

The Praxis Press

Faculty of Fine Arts • LASALLE College of the Arts Singapore • Catalogue of Events 2007-2008 • Project Space • Second Edition • 2008



A Way Of Looking At Art

Susie Wong

I was among the last batch of students to have my work displayed at the old Project Space. Project Space, from the previous college site at Goodman Road, was a battered room – about 15 square metres of rectangular space and a creaky door. One can peer into the room from the outside (done usually during lunch time when no gallery sitter is present and the door is locked) through a tiny glass slot built into the door. Like much of the rest of the old campus, it gave an aura of being in some continuous process – whether it was one of becoming or of decaying, I am never sure – but frisson stood within.

Praxis Space is part of an unyielding neo-modern architecture, that even now as I write today, won a prestigious architectural award (as reported in *The Straits Times*, 22nd May 2008). With such recognition, a new building begets new missions.

The old Project Space's withered state had permitted a certain degree of trial and fudging, a perfect platform for projects, and certainly was forgiving if matters too much or too little or too inane took place within its walls. It was, however, determined to be a white cube space with persistent white-washing that covers walls, almost everything, including the door. It was a neutralised zone, the most abstract form, for contemplation of any object placed in it. This white cube objective has its critique as the "archetypal imagery of 20th century art", and the power the white cube has over conferring the status of art on anything that lie within its walls.

The current physical space for Praxis Space, on the other hand, is an untypical choice for an art gallery. Its design coerces a unique, and possibly intriguing, new agenda. Consistent with the design of the rest of the campus, the glass wall/window/façade feature

encloses three-quarters of this space, and allows for absolute visual access to art inside from most points in the public and centralised green area. The height and its wall configuration readjust the proportion of the space, enough to make it challenging to the usual suspects of art production. Along with the little stepway and slope, its irregularity undoubtedly impacts the art that you hang, suspend, stand, sit, float in any part of the space.

One has to consider that art here does not just exist as that individual object of art that is placed within the confines of the space, but that it also has to barter with its environs. The formerly ideal "white cube" is usually closed off to shut out the outside world and in whose mission is to negate the presence of even the onlooker to allow for an experience in which nothing exists but that object. It is now in constant engagement with the entire campus, with the external world.

So what is the new mission of the exhibition space here?

The way the gallery or art space can be inhabited often proposes what art is being determined. Here, because art is the least determinable and a most organic creature, exhibiting art in this space becomes the organic push against the geometric form. The outside intrusion into the gallery space, where the boundary disappears, hints at a future in this new century of the way art is being looked at, and why and how it will be produced.

For the moment, will there be the occasion that any creation in the visual arts conflicts with a building's austere and architectural modernist intentions, if it looks god-awful, messy, uncooked, radical, in this highly prized designer building? Is this space as forgiving as the battered old Project Room on the understanding that art shown here is

made while on a journey of learning? After all, Praxis means practice.

This space has to continue to embrace in its agenda the matters of the everyday – the daily grind of studious application through trial and error and exploration – as the institution owes students the space to fulfil the education expectations.

As the various exhibitions during the course of the past year of activity have shown, the curators had bravely put up displays of works of consistent standards, and have challenged the daunting modernist refrain of keeping everything "marvellous and the aesthetic". Art, in all its guises, from all levels were showcased with aplomb. What is clear is that this time, unlike its predecessor, Praxis Space is visible to most visitors on the campus. It greets VIPs, students, staff and the wandering mendicant alike with unblinking openness.

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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.



Introduction

Milenko Prvacki

We moved, both physically and psychologically into the new campus. Slowly, but permanently. The dream of Brother McNally has come true, though unfortunately without him present. But future generations of artists will enter the monumental new building in the centre of Singapore from his street, McNally Street.

New buildings in which one can learn art are rare. Our campus is one of those rare ones.

From the visitors' platform on 1 McNally St, after you exit your Rolls Royce, immediately on the right you will be welcomed and greeted by the PRAXIS SPACE, the gallery of the Faculty of Fine Arts, the older cousin of PROJECT SPACE gallery from the old campus at Goodman Road.

PRAXIS SPACE has become the headquarters of student exhibition activities in the last six months. A strange space to consider and solve: light, open and obvious.

If you then go down to Basement 1 (without your car please), you will see the already stained and splashed studios of the Undergraduate students, dirty and colourful, and appropriate for subversive visual artists (which can be the only possible reason why the Fine Arts studios have been placed in the basement).

At the very top (another suitable choice of location), on the fifth floor, under the sky, sun and rain (no snow) you can find the bright studios of the Postgraduate students where they do the last touchups to their works before they become independent artists.

Here you have the geography of the Faculty of Fine Arts where layered activities take place with students, lecturers, artists, visiting artists and frequent curious artists-passersby. They all contribute to the growing knowledge of contemporary art, which is their exact goal.

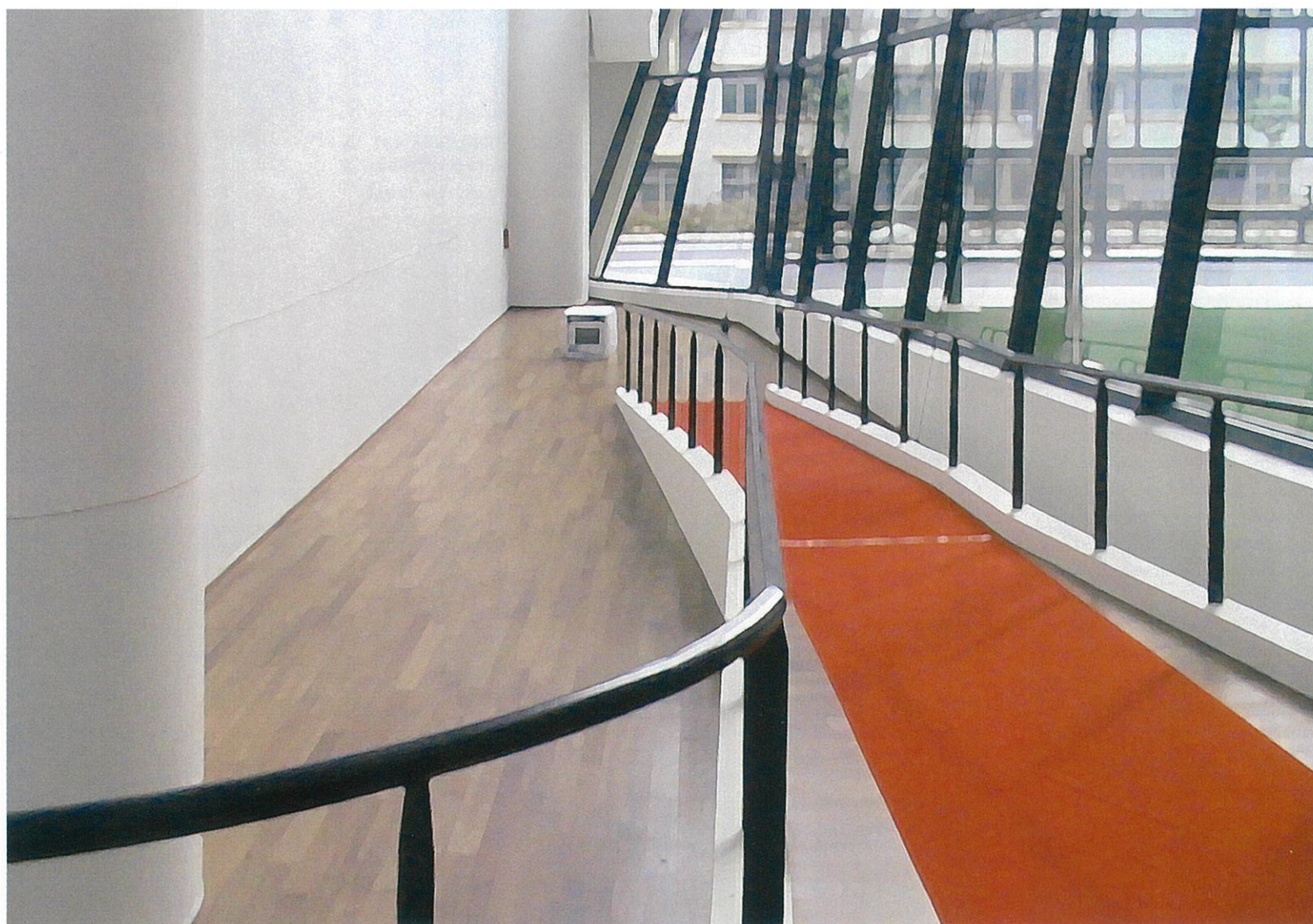
Seeds of different knowledge and dialogue spill out from the speaking platform during Artists Talks, also

in the studios and workshops during the Masterclasses and in the nearby cafes during lunch and dinner. And there is something for everyone: on painting and drawing, on film and video, on cartoons and narration, on performance, on photography, on the imaginary, on the conceptual, on the ephemeral and the permanent, on time and space, on content and form, on the interactive and the collaborative, on post-modernism, on globalism and South East Asian, on luck, on love, on the toilet bowl, on dreams, on the erotic and aging, on memories, on moving, on heritage and roots, on technology, on feminism and Asian masculinity, on future, on falling and failing, on freedom, on light, on colour, on movement, on the concept, on experimenting, on process, on trees, on travel, on playing, on the unknown, on the invisible, on the ugly and the beautiful, on stone and clay, on history, on museums and galleries, on lasting, on the spiritual and the physical, on waiting, on philosophy, on plants and animals, on the smile, on therapy, body and blood, on death, on depth, on matter, on flight, on speed, metamor-



phosis, on deconstructing, on waiting, on loss, on oneself, on deconstruction, on aggression, on maturing, on line, on green, on the unknown, on future...

This second edition of PRAXIS PRESS is a platform and storage for all the ideas and actions which the Faculty of Fine Arts began producing last year, in order to avoid forgetting and to inform all lovers of art about what we do and where we are. I am proud of the dynamic and the resultant practices of students from all Levels. I am especially proud that we survived the move and started a new life, on a new campus, unharmed.



At One

Tan Seow Wei

The exhibition title stops short – Not two, nor three, but one. Even if we were to grudgingly accept ‘One’ as an arbitrary choice, the title still confounds.

At One is the outcome of the photography masterclass conducted by Professor Peter Bialobrzeski. Selected by Bialobrzeski, it is a showcase of works by seven participants: Eudora Rusli, Jarrod Sim, Lim Hui Xian, Maxine Chionh, Sandhya Gopinath, Stephanie Seet and Tan Seow Wei.

At one o’clock everyday, for three days, these seven participated in a series of intensive, rigorous photography sessions with Bialobrzeski – an art critic, practicing photographer and professor for photography at the University of the Arts in Bremen, Germany. His wealth of knowledge and experience had been immensely valuable to the participants and there is no better testament to this than the seven series of works, crystallised from the masterclass.

The theme of the exhibition is Singapore’s urbanity. It is interesting to observe how each series of works interprets the participant’s experience with the city.

Eudora’s *Bits and Pieces* is a reaction to the en-bloc phenomenon, where rapid urban development wipes out old structures to make way for new ones. The incessant eradication and renewal propels her to seek out buildings from the past – at Bugis, Geylang and Tanjung Katong – and pay homage to them by capturing the beauty in their architectural details.

Likewise for Maxine, the unending upheaval of spaces proves to be a violent and traumatic experience. As she rents her accommodation, she often has to go through the process of moving in and, inevitably, out when the rental contract expires. The process of voiding in *The Condition Series*, thus takes place not in the space of an en-bloc location but within the space she inhabits. In three photographic images of the places she used to rent, she scratches out the personal artifacts from the image surfaces, leaving behind the more permanent fixtures of the rooms.

An entirely different kind of void takes place in Hui Xian’s portrayal of The Gateway buildings. The 40-storey twin towers’ acute external angles give the buildings the illusion of two-, rather than three-, dimensional form. The visual void represented by a missing



dimension renders The Gateway almost paper-flat and this unusual appearance and geometry is precisely what she sets out to capture in her series of work, *Dimension*.

The play of ambiguity persists in other ways in Jarrod’s *Equivocal*. Close-up shots of repeating patterns latent within the built-up environment are carefully composed to mask their true identity. He beckons viewers to make sense out of his photographic images. He hopes to “pull the viewers away from immediate discernment, leaving them either in an unsettling state of obscurity or with the answer to this baffling riddle”.

