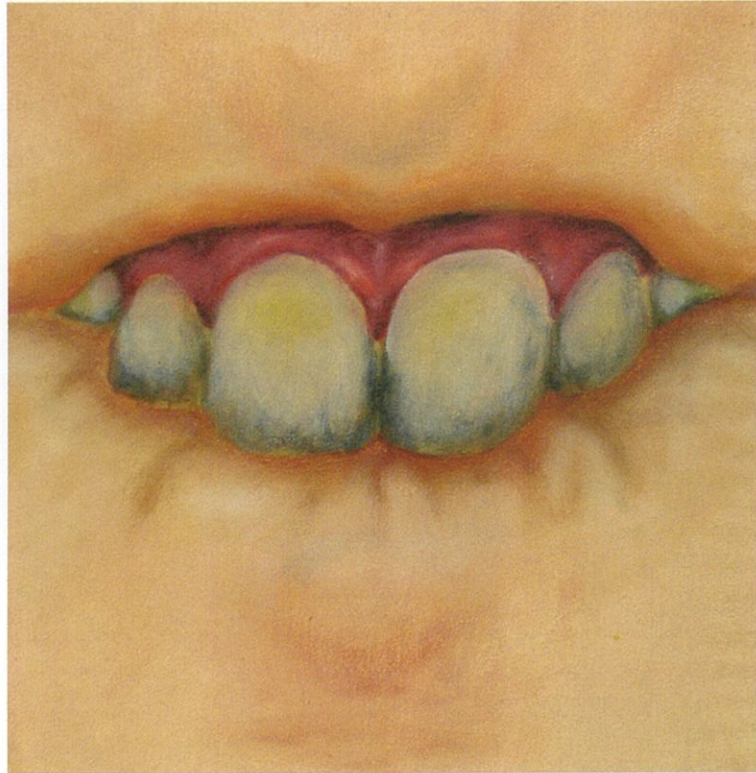
Class 1 seemed to have come and gone, slipping down into the deep dark waters of things disremembered. How could something that meant so much to the participants garner hardly any interest aside from our own pollyanna stares; how could we have shaken our audience by their shoulders when their level of engagement was merely the perfunctory seven-second look-through?

Taking that very walk through the gallery actually requires little more than a few shuffling steps, yet it felt dismally empty and bleached. I guess it is hard to focus on artworks by Level 'One-ers' when the amalgamation of the light spectrum is burning into one spot in your cornea. But, assuredly, there were artworks painstakingly worked upon, and tenderly displayed by the six.

Making it through the doorway into the threshold of the room, we see Jacqui's artwork that stood carved into the left wall. Her fragile ceramic slices looked like strong visual metaphors for fungus that grows on trees, an organically undulating stairway whose steps would break with even the slightest brush against it. But in naming her sculpture "Morse Code", the artist seemed to want us to pay closer attention to the gaps between the clay pieces – the various sequences of clicks and pauses, long and short sounds between them, all in a bid to transmit some form of message. By this token, it is truly the acts of transmission and decoding that became the message.

The second sculpture student to be featured in this exhibition is Wang Jian. "Beauty of Nature" is an artwork consisting of two free-standing foam structures. One can guess that the artist was meditating upon the decay and decomposition of all things natural, that the state of becoming undone can be even more beautiful as when they were whole. It is a work whose pristine whiteness alludes to the idealized and romantic notion of a pure, untainted side of nature, in one moment of its cycle of atrophy and eventual resurrection.

Veliana's and my paintings also bear close associations with the natural environment. Rendered in oil, both works are investigations into the flora and fauna of Singapore. Veliana chose a flower whose name she is not quite certain of – she painted a series that is mysteriously abstracted in its representation – she left it "Untitled". The ambivalence of her work, from its conception to its execution and display spoke of her sensitivity to the great unbeknown aspect of the natural world. The O'Keeffe sensibilities of this work lure the viewer into taking an intimate gaze at the almost sexualised insides of a living vessel, an invitation to deflower the painting. My work embodied the escape of the painter from painting, turning to the salve of drawing. The orchid I was depicting found its final manifestation as tumour-like forms on the canvas, wasting away into the thinned arms of its floral stems. Not many can decipher the identity of the subject matter on their first look, but I liked it that things came together when one looked at the title. I found in this, a seminal piece that has got me excited about



expanding my oeuvre in the direction of metamorphosing a painting into a drawing, of non-classification of technique and final work.

