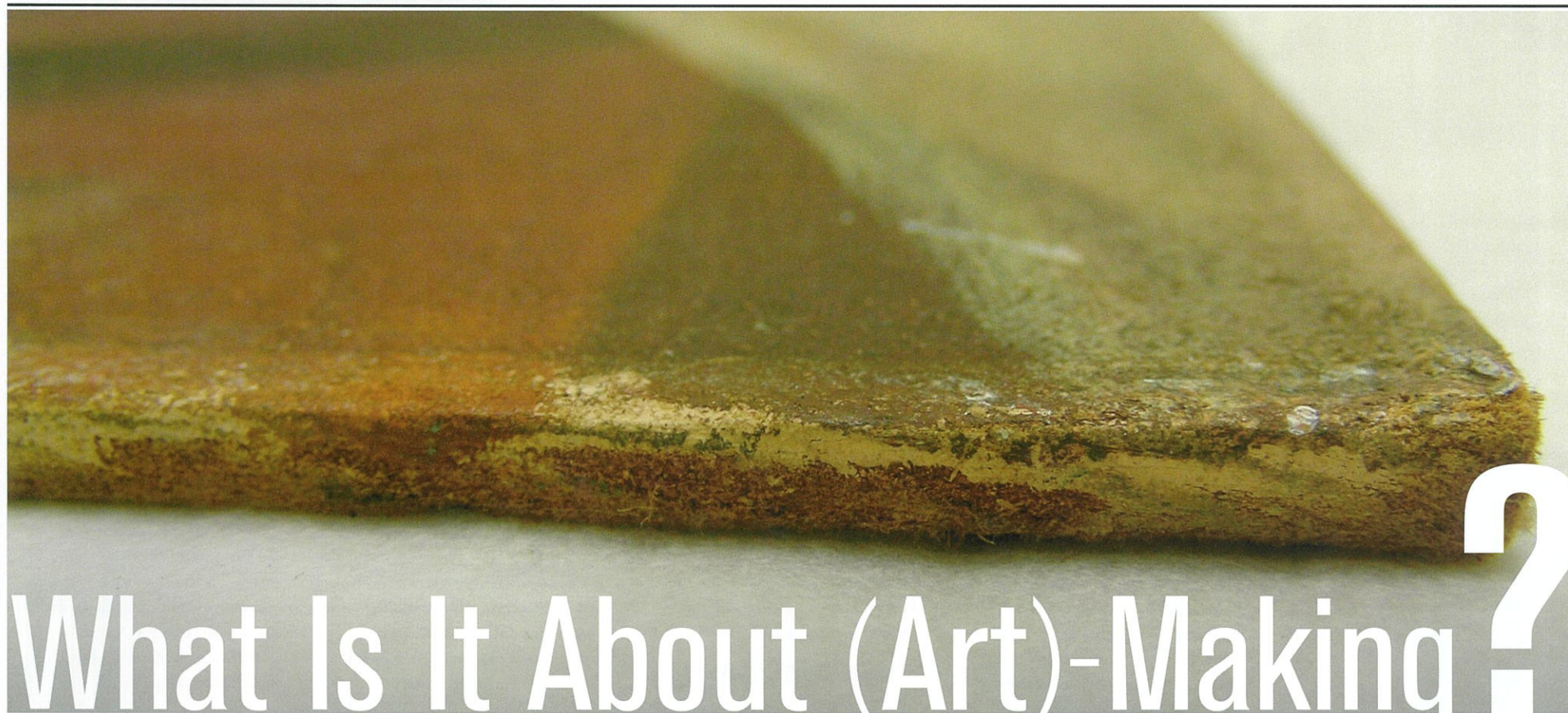


The Praxis Press

Faculty of Fine Arts • LASALLE College of the Arts Singapore • Catalogue of Events 2008-2009 • Praxis Space • Third Edition • 2009



What Is It About (Art)-Making?

Throughout the passage of the academic year, and probably repeated for an umpteen time, a carefully managed interaction between students and lecturers plays itself out, culminating in discussions on evidence of productive, creative output and the inevitable question (or one of its variants): "What is it that you are making?"

Lawrence Chin

Extended answers and rambling expositions – often ended up as “tutorial sessions” – are proffered, as if on some automatic cue. These are, of course, no more or less illuminating and predictably so. Otherwise, the academic year will seem less eventful (or less stressful for the lecturers) which will plunge everyone concerned into an existentialist limbo of not having to talk about art anymore.

So, a closer examination of the question will be attempted here, with the hope of finding some semblance of an answer, if at all possible, or at least a better understanding of the failure to answer.

Incredible Things - "What is it?"

The basis of all artworks lies in their inescapable and undeniable material existence. This is not to say that a proper understanding of art, and its ideas, must necessarily be materialistic in approach. Nevertheless, it is often forgotten that the very physical reality of art and its making in the process of bringing forth intangible ideas from tangible assemblages of bits of things. We do not get to hear or read enough about the messiness of art-making frequently enough. Perhaps, a recent and rare exception would be James Elkin's *What Painting Is*. It could be that the actual act of art-making is too raw and unruly in its essential form that language is incapable of describing it suitably or adequately. Or equally likely, that language is either superfluous or unnecessary (or both) in making sense of art and its making. One might describe the effort as akin to taking a stab (of paint), making a scratch (on an etching), pinching into relief (of clay), pushing a line (of graphite) But these alone do not an artwork make. In any case, it is this state of linguistic inadequacy which results in art objects being appreciated in varying degrees of awe. The

loss of words, when confronted by an intriguing work of art, is precisely the defining quality of art, in general. It is that excess of material existence beyond the realm of words and material – or what Heidegger termed elsewhere** as “the thingness of the thing” – that seems to define that elusive quality (variously called aesthetics, artistic sensibility, or simply art ...) which traverses artworks.

In recognising that intangible excess, art becomes a thing that is made and which must also transcend its material form to reach towards an immaterial end or telos. It is a transformation from being a mere thing to become incredible things - as beyond belief.

Workable Ideas - "What is it?"

When confronted with an (intangible) idea and a (material) form, privileging that intangible metaphysical realm, as somehow embodying a higher purpose, seems to be a given, almost. This is perhaps a symptom of the linguistic turn in art, in that what is being said or written about the artwork becomes more widely disseminated – and, hence, accepted – than the actual physical manifestation of that same work.

Therefore, in responding to the question: “What is it?”, we invariably try to explain, articulate, clarify, and convince. Often, finding ourselves backtracking, revising, correcting, supplementing and starting all over again. Still, we seem to be missing the point. And because that excess of (and in) art can only be circumscribed by language but never be fully contained by it. We can try and say what we mean, but inadvertently, we do not mean what we say, or write.

Ideas, being primarily rooted in language, cannot completely subsume the excess of materiality of art. Instead, ideas and materials

must co-exist in a complimentary fashion that can only be described as symbiotic or even mutually parasitic. It is to expect ideas to work in tandem with materials, and for materials to expound on ideas, concurrently.

Shifting Contexts

The making of an artwork must surely derive from very specific beginnings in material form and working idea. Such specificity can, and does, hold extraordinary significance – presumably anchored in biographical and circumstantial relevance – in terms of association, context and interpretation.

The danger of such specific private and personal significance is that it downplays alternative readings of the selected materials and ideas – to the extent that the meaning of the artwork becomes strictly deterministic. Meaning is no longer tentative and being alluded to beyond that excess of material and idea. This is an instance when artwork becomes illustrative – in that it has subsumed its predetermined “meaning”, at the exclusion of other meanings.

When other “meanings” are closed off, then it makes for a poorer understanding of the artwork. Misapprehension piled upon unintended readings become highly disconcerted and is echoed in that all-familiar exasperation tone: “You don’t get what I mean!”

An effective remedy is to adopt a rigorous pace of research. And one that focuses on re-searching for as many relevant contexts as possible, into which materials and ideas are cast, tested and shifted. It is both an intangible and tangible endeavour which starts by surveying, collecting, sieving, then deciding, conjoining, disassembling, juxtaposing, and revealing. The research process is not so much of a forage for new ideas or usable materials. Instead, it is a reassessment of the relationship between materials, ideas and contexts

in order to generate new associations and plausible meanings – in excess of material or idea.

It is that promise of meaning which gives an artwork a context. And in further engaging with multiple contexts arising from a multitude of promises of meaning, the possibility of an artwork is realised. This expanded discernment maps out the perimeter of plausible meanings, thus pointing to a trace of that kernel of an answer to the question: “What is it that you are making?” In an indirect manner, one comes into knowledge of what one makes by knowing what one does not make.

Perhaps the original point of the question is a distraction. One can surely adopt a Heideggerian approach – as laid out in that seminal lecture / essay** *The Origin of the Work of Art* – in defining art as the work produced by the artist, who in turn derive her artistic identity from making art(works). One can, hence, avoid or delay confronting the question by resorting to a self-referential and circuitous manner of answering. However, that still leaves the problem of: “So what do art students make?” or *do not make*.

About Lawrence Chin

Lawrence Chin currently teaches Art Proposal Writing for Level 2 Fine Art students. His other preoccupation includes working as a freelance paintings conservator; researching on the historical development of artists' materials; and occasional writer.



“To Make A Difference ... Not Legacies”

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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.

Charles Reyes



Level 2 Fine Arts student Charles Reyes interviews Prof. Alastair Pearce, President, LASALLE College of the Arts

As I waited in the office lobby of LASALLE President, Prof. Alastair Pearce, the first thing I noticed was how the décor matched the building. The furniture was slick, smooth and silver-grey with large-scale works of art hanging on the walls - everything you would expect from a modern art institution. When Prof. Pearce was ready for his interview with me, I proceeded to his room through automated sliding glass doors, into an office just as glossy, just as angular, just as shiny—as if they had taken LASALLE's façade and turned it outside-in to create the office for the highest position in the College.

The man who sat before me, though, did not quite reflect his cold, slick surroundings. With a head of curly white hair and square-framed glasses, tidy blue shirt and brown leather oxfords - the kind of man you would expect to be surrounded with hardwood furniture and leather-bound books; not all this black slate and brushed aluminum. He spoke softly yet confidently, and with a scholarly English accent that could not help but put one at ease. You could say that nothing about this man matched the rigidity of the black-box building, or the modernist styling of his office. But that might be exactly what the College needed.

Taking the Helm

Before joining LASALLE, Prof. Pearce was the principal of a Drama College in London. It was smaller in scale - about half the size - with a similar curriculum to the Performing Arts Faculty in LASALLE.

The shift was not overly drastic, and not at all hard. “It was a very pleasant change in many ways. The education environment here gives greater opportunities for higher education than at the moment in the UK. There is a commitment in Singapore to the importance of the creative industries,” Prof. Pearce offered.

As one who is familiar with higher education institutions, Prof. Pearce is aware of the unique position that LASALLE occupied in the landscape of Singaporean art. While other institutions' strengths might lie in their past traditions, LASALLE has another strength of its own: a mix

of Western and Eastern origins. “LASALLE was founded by an Irishman, Joseph McNally, so our roots here are different,” Prof. Pearce reminisced. “And these roots will enable LASALLE to be energized by both Western and Eastern traditions of creativity and art.” It is this inter-mingling of traditions that will distinguish LASALLE among Singapore's other art institutions. “The LASALLE of the future, because it sits in Singapore, will become the place for the discussion of the interaction between different traditions.”

As the President of an art institution, Prof. Pearce is more than aware of the impact he might have on the arts scene and practitioners in the field. It is a responsibility that he welcomes with a fierce idealism - and an idealism not unfamiliar to young artists. “I have a passionate belief that art can change the world, and that art overwhelming changes the world for the better,” Prof. Pearce enthused. “And it does that by encouraging creative people to reflect on themselves, and reflect on how they can change the world.”

Running an Institution

A typical day at work for Prof. Pearce can be summed in a few stages: “In the mornings, I try to make LASALLE a better school; in the afternoons I try to fix the problems; and then I walk around having conversations with people to get a feel of the school and any problems there might be.” In between, he would go through several meetings; clear an inbox full of e-mails; and welcome “the occasional dignitary,” as foreign representatives and heads of state like to pay the college a visit when they tour Singapore. For lunch, Prof. Pearce, just like the rest of us, enjoys a meal down at the Sim Lim Square food court. At night, he tries to take in an exhibition.

Prof. Pearce has a background in music and musical theory. “I studied computer aided musical analysis,” he recounted, and admits openly that he is not an expert in the visual arts: “I'll leave that to Milenko (the Dean of Fine Arts).” But Prof. Pearce is continuously learning: “I'm going to a lot of exhibitions, so I'm learning about the contemporary art scene in Singapore and South-East Asia, and I'm enjoying the excitement and edginess of the art that I'm seeing here - with the students' works too, within the college.”

When asked to imagine himself to be a Fine Arts student, Prof. Pearce surmised that his workspace would reflect his musical background - displaying the geometrical and mathematical works of Mondrian; the colours of Rothko; and the classical beauty of the early Renaissance. It would also be spare, neat, and tidy. And to this day, Prof. Pearce continued to be baffled by the location of the Fine Arts studios. “I think it's crazy that it's in the basement, where there's

no natural light. But it's there,” he said regrettably.