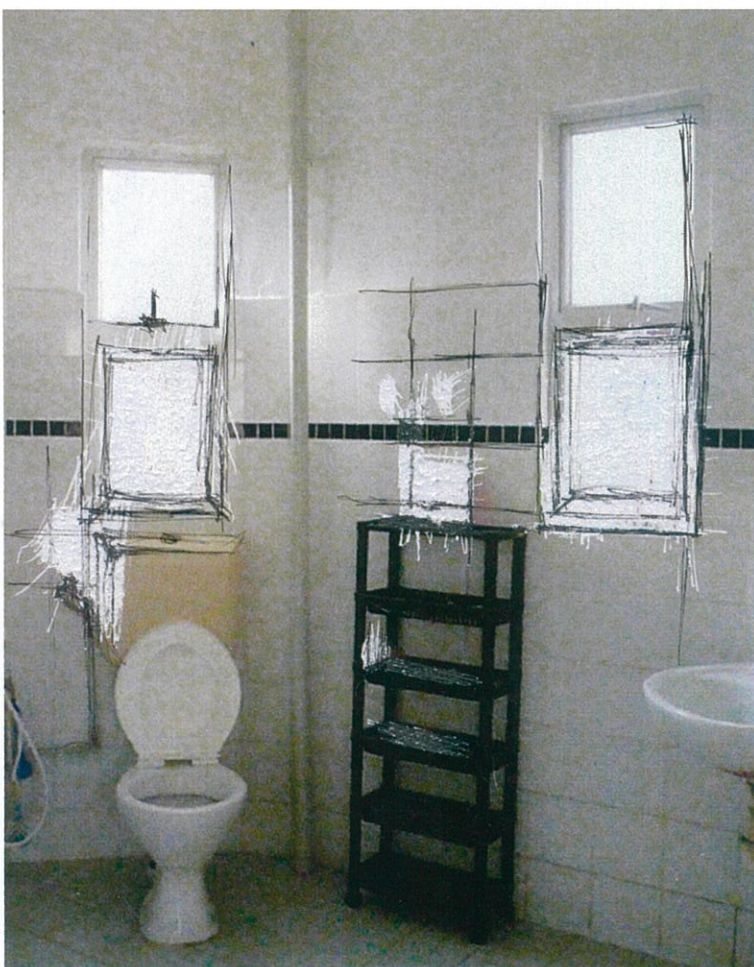
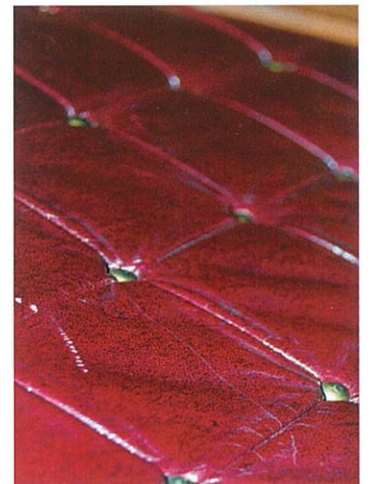
In particular, the extensive use of glass in contemporary architecture has transformed visual urbanity into ambiguous and complex positions. This juxtaposition or interplay of reflectivity, transparency and translucency within a picture frame is explored by Seow Wei in her work, *The Glaze*.

The depiction of urbanity need not always focus on architectural or structural aspects; it could take on more humanistic ones. Sandhya’s *Sunday*

Strollers captures boisterous Little India on a Sunday, when the crowd brims with life and rages with chaos. The presence of people brings character to a city and unknowingly shapes the urban space.

Of late, Stephanie observed, one man has single-handedly altered Singapore’s urbanscape. He is none other than Mas Selamat bin Kastari, Singapore’s most-wanted terrorist fugitive, who escaped from his detention on 27 February 2008. Still at large, ‘Wanted’ posters of him can be seen in most public places. Fittingly titled *At Large*, her photographic artwork makes a social commentary on the national furore and the way it has, discreetly but surely, transformed the façade of the city.

The 30 works conclude the critical discourse and mark the culmination of the three-day workshop. Never mind that the photographic works exist only on flimsy papers and, as print quality goes, are unimpressable. What matters most is the experience that each of the participants takes home from *At One*, at one.



Does traveling spurs the Artist to create ?

Pamela Khong

Travelogue, an intriguing idea brought on by a man with as much zest for life as for nurturing young artists – Dr Winston Oh, renowned cardiologist, philanthropist and traveler. What is travelogue, one might ask. It is, in the most basic of terms, a showcase of the wonderful things that one brings home when he or she departs from their natural surroundings and embarks on a journey into something foreign, unfamiliar and, most importantly, nurturing to the creative soul.

Dr Oh is a firm believer in the act of traveling to renew one's spirit and sense of adventure. What does it mean to travel? Travel: adjective, change location; move, travel, or proceed, undertake a journey or trip.

When an artist is selected as a recipient of *The Winston Oh Travelogue Award*, he or she is given a sum of money to use on their travels to a particular place. While the artist is there, he or she would take notes on and document their travels. Documenting everything from their actual journey

there, to the accommodations, food, places, sights, faces and experiences. Upon arriving back home, he or she would then present their findings and experiences of their travels in a showcase using any art medium available.

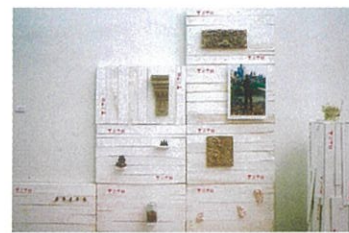
So after all is said and done, does travel really promote creativity in artists? Of course it does. I would dare say that inspiration in an artist is key for producing works with meaning and a sense of individuality. And travel does inspire. Whether it be a trip to neighboring Malaysia

off-the-beaten-track, to the east coast to spend a week by the beach, or to the ancient sites of Greece, the act of departing from home and arriving in an unfamiliar destination is in itself a journey. A journey that would give as much as you are willing to take.

Having said that, there is a downside to this particular award – that is, so many artists, and not enough opportunity. Perhaps what could be done is that the college introduce an integrated programme for all Level 2 Fine Arts students to travel for one

week to a destination in the region, which could become part of the curriculum. This would then produce an equal opportunity for all Fine Arts students to be part of this wonderful experience.

When one has this chance to travel, it not only inspires, it opens eyes and introduces a whole new world to the traveller. Below is a personal account of classmate of mine, who attended one of the showcases this year, and what she had to say about the exhibition. Happy reading, bon voyage and here's to the next issue of *Praxis Press*.



Organic Agonies, Level 2 Drawing Exhibition, September 2007

Organic Agonies

Maxine Chionh

'Drawing from nature' was the project brief for the first drawing assignment of the 2007 Level 2 cohort. The students were expected to make final works in an A1 format, based on plant or animal biological studies. The works of ten students were then selected for Praxis Space's inaugural exhibition. The participants are Theresia Irma, Claes Eriksson, Simon Ng, Stephanie Seet, Veliana, Germaine Lee, Siti Norjehan, Nur Ain, Patricia Ho and Maxine Chionh.

The curatorial intention for this show seems to be that of displaying as wide a range of interpretations of the project brief as possible. While Lee's approach is that of placing formalist concerns at the forefront, Ho's work on the other hand, demonstrates a boldness in discarding traditional conceptions of sound composition and design theories. Ho opts for a literal

incorporation of negative space by cutting out curiously geometrical shapes, providing an enigmatic counterpoint to the organic forms preferred by the other participants. Lee's work proves a certain technical ability, a concern that is unfortunately unquestioningly prioritised by the majority. They defend this inclination by declaiming against the notion of having even a semblance of an idea as being "conceptual".

There are works that display a sense of repetitive patterning – interestingly, the repetition reminds the viewer of a "Singaporean" sense of experiencing nature. Here, the repetition creates an impression of fabricated nature and our man-made apprehension to and attempts at controlling it. Veliana's and Siti's works show a frigid rigidity in its layout and structure, creating a tile-like pattern of staid shapes that echoes the state of manufactured greenery in this city of sky-scraping concrete. Veliana's use of neon marker pens betrays

an insensitivity to her subject matter; an overall sense of incompleteness nags at the viewer. Nur's work also makes use of neon colours, but the resultant cacophony of fluorescent greens, pinks and yellows creates a satisfying visual orgy of chaotic propagation. The viewer is reminded of a certain viciousness behind the cycle of reproduction, birth and death. The work ultimately falls short of the intensity needed to fully convince the viewer.

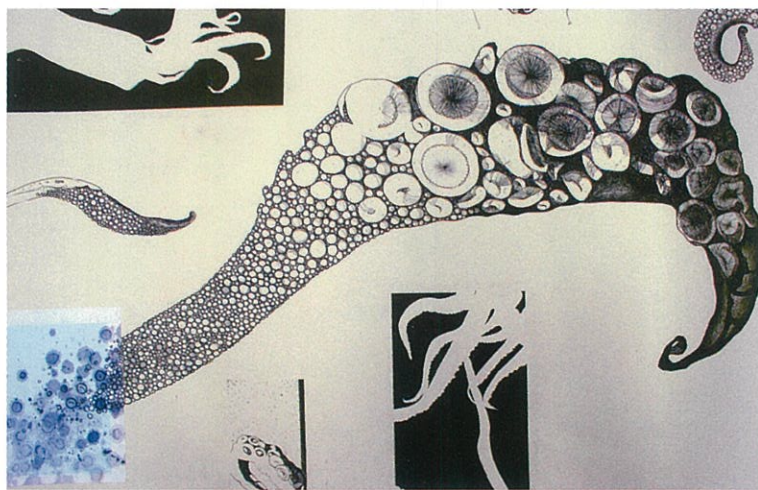
The works of Seet, Ng and Irma share the elements of poster design. Ng's work is a pleasingly mild picture of flower petals and stems, all meticulously rendered. By making a piece of work that anybody would like to hang above their sofa sets, Ng has, more so than the rest, honestly reflected LASALLE's ethos of making pleasant pictures, cloaking his cynicism with a mellifluous composition of powder pinks and whites. Seet's predilection for storybook narratives and manga-inspired figures dominate her picture plane. She creates a depressing landscape of figures with drooping heads that resemble wilted flowers, and the autumnal feel of death and entropy is reinforced with brown splatterings. There is an attempt made at combining the use of different media; the effect is that of some elementary experimentation that hints at the possibility of less self-conscious future exploration. Irma's work in this show is the weakest in her oeuvre of drawings. Her subject matter of squid tentacles suffer from an unvaried and stiff line quality, while the blocks of ill-positioned black areas did not do



justice to her depiction of squid ink under duress.

Eriksson and Chionh's works show nature in a more grimy, raw, textured aspect. Eriksson's bulbous forms appear to be a magnified version of bacterial growth, laudable in its skein of disturbingly waxy and uncomfortably dirty-yellow linear mutations. However, what is also apparent is the lack of treatment for the background, where a more decisive treatment would

have made the work more convincing. Chionh's work demonstrates her interest in unconventional material exploration, conveyed by her use of tape and photo transfers, barley seeds, paper collage, bandage and various wet media. Here, the environment seems to consist of a hodge-podge of artificial and natural elements. Her work is confident in the conviction of its message, but hesitant in its execution at this burgeoning stage of tying in material exploration with conceptual concerns.



documenta 12

Zurianah Bte Hashim

Heralded as the most important exhibition in contemporary art, *documenta* is an exhibition that takes place every five years in Kassel, Germany, founded in 1955 by artist, curator and educator Arnold Bode. The recent *documentas* have been more concerned with artists from around the world and works of a site-specific nature. I caught up with our Fine Arts lecturers Hazel Lim and Shubigi Rao to talk to them about the latest *documenta 12* where they attended a workshop, so they can share with us their recent engagement in a globally-homogeneous art experience.

Z: Hey Hazel, I understand that *documenta 12* is not the first international art event that you have been involved in. You were part of the *Creative Camp (Paris, 2003)* organised by ASEF and *Convergence* held in Ho Chi Minh City's Fine Arts Museum in 2005. How then is the experience in Kassel different from the two preceding events?

H: The Open space workshop in Kassel was different in structure as it was organised in conjunction with an international art event – *documenta 12*. The workshop was thus somewhat scholarly and academic as it centred on discussions of the leitmotifs, or recurring themes of *documenta*. In a way it was quite similar to the *Creative Camp* organised by ASEF as both called for interaction and sharing of creative ideas within small groups as well as a daily interaction and discussion based on the exhibition visits in Kassel and leitmotifs of *documenta*, except that for *Creative Camp*, it was not organised in conjunction with any major art shows in Paris, but has a platform where certain discussion points were also formally laid out.

Z: It must be quite an experience to be interacting with other artists coming from all over the world and sharing your works with them. Shubigi, I'm very sure that you have done your fair share of travelling in your practice. Tell us more about what you've picked up in the recent *documenta* workshop and how it has affected your perception of today's art world.

S: There is certain tendency to still exoticise art and artists from our part of the world, and I noticed that while *documenta* occasionally suffered from that, the workshop was free of a lot of preconceived categorisation. The work produced was arguably fresher, more irreverent, and yet sometimes more insightful than *documenta* as a thematic whole. There is a tendency, however, to be too much the product of one's institutionalised approved form of rebellion, which led to some knee-jerk institution-

al critique as a matter of course. One tends to see that a lot in contemporary art – appropriations and interventions, critiques of the mechanism of art institutions, encouraged by art schools because it's fashionable. I learnt that this is a globally occurring irony!

Z: I believe that the works involved in *documenta* are mostly site-specific, which means that there might be a certain degree of adjustment that you have to make while partaking in the workshop. Did you have to tweak your works and yourself as an artist to fit into the current geographical context?

H: I didn't see the need to adjust to fit into an international workshop.



making work informed by very diverse geo-politics opens one up to so many different world-views on a singular issue. I've always felt that the rigid pegging of identity to origin is no longer a valid defence against global homogeneity, and a more nomadic, free-flowing form of existence is better suited to me. The adjustments then are never too painful! My group was marked by an inability to take itself seriously, so made a pseudo-terrorist video, where we took credit for the work of all the other participants in the workshop. While taking the mickey out of the 'bare life' leitmotif, "due to the forced migration from our homes to this strange place" we claimed responsibility for "all acts of intervention, sabotage, appropriation and critical debate". It was a scream.



Rather, I felt that we should take pride in where we come from even though culturally and geographically, Singapore might not be such a heavyweight in these areas, but I believe that we do have something idiosyncratic to share about where we come from. In fact, the nature of the workshop, I felt, was to highlight the diversity seen in various art works that originate from different countries. This can be seen in our small discussion groups where each group would have one representation from each of the countries, and each of us are to share our individual creative ideas and critique. It was most interesting to see the varied cultural differences but yet so fascinating to know that beyond all the obviously different outlooks by each of the participants, lies some very similar and universal perspectives towards the world.

