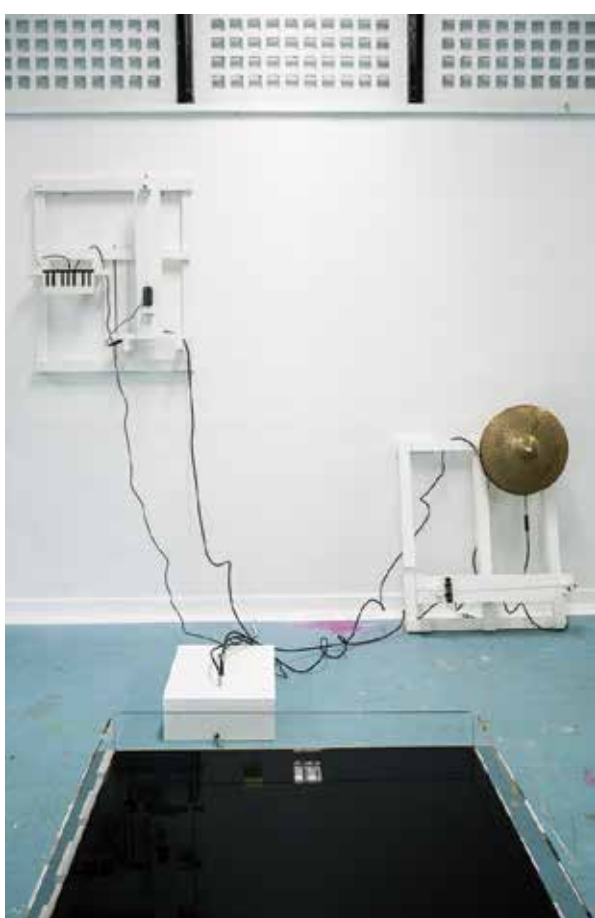


BA(HONS) FINE ARTS GRADUATION EXHIBITION: OPEN CIRCUITS

LASALLE Winstedt Campus
27 April – 4 May 2017

by Hazel Koh, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 1 (2017)



Images courtesy of Ng Wu Gang



“In curating this show, I’ve learnt that my own individual work is less important as compared to how it would fit in with other works to present a cohesive and engaging show. Often, I find that our own individual works becomes ‘stronger’ when it is placed with other works.”

Open Circuits was an exhibition showcasing the works of 40 students graduating from the BA(Hons) Fine Arts Programme of the McNally School of Fine Arts.

The exhibition was held in a series of rooms at Winstedt campus – transformed from the studio spaces that the BA(Hons) Fine Arts students had utilised for their practice during the year to produce the very works that were being displayed. As each room had an open concept with few, if any, partitions, the works from different artists were challenged to be mutually supportive and contributing in their engagements with the others in this intimate setting. The collaborative spirit was hence paramount in producing a cohesive and harmonious arrangement of works in each room, as the student had to consider not just the presentation of his or her own work, but that it was done without hurting another student’s autonomy, and further, to ensure the works contributed to and activated the space and the energies of the exhibition.

The exhibition presented works in a variety of mediums, from the more conventional media to the more current site-specific. The common thread running through each work was its contemporary approach that balanced eastern and western influence in terms of concept, approach and execution. A distinct feature of the show was the refusal to be confined to a single medium, with many artists employing not only traditional mixed media but also extending into multimedia. From pieces that blurred the line between video art and performance art, to photography that functioned as installation, there was a wide variety of work that subverted and challenged ideas of traditional medium. This could perhaps be linked to the removal

of a major in the BA(Hons) Fine Arts Programme, giving the students greater motivation to explore different mediums to express their artistic message.

The success of the student-organised exhibition was a result of the strong leadership of students who balanced the preparation and refining of their final works alongside the planning and execution of the graduation show, aided by lecturers and staff of the faculty and the collaboration with Fine Arts students in other levels. We spoke to Joel Chin, a graduating student and one of the curators for the show.