And as a hypothetical Fine Arts student, what Prof. Pearce would not do is to stay in school overnight. “That is because I know it's against the rules,” he insisted, “though if I were working passionately on something, I'd find a way to work on it 24/7.”

The issue of students staying overnight is a serious one, and Prof. Pearce does not take the situation lightly. Any accidents that might occur during a student's prohibited stay is not only not covered by insurance, but should anything untoward happens to the student, the President of the College would be ultimately responsible. “If there was a fire, probably from the endless wires running through there, and the student was locked in, probably sleeping, and dies, that would be my responsibility,” he reflected. “What would I tell the parents?”

Balancing Needs

Still, Prof. Pearce understands the creative freedom that students need. He has heard of the student who had “vandalized” the walls of the new campus and was expelled. That is why he is glad that the new murals on the school walls are up. “When you get into a taxi and say ‘LASALLE College, please,’ the taxi driver wouldn't know where it was. You'd have to say ‘the big black box’ or ‘Sim Lim Square,’” he suggested. “I want the murals to shout out ‘We are an art school!’”

As expected, there will be opposition to the murals, and such disagreements are what the leader of an institution must mediate. When a difference of opinion arises, Prof. Pearce prefers to work quickly but democratically, “I'll get the people whose understanding in the issues is better than mine, and that can be students, to advise me. So ideally, what I'd like to do is get the right people in the room together to tell me what they think should happen, and then I make up my mind.”

Ultimately, Prof. Pearce finds it helpful when making decisions to always have the school's strategic plan at the back of his mind. So the decision to paint the murals was an easy one, in order to proclaim that it was indeed an art school. “When visitors come here, they're all taking photographs of the building, not of the art inside the building. When I ask them what they think this place is, they say, ‘Is it a shopping mall that hasn't been finished yet?’”

Changing to Improve

Like the United States' new President, Barack Obama, some saw Prof. Pearce's appointment as a sign of optimism and change, as well. Though, Prof. Pearce offers his own comparison: “I think President Obama's popularity will never be as high in the future as the day he got elected. And I think mine will

be exactly the same.” Nevertheless, one does feel a change - a slow but palpable one - since the six months that Prof. Pearce has been at the helm.

Prof. Pearce is optimistic about the improvements he has made to the school so far. “Staff turnover is always a good barometer of how well an institution is doing. If all the staff wants to leave, that's bad news for the institution,” he explained. Staff turnover has halved over the last six months. Student applications are up as well - 35% higher than last year's. “Fewer staff want to leave, more students want to come and join us. Those are two really good indicators that we are moving in the right direction.”

Other improvements are in the works for the school as well. The contract for the cafeteria is signed and slated to open in May 2009. The photographic studio is being kitted out, with talks of a second one in the near future. The new exhibition galleries, with proper walls and lighting, should be completed within the next few months. And more importantly, the financial health of the school is improving.

These are just a few of the changes that Prof. Pearce intends on making. However, there is still one more area that he feels is most important to develop. “I sometimes feel that LASALLE is like a coiled spring that's really pushed down. And my job is to let that spring expand; let that energy release. I feel my job is to give people the confidence to say how they feel.” And this is to encourage people in LASALLE to ask questions and comment on ideas when they feel they need to.

Parting Shot

When the time comes for him to leave the college, Prof. Pearce sees no need to leave any sort of legacy behind. He explains his dislike for legacies: “The last administration did a good job, and they did a lot of things I could never do. And now I'm here to make it better. I want the same thing to happen to me when I leave - I don't want there to be an Alastair Pearce gallery, or any monuments in my legacy.”

Instead, what Prof. Pearce really wants to achieve goes back to his unfaltering idealism when it comes to the power of art - that art can, in fact, make a difference. “I know that it sounds like the things they say at beauty competitions, it's like asking for world peace,” he mused. “But I really do believe it.”

In the end, the biggest impact to be made is upon the students themselves. “I want the students, who studied in LASALLE while I am here, to make the best art in the world. The kind of art that will affect people, and change the world.”



No Wonder

A Humorous Take on the Biennale Theme by LASALLE College of the Arts

Hafiz Bin Syed Nasir

The second Singapore Biennale had generated a whole range of responses amongst the local arts fraternity. From the critical to the welcoming, it has to be said that whatever the prevailing discourses are, one can conclude that contemporary art is here to stay.

This spells good news for the local audience. Some might still question the direction of contemporary art in Singapore and the infrastructure behind the whole 'contemporary art machinery'. Nevertheless, the second Singapore Biennale would not have happened if the 'powers-that-be' did not see a need for it!

When I make mention of 'local audience' earlier, it was a specific reference to the artists and the arts management students currently in the local arts institutions. Besides promoting discourses and networking opportunities for local artists, the 'biennale machinery' also provided viable employment opportunities and experiences for those who doubted the merits of working with local arts agencies. The Singapore Biennale is definitely another major addition to the local arts calendar that we all can look forward to.

So it is in this youthful spirit that LASALLE College of the Arts contributed to this year's Biennale theme *Wonder* with an exhibition curated by Milenko Prvacki, the Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts. The exhibition, which opened from the 9 - 26 of September, galvanised staff and students to come forward with ideas in response to the theme: *No Wonder*.

Conversing with Milenko Prvacki, he mentioned that: "With Biennales, participating artists face a lot of pressure and public scrutiny of their artworks, so *No Wonder* is deliberately interpreted

responding to the campus architecture. It featured sonic reverberations through amplifiers/ speakers within the corners of the LASALLE building interior, resulting in a mix of myriad sounds which evoked imageries ranging from a pinhole picture to over-sized projection. Co-curated by Jeremy Sharma and Ian Woo, it is yet another creative work highlighting the much-lauded architecture of the LASALLE campus.

Sima Salehi's *How Much Sugar* performance continued her pre-occupation with raising awareness of the female condition; sentiments and issues of stereotyping; social and cultural conventions which limited individual identities; and the freedom of women, with reference to the contemporary context of Islamic culture in Iran.

Three other exhibitions were located in the different galleries in the LASALLE campus. Praxis space gallery showcased *Don't Worry Mum* (also curated by Milenko Prvacki), featuring works from current undergraduates and Alumni from the Fine Art Faculty. The exhibition paid heed to worried mothers who are anxious about the perceived "failures" of their offsprings who had chosen art as a career. It also paid heed to those children who, in order to take risks, had to defend their decisions in the face of their parents' wishes. Though the title of this exhibition might be 'cheeky', the works were anything but light-hearted. In addition, the selected artworks highlighted the oft-neglected processes of art making - experimentation, works-in-progress and transformation of 'residues' accrued from these processes.

In the adjacent Project space gallery, *Oh No Wonder*, curated by Rofan Teo of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, also featured some current undergraduates and Alumni whose works engaged with the often over-romantised identity of artists in the contemporary world. The works were a collective tongue-in-cheek critique of the production of art while demystifying the artistic process, and culminating in the perception of artists losing their often-glorified status of present-day "celebrities".

Zainudin Samsuri's *Rowing Boats*, sited at various venues within the campus, showcased his visually striking sculptural forms. His works functioned as visual idioms that arose from a dialogue between



in a light-hearted manner. Also with this exhibition, it is hoped that both the local and international audience will get to see what LASALLE has to offer."

With a humorous twist to the Biennale theme, it did not mean that *No Wonder* is not to be taken seriously. Ranging from a reverberating tectonic sound work to a whimsical rattan satellite dish hanging from the sky bridge, *No Wonder* invited viewers to ponder over what would constitute a real sense of wonderment, which may not exist in the digital world perpetuated with diseases, wars, pollution and racial discrimination.

The opening night featured 2 performances – *Image and Sound* and *How Much Sugar*. The former is a site-specific sound project

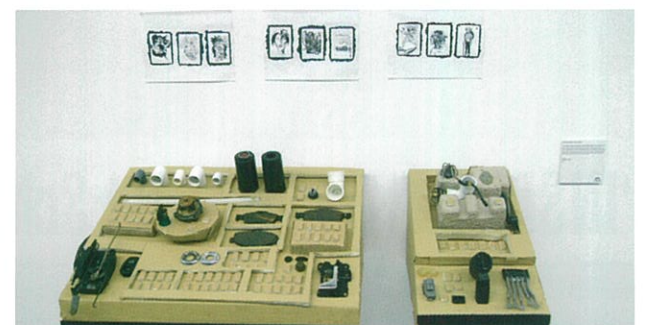
the work, audience and the artist's thoughts. In an effort to revive traditional Malay idioms as a means to convey messages meaningfully and subtly, Zainudin struck a chord with his installations amongst Singapore's multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multilingual audience.

To cap off the plethora of artworks on display, Patrick Storey's collaboration with Fine Art undergraduates gave form to the *No Wonder Structure*. Integrating his love for technology and nature, Patrick Storey built a satellite dish out of materials that are specific and native to Asia such as rattan, cane and bamboo. Suspended from the iconic campus bridge with aircraft cables, this structure engaged and interacted with the surrounding environment, like the passing breeze, in its attempt to mimic and mock the things in life we take for granted.



The Singapore Biennale might have generated much debate and had its fair share of critics. From this flurry of opinions, for better or worse, various concurrent events were organised and realised. Be it satellite events or 'guerrilla' exhibitions, all this can only contribute to the burgeoning contemporary arts discourse locally.

However, one concern is that such activities seem to gain momentum only during the period coinciding with the duration of the Singapore Biennale. This is not surprising due to the fact that international stakeholders would only be in town for a specific reason. But one cannot help but observe that Biennales have become increasingly 'brief' affairs after which the 'buzz' would die down at the end of the exhibition, leaving a discomfiting lull as we all wait for the next Singapore Biennale.



NO SIGNATURE IS REQUIRED

Michael Timothy Surija

No Signature Is Required is a group exhibition by BA students with work covering media as video, photography, drawing, painting, prints, and mixed media installation. The exhibition radiated a rich atmosphere, where the individual expressions of the artists manifest in their work and fill the Project and Praxis Space. Before I write about the works in the exhibition I shall elaborate a little on the intriguing choice of a title.

Despite its ordinary function as a mere identifier, signature plays a part in the long history of art. Looking back at the Renaissance period, the practice of signing a work of art was done by the masters, resulting in the whole work to be attributed to one person regardless of the fact that the production involved a team of apprentices. A signature signifies originality, authorship and ownership. Drawing from this conventional meaning, signature can be interpreted as a bold manifestation of self, thus is an egocentric action justified only by one's role as "the artist". This point is obviously a very subjective one - one can still think of a signature as a much less egocentric mark - but it indicates certain views, which are relevant to the question in art practice today.

A few decades ago, some art movements advocated the "free from author" art. An example is Duchamp's readymades with their reproducible nature, banishing notion of originality and authorship. The title of this exhibition somewhat resonates, esoterically, for me the very essence of Duchamp's readymades, the detachment of the work from the artist and the artist from the work, as the symbol of a selfless and conceptual approach in art making.

In going along with this theme, I am liberated from mentioning any names, as I do not think it is the artists' wish for being credited with authorship whatsoever. So here I go with my ego in commenting on the eight pieces of work that I enjoyed.



1. An installation of drawings, a table, drawers, chair and photographs: the drawings are painstakingly rendered and arranged in the pastel-color painted backdrop, infusing a nostalgic atmosphere. The subject matter, unknown to the viewer, is gazing through in fragility.



2. A diptych in muted chromatic grays evoked an intense response in viewers. Unmistakably figurative, it is not hard to see a skillful handling of the paint, the combination of thick and thin lines and forms, two dimensional depth created by the overlapping layers.

3. A set of graphic novels delicately rendered in ink and watercolour with general tone of 'constant questioning in art making', showing the artist's will to (maybe) inject the very ingredient of art-making as his/her subject matter, an intellectual lip-biting piece presented in a humorous and almost cynical way.

4. Eight columns and two rows of black and white ink painting, of men, depicting a unified theme of masculinity, violence and sexuality. The absence of colour homogenizes all and at the same time accentuates the stereotypical nature of the subject matter.

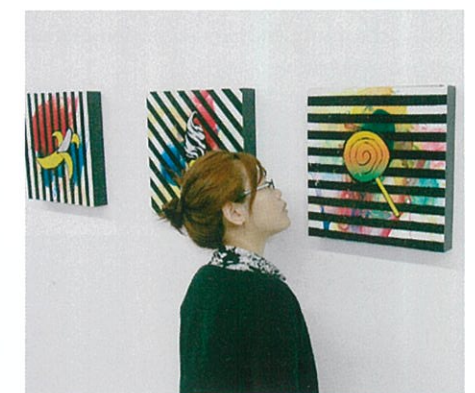
5. An interactive installation of sixteen rotating squares of plywood. On each surface is printed a phrase spoken mostly in a romantic relationship, ranging from "you are so beautiful" and "let's get married" to "I'm wasting my time" and "that's it, we're done". The strategy successfully led me to link each of the statement chronologically: it made a mockery of such relationships through the superficiality of the statements.

6. A video installation resembling Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* with nothing being cut from beginning to the end. Instead the artist incorporated instructions in the video for the viewers to imagine the process of cutting for themselves. I personally feel it is a successful response to Yoko Ono's work, but it is difficult to engage with an audience unfamiliar with the imaginary nature of the work.