The third painter in this group show exhibited two in a series of five self-portraits. In his tongue-in-cheek representation of himself, Claes has chosen to paint only his mouth on a small square canvas. The comical biting of his lips and the exaggerated gums serve to bring his teeth into sharper focus. Entitled "Ear", his is a playful piece that is unique for a self-portrait that does not indulge in trying to find his own identity; rather, the artist seemed to be objectifying and isolating a part of his body that rendered him almost unrecognisable on a mere canvas, but completely unmistakable to those who know him.

The only printmaking student in this show, Julie, has put up five deceptively nondescript prints. Combining the techniques of hard ground etching and soft ground impression, she had produced a beautifully understated suggestion of vague forms. If artworks could be measured in terms of decibels, "Unscathed Traces" would hardly be above the intended whisper of the artist behind her prints. The delicate and sharp line work in the foreground is well-complemented by the enigmatic brown marks texturing the print. There is a wealth of subtle marks and traces to be uncovered, and the artist keeps you guessing what forms the blue lines actually encapsulate. Parachute-like, flaccid latex sheaths, peanut tents – all whimsical, friable expressions in her exploration of leaving her mark.



Hsiung Lu-Fang

The Alchemical process of making art is slow. It requires a gestation over years and the inclusion of all sorts of influences – a fairytale here, a violent comic there, a biblical reference, obsession with form or materials, perhaps love for mother or country.

– From the Exhibition Synopsis for Alchemist

Often, when one steps into a group art exhibition, the artworks on display are stand-alone pieces of art. Although the artworks adhere to one curatorial theme and (usually) form a coherent whole, a full appreciation of each individual work is possible only if the viewer is aware of the previous artworks by each individual artist. And in approaching each of these works, one might ask, where does each artwork fit in the personal context and history of each individual artist?

Alchemist differs from other showcases by being an exhibition that examines the evolution of the art making process of each participating artists. Consisting artworks by artists, Lina Adam, Chang Jinchao, Susie Wong and many others, it was a pleasant surprise to discover that each recent artwork on display was accompanied by an image or a collection of images rooted in the personal history of the artist, providing additional layers of meanings to the more recent exhibited work.

Instead of deciphering the links between different works by various artists and the curatorial theme, which is commonly the case, in the instance of Alchemist I found myself looking for links between the images from the artists' past and their more recent works. Some of these links are immediately apparent, such as Regina Yam's Drawing from 1992 and her new work Not Young Anymore, a charcoal and pastel drawing.

Although there are some distinct differences in the range of line work and the colours used in each drawing, both works echo each other and it would be hard to guess from just looking at these two drawings that these are actually works from different eras, if not for the tell-tale signs of aging paper. These two works are intriguing because "obsession and repetitive mark-making" appear to be an enduring concern despite the gap of 15 years between the two works. Of course, it would be even more intriguing if we could see 15 years'

worth of obsessive and repetitive marks, but that would be beside the point.

Some of the artworks with links between past and present which were not as immediately obvious include Robert Guth's Drawing from 1990 and Mr Singapore, 2007. Drawing from 1990 is made up of two separate pieces of drawing, one of which is clearly a preparatory study for the other, consisting several sketches and an image of a friendly furry bear, covered with fine blue ink lines. The other piece of drawing has aged particularly well, like good wine. It seemed to have undergone an alchemical process of transformation in itself. What looks at first glance like a blueprint of a sea urchin, composed of an intricate and meticulous network of intersecting blue ink lines, takes on cosmic proportions because marks of time have been left on the paper. The whole drawing now looks like an image of earth floating in outer space.

What do these drawings have in common with Mr. Singapore, a series of 10 plain vermilion red plastic bags (the kind you use to lug home stacks of textbooks or heavy shopping), arranged five by two and with some overlapping each other? Each shopping bag has a CD-face with a unique facial expression, and arms are raised in surrender, as though they are all hanging from the same invisible laundry line.