S: Yes, there was a certain amount of adjustment, which is always rewarding, because working in a group, and

Z: Different art directors are appointed for every *documenta*, and every *documenta* has its own leitmotifs. Each *documenta* so far has aimed to touch on the contemporary and current issues regarding art and its changes. One of the leitmotifs in *documenta 12* is the question of whether modernity is our antiquity. How do you resolve that concern based on your own art and research, and do the leitmotifs tie in directly with what you have studied?

S: The leitmotifs came under some critical debate, and a lot of us were unsure of the validity of the revisiting modernity as antiquity. I did feel that *documenta* did attempt to address the leitmotifs in a more democratic way, by releasing the debate from narrow critical circles. In particular, I felt that the initiative involving publications from all over the world responding to the leitmotifs was laudable and made for fascinating and often quixotic reading. I

especially enjoyed the work by 'Valdez', a book/magazine from Colombia that has no supervisory editorial team, and whose creators don't even own copies of it. The questioning of what it means to be a free publication in an industry where critical writing is invariably owned, with rigid copyrights, was a provocative response to the *documenta* juggernaut.

Z: If you are given the directorship of the next *documenta*, what are some of the leitmotifs that you would come up with?

S: The homogeneity of art academics globally needs to be questioned. I also feel that there is a shrinking base of interest in critical debate in countries (like



Singapore) now gaining recognition in the international art world. There is more emphasis on the usual suspects of what makes for 'contemporary art'. For me, I would look beyond intervention, and critiquing the addictive trend of institutional critique, and I would attempt to generate argument, dissension, anger, disagreement and polarised opinionated work, which I think would make a refreshing change from the dreary sameness of smoothly curated, thematically harmonious expositions.

Z: Tell me more about some of the things that you have learned in the *documenta 12* workshop, more specifically from the collective response of the international artists you've met and how their works differ from yours, or would you say there even is a collective difference?

H: Even though it was such a great opportunity to view and come up close with some of the world's well known

art works, nothing beats the friendships that were forged during the workshop. I felt that I learnt more from my immediate peers in the small groups during our intense discussion and interaction. Some of the works that the participants shared during the public lecture were also so amazingly mind-blowing that I wish they were also a part of the *documenta* exhibition.

S: Well, I learnt to recognise (again) the shortfalls of presuming originality. There is a marvellous liberation in freeing one's work from the institutional climate it functions in, simply by not regarding those institutional mechanisms as being cogent to the work. The 'secret knots' that bind things has always fascinated me, and it was very heartening to find artists from all over the world sharing similar concerns, with refreshing irreverence and a lack of machination. The differences were less evident than a shared ability to revel in a commune-like art camp, ingest copious amounts of beer, and engage in furious debate with each other, and even on an egalitarian, irreverent level with artists from *documenta*.

Z: How do you think the *documenta* has affected the art world, particularly in view of the public's opinion towards art?

H: I find it hard to answer this question, and I am also not an expert to say how the *documenta* or for that matter, biennales have impacted the art world. I supposed it's a great thing to have *documenta* in the small town of Kassel, which if not for the art event would have been a really boring little province. I like that *documenta* has the accompanying leitmotifs which made the event slightly more academic, as it also has a branch where magazines, journals and art catalogues were also a part of the event. I see the sharing of the art writing as pertinent as the exhibitions for they both share a very intrinsic relationship. I think in general, the response and attitude towards art in Europe is very different from Singapore as we are only just beginning to realise the importance of the language of art here. Somehow, due to the fact that Singapore cannot escape from wanting to chase after 'consumers' to adopt an open attitude towards arts and culture, it might render the arts here as much more of an entertainment or fanfare than those in Europe.

Z: Thank you Hazel and Shubigi for both your time and delightful insight regarding your experiences and thoughts on the latest *documenta*.

For more information on previous *documentas*, please visit its official site at www.documenta12.de.

Frozen in Time

Jacqui-Rae Cai

Nathalie Daoust is a Montreal-born Canadian photographer whose passions for photography and travelling are taking her on an endless exploration of this amazing world. Her images are surreal and yet hang in the balance between the haunting and the ethereal. Her first solo exhibition held in the Carlton Arms Hotel in New York, resulted in publishing her first book. Currently, she is in China working on another project.

J: Jacqui-Rae: Did you enjoy your stay in Singapore? And has it hopefully inspired any future works?

Nathalie Daoust: Yes, loved it... And it did inspire future work. A few people spoke to me about the art hotel Majestic in Singapore... So I got in contact with the owner Loh Lik Peng to make a project with him and his hotel... we are now talking about making something creative... (But in London)... lets see how it will come out? I would also love to come back to Singapore for an artist residency... (A few months)... and see more of the culture. 10 days was not enough.

J: How has life changed for you or changed you since first starting out as an artist?

ND: Since 1997, I have been travelling non-stop for my photo projects... I have lived many good and bad experi-



ences (the bad are usually good in the end) and seen many interesting cultures. I would say I am still the same... but more open and free-minded then when I left Montréal. I also feel that everything is possible if you work hard at it...

J: So what was your first camera, and which is your favourite, or dream camera?

ND: My first camera was a Minolta x700... and now I have 2 Nikons... but I don't really pay attention to this... as long as it clicks... and lets me express myself easily. (Not much of a brand person...)

J: How did you come about the images for the series Frozen in Time?

ND: My project in Switzerland was created for an artist residency program. I had to write the concept before I arrived. I had written many things I could do there... but they all had nothing to do with what I did. The first week I was there, some friend from Australia came to visit and wanted us to go to the Alps... I didn't really want to go (I was never attracted by touristy places... and this is what I thought the Alps were.) Once we got there... I was stunned by its surrealism, beauty and the eerie feeling it gave me... its was a mixture of happiness and freedom, and at the same time sadness and entrapment... I felt I needed to let these feelings out by capturing these emotions on film.

J: According to your wall text, the photos are stated as black and white and the colour is from physically reworking the photographs... Why that in particular and not digitally-enhanced colour photography?

ND: I hand-print the images in a black and white darkroom (I also

manipulate them at the printing stage), and then I hand-colour them. The main reason I do all these manipulations is because the raw photo never feels or looks like the image I saw when I took it... since I want it to represent closely how I felt and what I saw... I manipulate it until it becomes my reality (my memory of the moment).

I did not use digital because I am passionate about darkroom process... then colouring the images by hand was meditative... I don't feel the same when I am in front of the computer; I am not as inspired. I have nothing against digital... I just think they are two different mediums... (As a painter would use aquarelle paint and others acrylic paint.)

J: Your photographs have a beautiful, haunting quality to them. What role does intuition play in your work?

ND: It is quite an intuitive... feeling... During my time in the Alps I was dealing with past problems... old memories and feelings came up... With my photos I was slowly creating my own memories... in a way a bit of art therapy... I go with the mood of the day... and you can see that in the images... some days are good and others are darker...

J: There's a very honest, yet painterly quality in your images, which would lead me to ask - why photography and not painting?

ND: With painting it is more that you close your eyes and imagine whatever you want... and then reproduce it...

But with photography you need reality.

I like to look at this reality and then manipulating it until it looks like how I feel and see it... my own reality... changing colours, printing effects... etc....

J: Where will your photographs whisk you off to next?

ND: I am in China now working on a new project and next it's Tokyo... after this Berlin... after this Brazil... after Switzerland... so... everything is planned until 2010

J: Whol/ what are your bigger influences?

ND: I'm a bad artist when it comes to art culture... I don't really look at what is happening in the photo world... I spend my free time mostly doing anything else then art... or reading- researching art... biggest influence... the people I met in the countries I go... the books I read... different cultures... but I could not point out a specific photographer... (If that is what you meant)

J: What made you decide to continue and pursue a life of a practicing artist?

ND: Photography and travelling are my passions...

Photography allows me to do what ever I want whenever I want... This freedom is an incredible feeling... but also an incredible struggle... I have to make sure I am always preparing a new project... this is non-stop... and it is also tiring. One day I would like to teach... I think it would be great to be surrounded by new creative minds... lets see what happens.

J: Any advice for students hoping to follow in your footsteps?



ND: It takes a while... if you are motivated... just keep on trying and you will get there... That is the good thing about art... there are all kinds of artists and all kinds of people to like the art... who is to say what is good and bad... therefore... I believe everyone has a chance... you just need to try until you find the galleries who are looking for what you do.

J: (in reference to Tokyo Pin Up Girls Series) What was going through your mind when you were shooting the strippers in Roponggi and how did you manage to get that chance?

ND: My roommate from New Zealand was the person in charge of interviewing the girls and taking care of them. They would often pass by our house needing something... I shot one girl... and the word got around... and it ended up being easy... the girls all wanted to be photographed in the project...

What was going through my mind was that I did not know what type of girls who work in this field were. And I was very interested in knowing them and knowing their life story... everyone has a preconceived notion of what an erotic dancer is... and mine was not accurate... I met so many wonderful people. And this was my main interest... (I was curious and photography was a tool for my knowledge... same with street kiss and the S&M project that I will start in Japan next month).

Identity: photograph

Rachel Chan

The exhibition *Identity: photograph*, as the title suggests, explores the notion of the self and that of the photographic image.

Identity is a major theme to be explored by the fine arts students from Levels one to three, and mentored under the guidance of Gilles Massot. The works are based on their research on the National Museum's Photographic Gallery which presented a clear understanding and illustration of the evolution of the use of photography in capturing and projecting identity. Among other things, it featured a few *Cartes de visite*, a type of 19th century photograph that was a forerunner of the identity card.

Though having one common theme to work on, the students from the

different levels of study took on highly diversified approaches and conceptual ideologies. Level 1 students explored the notion of identity in the perception and projection of 'personae', developing contemporary versions of the *Cartes de visite* in various forms of the photographic image which influenced the way we conceive the 'self'. The result was very interesting and whimsical personal artefacts, fleeting imageries of the artists themselves, which operated as a linkage between personal memory and sociality.

In contrast, level two students questioned the identity of the photographic



image, working on the nature of the photographic image as it is perceived and used in today's society. The initial difficulty, which the students faced in comprehending the concept of the project, did in a way emphasize the starting point of 'everything': the abundance of photographic images all around us has made the nature of photography seem obsolete. Photography took the backseat as the students had to go out into the streets to review the many advertisements and forms of photography out there. Such advertisements have pervaded everyday life to such an extent that the images pretend to be 'real' but are only a fabricated reality. The virtual had turned into reality by general tacit agreement from the public. The students' task was to create situations



in public in which these distinctions become blurred or sharpened.

Seniors of the fine art batch, the level threes, took the 'identity: photograph' theme further toward questioning the notions of identity and of memory in relation to the passing of time. Rum-maging through old boxes of photographs and mapping out family trees, they were asked to locate the oldest images in their family albums and to expand the memory content of these images in today's context.

One student, Regina Sim, roped in ideas for her work from artist, Christian Boltanski. She tells of her interest in Boltanski's concept of how a person can die twice as a result of photography. In



her instance, she proceeded to re-look and to reinterpret the old photographs of her grandparents and to churn 'them' into abstract drawings of pen and charcoal. This process becomes the means in which she deals with the loss of her grandfather; how he still exists on the surface of the photograph even though he is not physically present. Photographs can translate the memory of life, loss and death. Other students chose to deal with this concept by merely displaying the actual photographs, citing no references and needing no manipulation whatsoever; by doing so, the very essence of the photographs themselves is retained.

All the works, from students of the various levels, succeeded pretty much at illuminating both the journey and destination of photographic representation. The exhibition was very well received and comments were generally positive. It was also successful in the ingenious way works were displayed within the boundaries of the uniquely 'L-shaped' layout of the Praxis Space.

The Present Tense of Nostalgia

Daphne Ang

We are now living in era where nothing can possibly be new, neo, nouveau or novel anymore. We have run out of ideas and are doomed to the fate of being part of the perpetual cyclical nature of the recycling of history, culture and heritage, to be reused and repeated ad nauseam.

It has always been vogue to sing paeans to the past, but more so now where we ride on a tidal wave of fondness for old buildings. In the recent years, buildings in Singapore that were abandoned and deserted by the previous generation are being rejuvenated and injected with a new (and chic) lease of life. Derelict shop-houses are being transformed into swanky boutiques and old warehouses to modish and posh nightclubs, restaurants and art galleries.

The current trend of resurrecting old buildings (army camps, warehouses, power stations) and dolling them up for yet another commercial venture is done without regard to conserving just a mere fraction of the building's original, rustic feel or at least attempting to try to preserve some precious nuggets of the history of the building.

In a refreshing change from yet another project turning an unsung architectural heirloom into yet another shrine of hedonism a la "yuppie" watering hole, a group of young artists had collaborated to do their part in preventing historical amnesia and bridging the

irredeemable gulf between past and present.

Curated by Milenko Prvacki, Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts and as part of the Singapore Art Show '07, *The Last Wayang*, succinctly entitled the last dance in Malay, may ironically and ominously be Capitol building's requiem and epitaph, almost like a post-humous retrospective. This site-specific collaboration is a joint effort between LASALLE College of the Arts students and alumni, Fai (video), Ridzman Putra (Fine Arts / Performance), and Ryf (Interactive Installation).

The Last Wayang can be seen has been a swansong for Capitol theatre, which has been standing since 1931. However, to the artists, using the Capitol theatre as a site for their art is not merely about revisiting nostalgia, it is about the reinterpretation of it. Rather than using past filmic styles in order to conjure a simple sentimental playback of the past, the video artist, Fai torqued the assemblage of film footage into a jump-cut, snazzy MTV style trailer superimposed and juxtaposed against the neo-classic façade of the theatre building. It was somewhat of a montage of



the old films that have been screened at Capitol theatre that may have been subjected to a death of anonymity and abandonment, just like the cinema in its physical and utilitarian sense. Perhaps the capitol is indeed an effigy of the convenient mindset of "out with the old and in with the new".