Hazel Koh (H): What do you value most about your Fine Arts education at LASALLE?

Joel Chin (J): I value the bonding among like-minded individuals the most during my education in Fine Arts in LASALLE. Not just with my fellow students, but with the lecturers as well.

H: Now that you have had the experience of running and curating the graduation show, do you think you will continue to pursue curation in your career?

J: I definitely would be open to curating in my career, as an extension of my aspirations to practice.

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About LASALLE's McNally School of Fine Arts

The McNally School of Fine Arts offers contemporary practice and research-based programmes at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels with an innovative and interdisciplinary structure. The School focuses on redefining the milieu of artistic research in the Southeast Asia region and Singapore's position in the world of contemporary art.

Editor's Note

Dear Readers

Welcome back to another issue of *Praxis Press*! We are kicking off this issue with an article from Hazel Koh on *Open Circuits* featuring the School's signature exhibition held annually at the LASALLE Winstedt campus, followed by many exciting activities such as industry showcase *i Light Marina Bay project*, artist film night *Wayang Malam*, the overseas field trip to Kota Tinggi and *Trans/Mission* dissertation research seminar.

The 11th issue welcomes student assistant editors Loh Hui Ying Abby and Ian Tee Wang Loong from BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 2, who have added rich content and diverse voices to the publication. That being said, we are looking forward to involving more students in the editorial panel of future issues.

Praxis Press, as promised, will continue to service as a wonderful platform in capturing and documenting the wide range of activities both inside and outside of the McNally School of Fine Arts for each academic year. On behalf of the editorial board, we hope you would enjoy reading the latest news of the School and staying connected with us. While we are pleased to see the significant increase of number of writers from the Diploma level, we would also like to extend our invitation to the fine art alumni for their contributions, to help us keep the exchanges going, and to stay in touch!

Images courtesy of Ng Wu Gang



H: As a BA(Hons) Fine Arts student, I'm sure you've had many years of experience setting up shows for assessment. How do you think this last show differed from the rest of your experiences?

J: Aside from thinking solely just about one's work for one's own assessment, in the *Open Circuits: BA(Hons) Fine Arts Graduation Exhibition*, there needs to be consideration for each individual student's requirements and specifications of his or her own set up. Furthermore, there is also a need to understand each student's work so as to better curate each studio space and decide what best fits where. Juggling the demands of the final semester such as having to write our dissertation as well as execute our own final studio work, it was tough to accomplish both. Thankfully, we had a very good

team who was able to take charge of certain aspects of running a show, such as logistics, collateral and budget, to name a few. In curating this show, I've learnt that my own individual work is less important as compared to how it would fit in with other works to present a cohesive and engaging show. Often, I find that our own individual works becomes 'stronger' when it is placed with other works.

What is compelling about *Open Circuits* is that it inherently represents and questions the multi-faceted identities of people living in Singapore, whether for the duration of their education or their lives. It is the distinct work of diverse artists conversing on what it means to create art in Singapore today, a heartening manifestation of potential, and a glimpse into the future of art in Singapore.



INTERVIEW WITH 2016 CHAN-DAVIES ART PRIZE WINNER SHIRLY KOH: LIGHTER THAN SUNSHOWERS

by Cynthia Delaney Suwito, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Alumni (2016)



"It is an observation of my everyday spaces and subjects that are so visually prominent in our urban environment yet they fall into the background after an extended period in the same space."



can't forget. All of which is based on a Zen quote: "appearing through the viewer as though seen for the first time" where each moment is free from any habit.

C: How did it develop to that?

S: I was reading up on mindfulness when I found this quote really resonated with me. From then on I make my work according to that. Mindfulness is not the concept of my work, it is the way I approach my work.

Each work is a development from a previous work. Some pieces have gone beyond specific subjects; it's more about having the audience present and experiencing an encounter with the works itself. The painting can be noisy or vibrant, calm or have a gradual flow but the audience will need to give it time.

C: Was it difficult to work outside of school?