7. A Diptych painted with intense strokes in green leaving the artist's trace of movements in the making, depicting a figure approaching from a swamp-like landscape, creating unease and sense of

danger as the viewer stands in front of these large-scale paintings

8. A series of photographs with dramatic lighting, depicting characters in distinct poses against a consistent black backdrop. Evoking a sense of glory in each, and together creating a unique persona, lifting the whole work to a somewhat narrative mood.



Insert Title Exhibition, Sept 25 – Oct 4 2008 - An interview with President



First Impressions: 'INSERT TITLE' @ Old School Mt. Sophia

Hafiz Bin Syed Nasir and Daphne Ang

Insert Title was held over a 10-day period at the Arts Studio, Old School located at No.11 Mount Sophia. The visual arts exhibition featured 13 Diploma graduates from the Fine Arts faculty of LASALLE College of the Arts 2008. The artists included: Animesh Sundar Tuladhar, Fairul Darma, Huang Yifan, Lim Hui Xian, Mohamad Izzat Isa, Jacqui Rae, Julie Lee, Maria Chua, Muhd Raihan Jaffar, Wang Jian, Shariefah Shamsir, Simon Ng and Stephanie Seet. The exhibition featured works

from various mediums like painting, sculpture, installation and video. Curatours were also conducted for primary school students during the span of the exhibition. *Insert Title* was co-curated by Syed Muhd Hafiz and Daphne Ang, level 3 students from the Arts Management BA(Hons) program. Below is a short interview with the current President of LASALLE College of the Arts, Professor Alastair Pearce, who attended the opening reception of *Insert Title*.

Was "Insert Title" your first encounter with LASALLE students?

Yes, in fact it was also my first encounter viewing an art exhibition in Singapore. I had only been in Singapore for three days when I was invited to attend the opening for the exhibition *Insert Title* at Old School, Mt. Sophia.

What were your first impressions upon going through the artworks at Insert Title?

The first thing that struck me was that it was a very "edgy" selection of art works which was a balance of polished and raw works. The exhibition was well thought out and the positioning of the artworks complemented the gallery space. I particularly liked Maria's video installation of the view of the ocean filmed from a bunk on a cruise ship. Stephanie's works which feature miniature portraits of androgynous children also left a strong impression on me.

What did you think of the exhibition as a whole, including the spread of local food?

Needless to say, I was proud that my 'future' students had independently initiated this exhibition

and surprised that they could pull off such a show, independent from the safety and comfort of institutional support.

This exhibition was a direct causation of this year's LASALLE Show including all the graduating diploma and degree students. This directly influenced the decision to give all diploma students at LASALLE, a space to exhibit their works at this year's LASALLE Show in May 2009. Therefore it is no longer called the Degree Show.

The food at the opening was good as well!

As LASALLE's President, do you hope to see more of these independent initiatives?

Yes of course. On one hand, LASALLE hopes to provide its students with a conducive environment to be experimental and to execute creative projects; however, sometimes this environment can become too comfortable. Students need to venture out of this 'safety net' in order to truly experience the sometimes unforgiving world out there. I definitely hope to see more independently organized artistic initiatives and projects by LASALLE students.

TO BE FOUND, you have to be LOST

Gan Kwan Chuen



The international workshop *Tropical Lab* was hosted at none other than our beloved LASALLE Campus from the 10 to 20 of November 2008. Hosting ten international artists from six different countries, each bringing their own knowledge and experiences to share. The ten visiting artists toured Singapore, experiencing our national mix of cultures, viewing our famous landmarks and of course, consuming our local cuisine. However, I am sure all of the participants would agree that our trip to Pulau Ubin, a tiny island off the north-eastern shore of mainland Singapore, was the most memorable. As an artist-assistant for this workshop, I would like to share my personal unforgettable experience:

It all started on an ordinary weekday. I arrived at LASALLE, clad in appropriate island-adventure clothing, armed with a sketchbook, camera and an open mind. Soon I found myself seated on a large bus with fourteen other people as we made our way to our destination. I was barraged with questions about Singapore by several of the participating artists, eager to learn about our culture. The others were either mingling or kept to themselves in daunting silence.

A few hours later, I was hit with the full impact of my decision to help out with the workshop. I found myself exhausted, sweating, my ankles burning, my head was ready to disconnect from my shoulders as I cycled up a hill located in Pulau Ubin. "I never thought I would ever be here," Lyra Garcellano, one of the participating artists, commented to me. All I was able to muster, between short breaths, was a curt "neither did I!" as I struggled to understand why the head coordinator, Zainudin, of *Tropical Lab 2008* dragged ten visiting artists to a remote island, only to ride around on rusty bicycles in ankle-deep mud. As I avoided loose tree branches and paranoid thoughts of my bicycle collapsing under me, the very reason why we were thrown into such an uncomfortable situation dawned on me.

The very nature of the trip to Pulau Ubin was distraught, unexpected and awry. As a result, we were all being taken out of our comfort zone to experience something different about Singapore, an encounter beyond the overly commercialized Orchard Road and the air-conditioned food courts. We gained a first-hand encounter of rural Singapore. We were gaining an experience of Singapore so different it was both refreshing and inspiring. It is a view of our home country, which our younger heartland residents may not have actually seen. The inspiration translated into artworks, presented during the concluding exhibition.

Tropical Lab was not only just a workshop which offered an artist a glimpse of a foreign land, communing with complete strangers, while under the daze of jetlag, and completely dependant on local guides. Some of the participants did not even have a strong grasp of the English language. It was a workshop that taught them a true lifetime skill as a practicing artist: finding inspiration in a lost situation.



Such a Lovely Place, Such a Lovely Face Exhibition, Jan 15 - 28 2009

Such a Lovely Place, Such a Lovely Face

Danielle Tay

This exhibition by the Fine Art Level 1 students consisted of a variety of works selected from two first-semester projects - "Constructing Ambience in Architecture" and "Self Pin-Up". This exhibition included the works of students from Painting, Printmaking as well as Photography.

The highlight of the exhibition, in my opinion, was viewing the works from the "Self Pin-Up" project. The objective of the project was to create a self-portrait in the format of a pin-up, taking into consideration the technical aspects of proportion and skin tone colours, while capturing the so-called 'glamorous' personality of the self, through body language, facial

expressions, dressing as well as other props which may help in creating an effective reflection of oneself.

The selected works provided the viewers with an experience of various styles of artwork, ranging from illustrative, graphic styles to the more expressive, painterly ones. This particular project was a personal one, giving each student the freedom to express themselves. The outcome was pleasantly surprising and well received by the viewers, as each work had a distinctive individuality about them which made them interesting to explore. Each response to the project was different which made it intriguing to try and decipher what the intended message was.

One of the paintings by Vicknes s/o Thanasegeran, entitled *The Insecure Self*, dealt with the idea of glamorizing himself through the exaggeration of his insecurities. The outcome was a larger than life sized figure which towered over the viewer, painted in a raw and expressive style, with the employment of bold brushstrokes. Another work by Michael Timothy, who described his painting style as being like a shy expressionist, also produced a gestural portrait, in which he portrayed himself as a person in control. His work featured himself focusing intensely on something in his mind, and was successful in conveying this idea through the pose and, especially, facial expression.

In contrast to these painterly works, there was a selection which were more "illustrative" in nature. One such work was *Oh Dear!* by Ashley Yeo, whose painting was of a whimsical nature, consisting of an unusual juxtaposition of elements. She paints herself standing on top of a clown's head, with a mixture of flowers, birds and fishes in the background, resulting in a work that is surreal and dreamy. With aesthetics as her main concern in her practice, as well as the need to work with subjects that she sincerely likes, Ashley translated

her ideas into a painting consisting of technically well rendered objects of personal significance.

Pretty Ugly, a series of three panels painted by myself, was an attempt to modernize old pin-up magazine covers. My idea for this project was to make the unglamorous glamorous. This series had a slightly humorous yet sarcastic take on the whole idea of pin-up, with the use of text within the work playing an important role in communicating the message to the viewers. The stylized elements and bold colours employed in the paintings served to reflect the often flat and graphic covers of magazines.

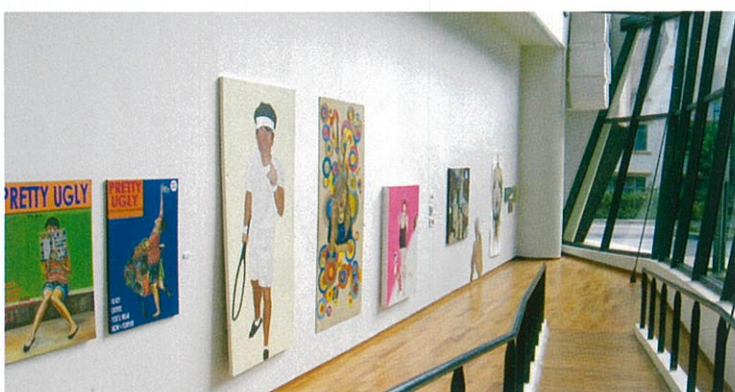
Apart from paintings, there were responses to the "Self Pin-up" project in other media, namely, print and photography. *Look up!* by Nelson Lim Yeow Sen was a life-sized darkroom print of himself. It was taken from a high angle with a creative body pose, to convey the idea that human life is not always perfect. This piece was a study of human posture and angles, influenced by human life in society.

Amongst the selection of the paintings displayed, there were also several works from the "Constructing Ambience in Architecture" project,

which was about capturing the structure of an unfamiliar location and accurately creating an atmosphere that brought out the characteristics of the space. In his painting, *Sometimes expecting a reply*, Godwin Koay effectively captured the loneliness, feeling of emptiness and isolation of an abandoned room. The good choice of composition, dramatic lighting, together with very competent techniques - to achieve a naturalistic effect - contributed to the success of the painting.

Another two paintings by Ruben Pang also reflected the mood of his chosen site well. His creative use of iron oxide powder to depict the texture of rust on the buildings served to enhance the industrial effect of the paintings, together with the realistic depiction of the hard, solid and structural form of the buildings.

All in all, this exhibition was a good experience for the Level 1 Fine Art students who also helped in the setting up of the exhibition, with the guidance and help from our lecturers, Betty Susiarjo and Jeremy Sharma. It was an excellent showcase of a diverse range of works which promised greater ideas to come in the future.



The Shift

Eunice Ng

It is done. We named it thus we own it and now we can't ignore it. *The Shift* is now officially the new itch that needs to be scratched. We foresee that scratching may break some skin, perhaps draw some blood, probably even incite many to exhibit hair-tearing hysteria, but the euphoric climax when we "get down to it" and nail that bugger is worth (arguably) the further roughshod of our already fragile sanity. May 2009 heralds the crowning moment when we shed our shoddy Art Student persona and offer ourselves as choice meat to the hungry jaws of the world beyond our black cube fortress. Yes, the great shift has begun. It is graduation year at the diploma level for me and the motley crew I call studio mates, or as some wisecrack once told to me, cell mates (don't get us wrong, she was probably inspired by the cell-like underground structure we refer as studio spaces).

The Shift, our chosen moniker for the diploma level graduation exhibition, has from the on-start been an issue of debate amongst the level two students. The common thread of argument is the ambiguous meaning of *The Shift*. In fact, the name had caused a few to break out in a chorus of expletives too indelicate for mention. Personally, I'm thankful for its ambiguity. The less explicit it is, the more encompassing it will be towards the many weird and wonderful creations that will be exhibited. The chances of us imploding is dramatically reduced, I construe.

Yet at this point, at the risk of sounding cognitively dissonant, I believe that any feeble attempt to "figure out" *The Shift* is still necessary. After all, it is reflective of the unique make-up of this bunch of diploma level graduates. The moniker should infer the great depth and breadth that we must surely possess (yes, much faith I have in *The Force* that is with us).

Any shift is equivalent to change, and change, in my opinion is a good thing. Plateau land is the possibly the worst height to get comfortable with, thus, it is no surprise that our Level Two academic year has been deliberately peppered with all sorts of shifts, both great and small. From desperate attempts to concoct witches'

brews strong enough to intoxicate and render our lecturers speechless in our self-proposed projects to left-on-our-own-to-sink-or-swim studio practice moments, the process of being bent out of shape has started the gradual shift from dependency to self-propelled sufficiency.

Albeit, it seems that we are often floundering in the flurry of our bemusement and positive changes are not always captured on our radar. But on hindsight, I have begun to



comprehend the value of allowing some issues to remain unresolved and answers unattained. I believe that our fascinating pursuits as artists thrive on such tumultuous terrains. Pondering upon possibilities and erasing boundaries are two of the few fruits I gathered from shifting constantly out of comfort zones. Has my educational journey given me such moments of artistic and personal growth? To the chagrin of my many studio mates, my answer will have to be a yes. As my dear mate sitting many cells away from me informed us in his last presentation, "Size does not matter!" then I rightly conclude that it's how we weld the tool that does.

So, the academic year is ending and final assessment looms dark and threatening in the near distance as we continue in our nail-biting race towards graduation. Let's forget the many nuances involved in the running and celebrate the Moment – shifted.