Rizman Putra, co-founder of the multi-disciplinary collective, *Kill Your Television (KYTV)*, takes a schizophrenic persona, acting as various famous actors from the past with alternating alter-egos. Ryf's installation of interactive billboards dealt with the issues of censorship. Passersby were encouraged to hit a buzzer that could "censor" images at their own discretion, transferring the power of censorship into their own hands.

In another interactive site-specific experimental art activity tangential to

The Last Wayang, curated by Milenko Prvacki, Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts and specially created for the Singapore Art Show 2007, the disused River Valley Swimming Complex was the site for another project.

Artists Deborah Tan, Jacqui-Rae and Cassandra Hale, also students and alumni of Lasalle College of the Arts, invited members of the public to pen their memories of their times spent at the swimming pool and then to fold these into paper boats. Released into the former public pool, these delicately hand-made paper boats were left to bob on the surface of the water, a deep shade of emerald and infested with tadpoles, mosquito lava, moss and algae collected with all the years of neglect and abandonment. According to LASALLE, this exhibition sought to "explore the re-occupation of a disused public space for a different non-functional purpose to make new moments in social memory. The making of this artwork also expresses the inter-dependence of the public on each other as they come together for the purpose of filling the abandoned pool with paper boats."

The exhibition attracted more than 50 participants. The floating memoirs ranged from the humble spartan sampan to fancy double hooded yachts.

There was an enchanting child-like character, of paper penned with intimate memories and thoughts enveloped in secrecy through the folds of the origami paper boat. Some even chose to write on the exposed surfaces of the paper, for the world to see, thrust into the public sphere. The ephemeral and organic coalescence of paper, water

and delicate hand written memories was transient and fleeting in nature, yet perennial and enduring to memory.

I see these two events as a muted cry for the preservation of precious heritage and our architectural heirlooms. In light of the swath of demolition that led to the bulldozing of the old national library, which left nothing but a gaping tunnel (the currently existing Fort Canning tunnel) and a symbolic gaping hole in the hearts of those who have grown up with it. It is endearing to see a revisit to nostalgia, of things old and forgotten revived in non-exploitative and non-invasive ways.

Further, these site-specific art events successfully subvert the symbolic stifling glass ceilings and the confinements of "white cube", which can be asphyxiating at times. These site-specific art events manage to break through the invisible elitist sphere of social boundaries and sense of alienation inherent within museum walls. In addition, the migration of art out of buildings and galleries result in art breaking away from the stasis and constraints of institutional bodies that elicits command and control, paving way to discovery and exploration, making art accessible to the masses.

Somehow, this enlightens and touches deeply.



Life Drawing Exhibition, February 2008



A Collage of Perspectives

Tan Yi Xin

'Cold, naked, horrible...'; (laughing). Model- Jim, when interviewed upon his experience during life-drawing sessions.

The human figure may appear to be a simple source of inspiration, but its forms of representation are surprisingly many. These diverge across a wide array of style and media- from the most basic 2B pencil, to more exotic media such as photocopy-transfer. Many life-drawings are not only technically competent, but also experimental and expressive in nature.

While paintings can be technically manipulated to reproduce the visual appearance of reality, drawings aim to portray the *experience* felt by the artist towards his or her object of interest. Through a fresh and instinctive approach towards their drawing, many

young children's works sometimes carry surprising impact. These 'doodles' become the visual 'recording' of an individual's constantly evolving perspective.

What then, makes life-drawing different from other forms of drawing, for example, commercial illustrations?

Crucially, the lack of time puts the artist under pressure to quickly observe and record the visual information. During a session of intense synchrony, of rapid eye-to-hand coordination, there is little time to engage in frivolous or analytical thought. An especially time-constrained technique would be gestural-sketching; it is pretty amazing how much detail one can put down in five minutes alone! Many life-drawing students have realized that the quality of drawing may not be directly related to the time spent, but to the constancy of their observation towards the model. Eventually, everyone found it unnecessary to romanticize (or,

effectively, distort) the human body to sustain a viewer's interest.

Another important factor is the drawing studio. Its privacy is the ideal setting for life-drawing. Every student-artist stepping into the studio is instantly detached from the typically squeamish social view of a naked human-being. Instead, the model is observed from an objective and purely aesthetic standpoint. (Interestingly, some students prefer drawing a female model over a male model, claiming that a female model, having a more sinuous, organic form would produce a 'softer' drawing as compared to a blockier-built male model.)

While we were setting up the exhibition - 'we' being the organizing lecturers, Joo Hsiang and Jeremy Sharma, along with a group of student volunteers - we planned the placement of the drawings around an aesthetic instinct, that is, the general composition of the drawings as a collective group. Everything - from the color of the drawing paper, to the position of the drawings in relation to size - was taken into careful consideration. In a nutshell, the exhibition appeared like a massive multi-colored collage wallpapering the entire Praxis-space interior.

It was pleasantly satisfying to take a step back and reflect on how we managed to pull many very different draw-

ings to work together visually as a cohesive collection. There were charcoal and pastel drawings, pen and pencil drawings and more uniquely, figures 'drawn' in the dry-point technique of print-making. Interestingly, many wet-media paintings demonstrated a very 'loose' depiction of the human figure, compensating the abstracted likeness of the model with a livelier and more expressive impression of the respecting model.

One finds that no two drawings are alike. Some feel light-hearted and quirky; others appear intense and are dark in color. Some are more realistic, while others appear more stylized. Often, many of these may look deceptively 'simple' to a layman, seeming to lack technical finesse. In truth, some of these are more successful as they are able to capture a model's 'character' visually, despite the short sketch-time.

Truly, it is impossible for an objective drawing to exist. Nor is it possible for drawings to be viewed in a completely objective way.

Lastly, I would like to add some final comments from the viewers of the exhibition.

While looking at a figure-drawing depicting himself, Jim stated that it felt like he was looking into a subjective mirror. Although the subject matter remains

the same (albeit observed from different angles), a drawing's progress is also affected by the individual artist's unique reaction towards the model's posture and expression. Life-drawings may also be interpreted as a reflection of the artist's own emotional state of mind.

Incidentally, what happens when an artist happens to also possess modeling experience?

Being an artist who frequently practices life-drawing, Jim informs me that he may *empathize* with another model's poses, should he find them familiar, thus 'translating his own modeling experience' onto his drawing. Hence, that particular drawing may reflect both the viewpoints of an artist and a model.

And in spite of the strong connection one has with one's drawings, many students claim that they begin to view their drawings differently when viewed as part of a large group. It was difficult to single them out without visually referring to the others, as every drawing up there *reinforced*, and played a role towards, the overall impact of the exhibition.

In conclusion, I personally feel that the 'BODIES' collection have left all of us a strong *and* lasting impression of movement and energy. It is through the process of life-drawing that I have rediscovered the beauty of the mundane face.

Same space...

Gilles Massot

The space is the blank photographic paper, the screen. It is said, according to Alain Fleisher, that the screen is 'sensitive'. Of course, it is a pun suggesting that the surface of the screen is not only sensitive to the light of the movie projected on it and resulting in a final photograph, it is also emotionally sensitive to the moment, just as we are. The screen as a metaphor of human memory.

The light is radically different. It doesn't look so at first glance, but we learned about it through hard earned experience. Point is that until that memorable afternoon in LASALLE College of the Arts room B1-15 (a date to remember, 18 April 2008), Alain's technical approach to his sensitive screens had remained anchored in traditional analogue photography: 16mm negative reel movies projected onto analogue photo paper. Will I surprise you if I say that the Singapore version of the sensitive screen didn't intend for things to remain that way...? The reason for this was seemingly purely pragmatic: 16mm black and white movies can not be developed in Singapore, or anywhere else in South East Asia for the matter. The idea to use digital technology for his screens had been on Alain's mind for sometime. Singapore's context gave a clear indication that the time had come to go ahead with this experiment.

A sensitive screen however is much more than the final large size print. It is as much a performance, a highly physical process that sees collaborators and assistance come together to celebrate the photographic mystery. For the theatrical dimension of the event to be complete, the screen has to be processed standing vertically, using big brushes to swiftly spread the chemicals over it while on-lookers watch the image appears. Each screen performed in a new place thus requires the training of a new team. This was the content of the workshop organised in LASALLE College of the Arts in April 2008 by the Faculty of Fine Arts, in collaboration with the Putnam School of Film and with the support of the French Embassy and the Singapore Month of Photography. It gathered students from the Faculty of Fine Arts and the Putnam School of Film, in a rehearsal of the event planned for the opening night of Alain Fleisher's exhibition in SAM two months later.

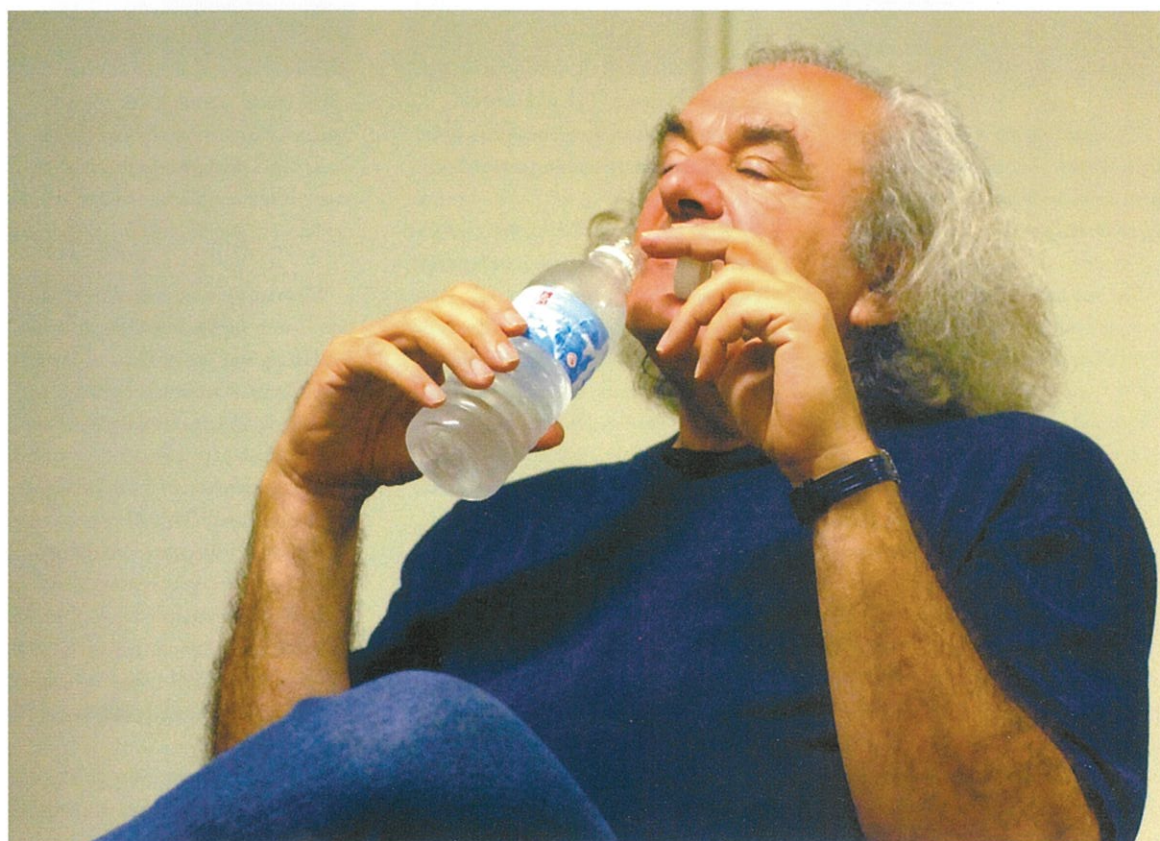
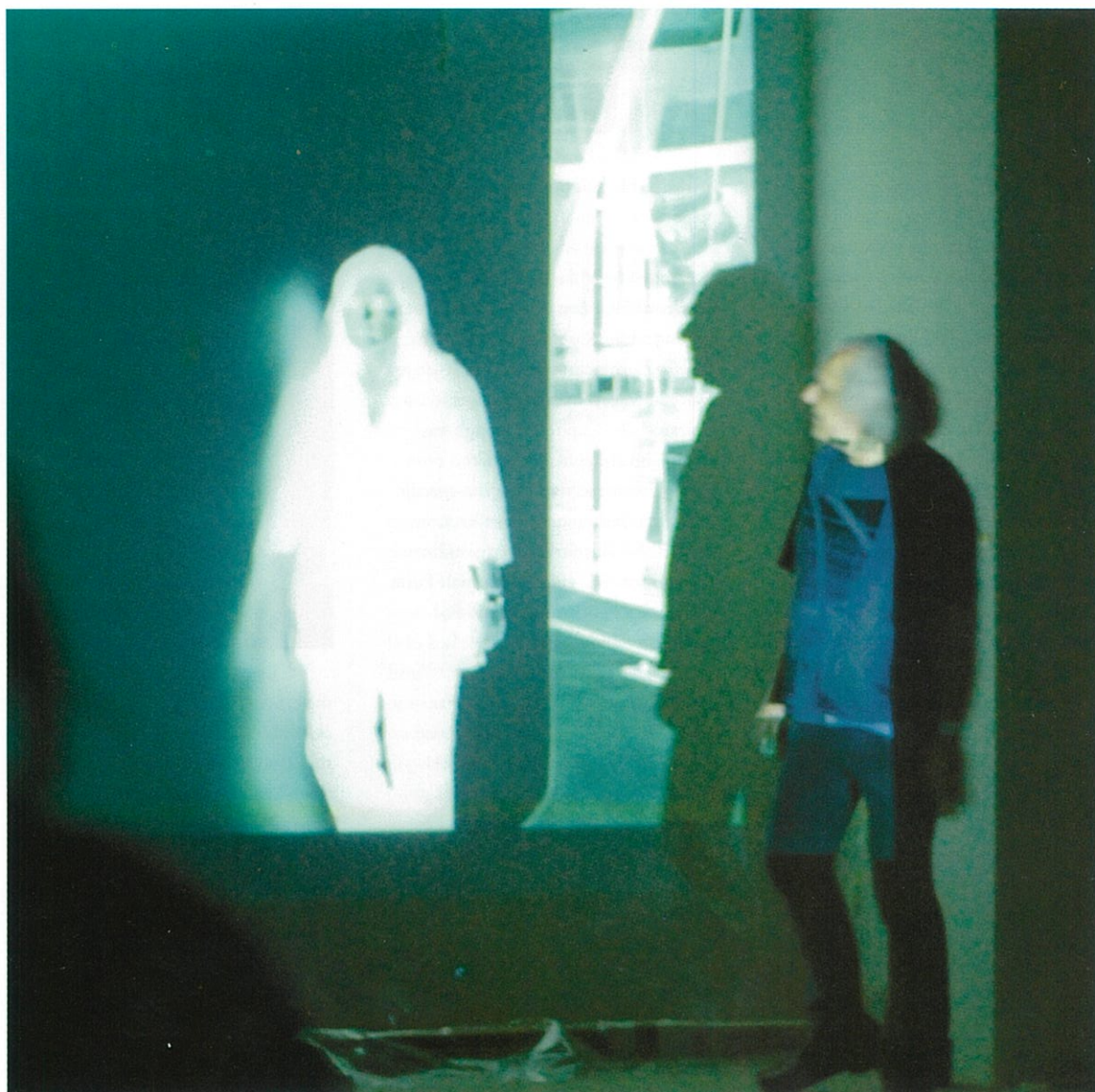
The initial training on the first day of the workshop was done with 16 mm films used for previous screens. The technique in a way is rather simple. The exposure time is fixed by the duration of the movie. The aperture of the lens on the projector too is fixed. The only way to control the amount of light for the correct exposure is thus the use of filters, the number of which is defined through trial and error. Strong of his long experience, Alain guided the team through the entire