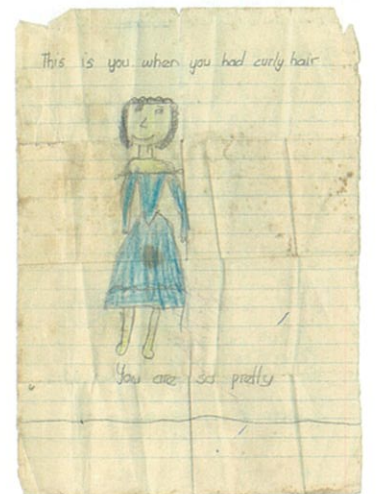
Apart from recurring hints of the artist's playful sense of humour, it took me a moment to register the similarities between Guth's past and present work. The drawing of what I now interpret as earth adrift in outer space takes on additional meaning as a symbol for how everyone on earth is connected and a part of the larger whole of humanity, the way Mr. Singapore is in fact made up of many different people. Guth himself explained that "The use of formal repetitive pattern to build a complex image is continued through a change in media."

In the second statement of proposal for Alchemist, where ideas for the exhibition were bounced around through email (I was kindly allowed access to these documents for the purpose of this review), Robert Guth suggested that the MA Fine Arts candidates "transform the space into an illegal casino and we all become croupiers – in essence transforming a money-losing art space into a gold mine." Which would have been hilarious, and a whole lot of mischievous fun; but as it stands, the actual Alchemist is in fact a gold mine in itself – if you as the viewer are willing to connect your own dots.



MAJULAH SINGAPURA

Mari kita rakyat Singapura
Sama-sama menuju bahagia
Cita-cita kita yang mulia
Berjaya Singapura
Marilah kita bersatu
Dengan semangat yang baru
Semua kita berseru
Majulah Singapura
Majulah Singapura



What Could I Really and Sincerely Write About?

Gilles Massot

I must say that the request to write something about the exhibition Of Castle Ruins and HDB flats at this particular point in time created a fair amount of stress for me. First of all, the show was conceived as the Masters 2006 Alumni show by Shu Fang and she would be in a much better position than I to tell why she had thought of juxtaposing my work based on the ruins of an 18th century French castle and Safaruddin's exploration of childhood memories in Singapore HDB. Besides intuitively perceiving a connotation in some aspects of our respective works, I hadn't put much thought and reasoning as to why this was so at the time. Trying to do so now would amount to a formal exercise emptied of much of its content. So what could I really and sincerely write about?

The main reason the request created some stress is probably because I am currently busy preparing for the launch of my new book while getting ready to receive my mother for a three-week stay, her first visit here in more than 20 years. Both events feel like a turning point for me and this certainly generates tensions in the depths of my being. I am physically busy preparing the launch of a book that summarises 30 years of artistic practice and mentions some of the seminal works I did in the Singapore art scene in the 1980's, while looking forward to sharing what has been my life in Singapore through that same period with the woman who gave me birth. Will she ever come back here? She is

getting old... she can still travel... but how long will she be able to do so?

If anything, it looks like this month of April 2007 will hold a feeling of Before and After... a threshold... hum... maybe that is what I could write about: threshold... That master has been indeed a threshold for me, a particularly rewarding experience that gave me the opportunity to deepen and consolidate my practice. So it is certainly a case of "before and after". But it also materialised a work that had been in the making ever since I was five years old. The castle of Valbelle was an important source of inspiration to the child I was, an inspiration that proved powerful enough to connect with the research of the conceptual photographer I have become. Thus, the notion of a "Before and After" normally associated to a Master is further emphasised. And I suppose this must be pretty much the same for Din, given that for him, too, the origin of the work is to be found in childhood memories.

I remember being struck by what he said in one of our conversations in the Masters studio: to the child he was, the shift from Toa Payoh to Tampines had been a particularly traumatic experience. Talk about a threshold... a complete change of daily environment. At least to him. To my foreign perception there isn't much to differentiate Toa Payoh and Tampines and that is why I had found his statement particularly arresting. But to him that had meant the shattering of a familiar and comfortable world to step into uncharted land. The Master work was a way for him to understand and recollect the pieces that had made

his earliest childhood a blessed moment.