Till then, we might never know

Hazel Lim

Betty Susiarjo never fails to exclaim when I don on an occasional dainty piece of jewellery. She will stop whatever she was formerly doing on her computer, and turned all her attention to the trinket, whatever that had caught her eye – an unassuming necklace or a little ring worn on the pinky.

Perhaps it is this preference for small delicate details that can direct one to Betty's sense of aesthetics. Faced with a monumental, sharp-edged and solemn coloured architecture, Betty certainly had initial doubts on how to bring her love for delicacy and inconspicuous details into a space like Lasalle. I hear her ideas bouncing in her mind, negotiating how and which space could handle her big scale installation of miniscule things without compromising the qualities that they already possess.

Her final choice was to transform the bridge that links Blocks E and F with tiny coloured ribbons and beads plugged onto the surfaces of the bridge glass and floor. The field of ribbons flooded the parameters of the bridge, lending a feeling of being in a technicolour landscape, where autumn had suddenly adopted a tad more fuchsia and electric blue.

Looking at the installation from outside the bridge (whilst I was sitting on the green one evening), I thought the technicolour-autumn landscape description did not apply any more. From below, far from seeing the lightly flapping ribbons, the bridge transformed into a man's unshaven chin, his pores sprouting overnight hair, dyed in an outrageous intermix of disco colours.

It is certain that I am not the only one who had imaginative interpretations of her installation. On the bridge crouching over the ribbons and painstakingly attaching them on the glass, she must have heard a slew of comments/interpretations on her encounters with people passing by. Perhaps that is the most important part of her installation – talking to the people and hearing their comments and interpretations, and when not getting a straight answer from Betty, the passer-by offers to give her a hand in sticking the ribbons on the glass. It is irresistible, I must say, to want to try to give an interpretation, and to lend her a hand in completing the artwork (which seem to have no actual end to it). But both of it defies finality, in the open interpretations possible to the artwork and an inexhaustible possibility in extending and altering the look of the work.

The open quality could be something she is attempting to sum up in the title of the installation – *Someday We Will Know*. Betty had let on that it was an advice given to her by a lecturer when she was a student. In the context of looking at the installation, it might have suggested an openness in interpreting her installation in varied manners. It could also indicate an openness to how amoebic and infectious her ribbons would spread onto other surfaces (under the hands of the many who helped to install). There is however, I think, much more than that. The title is a window to Betty's frame of mind, which suggests adopting a patient and open attitude towards the creative process, how one could sometime not quite comprehend where it is leading to, but we constantly and positively aspire towards that ultimate knowledge of material discovery or self discovery.

I could still be wrong. For this is yet another interpretation for a work that defies fixed descriptions. Until one day we might finally know it for what it is. I shall positively wait.



Two Coats of Paint

Veliana

Two Coats of Paint was the third installment of Performativity series first jointly curated by Thanavi Chotpradit (Thailand) and Khairuddin Hori showcasing performance-centered video pieces by emerging artists from Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and The Philippines. This exhibition held in Praxis Space is a joint collaboration between Hori and LASALLE College of the Arts Level 3 students, Maria Chua, Thao Nguyen and myself.

Two Coats of Paint suggests a destruction (of sorts) through an action not dissimilar to laying fresh paint over a masterpiece. In this instance, the four artists will respond, adapt, appropriate, borrow and even steal from classic pieces of performance-centered video art by European and American avant-gardes from the 1960s to the 1980s such as John Baldessari, Marina Abramovich, Bruce Nauman and Yoko Ono.

Performance Art in the late 1960s and throughout 1970s was characterized with body actions that foreground the artist's stamina and perseverance, pushing the limits of endurance and duration and at times involving or risking bodily harm. One could recall Marina Abramovich's *Rhythm* series (1973-1974), Joseph Beuys' action entitled *I like America and America Likes Me* (1974) and Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* first performed in New York, 1965.

Looking at the artists' works in this show, there is a nonchalant, if not mischievous, attempt in creating personal myths, contrary to epic struggle and sheer physical impact associated with the early avant-gardes, perhaps a shift in response to the hybrid of performance and video art.

Upon entering the exhibition space, one is greeted with Hori's video titled *Iron Fist*, recalling the eponymous Marvel Comics Universe superhero character that emerged in the 1970s during a pop culture trend for martial arts. Sporting unevenly colored blond

hair and a pair of oversized sunglasses, the artist repeatedly irons the side of his cheek, in aloof concentration, as if in a trance. Everything about the artist appears fake with the deliberately mismatched- golden hair, shades slightly out of place in the indoor setting, and the exhibitionist macho gesture paired with a banal domestic appliance. Hori seems to have adopted this sensibility from the American entertainer and performance artist Andy Kauffman's lackluster impersonations of popular figures such as Elvis Presley and Meester Carter, often characterized with fake accents and awful, straight forward comedy. This Kauffman-as-character strategy presents the audience with a resistant identity - a confused, decontextualised replica of popular cultures. Hori abruptly breaks into a grin at the end of his performance - an obvious anti-climax, again alluding to Kauffman's trademark closing line "T'ank you veddy much!"

My work in the exhibition, *Cut Piece* depicts an uncanny female body-cropped to show only her middle section- persistently interrupted with

texts of instructions that teeter on the scopic desire and expectation of the onlooker.

In the original live performance in New York (1965), Ono sat still on the stage and invited the audience to come up and cut away her clothing. Ono physically cut the line between audience and participant, hence the uneasiness the audience felt of being put "on the spot", of being implicated in the violence taking place on stage. Ono also frustrated the given notions of theatrical experience (i.e., that a play is supposed to serve for the gratification of the audience). In my version of the *Cut Piece*, what is expounded on is this sentiment of eradicating altogether any physical violation of the female body, questioning the nature of sexual aggression and voyeurism in the prevalent lens culture.

Beyond its passive appearance, the fragmented torso displays a mode of eroticism and the quality of a "cut-out"; characteristics described by Laura Mulvey of the conventional close-ups of female body parts displayed in narrative cinema.

One of the two collaborations between Khai Hori and Maria Chua is *Relation in Time*; an appropriation

of Marina Abramovic and Ulay's 1977 performance of the same name, during which they sat back to back with their hair intertwined for 16 hours, after which audience was admitted in and they continued to sit motionless for another hour.

The two artists, Hori and Chua, are not connected but instead separated by an knife, its sharp end aggressively directed at Hori's head. At certain stages, the video produces such striking flattening of the image of the knife; that one wonders if the sharp object is a mere optical illusion. If the knife had been real, the danger is trivialized by the aloof composure of the artists, who look more bored than alert. Whilst Abramovic/Ulay's performance relied on the visible intensity of their performance-their shared plait worked loose as the hours pass - Hori/Chua's piece hardly displays any semblance of physical or mental struggle. Hori's final gesture of lifting his hand to reach for the knife further betrays the casual duration of the performance.



Disasters Exhibition, Aug 27 - Sept 5 2008



DISASTERS

Shubigi Rao

To name a show *Disasters* takes courage of a certain sort. To plan and execute it as students, some showing for the first time, takes even more pluck. To then come out with a coherent, well-considered and independent thematic pivot is remarkable, as is the decision to elect a curator, presenting the concept and participants to her as a fait accompli.

The initiators and participating artists of *Disasters*, Patricia Ho, Maxine

Chionh, Jim Worachart, and Eun Ju Jang saw the necessity to have the show simply because the art school context is the crucible in which they found themselves framed, as they sought to free themselves from being apathetically complicit to events that appeared "solipsistic or unjustified" as quipped by Patricia Ho. Reacting to what they termed the baffling and the incomprehensible, these four artists created a parallel show, one that required minimal institutional guidance (benign or otherwise), and relied instead on conviction in their abilities to convincingly articulate

their reactions. Placing these reactions on record, so to speak, Maxine Chionh carpeted the ramp of Project Space in red, an invitation to the visitors next door at Praxis Space to move into the parallel plane. The untitled work drew visitors in, whilst gently exploding certain fixed aesthetical perceptions of a 'student' show. For her, the carpet was a "tongue-in-cheek gesture of parodying the vacuous accoutrements of according worth where there is none", a gesture that very effectively spelt out the errors of dealing with the familiar pressure to be 'artistically' explicatory without questioning the underlying imperatives of systemised control.

Similarly, in Worachart Jim Ranauro's *Unfulfilled*, a rolled up painting was to be found leaning against a wall in a corner of the gallery, the onus left on the viewer to unroll it so as to (imperfectly) view it. For Jim, this pointed to the very flawed nature of art making, an "interpretation of an artist's unexpressed thoughts and desired opinions". For him, the refusal to unroll the painting (hiding "the murky hues of red and purple underneath a blatant lie of a white surface") denied an easier reading, and with each unrolling by the viewer, the work degraded further, with wax flaking off to eventually cover the

floor, like debris at a crime scene. This "...need for honest communication, the inevitable breakdown of a repressed being" unfolded over the duration of the show.

Patricia Ho's two videos, *[A]S Physics*, and *[A]S Physics Cont'd* were documents of a prior installation of her drawings on the walls of void decks, disrupting the static nature of viewing a conventionally mounted paper work with, well, static. The videos recorded her take on situational physics, tempering her rigorously academic response with sly humour. The viewer's inability to effectively view the original 'art' in any one video was further confounded by the diversionary tactics of the opposing video.

Perhaps the most intriguing images, in a show that resisted easy imagery, came from Eun Ju Jang's three *Untitled* paintings. Charting an exquisite agony ("the urge to open myself by my ribs... baring my internal self where I could rub my organs onto the canvas") with sure-footed skill, Eun Ju's paintings presented an absorbing amalgam of aesthetic poise with uneasy, nuanced imagery, rendered in motions that imitated the mechanics of "the chemistry of life and nature's ability to

sustain the actions of the chloroplast (which) are the driving forces".

A name like *Disasters* can be seen then as particularly apt for a show that featured such uncompromising clarity, undiluted rigour, and hard-nosed cynicism at the unquestioned institutional systems that frame the context of student artwork. As Jim puts it, "Disasters remind us of the accidents in arranging an exhibition, the inevitable human errors and collisions with dead ends in the unpredictable system of controlled order", an order that according to Patricia Ho, generates events "solipsistic or unjustified", yet paradoxically "galvanisers of a curious aesthetic rigour, a reaction against the baffling, the incomprehensible, and thus, tragic".





Postgraduate Symposium 2009

Articulating Difference

in Practice

Susan Olij

On 10 February 2009, the Faculty of Fine Art Post Graduate Symposium returns with artists and educators from Paris, UK, China and Singapore. The highlight of this year's panels came from two European schools. La Seine Beaux-arts de Paris brought with them eight practicing artists as students of the La Seine Post Masters programme headed by Tony Brown. The artists came from France, China and Taipei.

One of the artists was Charwei Tsai: you may remember seeing her ink mantra writing on tofu in the first Singapore Biennale in 2006. The other school from London is one that needed no introduction: the Royal College of Art that brought with them three artists and students of their third year PhD candidates.

The symposium began with a comprehensive presentation by Singaporean artists. Lynn Lu who highlighted her practice in developing relational

aesthetics that extends to social structures of the everyday. Interestingly as a performance artist with international experiences, she presented almost with the sensibility of a delicate fragile flower, which in comparison with Martin Constable, who paces during his presentation, gave a very verbally strong and honest presentation of his love for digital art and an introduction to the history of his alter-ego Jack Youngblood.

The second day of the symposium sees Singapore artist Donna Ong presenting a selection of her installation art, a collection of curio and twisted versions of childhood dreams and fairy tales.

From the Royal College, Olivier Richon, a professor of photography, presented on themes of desires and pleasures of imitation based on traditional functions of objects in art history, where time seem to stand still as if frozen and how these works are like silent hieroglyphs that resists interpretation. In contrast to this classical approach, Clare Carolin, acting Senior Curator of Modern Art Oxford gave a brief presentation,

comprising a survey of exhibitions by Guatemalan performance artist Regina Jose Galindo, mainly video works that are shown in the Modern Art Oxford during the duration of the Symposium.

I was under the impression that this symposium, pointedly expects the panel to discuss specific differences in practice rather than just to dispense the works done chronologically. Articulating differences does seem to flow chronologically best for most of the speakers, this shows in the different presentation styles which bring forth different levels of confidence, and how prepared each speakers were.

Often the challenge of running a symposium this size is the ability of each speaker to be as clear, and as concise as possible about their chosen topic and yet still withholding some mystery.

In all respects, it is a challenging task, yet the Faculty produced a fairly comprehensive symposium which was well moderated by Lawrence Chin. The key to an interesting Symposium is the dialogue it creates at the Q

and A sessions; sometimes this part can be more interesting than the presentations.

The third and final day sees all the Masters of Arts Fine Art candidates from LASALLE presenting their works and practice. This went smoothly even with less attendance from the previous two days. All in all, well attempted presentations by the MA students, even when the self-conscious factor often means a missed item from the original content of the subject matter. Slides can sometimes lend to more curiosity and questions if presented in a simple and straightforward way.

The diversity of this year's Symposium manages with some effort to show the differences in dialectics, exposure, experience and points of interest. For now, artworks that will be made in the near future will perhaps take on, reflect and contemplate some ideas and concepts thrown out in the symposium and it will be interesting to see what the next exhibitions by the MA students in LASALLE will bring forth.





s in Practice

Articulating Differences

The LALA TrYangle

Red Lebrun

I want the reader to look up from this paper at the end of this sentence, and look around him or herself.