process and by the end of the afternoon, we could complete a satisfactory test that showed the ghostly giant effigy of a woman standing in a doorframe. A novelty though was introduced to Alain's technique when it occurred that the filters he had brought along with him were not sufficient. Yong En suggested the use of multigrade filters meant to control the paper contrast. Indeed, they proved to be more powerful than expected and in a way more suitable than Alain's usual filters. Little did we know that this discovery would come really handy two days later when we would switch to digital light.

The second day was devoted to the shooting of the movie. Point is that none of the action scenes will imprint the paper. Only elements staying still for at least a minute will show up in the end. Yet, the process of watching the movie unfold is paramount to the perception of the spectators: they in a way experience the essence of the cinematographic manner, compressing a few minutes of action into one single still frame that has forgotten all about movement. Alain chose a location in the campus and devised a little scenario in which members of the workshop moved about while his wife Danielle and Shirlene took turn to be the still characters who would eventually remain on the print. Later, upon watching the first version of the movie, turned to negative with a post-processing software, Alain felt that the contrast wouldn't be strong enough, especially the black of the negative which probably wouldn't give a good white in the positive print. Analogue printing often implies dodging and burning techniques to bring out the best of a negative. With Wan Wan from the Putnam School of Film, we then embarked on a rather interesting process: by means of the software's many layers and masks we ended up applying dodging and burning onto the negative itself, thus making them part of the projection. The sensitive screen was again venturing into grounds new to all of us.

Finally came the big day: digital light was going to meet analogue paper. The first trial was in a way quite successful: the paper turned out to be completely black! At least we knew it worked, all we had to do was find the right exposure. That was however easier said than done. For the next one hour, we kept producing test prints, each time increasing the number of filters over the projector and lowering its intensity, each time ending up with a hopelessly black print in which not even the beginning of an image could be perceived. The last attempt saw so many filters laid over the lens that



another light

almost nothing was left of the projection. Yet the print was still completely burned. We knew that video projector bulbs were much more powerful than traditional tungsten lamps, but didn't expect it to be to that extent.

Ernest then came up with an idea that put us on track towards a solution. He suggested trying a brief exposure of just 10 seconds to see what would happen. As the brushes started spreading the developer over the test print we watched in great anticipation. And the miracle happened: the image began forming, blacks were emerging while whites remained so. The magic of the sensitive screen was back with us! Problem was that we had to turn that 10 seconds exposure into a 4 minutes and a half... Sheng En then remembered that in digital imaging black isn't the absence of light as in the case of analogue. It is just another colour made up of the three channels red, green and blue. What looked black to the eye was in fact conveying almost as much light as the brighter parts of the image. He tuned the projector by taking out the blue and green channels, keeping only the red to which photo paper is the least sensitive. We added five layers of multigrade filters and two of neutral, at least the projection remained visible, and hoped for the best; time was running short and we didn't have much room left to explore if this still didn't work...

Working it did, beautifully, and by 7pm we finally could watch the Singapore sensitive screen in its full size. An accidental flash of light coming from a hand phone had lit the screen while it was installed and resulted in a print that wasn't quite perfect, two of the papers showing an unwanted overall greyish tone. Never mind, this was only a test, a rehearsal. The main problems had been solved, solutions could be improved on, and the print was anyway beautiful. From afar it looked like one of Alain's usual screen, a larger than life image with a slight haze to it resulting from the motion that at once was and wasn't. From close, it showed the grill of electronic video projection, something akin to a TV screen transmuted into silver alloy. The Singapore screen had indeed transcribed a moment that stood at the threshold between 20th and 21st century photo techniques.

A bigger question looms behind the experiment and excitement of the Singapore sensitive screen: that of the relevance of analogue photography in a 21st century context. The transformation of the photographic scene from analogue to digital over the last decade has been so fast, so widespread and so complete that it is easily tempting to regard analogue photography as obsolete. Yet, while there is no doubt that the future of commercial and mass market photography is digital, there are signs showing that analogue might have a different function to fulfil. The 'mechanical age of reproduction' al-



lowed the 'work of art' to venture into uncharted territories at the turn of the 20th century. In parallel to what photography did for painting then, what if by the turn of the 21st, the invention of a medium fulfilling the need for cheap realistic representation was to free analogue photography and allow it to reveal the extent and depth of its inner most secret, the transformation of light into images?

No digital print however good it is will ever replace the magical moment experienced in a dark room when for the first time one sees a photographic image appears on the floating paper in the tray. It isn't really about the quality of the image, it is about the experience. It materialises the effect of light on photo sensitive supports (whether analogue or digital) in a way that a print coming out of a digital printer will never do. Point is that the dark room is much more than a place devoted to technical practice. It is a rite of passage, a space where the alchemy of life, the transmutation of shadow into light and light into shadow, can be experienced first hand with very simple tools. Lets hope that in the future, analogue and digital will be able to work in hand in hand to expand the boundaries of photographic art.

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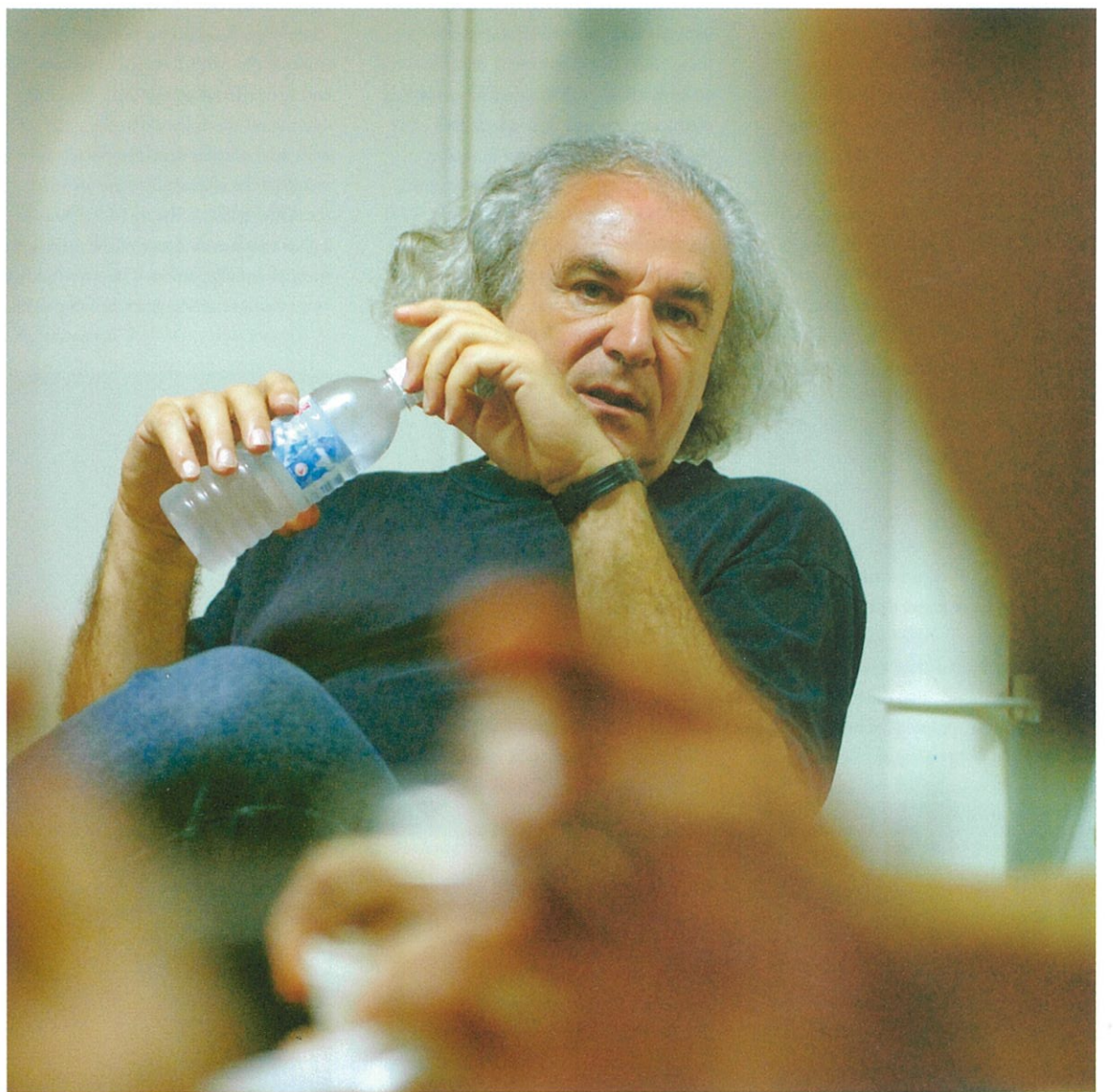
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Big thank you to:

Nicholas Joseph and Majulah L.
Suppiah for loaning projector and
lenses for the 16mm projection



10th Istanbul Biennale

Rofan Teo

It's not only possible, but also necessary – optimism in the age of global war.

Straddling the ancient minarets of the Ottoman empire and a sprawling city centre, Istanbul is in between East and West, present and past, tradition and modernity. She provides an excellent cultural backdrop for thirty-five nations to converge and form dynamic relationships in the 10th installment of this major contemporary art event.

Hou Hanru, the curator of the Istanbul Biennale, selected sites imbued with strong symbols of cultural, socio-economic, and geographical positioning, as well as sites epitomizing the urbanization of a third world metropolis. Included among these selections are AKM, a national cultural centre, and Antrepo, a trading harbour, which houses two exhibitions *Entrepolis* and *Dream House*. *World Factory* is found at the textile wholesaling market of IMC (Istanbul Textile Traders' Market) while Istanbul University was the main site for incubating and presenting public art projects.

Located at the city centre of Taksim Square, AKM (Ataturk Cultural Centre) exemplifies a waning vision of a utopia and the nation's ideals reflected in its exhibition title *Burn it or Not*. Rebuilt by Hayati Tabanlıoğlu in the early 1970s after a fire disaster, AKM (which is slated to be demolished) is a venue for outstanding high art performances. The metallic interior walls and the galactic spiraling lights are at once progressive and transcendental. AKM harks to the austerity of German architecture of 1970s. At the same time, the building reflects both the trappings of our con-

temporary culture as well as our possible futures.

The locations of the works within AKM epitomizes the curator's compelling engagement with the architecture of AKM. The film projections were screened at the stairwell landing, rather than within partitioned rooms. We are likely to stumble upon a video installation by German artist, Nina Fischer, unwittingly drawn into the apocalyptic view of her *Toute la memoire du monde*. The scenes were of the old National library in France. They gradually shift from this repository of world knowledge to a haunting image of vacant library shelves (mirroring the empty landing of AKM) propelling the pelting of rubber bands as a recourse to boredom.

Photographic prints by Vahram Aghasyan, Nancy Davenport, Daniel Faust and Tomoko Yoneda were hung along the shimmering metallic walls. Each artist demonstrated certain distrust to modern technology and beliefs, with Japanese artist Tomoko photographing dilapidated communist sites in Hungary that symbolizes the disintegration of totalizing ideologies in Europe. *Ghost City* by young Armenian artist Vahram Aghasyan succinctly

captures in moving images the shattered ideals of Third World modernization. Mush, Aghasyan's ghost city, was a new residential area which was built by the Soviet Government to help the 149,000 Armenians who were rendered homeless from an earthquake disaster. Yet, the construction of Mush, which began in 1989, was never completed.