S: I was successful in my bid for a shared studio space in Goodman Art Centre as I needed a workspace with good lighting and some personal space to focus; if not it will be a struggle.

C: Do you think the time you get is enough to make a solo show?

S: It's ok; I did what I wanted. I exceeded what I thought I could make.

C: What did you get from doing this show?

S: I got to know myself better. Also throughout these six months, reflective conversation with my mentor, Jeremy Sharma, helped solidify the showcase. I am also very thankful for my friends and family, without whom I would not be able to complete the show.

C: Are you working on anything now?

S: Been focussing on food illustrations recently, besides working on my main practice. I don't know, I'm just a bit lost, but I think it's ok to be lost. I think after a while, I will continue to do what I want to do while earning my bread and butter.

Shirly Koh Li Qing is a graduate from LASALLE's BA(Hons) Fine Arts Programme. She is a recipient of the Chan-Davies Art Prize (2016); UOB Painting of the Year – Silver emerging artist category (2016); Noise Singapore Award (2015); and LASALLE Future Leader Scholarship (2013/2014). She held her first solo show, Lighter than Sunshower at Chan Hori Contemporary on 5 – 30 April 2017.



It has been a year since we graduated, a year since the announcement: "Winner of the Chan-Davies Art Prize, Koh Li Qing Shirly." We were very happy for her, and maybe a little jealous too, for with a prize money of \$15,000 and a solo show opportunity, who wouldn't be.

Cynthia (C): How are you feeling after your first solo show?

Shirly (S): Still trying to recharge. I'm both happy and sad that the show is up. But overall, I am proud of what I've accomplished.

C: That's good, I think the show looks nice.

S: Really? What do you like about it?

C: I enjoy seeing how much you have developed and expanded your works from our school year.

S: Yes, I'm happy to get a chance to play and do some site-specific installation in the midst of the showcase.

C: Was the result exactly like your proposal during the Chan-Davies Art Prize interview?

S: No, it changed. In my proposal I wanted to observe the form and shape of plants in my everyday urban spaces. But I decided to continue on what I was doing for my final year project instead. It is an observation of my everyday spaces and subjects that are so visually prominent in our urban environment yet they fall into the background after an extended period in the same space.

C: Tell me more about the final concept of this show.

S: There are three parts: the observation of daily feelings; form and shape from my everyday spaces; and colours I



TROPICAL LAB 10 (2016)

DYNAMIC INTERACTION

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore
20 July – 4 August 2016

by Flavio Cury

“The dynamic interaction that grew among the participants was very intense; it was an opportunity for me to be in touch with other artists from around the world whose practices were very interesting, therefore I found the exchanges extremely rich.”

A ‘residency’ programme for an artist has always intrigued me. Over the last years, I have participated in only one programme, and after this first experience, I was quite sceptical about the format in general. That means: in some cases you are supposed to conceptually adjust your work to a very specific theme; in other cases, the creation of a work is not mandatory, and even if the artist does not produce an art piece it is also ‘ok’; in other programmes, particularly in the USA, the artist is supposed to invest his/ her money to attend the institution, besides bearing all production costs. To resume, the perspective of attending a residency again seemed to me remote.

But none of the situations described above corresponded to my experience in *Tropical Lab 10* at LASALLE College of

the Arts last July. First of all, I was very impressed with the organisation and support that I had during the programme. All the ‘ambassadors’ were extremely friendly and helped us in every situation which made the experience very pleasant and stimulating from the beginning.

In the first week, we visited many places in Singapore. The contact with the city and surroundings was a fundamental part because it fed us with many inputs, and it was a great source of inspiration for the creation of new works.

The curatorial team from the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore was extremely competent and helpful as well, and it was a real privilege to work with a group of curators

interested in our works and also engaged in the process of conceptualising the exhibition. Besides, the exhibition spaces were really impressive; the galleries were located in the central area of the building which gave a lot of visibility to our works.