You did? Great.

What did you see? Probably, people walking together in groups, conversations, social interactions, networking. One would be wrong to believe that teamwork or collective thought does not, in one way or another, permeate almost every aspect of everyday life. Art, as a supposed representative entity of "life beyond life", should follow similarly.

There is no end of collaboration in the performing arts: Think of theatre, dance, film, and music. Nor the visual arts: graphic design, architecture, advertising. These are all fields in which a team usually takes on the burden of creative

genius. The exception, the only exception, is the Fine Arts. When exposed to a grand painting, what can one say but: "What great work could be created but by the hand of '...!'?"

Times have changed, and in an increasingly connected digital world, the greatness of contributive creativity is more and more attributable to context, to research, to shared ideas and dreams. There are the three branches of the "Y" in the *LALA TrYangle*. Three branches, three institutions, three cultures and minds of their own, meeting at a single central point...

...And that point is LASALLE College of the Arts.

Featuring various installations and collaborative artworks by students from London's Royal College of Arts, Paris' Ecole des Beaux-Arts and our very own

LASALLE postgraduate students, the exhibition was curated by Tony Brown, Director of the Post-Diploma research program, La Seine Ecole des Beaux-Arts. It was held at various locations on campus, at times blending in seamlessly with the space, such as Guillaume Aubry's scotch tape works, or operating in complete disregard of it.

Another sign of the rich context that contributed to the works, the team behind the *LALA TrYangle* exhibition bent not only the constraints of space to its will, but also various emotional concepts, interpreting their ideas through humor (*Artist No Holiday* by Ko Siu Lan), frustration (*There Are No Accidents* by Susan Olij) apathy (*Space Scenario series (Climb lean Break Block)* by Guillaume Aubry), and other such intense emotional responses. One of the most noticeable exhibit could be said to be the giant signage found on the campus green throughout the entire two weeks of the exhibition - stating blatantly *Artists No Holiday* - in a delicious parody of the amount of hard work and pains taken in its time-consuming preparation. From afar, resembling large red letters,

the actual product was a sort of pointillist art, utilizing hundreds of plastic red flowers, celebrating words, both in meaning and in shape.

Guillaume Aubry's exhibit that could not have been missed was the fictional vandalizing of LASALLE's glass walls by fracture-like scotch tape arrangement. For a while after their appearance (but before it was commonly known to be an installation work), I still remember hearing murmured chattering about who had committed such an act from the campus' curious students.

To very loosely quote (or misquote, rather) the famous pop artist Richard Hamilton: Just what is it that makes collaborative art so different, so appealing? Although the idea of the Artist as a single heroic entity is still predominant in minds of this generation, it would be rather unfair to proclaim that collaborative art has no place within the contemporary. While now an accepted form of artistic expression, it was only in the last ten years that these practices have truly been able to reap the benefits of many years of sowing done in the socio-artistic

field. Many problems yet remain: issues surrounding the authorship and ownership of the created works; fair accreditation... There are times when the art itself has never been touched by the artist's hand - this task having, instead, been relegated to those with superior technical power but "lesser" creative ability. Who, in these situations, is the artist? Who is the creator? Can these two functions be separated?

And yet...! Looking at the results of the *LALA TrYangle*, the value of collaborations cannot be overlooked. While these, more often than not, were previously understood as reactions to political and cultural changes, I believe that we're seeing more and more friendly "co-operation" instead. And with the inherent synergistic potential, it is a source of art that I believe will take the world by storm in the years to come.



A Decade of Winston Oh Travel Award

“The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page.” - Saint Augustine

Tan Jack Ying

Unlike the institutional education that one has to go through, travelling is a way of learning without a structure; an odyssey that is built upon interacting with people, objects and places around the world. The amazing sights of an expansive horizon inevitably questions one's existence and the limits of one's knowledge. Travelling is also about the collection and recollection of memories, experiencing the environment, culture, people and, lastly, returning home.

Travelling implies a displacement - a removal of oneself from contented surroundings into an unfamiliar and

the Winston Oh Travel Award. It is timely to be reminded of the generous contribution of Dr Winston Oh, a consultant cardiologist who is also a keen watercolourist, for establishing this travel scholarship.

Dr Oh is a person who enjoys travelling and he hopes that more opportunities be given to students to inspire and broaden their minds in the same way. This scholarship has benefited students from the Faculty of Fine Arts, in widening their life experiences and so attain a greater understanding of their own art practice by visiting various localities in Asia and beyond.

the European experience as Travelogue Research. Dr Oh also contributed additional funding for one full-time staff to travel with the recipients of the Travelogue Research Award in the same year.

The Travelogue Practice Award

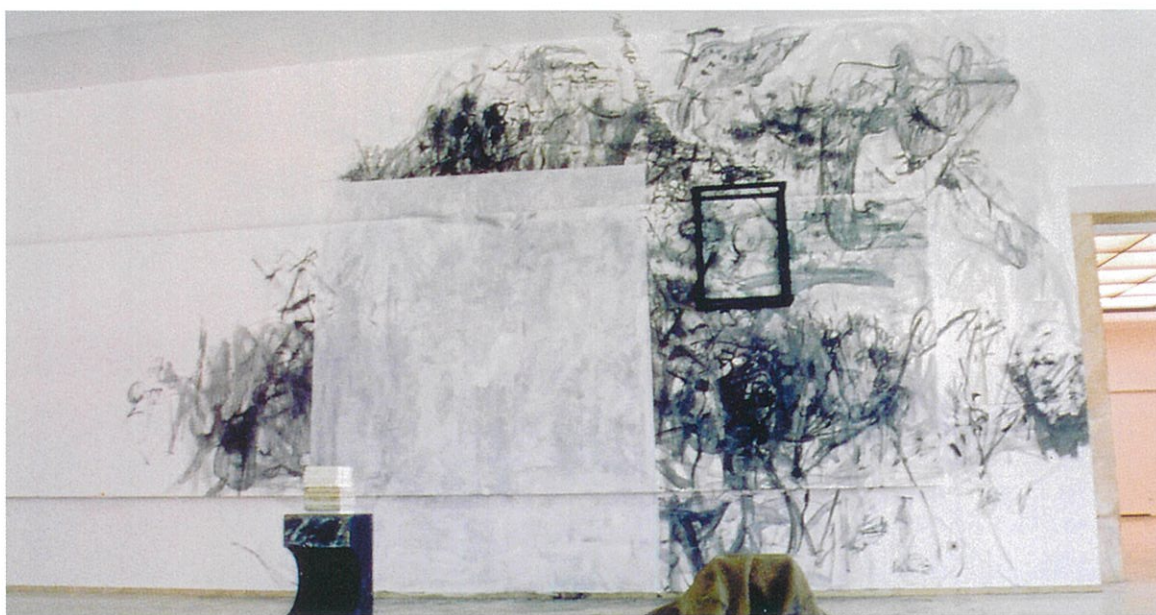
From 1999 to 2008, there are altogether 41 Fine Art Diploma students who received the Travelogue Practice Award, with itineraries that criss-crossed 17 countries. These countries included Australia, Burma, Bhutan, China, Cambodia, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Japan, South Korea, Nepal, Netherlands, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

taken of the city, Julie printed them onto floral-patterned textiles, which were commonly worn by women in Vietnam, while tracing these images with stitching work. One of Julie's observation of the urban environment while in Vietnam was the intersecting overhead cable lines that hung loosely round the city, creating a sense of chaos and confusion. These formed the essence of the place that she wished to evoke through her works.

On the other hand, Simon Ng Yong Heng, another Award recipient in 2008, visited Siem Reap, a historic city in Cambodia. The most memorable event to him was his visit to the glorious temple of Angkor Wat which

which is the iconic representation of Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction and reproduction, as well as being a phallic symbol. This also marked a departure point for Simon's subsequent investigations into the notion of masculinity, and the boundaries of sexuality as a social construction, in contemporary art and painting.

I also had the opportunity to interview one of Singapore's young contemporary artist, David Chan, who received the Winston Oh Travel Award in 2003. Akin to setting out on a quest, David started from Bangkok, Thailand, towards his destination: Angkor Wat in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The journey led him across Thailand



uncharted one. Through the experience of disembarking and stepping into other territories, one begins to examine one's existence and sense of belonging. Reflecting on the where one is physically and psychologically, where one has been, where one may wish to go, or where one is not.

A travelogue, thus, is a documentation of an individual's experience in crossing boundaries; a record of one's sensory, intellectual and visual encounters.

The Winston Oh Travel Award
2009 marks the 10th anniversary of

The Winston Oh Travel Award began in 1999 as a single award given to Ng Geok Seng. The award has since increased to benefit 5 Fine Art Diploma students from 2000 onwards. In 2002, the scope of the Award was broadened to include a separate category that enabled 2 Bachelor Degree Fine Art students to travel to Europe.

The works produced by the BA degree students would be based on research and publication. In 2004, Dr Oh and the Faculty of Fine Arts decided to rename the Asian experience as Travelogue Practice and

As one of the most recent recipient of the Award, Julie Lee Pei Shan - currently a Fine Art undergraduate at LASALLE - proposed a trip to Vietnam for a duration of 10 days in 2008. Upon arrival, she found the architecture and structure of the local buildings to be a captivating sight.

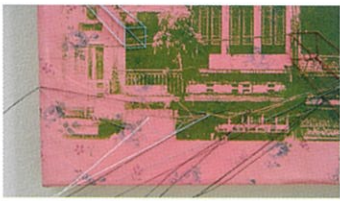
In her work, these motifs were presented through structures and lines in printmaking techniques. Although her visual interest has developed to include video art prior to the trip, Julie decided to revisit the print medium, almost as an act of reminiscence. With the photographic images that were

turned out to be an enriching and rewarding experience. The actual encounter with astounding ancient architecture was unexpected, even after reading about the immense grandeur of Angkor Wat in the travel guide books. This trip had certainly quelled Simon's thirst and interests in ancient history and architecture.

The history of Khmer is strongly reflected in its architecture, with the details of the bas relief - decoration of the temple walls - narrating stories and episodes from ancient mythology. Simon was stirred by these anonymous Khmers in ancient times who were single-mindedly devoted to their craft while working on the temples. He was also humbled and awed by the power the Khmer kings who hold sway over their subjects, especially King Suryavarman II, in order to build such magnificent structures. During the trip, Simon developed an interest in studying the symbolism of the lingam,

and over the Cambodia border, after which he travelled by various modes of transport to reach Siem Reap, and at some point he even crossed over to Laos. Consistently throughout the trip, impressive sights of temples and artisans can be seen along the journey, including a river where stonemasons had created huge designs in the bedrock underwater. Recalling, David could vividly remember the pilgrimage to Angkor Wat, but amusingly can only vaguely recall the return journey home. He supposed that such is the nature of quests: it's the sense of progressing towards a purpose that leaves the deepest impressions.

The Travelogue Research Award
Besides the Practice Award, the Research Award had been awarded to a total of 13 Bachelor Degree students between 2003 and 2008. The recipients had visited 5 countries between them - Serbia,



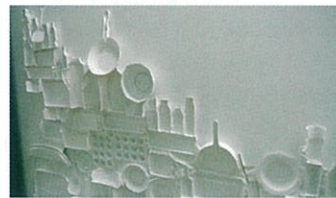
Romania, Greece, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Jon Chan, who is currently a Graphic Novel lecturer at LASALLE, was awarded the Travelogue Practice Award in 2003, and the Travelogue Research Award in 2007. Jon's earlier interest in social phenomenon was evident in his paintings of stray dogs which were a result of his trip to Thailand in 2003. He was intrigued by how a simple subject matter can evoke different perceptions. Later, during the trip to Prague, Jon struggled with the decision to devote himself solely to the medium of comics or graphic novels. While in Prague, Jon attended a script writing workshop by Herman Van Eyck, when he worked on a script upon Van Eyck's suggestion - 'Kafkaesque'. This became the point of renewal of Jon's interest to approach his idea through the medium of graphic novel.

Coincidentally, the Award's destination, Prague, was also the birthplace of Franz Kafka. So in a sense the trip became something of a 'destined' event for Jon. Kafka's work thus became the focus of the research trip. Jon also went on a trail which took in the sites related to Kafka, from his place of birth to his resting place. It was a journey tinged with a mixture of joy and sadness. A body of research for Jon's up-coming graphic novel work, which is set in an imaginary Prague, was also the tangible result of that trip.

In the process of writing this article, I have managed to interview a number of the recipients of the Travel Award. Everyone has his or her own adventures and experiences to share. But the consensus seems to be that travelling is a beneficial activity that overwhelms the emotions, resulting in a renewed awareness of one's existence. This can only be a good lesson to have. It can thus be surmised that the Winston Oh Travel Award have successfully nurtured students and start them on a right footing at a nascent stage of their artistic careers.

It leaves us to thank Dr Winston Oh for his generosity that had benefited students each year in fulfilling their dreams, opening up perspectives while looking closely at different things that exist in the world. As we celebrate a decade of the Winston Oh Travel Award, let us congratulate past years' recipients and, at the same time, look forward to promising and engaging art works from the award recipients in 2009 upon the conclusion of their travels.