More than ten years later, Aghasyan revealed Mush's once grandeur and solid buildings being consigned to oblivion. Like a castle in a moat, Mush floating majestically over the surrounding water, magically evolving technology from nature, like a fantastic bastion of modernism and technology. Yet it is a façade, barely disguising the sinking symbol of an ideal in the decaying interior.

While some artists documented the brittle political ideologies of European superpowers, others employed a humorous slant on the Western technologies and media, through the melding of reality and fiction. In August 2005, Xu Zhen, together with his friends, had climbed the 8848.13 metres high Everest and succeeded in doing the impossible – razing off the colossal Everest peak with an electronic saw. The installation recorded the aftermath of the feat. In the AKM hallway, the tip of the peak in a glass case was evidence of the artist's triumphant expedition. The strewn tents and mountaineering gears, accompanied

by detailed route maps, on-site photographic images, and video footages, documented the arduous climb.

Despite the textual and archival materials, the expedition was a sham. On one level, the work could be read as a critique of mock-cumentary and reality-tv entertainment. On another, it undermines our notions of evidence as indicators of truth; for one, renouncing the alleged claim of mass weapon of destruction as a pretext to declare war on terrorism.

Some of the works which were found in Antrepo reinvents popular beliefs through the manipulation of media. The video *Unity of All Religions* shows a canine dressed as a monk. The dog-monk licks and regurgitates Taoist phrases and English translations of other religions onto a bare wall. Since dogs are not traditionally seen to carry wisdom, the dog-monk ridicules the banal consumption of pseudo-spirituality, the fad in Zen-inspired decor and the burgeoning market for organic products and herbal teas.

Others alter the dichotomies between past and present, tradition and modernity, merging times and spaces to derive intriguing insights from newly imagined scenarios. The work of the collaborative duo Allora and Calzadilla, *There is More Than One Way to Skin A Sheep*

films a tulum (an ancient Turkish piping instrument) player using the musical instrument to fill the flat tyre of the bicycle in Istanbul. While inflating the tyre, the instrument gave off a piercing sound, which alternately sets apart and blends with the passing traffic. In *One step forward, two step backward*, it was amusing to see that the corpse of Lenin, turning in his grave (coffin) to a choir of people singing The Internationale in their own language.

Rich Cat Dies of Heart Attack in Chicago suggests the sensationalism of media and triviality of media in the West. The work connects with the beheaded statue of Saddam Hussein which generated media hype during the invasion of Iraq. A bronze head was dragged across fairgrounds, planted at the centre of a football field, and seen at public order training sessions. Entering realms of sports, entertainment, law and order, the head was oblivious to the unfolding events and narratives, only once compelling a horse to leap over to avoid crushing it.

The Istanbul Biennale presented incisive political statements against the hegemonic Western systems and infrastructures as well as technologies. Collectively, the works injected a sense of optimism, as they reclaim the diversity of Turkey, often stereotyped as merely corrupt and impoverished.



Mobilizus: Exhibition featuring International Alumni Artists, April 2008



Transglobal Paths

Nur Shazwany

One cannot help but wonder about the meaning of the exhibition title *Mobilizus*. When pronounced, it sounded like 'Mobilizes', which means to make mobile, to be capable of movement. This was exactly the theme for the exhibition, by four artists from Lasalle's Fine Arts Alumni, Arthur Wong, Claudia Conduto, Lynette Rob and Viviane Rombaldi. The artworks which were exhibited for two weeks at Praxis Space mixed various media, including photographs, sculpture, paintings and an installation.

These artists from various parts of the world came together after four years to hold this exhibition. Singapore

marks the starting point of Mobilizus, and continue to follow them to wherever each artist lives. Their lives consist of constant fleeting motion. They travel around the world, but feel at home at the same time.

This constant moving around can be frustrating to some: the need to settle down, the continual cycle of culture shock, the learning of new languages, the getting used to new peoples and the adaptation to new foreign cultures.

On the other hand, some may find travelling, always being in constant or nomadic motion appealing. What exactly could be the thrill of being always on the move? Perhaps the cultivation of freedom, or the departure from home and country, or the departure from the foreign, or the arrival in one, or perhaps the experiences in between?

Finally, the desire to eventually return home, driven by our familiarity with our home culture, compounded by our unfamiliarity with a foreign one.

In her series of paintings on old maps, Lynette Rob portrays the temporary transience of finding a route home. Made with an aerial perspective (like a map), the paintings had what seemed like clouds on the painted surface. She shows what it is like to have the desire to go, to leave behind a place, to head towards more familiar destinations. Viewers are left to decide if the artwork is in a vertical or horizontal perspective. According to Rob, "A map is a two dimensional representation of the three dimensional earth, plus the fourth dimension of time. My artwork, is a simulacrum of this ideal."

Viviane Rombaldi's works reflect on the fleeting movement from one country to another. Originally from a migrant family in Europe, she has been repeatedly relocating for the past few years. These experiences of learning other cultures led to probe her sense of belonging and communicating. Phonebook pages and ink were used in her collage. They serve as links to her new environment in every country that she has moved to.

Claudia Conduto's photographs are simple; they are taken using a mobile phone camera in the six months she spent traveling. Views of the skies are varied, due to the latitude and longitude of each place. The impact was more powerful when the pictures were actually taken at the same 'home' time in Brussels, Belgium (10 am CET) despite of changing time zones.

When we look at these artworks, we learn insights into the experiences, feelings and emotions these artists have encountered on their journey and their return home. I realized that the state of impermanence informs their personal perspectives of tourism and travel. I feel that their experiences are different from tourists (who are only in a foreign land to shop), expatriates, emigrants and refugees.

I wonder if they suffer homesickness living in this transient state. I guess it would be best if we are not deeply attached to the new surroundings, but still think of where we came from.

Mobilizus will move on to Bains Connection, Brussels, in July. From there it will head to New York, and then to New Zealand.

Son of a gun / think about it / opposite of loosenen - .99hours

Jayson Yong

"Four artists, one performance, one extraordinary exhibition. One of the artists will attempt to stay inside the exhibition space for 99 hours. His actions will be broadcasted directly from the CCTV to the television set, which is situated across the exhibition space. The artist will be cramped into a small claustrophobic room for your viewing pleasure. Only a mattress, a pillow, a candle holder and a bag of surprises is given to the performing artist. You follow? Don't you enjoy the torture?"

The exhibition is explained in the blurb that was written by the artists. An exhibition that is calculative, misleading and manipulative. This paradoxical exhibition successfully attests to televised culture - its influence, persuasion, suggestion, conditioning, occultism, and homogeneity. When confronted by the images broadcasted from the CCTV, one becomes skeptical and suspicious. Every movement in the performance space is recorded and presented to the "audience" live for their viewing pleasure, reflecting on the ominous effect that televised culture produces for mass consumption. The television "program" from the CCTV has a hypnotic effect that eliminates critical tendencies or potentialities, limiting accurate knowledge about the exhibition itself. The audience has successfully conformed.

The audience had no emancipated view apart from what the artists determines because their cognizance is removed by artistic control. The television and the performance space were carefully separated, placed at each end of the gallery, cutting off distraction. Their behavior was anticipated and manipulated by the artists, using methods inspired by psychology to dictate their movement by subtle suggestion. Deliberate clues were placed at obvious

places for the audience to take notice, furthering their reliance on the pseudo-authority that the artists fabricated in their installation. The audience leaves the exhibition with queries but nonetheless convinced that the performance took place because of the telecast that they witnessed and experienced.



This exhibition seems to comment on the denunciation of choice. We see this in the manipulation of "the presuppositions within which the implications function before a single word is spoken." The audience already has a set of expectations or habitual behaviour when entering the installation. This emphasizes the way a delusion is willingly accepted even though the delusion is an imaginary solace. Theodor Adorno reasons that television 'pretends not to touch on anything serious and expects to be regarded as featherweight'. This exhibition also addressed another issue. The audience waits to be entertained. They are molded by the artists to think within a box without their knowledge. This means that presumptuousness on the part of the artists and this may be stereotyping the audience, but this also explains what makes the installation a success.

This exhibition is organized by local artist, Donna Ong. This is a first-time collaboration between three other artists - Quinatasya, Tai Ten and Jayson.

Viz a Viz a Vizualize

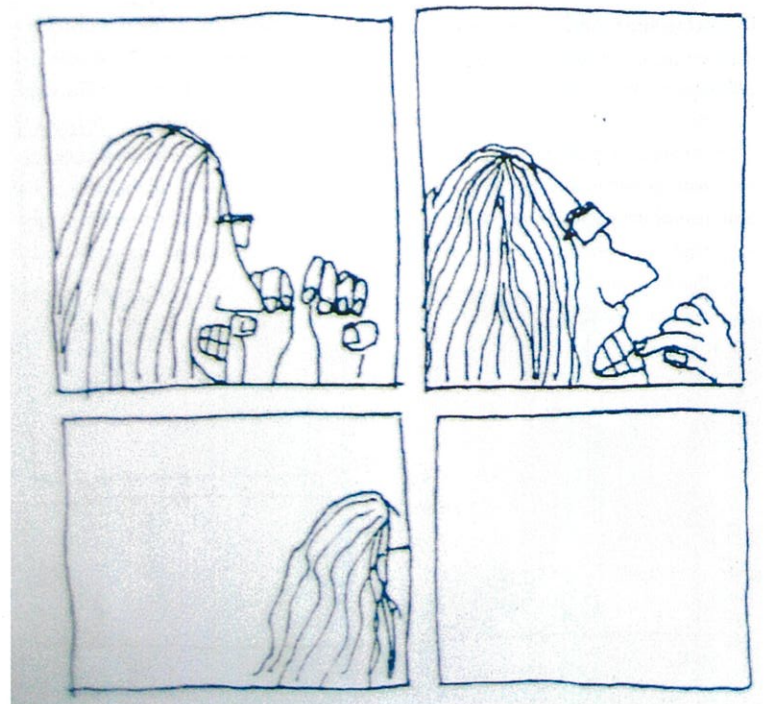
Jon Chan

In the world of George Herriman's classic series Krazy Kat, words are commonly misspelled to give his characters their individualized slangs. This serves to bring the audience into a world of fantasy animals that are grounded with a sense of humanism. To invest one's time in creating a comic, a myriad of decisions have to be made in order to bring one's reader into a world that is believable but still achieves the artist's intentions.

The Canadian cartoonist Seth builds entire building models to garner a sense of placement in his fictional setting of Palookaville. In the case of Charles Shulz and his famous comic peanuts, settings are relatively simple and a crude rendition of a line is enough to suggest a pavement.

In its seemingly simplistic and naïve way, comics have unfortunately been labeled as a less sufficient mode of expression, compared to other modes of art making. Fortunately, thanks to the work of such contemporaries like Alan Moore, comics have been increasingly growing in their notoriety for handling mature, complex, and thought provoking material, while all the while keeping its strong attachment to what are their essential strengths, such as the crumbling line work that Shulz has given us. It is as good as a signature, and auto-biographical cartoonists today have made use of these personalized modes of drawing to express their own direct experiences of living in this current state of affairs.

In Viza- Viza- Vizualize, student artists and participating artists Sia Joo Hiang, Weng Pixin and yours truly give us a glimpse of these worlds whether they be fantastical, auto-biographical, or even formalistic (yes, comics can be purely formal - Art Spiegelman's experimental comics.) No easy task, for each of these artists has to combine not only a visual sense of what is, but to create entire plots, characterizations etc. Yet, what is exciting about these first time endeavors is that these artists come from a fine art background and so their attempts at comic making are no different from any other transition of media - for example, painting to performance art. Sequential art is not a genre and it is not even a medium; it is simply a mode of perception, essentially the combining of words and pictures with a sense of sequentiality. It doesn't have to be about superheroes, westerns, or funnies and it doesn't have to be done only in ink. In fact, comics can be about anything, free to new forms of viz-ualization. The artists in this exhibition play with the sensibilities they have from their fine art backgrounds, intermingling them with all they have come to love in comics - Shulz's psychologically complex children, Kirby's raw expressionistic figures, Moore's offbeat writing, and Herriman's language, a broken language that occasionally gives itself to sheer poetry. The artists in this exhibition offer us that opportunity to experience their precious first steps in uncharted areas, where the seeds of their ever expanding new worlds are continually growing, fleshed out and viz-ualized.



La Biennale di Venezia

Syed Muhd Hafiz

With this year's local biennale (or biennial, the English translation of the Italian word), adopting the theme *Wonder*, there might be some amongst us who are wondering what is the whole deal on biennials. Is it just about art? How does it help the host nation? Is it the definitive arts exhibition compared to others?

For the uninitiated, the biennial phenomenon is not new with the first ever held in Venice in 1895. Of course back then, it was of a different nature and probably for a different set of reasons but what we have come to be familiar with, is a trend, which gained momentum in the nineties. From the Dakar Biennial in Senegal, Africa to Shanghai Biennial in China, there seems to be an irresistible urge for countries to latch on to this bandwagon.

It is not a surprising trend as biennials have undoubtedly raked in the tour-

ist dollars. Thousands of visitors and not to mention, the huge teams that the different international pavilions bring along, will surely benefit any host nation. Whatever the criticisms and debates the biennials have raised, one has to admit that besides a showcase for contemporary art, it is a viable platform for cultural exchange. More so in this increasingly globalised world, an understanding of different cultures is not only educational but also necessary for us to negotiate through life.

Singapore's inaugural participation was in the 49th Venice Biennale in 2001 with Chen KeZhan, Salleh Japar, Matthew Ngui and Suzann Victor. Attracting over 200 000 international visitors, the five-month long exhibition provides excellent networking opportunities within the international arts community, through dialogue and discussions. Plus, representing Singapore against more than 60 countries with over 200 artists is always a national honour!