During the residency I made a series of linoleum etchings. The facilities of the school in general are very good, particularly that of the etching atelier. I was very happy to revisit this technique after so many years, and I have to thank the support I had from Lina Adam, print technician from the printmaking studio, for my work. While many etching ateliers are closing around the world, it was very comforting to see that the school keeps its own running, and that many students show a great interest for it.

The dynamic interaction that grew among the participants was very intense; it was an opportunity for me to be in touch with other artists from around the world whose practices were very interesting, therefore I found the exchanges extremely rich. And I strongly believe that it was made possible thanks to the proposed activities, the general organisation of the residency, the generosity of all and, if you allow me to say, of our eternal Tropical King Milenko Prvacki :)

The whole programme was brilliantly conceived and proved to have a deep understanding about the needs of an artist, creating an optimal and fruitful context, with many exchanges and new inputs that inspired and prompted the creation of new pieces.

I want to convey a very warm thank you to everyone in the Team of LASALLE and *Tropical Lab* for this great experience!

Flavio Cury was a participant from ZHdK, Zurich University of the Arts.



All Equal, 2016



Belle Vue, 2016



Belle Vue 2, 2016

Images courtesy of Monica Shanta Brown

FICTIVE DREAMING AND WONDERING...

by Monica Shanta Brown

“I wondered if, by holding so tightly to historic identities associated with fading memories of homelands, cultural life and evolution in Singapore might be constrained by such ingrained and enduring ethnic separations?”

Last year, I was very happy and honoured to be one of the artists selected for *Tropical Lab 2016*. Our theme was Fictive Dreaming and I had written my proposal as a response to Martin Luther King’s famous “I have a dream” speech. I was particularly interested in his words:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal...and when we allow freedom to ring...black men and white men, Jews and gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, ‘Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!’”

I come from a parentage of a mixture of English, Portuguese, Indian, and Sri Lankan. My art practice is concerned with outcomes that emerge from embodied meetings of difference. I am interested in dismantling the conceptual boundaries of ethnic and cultural identity to discover the innovative creative potential of cross-cultural flows. I seek out experiences of transformation at points where differences meet, in pursuit of an authentic inner location of ‘self’, and an inclusive coherent human identity.

And so, from Brexit Britain, I arrived in Singapore. I knew nothing of its present nor its history. As I was riding in the taxi from Singapore’s airport, I observed with amazement the road signs written in Tamil, a script familiar to me from childhood visits to my mother’s home city of Chennai in South India.

And I discovered very quickly that I share a history with Singapore. We are both children of trade under the East Indian Company and British Imperialism. I am, like Singapore, a post-colonial embodiment of the meeting of ethnicities and cultures.

During my time in Singapore I saw the continued protected separation of Singaporean Indians, from Singaporean Malays, from Singaporean Chinese. I wondered if, by holding so tightly to historic identities associated with fading memories of homelands, cultural life and evolution in Singapore might be constrained by such ingrained and enduring ethnic separations? Is Singapore, like Brexit Britain, fearfully resisting the ‘other’, resisting a new identity fashioned from fertile meetings of differences? I wondered if it is resisting the evolution of a new form of uniquely Singaporean cultural identity of integrated creative freedom, with which it may assert itself in our increasingly globalised world?

And in the midst of it all was *Tropical Lab*, a magical meeting of artists from all over the world, and an opportunity to be part of a transitory trans-global environment, a wonderful chance to enter into a space of fluid identities and engage with the alchemical creative potential of our integration.

Monica Shanta Brown was undergoing her MA Contemporary Art Practice (completion 2017) at Plymouth University.

“This belongs to everyone, the flow of ideas; it is like a well for water. If nobody uses this water, it becomes poison, as there’s no circulation. If you give it to your neighbour, the source will be fresh. Ideas are the same. If you keep them, it becomes poison to your body, and you don’t even know which idea you want to explore because it has already been poisoned. You need to make it empty in order to create new things.”



BA(Hons) Fine Art students creating their own shadow puppets under the guidance of visual artist Heri Dono in the three-day intensive workshop.