Travelogue Practice award

1999:	Ng Geok Seng	- Bangkok
2001:	Addy Ipsen Agnes Lim Diana Soh Stephanie Tan	- Nepal - Tokyo - Bangkok - Chiang Mai
2002:	Lim Bee Ling Lim Siau Chong Anette Notfors Tania De Rozario Betty Susiarjo	- Cambodia - Beijing - Perth - Malacca - Bangkok
2003:	David Chan Jon Chan Claudia Conduto Tay Choon Wei Safaruddin Bin Abdul Hamid	- Siem Reap, Cambodia - Bangkok - Beijing - Ho Chi Minh City - Bali
2004:	Aiman Hakim Bin Mohd Amin Nicholas Chai Sylvia Haliman Jolene Lai Muhammad Nazri Bin Mokhtar	- Kuala Lumpur - Kuching, Sarawak - Yangon, Myanmar - Chiang Mai - Delhi
2005:	Nurasyikin Bte Hamzah Lin Bao-Ling Ow Yan Ying Jane Porter Shubigi Rao	- Hyogo, Fukuoka, Osaka, Okayama, Niigata, Aichi. - Tokyo, Nagano, Sendai - Bangkok - Myanmar - Bhutan
2006:	Poh Ya See Ng Cai Zhen Quck Wei Xiang Ong Wei Wen Denis	- Netherland - Vietnam - Cambodia - Thailand
2007:	Yap Ming Chan Yam Hoe Chee Tan Seow Wei Choung So Mi Hew Kai Shen	- Cambodia - Bali - Vietnam - Seoul - Taiwan
2008:	Simon Ng Yong Heng Julie Lee Pei Shan Theresia Irma Iriani Veliana Nor Ain Abd Zanar Claes Eriksson	- Cambodia - Vietnam - Nepal - Hong Kong - Thailand - Germany

Travelogue Research Recipients



2003 Aaron Kao - Belgrade
Dovan Ong - Belgrade



2004 Mithun Jayaram - Romania
Safaruddin Bin Abdul Hamid - Romania

2005 Chio E-Xian - Thessaloniki
Zenn Tan Mui Cheng - Thessaloniki

2006 Junaidi Wae - Keszthely Lake Balaton
Hong Xiao Hui - Keszthely Lake Balaton



2007 Kankanige Mahen Perera - Prague
Jon Chan Wei Wen - Prague
Susie Wong - Prague

2008 Hafiz Osman - Belgrade
Zulkarnan Othman - Belgrade

About Dr. Winston Oh

Dr. Oh took up the watercolour medium seriously twenty years ago. He went to learn from two well-known British watercolourists, and has not looked back since. The late Brother McNally invited him to support LaSalle after hearing about his passion for painting and travelling, and so Travelogue was born.

Recalling his own experience, Dr. Oh is convinced that he gained so much and progressed in his artistic development so rapidly because he travelled to paint, preferably on the spot. Besides the excitement and stimulus from exposure to new and different cultures, landscapes, colours and light conditions, he had to learn to observe and record these differences.

He hopes that Travelogue will continue to enable art students to learn and gain as much as he did by immersing himself or herself, even if briefly, in a foreign environment. It gives him the greatest pleasure each year to be walked and talked through the exhibit by each artist at the Travelogue exhibition.



WONDER WHERE IT EXISTED

Rofan Teo



Four months have passed since the Singapore Biennale (SB 2008). A retrospective examination of the SB 2008 would recall criticisms leveled at the event. Some writers, critics and artists I have had encountered disapproved of the lack of representation from artists working in Southeast Asian and Singapore. However, to drive a cliché to the ground, is less necessarily more? Where do the Singapore artists stand in the SB 2008, the theme of which is *Wonder*?

Wonder is broadly defined as something at which the viewer marvels for its beauty, unexpected and unfamiliar qualities. It stirs 'a feeling of surprise and admiration' which not only leads one to curiosity and desire to knowledge, but also causes doubts.

Through *Wonder*, the co-curator, Joselina Cruz, endeavored to reclaim bodily sensed aesthetics and pleasure, reviving our sensorial faculties, which some felt had been repudiated in contemporary art. Her premise attempts to reclaim contemporary art as being accessible to everyone, responding to the uproar from quibbles of French theorist and critic, Jean Baudrillard, and Australian art critic, Robert Hughes who scandalized

mediocre, banal and vulgar. Hence, most of the works chosen for SB 2008 were intended to be enjoyed primarily at the aesthetic level; works for example that evoke marvelous renditions of nature, and creating sensations of dreamily floating, between lifting one's spirits and sinking into disquietude.

This was however far from the case, in the work of an erected mammoth concrete wall on which the title of a book is written, to a room that deceptively mimics a pseudo scientific laboratory and museum. The works steered clear from nature, and seldom invoke the channel that attunes one with one's senses explicitly.

At City Hall, *Raw Canvas* by Jane Lee was at once both a painting and textile, stretched magnificently across the large wall, and by this gesture, had extended the boundaries in art. This coheres with *Who is this Family* by Rachel Goh who created variations of one family portrait with its members switching clothes, resulting in a discourse of interchangeability of identity, gender and hierarchy.

Most compelling was Sherman Ong's *Banjir Kemarau, or Flooding in the Time of Drought*. The work is

lengthy, consisting of a video that ran for 138 minutes, playing out scenes of people, such as foreigners and new migrants, engaged in dialogue in their flats and government housing. While *Flooding* suggests water, the conversations barely touched on the topic, referred to only when in one scene, an actor alluded to the dead fish in the tank. Quintessentially, the value of water to our survival, that had even raised the spectre of political conflict with neighbouring countries, has often been taken for granted as water is so readily available. On the one hand, the scenes are devoid of water; on the other hand, they evoked a deluge of emotional drought and emptiness of the lives of the characters, a certain disquiet that lent to the poignancy of the scenes.

On the façade of South Beach development, steady streams of neon lights were channeled from gigantic plastic cups, representing 'pulled tea' or as it is more popularly called by the name adopted in the title, *Teh Tarik*, a common beverage in Singapore and Malaysia. The work by veteran artist Cheo Chai Hiang paid homage to prose written by Yeng Pway Ngon; it featured original excerpts and English translations from 'Little Incidents: Between Me and Myself'. This work echoes the culture of bilingualism in Singapore, which, like making pulled tea, flows smoothly but somewhat awkwardly from English to Chinese, surprising one with an unlikely concoction of two distinct languages, in the melting pot of the society.

If you had not been informed about South Beach being one of the locations at SB 2008, *The Tuning Fork of the Mind* would have likely be

mistaken as an existing chamber which a scientist or archaeologist had devoted his work and resided. In reality, the room installation consisted of objects, ethnographical artifacts in bell jars, machines measuring brain waves, neat scribbles on sheaves of yellowing paper the artist Shubigi Rao had created and fabricated. The work is the artist's tribute to her love of museums and research. Staging an elaborate lie, which bordered on facts, she brought to mind the notion of subjectile that Antonin Artaud, the French playwright, poet and theatre director is associated with in his drawings, plays and poetry. Since all objects were fake, they are a collection of subjectiles that fall outside objects we know of. Like paper, the mock objects are only a veneer; each is a surface, on which one marks one's responses and interpretations, leaving it constantly in flux and never ceasing in possibilities in the terrain of knowledge.

While Shubigi's work might look like it belongs to or was a part of the decaying building, the works of Heman Chong looked slightly misplaced at South Beach. Where one would have anticipated graffiti, there was an installation made up of tiny 'stickers', which appeared to have been multiplying in clusters across different parts of the walls. Its long title *A Short Story About An Unknown Organism From Australia That Is Bent On Infiltrating A Given Space As Told By A Geomancer (I'd Like To Die Without Feeling Any Pain)* however aptly reflects the uncertainty of life, which is mostly at the mercy of an outbreak of undiscovered incurable diseases and epidemics. This is often countered with superstition and unfounded theories, because the diseases, like

an alien invasion or military offensive, penetrate unknowingly, but the consequences are nearly always resolute.

In Every Time we say Goodbye, the drawings and video installation of Tang Ling Nah and Willie Koh added imagined spaces through the creation of extra doorways, piping and other fixtures, leading us to the threshold of our imagination. On another wing, Joshua Yang's *Impossibility of the Superstring Theory* was developed with meandering lines that cover every aspect of the wall. Through scribbling anecdotes, the artist chronicled the passing of time and events occurring during the process of his drawing, as well as slippages within the spaces. In the end, I crossed an open space where a wide and free-standing concrete wall, another work by Heman Chong, stood. A text imprint on the wall of the artist's favourite book by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, invoked a momentary impasse between the wall and the field of vision behind. It is possibly about the predominance of emptiness of life that no one can bypass, thus binding us in a common fate. This monumental but simple truth continuously awes us.



Singapore International Photo Festival Exhibition, Oct 15 – Nov 2 2008

Who among us today do not know how to use a camera or a mobile phone to take a photograph? Anything we see we are able to record directly either on film or as a digital image. From the camera obscura to our DSLR cameras, photography has definitely evolved over time, from a pursuit that required specialized skills to an everyday activity. However, it is sometimes forgotten that photography is also an art requiring a process involving conceptual thought, composition, and plenty of trial and error. It is an art form meant to impress the viewer.

Recently, the stature of photography in Southeast Asia grew with the debut of the *Singapore International Photography Festival* (SIPF). It is probably the first festival of this scale, dedicated to photography, to be held in the region. Gwen Lee, the founder and director of the SIPF, as well as director of the 2092 Gallery located at Old School, initiated this event to allow the public to gain a better understanding of photography as an art form.

The event is a showcase of the best of Southeast Asian photography though International photographers have also made their presence felt at the festival. It is an event that aims to provide a platform for local and regional photographers to showcase their works alongside their international peers.

In April, the sounds of shutters filled the air as calls for submissions began in April and closed the following month. There was no theme for this year's festival; artists just had to ensure that photography was part of the process in the creation of their works. The event received nearly 7000 prints from photographers around the world in response to the submission call. It also attracted 20 of the biggest names in the photography world such as Fred Baldwin, Alex Moh and Florence Baur, just to name a few, who participated as speakers and contributors.

Held throughout various locations such as 2902 Gallery, National Museum of Singapore, The Arts House, Singapore Management University and not forgetting LASALLE College of the Arts, the festival ran the course of nearly a month, in October 2008. The features of the SIPF include photography exhibitions of over 600 photographic works, workshops and public talks.



Singapore International

Photography Festival

Khym Nga

The festival gained a lot of publicity, which attracted many far and near to Singapore. Expecting a large audience, and with so many fun and witty displays happening at several locations, conducted tours that guided visitors to all of them had been organised by the festival.

The SIPF can definitely said to be a success as it had achieved its mission, which is to discover, nurture and propel new Southeast Asian talent to prominence onto the international stage. It also aims to promote audience development through a number of outreach programmes that will take photography to the general public. The next SIPF will definitely be an event to mark on one's calendars.

TAIPEI DRIFT

A Re Interview With LIP

Ruben Pang

Re - in • ter • view [ree - in-ter-vyoo] – noun

A formal meeting in the un ideal world which an unsure interviewer re-questions, consults, or double checks with another person after an interview, often leading to more confusion, occasionally resulting in elaboration and drifting of topics: A Taipei Drift interview. Questions by Ruben Pang.

The Facts: *Taipei Drift* was an international workshop for art academics, which saw participation from 10 different countries from America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Hosted by the College of Fine Arts of Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA), the workshop was a double feature of the Taipei Biennale 2008. The following is a re-interview of one of LaSalle's student representatives (Lip) who attended the workshop.

R: Okay, so right, thanks for the interview man, really appreciated it, thing is I forgot to take notes. Good news is now I know what Taipei Drift is, so maybe we can run through what we just ran through and elaborate a bit more?

L: As long as I'm paid and you edit the grammar when you type this out.*(editing has started)

R: Alright great! Let's say you just got home from the trip and your mom asks you, "How was your trip?" What's the first thing that comes to mind?



L: Fantastic, I freaking loved the culture. I wanted to extend my stay, the people there are awesome. The whole experience of living in the Taiwanese way just rocks.

R: So you really mixed with the Taipeiinians then?

L: They're called Taiwanese. Yes, the locals I was fortunate enough to meet had a special way with guests. They really made me feel like I was one of them. They brought me around on scooter tours, took me through a whole bunch of specialty shops and all. They're a really sincere bunch of people, and they did all that not because they wanted something from me, they're really free and easy. Even in their MRT stations, people queue up in a single file before entering the train.

R: You didn't mention too much about the Biennale program just now...

L: Ah yeah, it was okay I guess. With the workshop group, we visited the places of interests and all, then I kind of "excused myself" here and there to hang out with my new friends.

R: You worked closely with the Taiwanese students, even did a presentation with them.

L: Oh yeah, it was a blast. I ended up being the one to present since I was the one most comfortable with speaking in English... Their teacher wasn't too happy; he wanted them to be more vocal. So I seized the chance to make a Singapore impression. My presentation was about our collective critique on the program (sniggers).

R: Well done, just about did our country and school proud there.