For the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007, the theme was *Figments, Fictions and Fantasies*. Tang Da Wu, Vincent Leow, Jason Lim and Zulkifli Mahmod represented the Singapore pavilion. At first glance, the artists involved represent a wide spectrum of local visual arts practices; Da Wu being the 'father' of

performance art in Singapore, Vincent is known for his edgy and alternative contemporary works, Jason is a leading ceramics sculptor who infuses performance art into his works and Zulkifli being a prolific artist in the relatively-new field of sound art.

The Singapore Pavilion was located in the 15th century Gothic and atmospheric Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti, a popular location on the main island of Venice, next to the Accademia Bridge. A well-known art and cultural venue and a highly-visited tourist destination, the site was important in shaping the Pavilion's theme and the works of the artists.



Many would argue about the highlight of the Singapore Pavilion but an unforgettable moment would definitely be the opening of the pavilion with the crashing of Jason Lim's *Just Dharma*, a 300cm x 120cm chandelier form composed of 1500 glowing porcelain lotus flowers. The work was dropped from the ceiling and 'smashed' onto the Pavilion floor in a visually captivating and exhilarating one-off performance.

Starting with a bang, the Singapore Pavilion continued to garner many positive reviews as attested by the interns who tirelessly manned and looked after the exhibits. "Many were intrigued by the interactive performance workshop of Da Wu where he employed traditional Asian materials such as the banana leaf, and had the audience eating rice out of them," said Deborah Tan.

One reason that might contribute to the positive reviews of our local artists is, despite their varied backgrounds they managed to connect with the biennale's theme and somewhat created a coherent presentation of their individually strong works – a perfect balance. This seemed to be the direction of Jason's 'hybrid-chandelier' form, *Just Dharma* which consisted of almost 2000 pieces of egg-shell porcelain fitted with light bulbs.

Zulkifli's 4 metre high *Sonic Dome: An Empire of Thought*, also resonated deeply with the visitors as they were treated to a 30 minute recording of sounds from Venice and Singapore amidst the ambient lighting within. Vincent's *Andy's Wonderland* where it featured *Andy*, the protagonist, as a man-dog and man-hawk, caught the imagination of the visitors too as the artist seek to address issues of dogmatism and the 'spectacle of everyday life'.

The Singapore Pavilion was indeed a success judging by the general responses of daily visitors. Thus we can only look forward to the upcoming Singapore Biennial in September. Not only will international visitors get a taste of the thriving contemporary arts scene in Singapore, but also get a preview of up and coming local artists and their works, should they be chosen for a certain biennial in Italy in the future!



Because it's Happy Chaos, August 2007

Because it's Happy Chaos

Julie Lee

Spontaneous, fun-loving and quiet candour are the three encompassing qualities that I came to know of the artists behind *Because it's Happy Chaos*. With frequent walks through the cluttered studios and curious peers behind oversized drawing boards, it slowly became a routine that I enjoyed a lot. The greatest joy of art does not only involve the process of making it, it is also the sharing of the process with your fellow peers that makes art-making so fulfilling.

So as I stood in front of these massive, coloured-filled canvases, I am reminded of the pages of journals that

were filled with gleeful doodles and scribbles, while Picasso grew remotely familiar. And this is perhaps the very basic essence of art making: the element of happiness and pure joy

Process-driven, this body of works registers constant change over time that offers an unending flow of imagination and possibilities. Like all the students, young and dynamic individuals, the works pulsate with energy and emanate vibrancy. From the deliberate drips of paints and obtrusive wash outs, the works are in constant state of flux that can be reworked over and over again. The use of blunt and fine lines creates an invariant sense of rhythm and movement while the writings inject a

whimsical muse. The multiple creations also reek of childlike naivety with their guileless forms and familiar motifs that add on to the quirky compositions.

As these six artists come together, weaving their disparate aesthetic styles, technical competence and diverse personalities, it is no mean feat to create an eclectic visual that manifests in bouts of playfulness and dynamism. And I would add this personal insight: the bond that they shared between them had contributed much to the cohesiveness and random play in this final body of works. The exhibition certainly suits the theme of a Happy Chaos; it meant a hell load of messy yet serious fun.



Ink Painting

Tan Jack Ying

“As the ink spread onto the rice paper, I felt peaceful and calm as though I was in a trance of my own spiritual self.” - Janet Olivero, after attending the ink painting class conducted by Mr Lim Choon Jin.

When I asked a few of my classmates what impressions they had of traditional ink painting, Nurulelma, who is currently taking painting as her major, said that ink painting is certainly related to a poem. Painting often embraces poetry, and artists working in ink have been known to make use of poetic themes in the composition of their paintings.

Many of my classmates, though, were more interested in the techniques used in ink painting. Under Mr Lim's classes, we studied these techniques in the context of traditional Chinese ink painting.

From traditional to contemporary,

the Taoist philosophy of Yin and Yang- polarising elements- has always strongly influenced the aesthetics and practice of Chinese ink painting. In Chinese, the word Yin signifies darkness while Yang refers to brightness.

Mr Lim Choon Jin's 2007 'cave series' is an excellent illustration (see images below).

The elements emphasized by Chinese painters often had to do with their understanding of nature and life. Frequently, this led to an expression of a unity of man and nature. Exploration of this 'Man-Nature' relationship can be seen in traditional Chinese ink paintings of landscapes. The overpowering sense of scale evoked by the mountains when seen in relation to human beings, exemplifies the effective articulation of the painters' sentiments.

In the class, Mr Lim taught us three basic techniques of *shui mo* - which in

Chinese characters means water (*shui*) and ink (*mo*). This style is often regarded as *xie yi*. The three techniques are the Ink-wash, Water-wash and Ink-splashing methods.

Ink-washing is done by first applying ink onto the rice paper, after which water is added. With Water-wash, the water is applied before the ink. In Ink-splashing, ink is not actually splashed but applied directly to the paper without any water. As a 'westernised' painter, these techniques remind me of the wet-on-wet and dry-on-wet method usually used in western painting.

At every lesson, Mr Lim demonstrates a couple of techniques, such as those used in the landscape and figurative works shown above. He feels that we should not abandon the 'traditional' for the contemporary, as what we now inherit, had evolved from tradition. Therefore he hopes that we will be able to expand the scope of our contem-

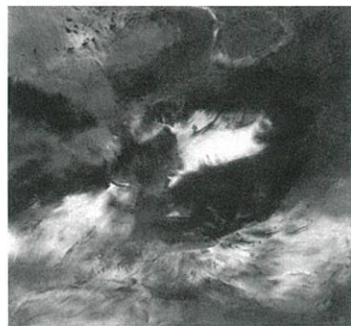
porary practice with a fundamental knowledge of traditional ink painting techniques.

I agree with him and moreover, I feel that our practice should evolve hand-in-hand with our own conceptual maturity as we, through our own conscious observations of life, develop a personal theory of it.

To my astonishment, I discovered that ink painting can also be incorporated with different types of medium such as acrylic paint, glue or even borax to create layering effects. Nur Shazwany, one of Mr Lim's students, found the classes very interesting even though she did not understand his language of instruction.

She personally found ink painting quite relevant to printmaking. As for myself, through Mr Lim's ink painting classes, I have learnt that a mistake made in painting does not have to be irredeemable. It might be a beautiful mistake- and it might even make the painting better.

Today, ink painting is no longer just about mountains and flowers. It is a medium which has shown itself to be a capable contemporary vehicle for works that require its quality of expressiveness and conceptualism. Not only is it well suited to express the unique poetic essence of nature, as was its traditional role, it provides a flexible range of effects that make it a worthwhile addition to an artist's visual language.



A Performance by Sasha Lim, November 2007

Secrets, Thoughts and Memories

Siti Norjehan

As an extension of her major work, Sasha Lim, a current undergraduate student majoring in Painting, decided to delve deeper into her theme 'memories' through performance art. Transmitting her mental state into a bodily experience, she used crocheted cocoons as the conduit. *Secrets, Thoughts and Memories* was installed in the area just outside the Praxis Space.

In this performance, Sasha, who was dressed in white and barefoot, invited members of the audience to sit next to her but face the opposite direction. Then Sasha would ask the participant to choose one crocheted orange cocoon, the end of which had been left open, from a circular container. What followed was a short interaction between herself and the participant. Taking turns, both would whisper into the cocoon and subsequently, by placing the cocoon to their ears, they would listen to it. Sasha then drew a smiley face on a small piece of paper as a gesture of gratitude and passed it to the participant to prompt a response of any kind. She then folded the returned paper and sewed it up in the cocoon which



she then proceeded to pin onto the participant's apparel.

During these brief exchanges, some of the audiences did share their secrets, thoughts and memories with Sasha who in return let them in on one of hers too. The "messages" that were trapped in the cocoon are like leftovers from the past, albeit in their less visible forms. I think this reminds us of our experiences with time. Even the act of pinning the cocoons on the participants symbolised a continuity of the present memory (the participants) with the past secrets, thoughts

and memories that both Sasha and the participants shared. She wanted them to take the cocoon with them as a remembrance of their brief exchange.

Personally, I feel that memory is not an easy thing to deal with, especially if you have one that you would rather have erased completely and not be a part that made up or explains who you are. In concluding, I would like to leave a quote by Margaret Fairless Barber in *The Roadmender* "To look backward for awhile is to refresh the eye, to restore it, and to render it the more fit for its prime function of looking forward".

Milentie Pandilovski, Artist Talk, October 2007

Milentie Pandilovski

Hazel Lim

Earlier this year, the Fine Arts Faculty was also pleased to have organized a talk by Milentie Pandilovski who is the Art Director for the Experimental Art Foundation based in South Australia.

Having been involved in the establishment of the network of Soros Centres for Contemporary Art (SCCA) in the former Communist countries of South East Europe in the early 90s, as well as being the initiator and Director

of Skopje Electronic Arts Fair, Milentie was here to share in his talk, his strong and varied program currently developing in the Experimental Art Foundation, that would include a mix of exhibitions, artist talks, workshops, symposia and publications. He also highlighted on the generation of artists who have, intentionally or not, signal the impact of technologies through their engagement with a wide field of cultural endeavours including bio technologies, gaming cultures, cosmological science, and operations of the moving image in a globalizing culture.



A Graphic Novel Talk by Paul Duffield

Norreen Rahmat

A brief introduction on Paul Duffield: He grew up wanting to be an artist as he would go to see exhibitions with his dad when he was a child. That's where he was inspired to become an artist. He drew all sorts of things from Greeks to Superheroes to Games workshop characters, so on - so forth. His source of inspiration includes the likes of Tolkien and from there; he then started to create his world of magic. He loves for "manga" is not because its "manga" but because of its graphics and the story lines that embodies it. In his later part of his journey, he then met Kate and was introduced to the world of Internets - the idea of comics and there he established his wealth of enthusiasm whereby he finally decided to do comics or to become a graphic novel/comic artist.

So the question pops what's Graphic Novel? Basically the definition of Graphic Novel is a fictional story that is presented in comic-strip format and published as a book. It first kicks off in Japan, commonly known there as *manga*. And the western counter part to it is relatively known as comic.

He - himself asked questions in which many of other graphic novel/manga/comic artist been debating among themselves, as to "what is manga"? And he feels that, there should be no diversion in it, and that manga itself falls under the category of sequential art, just like comics, and that *manga* has different term and meaning for various countries. Thus he quoted:

"I'm growing to think that the label 'manga' is no longer an inspirational factor in Sequential Art, it's a retarding factor. Companies like Tokyopop and Viz have done their thing, opened people's eyes to a certain sub-set of comics from Japan, but now they're going nowhere. These companies (and others jumping on the band-wagon and forming 'manga' imprints) are holding manga back, fencing it off from its western equivalents and cultivating a fandom who 'read manga, not comics', as if they're not both iterations of the same form of story-telling. The marketing reps know what sells, they've established a demographic, and they're becoming too comfortable with their profit margin; too timid to truly get behind innovative creators or dip into the vast pool of comics from Japan that sell to non-teens".

There's a difference between the Japanese comic (manga) and the western comics in such that it does not lie in the format, but the ideas or how things were being place into perceptive. The story lines and the scenes embodies each one is different because no matter where comic/manga is being produced, it will embodies the culture influences of that particular place and time. Then it comes all the different versions of comics and that graphic novel is just one type of it.

Therefore in my opinion, I think that there is no differences weather what name is being given to it or "what's the in-thing" or not, but the ideas behind the works and where it original begin. Because no matter what form it take, what background the artist holds or what country produces it, the important thing is the one that started it all off - which is "Manga".



An Index of Kindness by Ruark Lewis

Quinatasya Zain

The above assemblage of words would have sent my spell-checker into a frenzy and flood the page in a deluge of red and green crinkly underlines. Is it a cipher, or mere balderdash? Perhaps it is an outlandish vernacular with resounding grammatical slip-ups? Ignore the dull reminder that you need to visit the optician to get an eye test. Before trying to decode the text, welcome to Ruark Lewis's world of formal displacement, where typographical rules, such as spacing and hyphenation, are disdainfully ignored.

Australian artist, writer and word enthusiast, Ruark Lewis pushes the boundaries of definitions, by playing with the conventions and structures of language to suggest intriguing new and hidden meanings in everyday speech. In his practice he incorporates an array of media including painting, drawing, printmaking, installation, performance and sound recording, sometimes transmogrified and hinged together into distinctive and often surprising linguistic and cognitive structures.