Heri Dono answering questions from the BA(Hons) Fine Art students.

WORKSHOP BY HERI DONO: CROSSING THE STRAITS

LASALLE Winstedt Campus
24 – 26 August 2016

by Siong Chung Hua,
BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 3 (2017)

“Art is only to trigger our consciousness about our civilisation. If not, we’re living in an artificial life. Sometimes it is all a paradox, we are not conscious about civilisation.” Heri Dono.

Once every few months, visiting artists from different walks of life and countries grace us with their amazing talents at LASALLE. This time round, we had the talented and multi-disciplinary visual artist Heri Dono, to kickstart one of the semester’s most intensive electives – *Crossing the Straits* – a collaborative module (with the Indonesian community and artists) that investigates deep into the magical and sacred history of Candi Muara Jambi, (a Buddhist temple complex dated about the 11th to 13th century CE) in Sumatra, Indonesia.

At the end of three intensive workshop days, we finally got to sit down (enthralled and extremely humbled) with the jovial storyteller. Yet, his charming and captivating demeanour is a stark contrast to his multi-faceted, nuanced and politically aggressive artwork. Arguably one of the first contemporary Indonesian artists of his generation to break into the global art scene in the 1990s, how does an international star of that level handle the artist’s ego and the continuing pressure to create? The nine elective students from the BA(Hons) Fine Arts Programme Level 2 and 3, who were participants of the workshop, put Heri in the hot seat, firing philosophical questions with enthusiasm.

“First, we have to criticise ourselves, not to criticise others, because we are a witness of our work, on our lives. So artists, when creating the work or making a criticism, we are witnesses. It’s not about the ego, but the individual expression, which is universal. Some say that if you’re an artist, you’re egoistic. This is a difficult expression through your self portrait because sometimes when you describe yourself through drawing, it’s under your consciousness,” said Heri.

We looked at him in awe at his calm and Zen reply, each sheepishly remembering the ego flares we had during the course of our programme. But what happens when someone comes up to him with an unintentionally different interpretation of his artwork or declaring his or her dislike?

“The work engages multiple interpretations from everyone because sometimes the artist isn’t aware about what they make as an expression. This is a comparison between Ego and Super Ego. If you’re in Super Ego, we know about our Ego, and therefore, we make the distance. When we create the work, it is difficult to be part of the audience because sometimes you are still in Ego, from your perception. You don’t want to listen or look at your work from other people’s perceptions. So when I create the work, I become the audience, so as to be aware of the criticisms. We have to respect them; we have to let them be critical about our works because we need them to. We cannot afford to hide from it; it is part of our expression.”

As we continued to contemplate his wise words and layered meanings, Heri continued in his deadpan manner (a must for storytellers) about a challenge he faced when he was a child.

“I almost drowned in the sea in North Jakarta when I was 12 years old. What is surprising, maybe because I drank a lot of sea water, my mind now always think about aesthetic.”

We burst into uncontrollable laughter.

And without missing a beat, Heri continued, “When I was drowning, I felt like I was walking in slow motion in the colourful water. When you drown, your movements will be like this. My movements however, were like this [Heri started gesticulating in some recognisably painting movements]... so maybe that’s why I think everything in aesthetic. And the colour turquoise.”

Right on cue, we hollered with delight on this surprising tidbit.

Speaking of aesthetics, as students, we all know too well the struggles of understanding the art terminology from all disciplines and the accompanying complex theories. Does it really matter beyond an institution’s walls?

“Sometimes we don’t need to be worried about how to get the contemporary art terminology when it’s already there,” Heri explains. “When I was young, I wanted to be an artist. But when I’m an artist, I want to be a mediator. I travel to residency programmes to share. This belongs to everyone, the flow of ideas; it is like a well for water. If nobody uses this water, it becomes poison, as there’s no circulation. If you give it to your neighbour, the source will be fresh. Ideas are the same. If you keep them, it becomes poison to your body, and you don’t even know which idea you want to explore because it has already been poisoned. You need to make it empty in order to create new things.”