So there we are: re-actualised childhood memories, deep and intense shifts of periods of life, expectation and recollection of moments that will never repeat... the passing of time... What if I was turning the title of the show upside down:

Of Castle apartments and HDB Ruins

Hum... this is becoming interesting... will HDB ever be in ruins? Imagine... Ruined HDB covered in thick jungle... will Singapore ever not just "have" but BE history? That indeed could be worth writing about...



About Work in the Masters in Fine Arts Alumni Exhibition

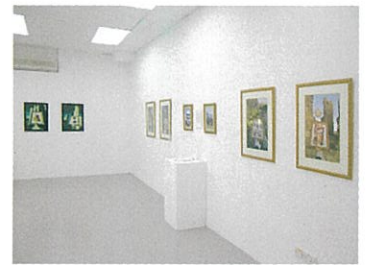
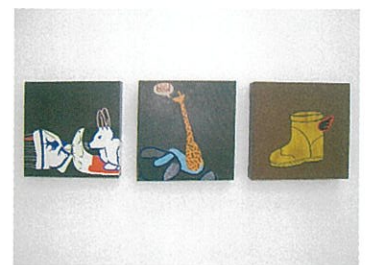
Safaruddin Bin Abdul Hamid

The works that I showed in the Masters in Fine Arts Alumni exhibition are a result of my intentionally displaced objects onto the canvas. I hope to evoke a certain reaction from the audience among which a sense of nostalgia or longing of something that is hard to find in the present time. The objects on the canvas are isolated and painted in such a way so as to bring across the idea of displacement. When a sense of longing comes about, it lets the viewer recall the memories they had with the objects being a marker. I wanted to show people the importance of its history and background. You can say that these works are a portrayal of my longing for the past.

In my previous works, I used photographs of my past as references for my paintings. The reason behind it was because I could not seem to remember my past and photographs helps me bring back past memories. And from these photographs, I uncover truths and revelations about my past that would trigger certain feelings and emotions towards how I would approach my paintings. Furthermore, a lot of my old photograph contains images of places, objects and icons that played a significant role in my life. Photographs capture the time that I had lost.

When I look back and I could not associate myself with the past, temporal and spatial displacement occurs. Most of the images of places, objects and icons had been distorted in my past works because of how I feel

towards each image. I intend to gather more information about the places, objects and icons from my past and compare the similarities and differences to the present to assist me in my approach to art. Furthermore, I view or see a new painting or works as a fresh attempt to and also part of an ongoing dialogue. Each work (whether a series or individual) is tied to the next and the one before.



OUTSTANDING

(Sometimes, we all need a pat on the back.)

Jon Chan Weiwen

Behind a very simple word, comes a variety of meanings, stratas of meaning that oscillate and gravitate into and out of each other. But this is only the case when fitted within certain arenas, and in this case we face the arena of the young artist, weighing and estimating the value of the word 'Outstanding'. What a strange word to be investing one's time in! But beware, dear reader, because we are on some dangerous ground! We face a minefield of conflicting emotions, doubts and an unsuppressible ego that lurks in every one of us. Very simply put, the word 'Outstanding' refers to a very good performance, work, but on another level, it also refers to the clearly noticeable. How does one arrive at being clearly noticeable besides being the best of the lot? On the wall within the Fine Arts BA studio there is a line of text, written by a fellow student that reads "Only a rat can win a rat race." Does it really take a rat to win this? Can it be possible to be outstanding and not to be conniving or self-proclaiming? Are there really rats out there? Or are we in all honesty, just plain jealous and in this jealous and bitter state, might we become rats too?

In this country of ours, education is the prized gem. Scholarly success, a limitless quest for knowledge and success is regarded with high esteem. There is a system of value that is awarded to academic students for all the right answers in all their different exam papers. In the case of the arts,

there are no right nor wrong answers, just self-proclaimed directions that are given an objective evaluation by all who are surrounding the works. These evaluations differ from person to person and no one view can be esteemed higher than the other, unless decided by the artist himself/herself. It is then apparent, that an artist has the will to choose who he/she decides to listen to and this is when we tread on dangerous ground, because the word 'outstanding' infers a different meaning from person to person and also by way of the person's usage of it. It can be dangerous towards us, the artists, on the level that it flatters us and causes us to believe that we are something we are not. In this blind reverie, we make false moves based on a lack of criticality and awareness. On the other hand, when we see that the word 'Outstanding' has different values for us depending on who says it, these are the doubts we might possibly face:

If there is someone whom you hold a high esteem for, say, a senior artist and the word 'outstanding' pops up into view, would you hold it in higher esteem than from an art critic who has just criticized you? If so, why would you do so if criticism is supposed to be good for you? Could it be that the criticism could be unjustified because of a certain biased view? Or are you just running towards the praise merely to heal your wounded ego? What if it were reversed? Would you do the same running? What if it were the critic who praised you and the respected artist who criticised and devalued your work? What does it matter in the end if it's what you think about your own art that counts and not the evaluation of others? Yet in order to be successful, in order to get you a place in the Venice Biennale, one needs to be placed in a sphere of evaluation and judgement.

One needs to be cattle, stamped, approved and ready for the slaughterer.

A fundamental question an artist is most likely to face is the question of success. How do we perceive success? As something gained by our works' selling power? Or is it in recognition by our peers, our senior artists, critics, art admirers. Is it a position at some prestigious Art Biennale? Or is it none of the above, but in a ceaseless act of soul searching, a possibly over-romanticised view that one gains recognition within one's own work. Where our value as an artist, as a person, is established in our search to discover ourselves within the work itself. Where in the search for truth, the artist finds his/her own joy in that very act of discovering his/her own self. And deeply set on this journey, what does it matter of the value of success, the critiques and the evaluations, when the joy should not be found in the goals of an artist (although necessary) but in the continual act of discovery? But even so, who can live this life?

How does one fund this continual act of discovery if it is not nurtured by surrounding supporters, organisations, unbiased criticism (if there's such a thing?). Who can deny that a place in some Biennale, an award of some kind, or even a pat on the back adds tremendous value to our endeavours, a tremendous ego booster? How much more 'outstanding' can an artist be when given the relevant support? As artists, should we shy away from praise? Are we fearful to be labelled as rats? Essentially, all these feelings constitute an old illness of ours - an illness established as the illness of being human. Very human indeed, to be locked in an all-out war within ourselves, a continual stratagem against and out of the fear of how we are perceived. What are we at most times at openings of exhibitions but masked individuals, concealing, hoping and occasionally revealing our true intentions, only to deny it later on. In light of this reality, what have we then?

We have our work.

And in that work, the journey, for it is in the work that we can see for ourselves. We see all our ability before us and at the same time all that we are lacking. We see ourselves mirrored, transfigured, contorted, and it is by our handling that we find the 'outstanding' for ourselves and for all others. And it is for ourselves that we decide the value of these works, value will differ from person to person, from time to time, but if we don't set down the anchor and choose to find the 'outstanding' within the work or the great value of the work, the tendency would be that this journey will end. In the end, it is in the discovering of value that wills us to go on, as in the words of Nietzsche, "who would still wish to go on working in these old depths, unless he had learned meanwhile to be satisfied with precious stones or discovering laws of nature?" With that in mind, I would like to end off with a question posed from the beginning, "Might we become rats too?" That, my dear reader, I leave entirely in your hands.



'Outstanding' Exhibition, 18 - 31 October 2006



Painting In Spite Of...

Mohammad Farhan Bin Rassemi

Paintings certainly have a long history in the story of art. Till today, painting is still a medium widely practised by many artists, with new techniques and styles that are being invented and improvised throughout the times. However, painting has been fighting for its own survival for the past two centuries. This is mainly due to the introduction and invention of other popular forms of media. These newer media such as photography, video, digital images, mixed media, installation and many others have placed painting in a doubtful and somewhat insecure position.

In an upcoming show "Painting in spite of..." to be held at Project Space on 18 April, these issues and themes on Painting might perhaps be addressed. "Painting in spite of..." would be curated by none other than the highly experienced artist and Dean of the Fine Arts Faculty, Milenko Prvacki.

In an interview with Milenko, he stressed that the young generation of today has seem to have forgotten about the importance of painting due to advanced technology. Painting has always expressed the time it was made in, from instructional, educational and conceptual till today, when it is part of a highly individualised but globalised world. The fact that painting has survived in spite of all these circumstances, gave Milenko the title of the exhibition, "Painting in spite of..."