L: (Laughs) It was okay, they took it lightly, and we had a laugh at all the technical difficulties etc... Hey at least they'll remember me.

R: The other schools also presented on their Taipei experience. Were the others as intellectual and conceptual as yours?

L: (More laughs) Yeah the Europeans were amazed at how people could sleep in the MRT in Taipei. In their countries, you could be a victim of snatch theft or whatever, just goes to show how safe Taipei is. There was another group that did treat a homeless man as a still life subject and one that had this girl going around the city in a wedding dress. There was this sense of humor. I guess Taiwanese really appreciate humor. There were actually 2 presentation sessions. The ones I just referred to were all related to experiencing the city. The other presentation was basically for the various students to talk about the work they've done in their respective schools.

R: You've enjoyed the experience, there's no doubt about that. So what would you say you learnt most?

L: I think I learnt how to experience. I think if you want to understand a culture, you really have to immerse yourself in it, find out the city's secrets and really just go with the flow, go where the wind blows.

R: Oh yeah, speaking of wind, there was a typhoon right?

L: Ah ya ya, wasn't that dramatic after all. Back to going where the wind blows, I managed to meet up with an old friend who was a LASALLE graduate, Bao Ling. We met up and he showed me around even more and I really got to see so much more than the usual tourist attractions. So what I've really learnt is, wherever you go, if it's someplace new...

R: Get chummy with the locals or hire a tour guide, and then slip the pre-planned schedule to bathe yourself in the vibrant juices of the city?

L: Yes, you got to think out of the box you know? Can't always follow the crowd, they are as lost as you are to begin with.

APAD @ the Singapore Arts Museum, Dec 13 2008- April 3 2009

APAD

Tradition, Innovation and Continuity

Hafiz Bin Syed Nasir

Art societies have always had an important role in the visual arts landscape. They are vital cogs in the local art scene, primarily being a 'support group' for fresh art graduates or emerging artists. This 'support group' is especially important for the young artists for the experience - they are exposed to the processes behind organising exhibitions - applying for funding, taking care of logistical matters, et cetera. Another important, but often overlooked factor, is the guidance provided by these senior artists. Often

a young artist might find it tough to break into the art scene and while there are numerous opportunities to hold exhibitions in the current environment, the artists' community still plays an important role in the development of the local art scene.

Gatherings where artists can bounce off ideas or engage in informal debates can only be a healthy experience. Somehow, there is a decreasing level of this communal spirit among local artists nowadays. Gone are the days where there was a proliferation of art societies like the *Singapore Art Society* (1949), *Equator Art Society* (1955) and *Modern Art Society* (1964).

The formation of art groups in Singapore (then known as Malaya) has its roots back in 1935. In his book *A Brief History Of Malayan Art*, Marco Hsu wrote: "The formation of art groups in Malaya in 1935 resulted

from the camaraderie amongst the large number of artists and a commonly felt need to practise the arts collectively". It is on this premise that APAD (*Angkatan Pelukis Aneka Daya* or translated, *Association of Artists of Various Resources*) was inaugurated in 1962 at the Sims Avenue Community Centre.

In his book, *An Artist's Note*, founding member and the 1st APAD president Abdul Ghani Hamid commented that, "Malay artists are divided into individuals and groups." Thus APAD was formed to bring together these various talents and work towards a common goal. Though it was not explicitly stated that the association was exclusively for Malays, it somehow developed into a predominantly Malay group. Having said that, the society has nevertheless held group exhibitions in the past featuring Nanyang pioneers like Georgette Chen and other non-Malay artists like Wee Beng Chong and Ho Ho Ying.

As the name suggests, the members of APAD come from various backgrounds and they include oil painters, water-colourists, sculptors and more recently, installation artists and filmmakers. These members form an eclectic mix of individuals, and exhibitions held in the past, have always proved to be a visual feast.

Tradition, Innovation and Continuity is the association's 34th large-scale art exhibition. It also marks the association's 46th anniversary, and their ongoing exhibition at the Singapore Art Museum has been a successful platform in charting their achievements over the past four decades. More importantly, this exhibition brings together works, since its earliest decade, from the pioneer artists to the current younger artists. Pioneer artists consist of individuals like Aman bin Ahmad (Pak Man) and Mahat bin Chadang (C. Mahat). The second generation artists consists of more familiar names like Abdul

Ghani Hamid, Iskandar Jalil and Mohamed Abdul Kadir (S. Mohdir) while current younger members consist of individuals like Ahmad Abu Bakar and Hj Salleh Japar.

This exhibition does not profess to be the authoritative history of APAD, however it does provide an expansive overview of significant milestones for the audience. Juxtaposing the works of the pioneer artists with their younger contemporaries in the exhibition, the curators for the exhibition have contextualised the threads of Innovation and Continuity. This includes the 'archival' section in one of the galleries which provides interesting aspects of local art

history like APAD's outreach activities (*Tunas*) and the *Pingat APAD* art award scheme (of which artists like Liu Kang, Cheong Soo Pieng and Georgette Chen were past recipients).

Last but not least, the exhibition featured artists from the LASALLE community, including Hj. Salleh Japar, Ahmad Abu Bakar, Erzan Adam, Suhirman Sulaiman and a few others, making it some sort of a reunion among the LASALLE alumni!

APAD - Tradition, Innovation and Continuity was on at the Singapore Art Museum from 13 Dec 2008 to 5 April 2009.



The Poetics/Politics of Transition

Daphne Ang

The Singapore Biennale seems to be following the trajectory of being named and themed after a duo-syllabic, abstract noun. Perhaps it is a tongue-in-cheek rebuttal of recent media criticisms that contemporary art, in the context of Singapore, being too cryptic and esoteric to be appreciated by the majority of Singaporeans.

Wonder, was the over-arching, blanket theme for Singapore Biennale 2008, which in the opinion of many fell short of being specific about anything. It was an overly generic term despite noble intentions for it to serve as a witty, double-edged pun. According to Fumio Nanjio, Artistic Director of the Singapore Biennale for the second consecutive time, to be engaged in a state of *Wonder* is to be “amazed with the marvels of reality” or a feeling of surprise and admiration. On the flip-side, it can also refer to being caught in a sense of doubt, curiosity or merely be in a state of questioning oneself. Extrapolating further, it touches on almost the entire spectrum of human emotions. As such, is there any real challenge for artists to create works to fit the premise of this unduly broad theme? Also, shouldn't all contemporary art aim to evoke “wonder” regardless?

Intriguingly, the more interesting subtext did not exist in the linguistically punned theme *Wonder*, but in something that was indiscernible to the naked eye and concealed subliminally. The hidden theme of *Wonder* did not lie in the play of words, contradictory human emotions, nor intangible entities, but in the contrasting use of space - cold, hard, exhibition spaces. The artworks were shown at three main spaces – City Hall, Marina Bay and South Beach

Development, converging on the heritage and central business district area.

Containart Pavilion was a temporary pavilion at Marina Bay, designed by Shigeru Ban, and built with 150 shipping containers. Marina Bay would eventually be the centre-stage of the urban makeover of Downtown Singapore. Public spaces along the Singapore Flyer at Marina Bay, Esplanade Bridge across the Singapore River, Raffles City, and Suntec City had also been incorporated.

The former City Hall and Supreme Court, which would be converted into the National Art Gallery in 2010, and was also used as one of the venues for SB2006 - probably intended as a vivid reminder of the previous biennale.

South Beach Development, which was the former Beach Road Camp and Police Station from colonial days. In 2012, the South Beach development would be turned into office spaces, two luxury hotels, exclusive city residences and high-end retail spaces and, not to mention, multi-tiered sky gardens.

This strategic curatorial allocation of spaces at prominent sites in Singapore gave credence to that paradox of modernity versus antiquity; old versus new; and spaces in transition. Modernity referred to the enunciation of the disappearance of the comfortable and nostalgic link to the past. Although it had been accepted that the use of alternative, non white-cube spaces offered new opportunities in espousing contemporary art, one could not help but notice that the dominant discourse was to use art - specifically for the Singapore Biennale - as a cultural anchor for the promotion of certain political or economic agendas, with regards to various prominent spaces in Singapore, be it heritage or commercial.

It would not be too farfetched to suggest that a large aspect of a country's history is determined by the buildings that were built, the buildings that were torn down and also the stories that were told in the process. This poignant theme was picked up by some of the featured artists.

Tang Ling-Nah's *Every time We Say Goodbye* (2008), encapsulated this idea succinctly. Her work was a series of site-specific charcoal drawings

that featured generic public spaces in Singapore, such as public housing and the underground transport system tunnels, on the inter-connected walls at the charmingly rustic South Beach Road Development venue. Her trompe d'oeil life-size drawings sought to “reflect and address the conditions of the modern city, particularly the lack of interpersonal intimacy in urban life”.

Alfredo and Isabel Aquiliza's *Flight* (2004-2008), was an installation of rubber thong slippers, bamboos and wind harps that lined the beach that flanked the waterfront at Marina Boulevard along the Central Promontory Site. This was done with the intention of “bringing people to the physical sites of the development”, and also allowing them to “contemplate the area through the lens of the artwork”. This work touched on notions of community and family; re-location and temporary homes; memory and identity. It also evoked an ephemeral sense of transience and impermanence.

An interesting aspect of the selection of artworks was the focus of many art pieces on the ambience, aesthetics and ‘tropicality’ of Singapore's cityscape. The humid and dense air of the environment made for a viewer experience that had a multi-sensory connection with the environment, one's individual consciousness, as well as a shared experience with fellow visitors.

One fine example of a shared sensory experience - of smell, in particular - is *September Sweetness* (2008), a life-size Burmese pagoda constructed from sugar, by artists Rich Streitmatter-Tran (Vietnam), Chaw Ei Thein (Singapore) and Aung Ko (Burma). Erected on the green grounds of the South Beach Development, the pagoda's crystalline surfaces shimmered like a glittering palace under the scorching tropical sun. The multi-sensory experience was realised as parts the *September Sweetness*

melted, festered, deteriorated in the heat and rotted in the elements, emitting a pungent stench that permeated throughout the compound and literally became a honey pot for flies. There is no odour as bad as goodness tainted. Even though it was meant to convey serious political and religious undertones about the plight of the people of Burma, the work also left the impression that a theatrical and dramatic irony was unfolding. Was the simulacra of a Burmese temple meant to be a microcosm depicting the fate of the South Beach Development?

Despite the underlying notion that *Wonder* was a vessel for the country's bigger agenda, Singapore Biennale was undoubtedly a confluence of dynamic and multi-dimensional relationships between cultures, art forms, discourses, genres and methodologies. It was a collective effort that should be unduly respected and applauded. At least those spaces were ushered in and out with a bang – a prominent art show used as a vehicle to re-invent history, usher in history, and bid farewell to the past. Consequently, should we succumb to a pensive, meditative reverie over these spaces? Or should we acknowledge that we are forever in a constant flux, and that this is not destruction, but merely transition?



Schema Exhibition, Sept 29 – Oct 12 2008

Schema

Muhd. Firdaus Bin Abdul Aziz

Schema: a representation of a plan or theory in the form of an outline or model.

LASALLE Fine Arts part-time lecturer, Shubigi Rao, curated *Schema*, which was an exhibition that was opened from 29 September to 12 October 2008. The participants consisted of students majoring in printmaking. However, departing from the tradition of showcasing resolved works, the works on display were largely process or test prints that came about from hours of experimentation.

A print is created through an indirect transfer, with the image being composed and created on a “plate”. A piece of paper is subsequently placed on the plate and put through the printing press. The advantage of

creating an image on a plate allows for a single image to be replicated many times over. The ability to multiply is one of printmaking's special characteristics, and this multiplicity enables the spread of ideas.

The medium of printmaking involves a great amount of planning and has traditional standards by which the quality of a print is judged. I have heard stories of students who tried out printmaking and disliking it because of the emphasis on good, clean prints. The training involves learning and mastering of specific skills and techniques that may take months or even years to perfect. Printmakers can thus spend countless hours trying to get a “good” print, and experimenting with the different possibilities within a single image. During the process of experimentation, one often discovers unexpected effects and results. Many of the prints exhibited were the results of such explorations.

This element of experimentation with the image was incorporated into

the exhibition. Not only were prints the main feature of the exhibition, a variety of plates were also put on display, showing the qualities that could be achieved by the different techniques. There was a good variety of the different printmaking techniques such as woodcut, etching, drypoints, silkscreen and monoprints being created and showcased by the printmaking students.

The monoprint however is a one-off image due to unique process of its production that cannot be repeated. Without the possibility of reproduction, the monoprint is an opportunity to contemplate the unique qualities of printmaking as a medium. The monoprints shown in *Schema* were attempts at discovering the richness and possibilities of printmaking techniques. From oils to pastels and various kinds of pigment or solvents that are applied to the plate; to methods of application - drawn lines, applied flat areas of ink, gestural brushstrokes; to different types of paper or surfaces that the print is

transferred to - all these are factors which make for endless permutations of textural and visual effects.