In his visit to Singapore in early September last year, Lewis's work displayed similar baffling disorientation in his orations. He also performed *An Index of Kindness*, a collaborative installation and performance work together with fellow Australian artist Jonathan Jones. In this performance, his utterances were stripped of what is so comforting about formal semantics, and internal punctuations and hyphenations were disregarded, akin to his physical works. As he verbalized the assortment of words and phrases in tonally deviating accents, he peered in curiosity at the orchestration of superimposed printed text on red and black flags suspended off the ceiling of the Post-Museum.

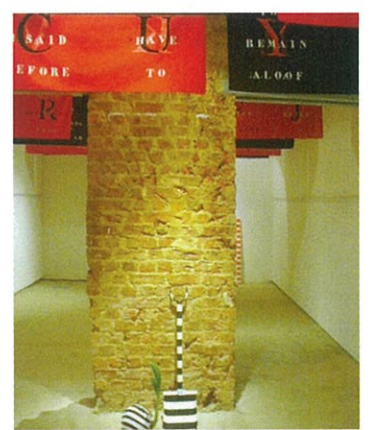
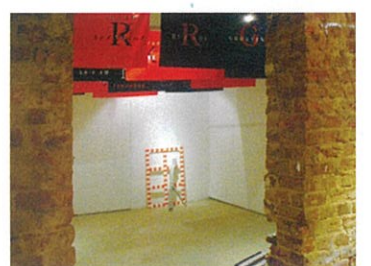
The transcriptions on the red and black materials were, according to him, conceived after a thorough examination of *Silence*, a play by French writer Nathalie Sarraute. "I wanted to work out ways to transcribe her tropisms and transfer them to the visual world." Additionally, he reflected on the growing political silence in the Australia society during the fourth term of the conservative government, and simply relocated the thought of speaking or acting freely to our Singapore context. Hence, the series of graphic flags, which amusingly distorted the conventions of the gallery space as they lingered above our heads, was called *An Index of Silence*. These were also accompanied by *An Index of Emotions*, a highly emotional sound recording of male and female abstract voices that palpably demonstrated intense sentiments of anger, sadness and joy. The hierarchy of the senses, creating a floating non-visual energy in the room, acted as an audio

image, and effectively created another dimension of experience.

However, one could not help but get distracted by various props - ranging from a tree bough, a wooden pallet, a coconut, a rock, a foldable chair, a ball propped with a bamboo stick and a shovel - painted in distinctive red and white, and black and white stripes. These objects, placed individually at various spots on the gallery floor, were called Signals, and were to operate as nothing more than decoys. Lewis claimed that they 'were to mean nothing - just visual props,' and a certain distraction for the viewer to consume their work at an unhurried pace, before arriving at the aforementioned Indexes of Silence and Emotions. The only 'signal' different from the rest of the objects came in the form of a flag pinned next to the exit, which ironically purported *Silence Is Golden*.

With every intention of speaking in disguised political/poetic codes, Lewis and Jones created a banner called QUOTE, which, rendered in the modular stenciled crafting font, said: 'it was a strange mix of love and hate, affirmations of continuity and difference, nostalgia and a sense of betrayal on both sides.' The momentous expression was derived from a written text by the intellectual Ashis Nandy, referring to the India-Pakistan relations since 1948, which was affected owing to the death of Gandhi. This apparent interdisciplinary approach reflects on the artists' ongoing engagement with modes of practice that generally lie outside the realm of the visual arts - literature, poetry, theatre, as well as politics.

An Index of Kindness had enhanced and occupied the Post-Museum, the 'artists-run-initiative' located in the vicinity of aromatic Indian food at Rowell Road, as an architectural intervention. By animating the installation spatially and aurally, Lewis had compellingly articulated the sense of an expanded language - a diversified field for speech and writing. Philologists, scholars and traditional defenders of the English language, however, may possibly succumb to superior mirth when confronted with Lewis's systematically rejiggered text and letters that appear to move chaotically across the surface of the work, forming themselves into new semantic chains horizontally, vertically, in eccentric trajectories that follow the unpredictable motion of the viewer's eyes. Perhaps we need to pause and consider whether we may simply be reassuring ourselves by asserting traditional prescription over the healthy mutation whereby language flourish to cope with the needs of an evolving world. Language drifts, as it always has, but that does not necessarily mean that it degenerates. Especially not in Ruark Lewis's world. There goes my spell-checker again.



Artist Highlights

Hazel Lim

In April, we were also pleased to have Guy Sherwin and Lynn Loo who jointly gave a talk to the Fine Arts students. This talk centered on the technical aspects of film making and its inherent relationship with the fine arts.



Lynn Loo is originally from Singapore and currently based in London. She made a transition from a music background to filmmaking in 1997. A way to describe her films is that they are compositions of images and sound that suggest narratives or convey an event without text or words.

The later influence by the London Filmmakers' Co-op has led to her exploration of filmmaking to move to an investigation of the celluloid and presenting works in a performance element with multiple projectors. Her first film from this is '0' (2004), followed by Vowels (2005). Letterforms printed onto strips of film that would also produce the soundtrack. Vowels is expanded to Vowels and Consonants in collaboration with Guy Sherwin. Since 2005, I have been assisting and collaborating with Sherwin in numerous film performances and projects.

As part of the London Filmmakers Co-Op, Guy Sherwin who presented his earlier works and his subsequent film works during this talk, often include live elements and serial forms. The predominant feature of his films is characterised by an enduring concern with light and time as the fundamentals of cinema. Recent works include multi-screen projection and gallery installations.

In a stunning presentation of the Man in the Mirror, Sherwin collaged a past video of him taken about 30 years ago on a live performance of himself, doing an almost identical action of flipping and turning the mirror. Here the collaborator is Sherwin himself, albeit in the past form, synchronizing a lyrical flipping of the mirror to achieve a quietly beautiful piece of moving frames.



Artist Talks - Singapore Biennale 2008



Hazel Lim

Hosted by LASALLE and organised by the Singapore Biennale Secretariat the college was also venue for the talks organized for the public to get an insight into the works and ideas behind some of the artists who are participating in the Singapore Biennale 2008.

In the two weeks that Lasalle was hosting the artists talks, we see a good turnout of audience interested to understand the works by artists Alfredo Aquilizan (who works and collaborates with his wife (Isabel Aquilizan) as well as Paolo W Tamburella.

For Alfredo Aquilizan, the artist's activities as husband and wife have long been drawn in a collaborative process, evolving within the spheres of family and community, including that which they share with other artists. Their ephemeral projects have been concerned with keeping the home, finding and defining identity, notions of diaspora, dealing with hardship of journey, orienting oneself in displacement, sensing presences in absence and accumulating memory. Alfredo and Isabel in some of their earlier works involve making use of everyday personal objects such as blankets and toothbrushes as both abstract and referential as a metaphor for human existence.

In a way similar to the collection of iconic objects Aquilizan were fascinated with, Paolo W Tamburella in one of his well known work - The Football Hunters, was also on a hunting spree to locate old, punctured and consumed footballs in India, which invariably brought him across the entire country where the search for hidden footballs became a way to explore India and to portray many different aspects of the nation, as these old footballs served as containers for a variety of stories and as keys to enter the Indians' everyday life.

Indeed, these collections of items and objects to signify the places and people that the artists meet in various societal context and geographical locations serve to bring to mind what narratives and objects they might associate with our city state. There were much queries from the audience about that but the artists remained mum about what they might present during the Biennale, adding on to the mystery of what they might showcase. I suppose there would be much to await for in the month of September to see what the Aquilizans and Tamburella might present to Singaporeans when the Singapore Biennale exhibition opens.



Who is Patrick Storey?

Arthur Wong

Patrick, you describe yourself as an enigma - I read it as a dual personality, each in conflict with the other. Can you talk more about these two elements which make you who you are?

Actually, there is no conflict or duality, per se. Rather, there is an intrinsic collaboration between all aspects of the personality to arrive at any particular means of thought or conduct for a particular situation or moment- like this one.

Since my own response is based on this interview, I must refrain from a detailed depiction of myself.

Why is Patrick Storey an artist?

It seems that my need to be an artist is derived from the desire to create things that shake people from their daily routine somehow.

At the age of ...my first site specific work was completed. We had moved into a new neighbourhood and next to the road there was a hillside of exposed dirt with no grass, almost vertical. With my ...garden tools I managed to carve a "smiley face" into the hill - just a crude shallow relief, as a way to give some type of positive greeting to my new home. I thought it was huge at the time because I was so small, but the "work" was only 1.5 meters or so.

Later that week I heard our neighbours talking about the face I had carved into the hill and my pursuit of art had begun. Knowing that this thing I had done was now in someone's

mind, and was causing them to search for an answer, fuelled a fire.

There is something about presenting an image, concept or experience and having it stay with someone, resonating, that seems unavoidable as a lifelong pursuit. It's almost like eating or sleeping, making art is inevitable.

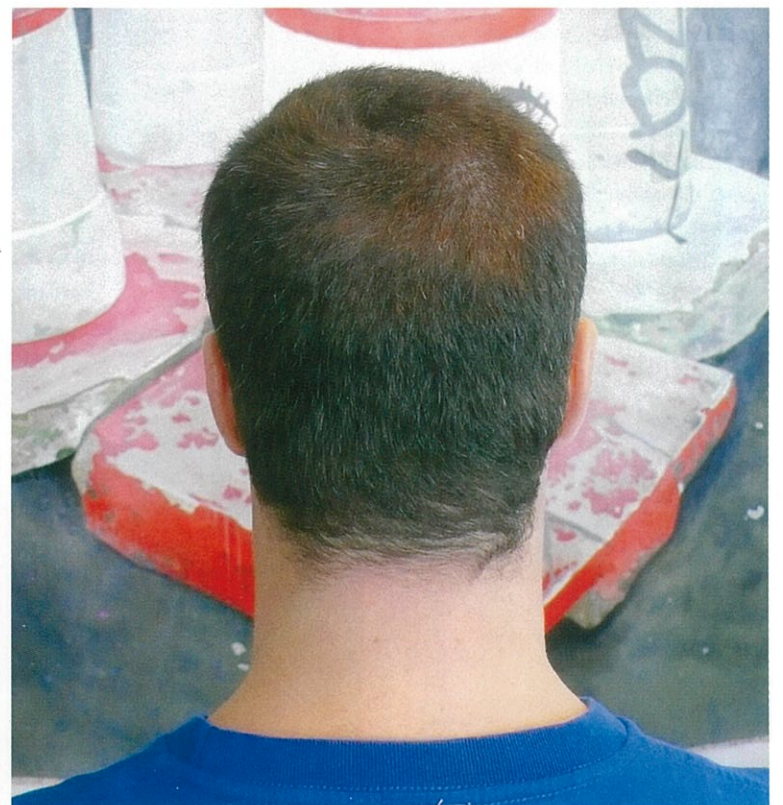
How will you describe your art practice?

Making things is almost always a result of an initial reflex, an intuitive (and manipulated) response which becomes recorded through the action and translation of making any particular work. As of now my practice is undergoing some profound changes due to having recently relocated to Singapore. Suddenly much of the subject matter I was involved in back in the ...seems less relevant now, except as an informing subtext to current works.

Finally, why did you choose to come to Singapore and what do you think of this little red dot?

I came to Singapore because my ... is working here as ..., but the curious thing about winding up here is that much of my work prior to moving here was about this region, through my ... photography of war torn Southeast Asia during the 1970's Singapore can best be described as an amazing Asian Melange, an intriguing mix of many varied cultures coexisting.

The longer I am here, the more this mix can be identified for it's individual parts so, after (only) ...months of living here, Singapore keeps redefining itself in the way I see and understand it.





Work in Progress

Nah Yong En

A ponder begins much. An insightful question opens the door to new thoughts and wonderful discoveries, giving access to fresh considerations and perspectives. The Masters students' WIP exhibition, 'Practice Mode,' is slated to open 21 April 08, and showcases 13 sets of ponderings, presented in a full spectrum of mediums.

About pondering; it asks to observe the world around, to respond with incisive questions and thoughts, to be sensitive to the happenings in our surroundings, to catch things that often pass by unnoticed, to notice things that many take for granted. It attempts to build understanding and value, and to make sense of the place we live in.

Add aesthetics to ponderings, aesthetics as that which pleases the visual mind. As something beyond pondering, it prompts us to create or re-create experiences for others to embrace in life, to take a renewed look at what and where one is living in, and to re-notice the little things. Aesthetic and pondering together is the amalgamation of thought, process and product – an extension of pondering, raising it beyond just a flicker of an idea.

The concretization of works may mark the end of any pondering, or maybe not; it may be the pathway which leads to more pathways, or the little lamp that pierces the darkness.

Of the works, there are those that ponder our senses. There are those that ponder our conscious and our subconscious, those that ponder our

dreams, or a warm and tender maternal embrace.

There are those that ponder the



technical aspects and traditional stereotypes of painting; the act of creating a painting itself and its inspirations, or how the least of lines and colour can be used to create a new space and aesthetic.

There are those that ponder perceiving and perceptions; pushing the possibilities of angles and proportions

in portrayal of heads, or an object that is present yet absent, or re-contextualized trees and greens in our garden city.

There are those that ponder life leaving its mark through time; the documentation of routine life, or the creating of décor from mundane happenings, events which could have flown by unnoticed.

There are those that ponder those societal values which influence how we live each day; in how crowds react and how we react to crowds, or how masculinity figures itself in our country today.

There are those which ponder how things can be broken down elementally and reconstructed; narratives and stories reassigned to other places, or images and colours and text interacted with and reordered.

Take time to pause and think, rather than rush into quick judgments. Be unsatisfied with just scratching the surface of these works, rather be keen on figuring all that lies beneath. If we let things just go by without any understanding, aren't we just doing ourselves a disservice?

Look deeper, think further, ponder.