The exhibition hopes to deliver the message to viewers the possibility of multiple viewings and understandings of painting as a condition for its survival. Milenko believes that there is neither a single message nor a single truth that defines painting. Therefore, viewers may analyse all works and make up their own minds. But painting still has the ability, strength and wisdom to open new windows and doors to new ideas despite today's new media.

The artworks in the exhibition will portray a unity of differences, which will dominate Project Space. The exhibition is not thematic nor narrative and the explorations are different from artist to artist. There is no single approach but there is authenticity in all the works, which is one of the things that connects all of them.

The artists who have been chosen for this exhibition are artists whom Milenko has individually hand-picked and are graduates from the BA (Hons) and MA Fine Arts programmes. These artists have their own unique distinctive way of painting and exploration and most of them have been practising their craft for more than a decade. The works that will be put up in the exhibition will be a visual feast on the different kinds of painting techniques which we have grown into and is practised by most artists today.

Indeed, the assortment of paintings that will be showcased in this show will be diverse and varied, and a reflection of various styles that made the artists shown here what they are famed for. The curator also mentioned, "For me

the vitality of painting is to be shocking enough, but also light and consequent enough to demand conceptual maturity and historical referencing." By showing different types of paintings, he hopes to broaden the viewers' mindsets and understanding of painting.

In an interview with one of the artists involved in the exhibition, Jeremy Sharma, he expressed that whilst he enjoys different kinds of art, his personal favourite are the gestural and abstract styles of painting. But he is also quick to add that every artist has his or her own favourite way of painting.

To summarise, the exhibition "Painting in spite of..." is to let viewers know despite the ever-changing and new forms of art present, paintings are still relevant and vital as an art form in the digital age. In fact, it is from painting that all other media find their inspirations from.



Ripcord

Nuraifa Bte Ahmad

Ripcord, a groundwork exhibition that featured selected works from the Foundation Fine Arts students showcased a range of 2-Dimensional and 3-Dimensional works, which included drawings, printmaking prints, Mural wall documentations and blue foam sculptures.

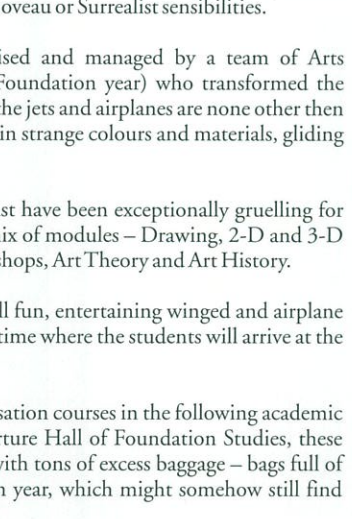
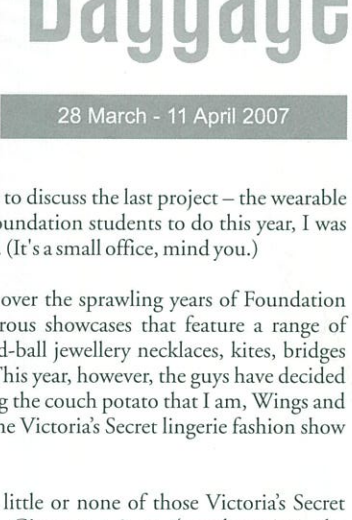
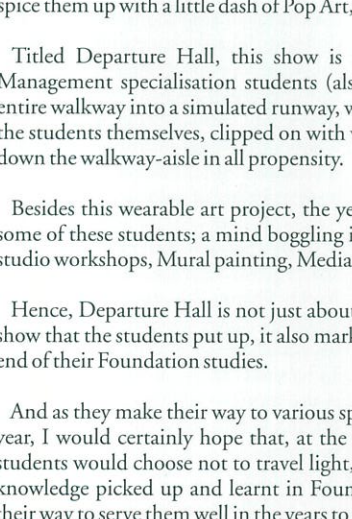
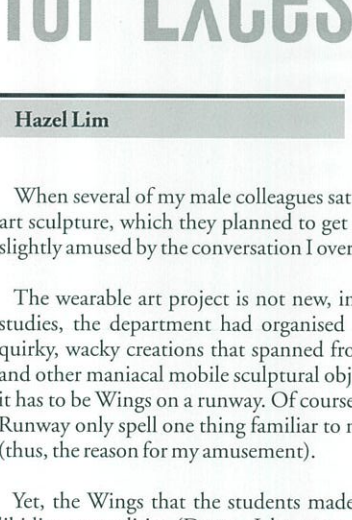
Most of the visitors during the opening gave positive commentaries about a range of outstanding and unique works that were showcased during the exhibition. As a Foundation student myself, I have definitely seen the creation of these beautiful works produced from the hands of my fellow fine arts comrades. I think this exhibition is definitely a good opportunity for them to exhibit their works, as it acts as a stepping stone for them to be more exposed to the arts arena.