Looking around *Schema*, one had a sampling of the several techniques that form the main branches of printmaking. Lithography, which is planographic, deals with the making of the image through chemical resistance on a prepared flat surface. Relief cuts, like carving of wood or other materials, enable a particular kind of straightforwardness in mark-making. Serigraphy/silkscreen involves the ink being forced through a fabric screen and so achieving a pixelated effect. Intaglio plates of copper or other metals, can have their image incised manually or with acid, or both, and offer beautiful line work effects as



rich as the history behind the method. Weixin Chong, a first year Printmaking major said, “It was a great opportunity for the printmakers. I hope that through the exhibition, a greater understanding of the medium gets disseminated to the viewer.”

She also commented that, “perhaps through the exhibition, it would inspire more students to pick up printmaking either as an extension to their chosen major or even as a major study.”

Judging from the positive response from those who attended and participated in the exhibition, an annual showcase of prints created by students does not seem too far-fetched an idea.





Lingering Encounters

Chong Wei Xin

At the opening, scores of people milled in and around the curvilinear gallery space. Students from various levels of the Fine Arts Faculty were especially engaged in exploring the works - not least because it was a collaborative showcase of photographs they had earlier submitted.

"At first we were thinking of calling it *Instant Details*," said Betty Susiarjo, Fine Arts Lecturer and one of the two curators of the exhibition, explained with a smile. But the final title, *Snappy Close-Up*, was much better as it is intriguing yet familiar - a reflection of the subject matter of the submitted photographs.

The exhibition was a serendipitous result of circumstances and an initiative by Milenko Prvacki, Dean of Fine Arts. "Basically, there were 2 weeks of free space between shows," Betty explained. A showcase of photography - an ideal medium for quick sharing of images - was planned as a platform for the Fine Arts Faculty to interact, as well as kick-start the new school year.

The apparent ease with which the diverse images, sizes and colours pieced together as a whole, is largely due to the thoughtful curating and presentation. Massot Gilles, the other curator for the exhibition, together with Betty and several student volunteers were kept busy with the selection and arrangement of each one of the approximately 200-odd photos selected, which were then pasted to the walls painstakingly.

A chair, a hairclip, tiles, a map ... Figuring out what was being represented in the photos - some of which were highly abstracted - was an engaging element of the showcase. Many students were kept busy guessing the subject matter of one another's photographs. "Some were spontaneous; some planned," said Faris, from Level 2 Fine Arts. Some of the photos were non-identifiable; an intriguing texture, a play with light. Others were more literal, telling all - yet endowing a semblance of significance on the things that they brought to attention.

If only they were contactable, *Monsieurs Chair, Hairclip and Co.* may have interesting opinions on their appearance in these candid shots.

Nevertheless, we had the fortunate opportunity to interview Red Lebrun - from Level 1 Arts Management. Photographed by Alvelyn Koh from Level 2 Fine Arts - whose portrait stood prominent on the wall of images. Long loose hair with shoulders slightly hunched against a background of the sea, the image conveyed a quiet vulnerability with untold strength.

Of his initial feelings during the shoot, Red confessed, "I felt very exposed". Gradually as he realised he was working "with a professional", this unease became a conscious role as the artist's subject. Looking at the photos now, he felt: "Proud, actually. That I've been made into an image and captured as an artwork. I'm not photogenic, and some of the pictures aren't pretty ones. But you can feel the emotional content and the message."

Wong Lip Chin, from BA Fine Arts, had a likewise engaging explanation of his large-format self-portraits featuring himself (apparently) wrapped in plastic bags. "I wanted it like that," he said with panache, raising his eyebrows at the photos, in which his facial expressions are intriguingly distorted.

I think it was this heady sense of diversity, spontaneity and referentiality that left vivid impressions in my mind. In the days after the opening, the wall of images frequently caught my eye. It brought back vivid encounters that lingered pleasantly in my mind: "Of knowing people who see things in small corners and little details of life. And of being able in their images to see things for a little while, from each other's point of view."

Artist Talk - Victoria Cattoni and the Kebaya

Nur Shazwany Bte Abdul Aziz

I did not plan on going to this artist talk, let alone write about it. But I was attracted to the poster I saw outside the library and, not wanting to miss it, decided to attend the talk there and then. The poster was not exactly noticeable but it highlighted an aspect of Victoria Cattoni's work that was about investigating and apprehending the different notions of identity - in particular the notion of the "feminine" in different cultural frameworks, social classes and different locations in Indonesia. As I went to the talk a little late, I was far from regretting having nearly not made it.

In one of the two major bodies of work that were presented during the talk, Cattoni addressed the underlying issues of the *kebaya*; a blouse deemed to be a 'classic'.



a piece of clothing worn by women across socio-economic classes, age groups and ethnicities, including the *Peranakans* (the Straits Chinese). The origin of the *kebaya* was probably derived from different places located in varied geographical areas; with distinct ways of life that helped formed the distinguishing traits of the traditional garment.

Through the Kebaya, a research-based work shown at various venues in Indonesia and Australia over a five-year journey, formed part of Cattoni's Master of Visual Arts study.

Investigating her chosen issue through video performances and a series of workshops, participants of diverse backgrounds collaborated with the artist as she used the language of clothing to stimulate audience interaction, encouraging them to share their experiences of being in a *kebaya* and being seen in one. Even men were included in the performance. The *kebaya* is used as a tool for exploring cultural identity, relating to the idea of the 'feminine', particularly in the context of Indonesia.

The set-up of her performance is in a relatively simple room, with a range of well-stocked *kebaya* of various sizes and designs, hung on a rack next to a full-length mirror in which a hidden camera was installed to record the performance. The participants then choose to try on a *kebaya* or two from the rack, and share with the viewer about their preferences on the choice of *kebaya*, as well as their thoughts and experiences. The resultant performances reflected on how women saw themselves in today's context, and their differing definitions of femininity.

Several false notions of culture were challenged through the performances, and Cattoni intends to use the recorded conversations as part of her subsequent research and other works. The outcome of her work is largely influenced by the context that she is in, such as the community of people and where it was produced. Describing herself as "an artist working outside the comfort zones of my own culture", Cattoni's personal perception of the *kebaya* mattered little here. While being aware of other issues surrounding the meaning of the garment - which at times were weigh down by social and historical baggages - the artist kept a healthy distance from the project's 'centre of meaning.'

The other major work mentioned, by Cattoni in her talk, is *Re-Dressing The Veil*, which adopted the approach of the *Kebaya* project. This is a project, carried out between 2007 and 2008, which examined the views of Islam in a multi-cultural society in three very different geo-political contexts: Australia, Malaysia and Singapore. Through the use of text and the fabric of the *hijab* (headscarf), the project attempted to challenge generalisations of and attitudes towards the wearing of *hijab* from those who do not wear it.

Cattoni's other recent work about the *kebaya* was *Nyonya's Kebaya, Baba's Desire* at NUS, and was developed in Penang and Singapore. It is a work inspired by her experiences of the Chinese Peranakan lifestyle.

The final work of the presentation, in which Cattoni has taken on a 'soft approach', is eagerly expected. It is to be presented in Singapore this year and will feature a digital media installation that would be located contextually, including portraits of local Muslim women and material from workshops conducted in Singapore.



About the Artist Talks

The artist talks series is a vital part of Fine Arts Faculty curriculum. Besides Victoria Cattoni who visited LASALLE in October 2008, other international and local artists were invited to share their works and art processes in talks or workshops within the college or where their works were exhibited (Wong Hoy Cheong in NUS Museum). These artists' concerns and mediums are broad and varying, ranging from performance based works to photography or painting as a process. The artists that we had invited from August 2008 to April 2009 are as follows:

Victoria Vesna, USA
Alan Cruickshank, Australia
Deborah Kelly, Australia
Alessandro Furlan, Italy

Wong Hoy Cheong, Malaysia
Victoria Cattoni, Australia
Ariel Ruiz i Altaba, Mexico
Sam Trubridge, New Zealand

Nanang Widayat, Indonesia
Sam Durant, USA
Lawrence Chin, Singapore
Francoise Huguier, France
Jon Tarry, Australia



Kota Rainforest trip 2009

Nur Liyana Bte Ali

Sick of the urban life. On the 23 February 2009, the Fine Art level 2 students had a drawing trip. Away from the bustling city of Singapore, just across the causeway checkpoint. A getaway from the bright lights and the sound of busy traffic, and into the calm green refreshing smell of dewy rainforest at Kota Tinggi. We stayed at a resort nearby. From the Tuas checkpoint, passing the town of Kota Tinggi, rubber plantations and the signs on the roads that got some of us extremely amazed.



There were activities planned for us for the next few days. Trekking in the forest, visiting the night market and a fireflies cruise. The experience was priceless. It was a breathtaking experience that one needs to be there to know it. There are tons to say about the trip. Friendships and bonding of friends took place. I have to say that the fireflies cruise had taken us by surprise. We were put in life jackets and were taken on a boat ride down a lake with the moonlight as the only source of light. The lake was calm and we could hear the crickets sing. The sides of the lakes were decorated with lightly flickering bright lights, blinking like Christmas tree lightings, except that these were the bright lights from the fireflies. Everyone became excited with the beauty of nature. It was a wonderful experience to be shared with friends.

The trip was a new experience for all of us in Level 2 from the Fine Arts faculty. It gave us new memories and create new inspirations. for our drawing project. We had our joyous moments and new friendships were forged during the trip. It was an unforgettable trip indeed.



An interview with Sam Durant

Adeline Kueh

Adeline Kueh, Senior Lecture of Postgraduate studies, interviews Sam Durant

AK: One constantly negotiates the concerns in one's practice. At this moment in time, what would you say is core to your works?



SD: In general, I try to work with issues of significance or importance to the particular audience in question. Often, I am attracted to controversial issues. For instance, right now I am working on a public project that takes up the issue of death penalty in the United States.

AK: I am particularly interested in the Transforma Project in New Orleans. Would you care to comment on some of the things you have learnt from working in a collaborative environment, through a work that tries to reach out to a community that is in the process of rebuilding?

SD: I have learned an enormous amount during the last three years of *Transforma*, both from the residents of New Orleans and from my co-workers on the project, most of us from outside the city. The main participants are artists Robert Ruello, from New Orleans, Rick Lowe the founder of Project Row Houses in Houston and Jessica Cucick, the head of Cultural Affairs for Santa Monica, CA.

We are in the process of evaluating what we did and what worked and didn't work, so it may be a bit early to make any conclusive statements. I would say that one of the things that we did fairly well was to let the folks in New Orleans determine the nature of *Transforma* projects while we tried to provide support for that. We had hoped that a local group would, in fact, take the whole thing over, but that did not end up happening. Why this did not happen is a very important question for me and I look forward to some answers from our evaluation process. I had hoped that *Transforma* would be a long term, sustainable project and although we kept it going for three years it looks like it will conclude this December.

AK: Another aspect about your works is rooted in the revisionist notion of 'history' as we understand it, in that 'history' and official narratives have significant impacts on the daily, social realities of many (specifically in relation to marginalised groups). Could you elaborate on the motivation/s behind doing these works?

SD: I would gently argue that what I am doing is not exactly "revisionist" in the sense that the term is often used. For instance, histories of Germany that minimize or deny the Holocaust are called "revisionist". It implies that one is creating a historical narrative that, while being different, is supposed to be just as truthful as the one it revises. In this sense what I am hoping to do with my works, that take up

historical subjects, is to make transparent the fact that all "histories" or historical narratives are constructed. I may be arguing for a historical account that includes unsavory events or that offers a different perspective on the unsavory, for instance looking at the period of American history known as the "Indian Wars" from the Indian's perspective, but I think I still try to show that mine is as constructed as any.

AK: Thank you for that. I should have phrased it better since the same idea may be employed for the benefit of both camps. Ideally, in reframing and re-presenting another historical narrative, one would be throwing up that process for scrutiny which would in turn - hopefully - reveal the constructedness of things.

What are some words of encouragement you would give to the younger generations of artists (and designers) who dare to be different?

SD: Look to others who already embody what you strive for, it seems easier when you know that you are not alone. And, if you need to, connect with others who are like-minded so that you really are not alone.

AK: What are your sources of inspiration? Or what inspires you daily?

SD: Well, I am inspired to work simply by reading the news every day. Perhaps unfortunately, there may never be a shortage of subject matter for the sort of work that I do.

AK: Thank you once again for taking the time to do this interview. A large number of staff and students who attended your talk and workshop found your works very engaging and thought-provoking. We hope to see you here again.

SD: I hope to be able to return to LASALLE, I found it a remarkable place. The students were wonderful to work with and I would love to be able to continue if the opportunity presents itself.

From the Calarts site:

Sam Durant

is a multi-media artist whose work has been widely exhibited internationally. He has had solo museum exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Kunstverein Düsseldorf, the S.M.A.K. in Belgium, and the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Zealand. His work has been included in numerous international exhibitions including the Whitney Biennial, La Biennale di Venezia, and the Sydney Biennale.

Durant works with Paula Cooper Gallery in New York, Galleria Emi Fontana, Milan, and Blum and Poe, Los Angeles where he exhibits regularly. His work has been the subject of several monographic catalogs and included in numerous books and publications. He has curated and co-organized a number of exhibitions and artists benefits and is a co-founder of Transforma Projects/ New Orleans.

His work can be found in many public collections including The Art Gallery of Western Australia in Perth, Tate Modern in London, Project Row Houses in Houston, and the Guggenheim Museum in New York.