Portraiture was one of the works being showcased in this groundwork exhibition. From serious to humorous facial expressions and different views of the students themselves with funny looking hairstyles that would leave smiles on your faces. Imagine these students drawing themselves with Afro hairstyles or spiky ones and even male students with long curly hair.

Other than portraits, there were artworks such as figure drawings, pen drawings as well as frottage drawings, but the one which left the visitors fascinated were the students' artists' citations where they had to pick a famous artwork of their interest and then, insert themselves into it, only by using colour pencils or pastels so that they could be part of the artwork. The objective was to bring humour into the artpiece.

Another type of work featured, which drew a lot of attention during the opening, were the blue foam totems that were placed in the centre of Project Space. All these stacked-up blue foam totems were being made by students from the three Foundations classes. From mystical to weird creatures, these sculptures made out of only blue foam were evidence of the students' creativity and physical challenges that the students had to face while carving out the totems to their desired creatures. After the students were done with their sculptures individually, they then had to combine all the sculptures, stacking them one after another. How exciting is that!

As part of our year-end project, Ripcord not only allowed students to be able to showcase their works, but also presented an opportunity for a team of us, who are going to specialise in the Arts Management course next year, to get a chance to curate and organise their show. Other than Ripcord, a runway show entitled "Departure Hall" with the theme "Wings" will be the finale event, so as to mark the closing of this exhibition on 11 April. Do look out for these same Foundation Fine Arts students to glide down the runway in their sculptural wings. This is definitely another event that is a not to be missed, see them live in action!



NO Charges for Excess Baggage

Hazel Lim

28 March - 11 April 2007

When several of my male colleagues sat down to discuss the last project – the wearable art sculpture, which they planned to get the Foundation students to do this year, I was slightly amused by the conversation I overheard. (It's a small office, mind you.)

The wearable art project is not new, in fact, over the sprawling years of Foundation studies, the department had organised numerous showcases that feature a range of quirky, wacky creations that spanned from odd-ball jewellery necklaces, kites, bridges and other maniacal mobile sculptural objects. This year, however, the guys have decided it has to be Wings on a runway. Of course, being the couch potato that I am, Wings and Runway only spell one thing familiar to me – the Victoria's Secret lingerie fashion show (thus, the reason for my amusement).

Yet, the Wings that the students made have little or none of those Victoria's Secret libidinous qualities (Damn, I hear some say). Given as a 3- to 4-week project, the students are to portray their wings in Harajuku, Superhero/villain or Biblical styles, and spice them up with a little dash of Pop Art, Art Nouveau or Surrealist sensibilities.

Titled Departure Hall, this show is organised and managed by a team of Arts Management specialisation students (also in Foundation year) who transformed the entire walkway into a simulated runway, where the jets and airplanes are none other than the students themselves, clipped on with wings in strange colours and materials, gliding down the walkway-aisle in all propensity.

Besides this wearable art project, the year must have been exceptionally gruelling for some of these students; a mind boggling intermix of modules – Drawing, 2-D and 3-D studio workshops, Mural painting, Media workshops, Art Theory and Art History.

Hence, Departure Hall is not just about the all fun, entertaining winged and airplane show that the students put up, it also marks the time where the students will arrive at the end of their Foundation studies.

And as they make their way to various specialisation courses in the following academic year, I would certainly hope that, at the Departure Hall of Foundation Studies, these students would choose not to travel light, but with tons of excess baggage – bags full of knowledge picked up and learnt in Foundation year, which might somehow still find their way to serve them well in the years to come.

Photographs taken by FDSstudios.