But what happens if one is unable to create, especially when under pressure?

“My process to create art is to create from stagnation. Because stagnation is a problem for artists. So when I work in painting, I make two different sketches – a sketch for painting or sculpture, and another as a plan for performance or installation. So when I’m bored about this, I write to contemplate about the concept. And when I’m bored about that, I try to create the installation. When I’m bored from installations, I create for performance. And when I’m bored from performance, I do some discussions with others. I’m never finished with this side of creation. The problem with artists not becoming successful is because of stagnation. This is my hobby besides the arts. Because art is 24 hours to me.”

THE MUARA JAMBI STUDY TRIP: CROSSING THE STRAITS

12 – 17 December 2016



Crossing the Straits team with Padmasana Foundation (www.padmasanafoundation.blogspot.com) at one of the Muarajambi Temple Compounds.



A young boy proudly showing a silkscreen print that he had printed.



Priya, Heri and Elizabeth dancing with the village children.

Images courtesy of Padmasana Foundation

by Priyageetha d/o Diayalan, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 3 (2017)

The students of *Crossing the Straits* elective along with lecturers Gilles Massot, Shirley Soh, French writer Elizabeth D. Inandiak and Indonesian artist Heri Dono undertook a journey from Singapore to Muara Jambi, Sumatra in December 2016. It was part of a five-day exchange programme based on the elective in which students responded to their own preconceived notions of the various social, cultural, economic and geographical dimensions of the project. Bearing their works as gifts in exchange with the Jambi community and the Padmasana Foundation, the students were prepared to encounter the foreign across the Straits.

Muara Jambi is located right in the Jambi Province of Sumatra, Indonesia. Even though its present inhabitants are primarily Muslims, it is rich in its Hindu-Buddhist cultural and historical context. The site consists of archaeological Hindu-Buddhist temple compounds which dates back to a civilisation during the 7th century CE.

At the crack of dawn, the group was welcomed by members of Padmasana in Jambi City and were taken to the Muara Jambi village on a motor boat through the river channel of Batanghari River. Throughout the two-hour long ride, the landscape of Jambi was consistently ridden with industrial plants fogged with haze. Stepping foot onto the flood prone lands of Muara Jambi, the group was greeted by the sight of rural life - villagers washing laundry on the river shores, to stilt houses and flocks of live poultry strutting along soil cracks.

The archaeological sites consisted of seven temple compounds spread throughout the Muara Jambi regency. The temples are known as Candis and each had a specific name given to it such as Candi Astano, Candi Gumpung, Candi Gedong I and Gedong II, Candi Tinggi I and Tinggi II, Candi Kembar Batu, and the Kedaton Temple. The temples were made entirely of terracotta bricks which was held together by rubbing the surfaces with water, thus creating its own adhesive. However, most of the temples were initially discovered under heavy foliage as piles of rubble that was the outcome of years of natural disasters. Through intensive conservation, seven of these temple compounds have since been restored to its best possible original state. The temples functioned as likely sites for pilgrims travelling from China and India in search of knowledge, as a shrine that kept the ashes of monks, as a library as well as a place for meditation. Moreover, each of the temples is interconnected through river canals, which used to bring in water into the temple compounds as well as served as a mode of transportation along the Batanghari River. The Indonesian government has since sanctioned this archaeological site as of cultural heritage and on the tentative list of candidates for UNESCO World Heritage.

Throughout the stay, the villagers welcomed the group by putting up performances on stage and without fail, prepared delectable spreads for lunch and dinner at various village houses. In return, the students held workshops, such as silk-screening, wire sculptures and painting on canvasses, in which

the village children participated. These were organised by the students and the members of Padmasana Foundation.

The highlight of the trip was the ritual procession which was carried out by the students along with the lecturers, Elizabeth and Heri on the final day. The procession was a re-enactment of what was envisaged as the significant meeting of a prominent Indian Buddhist master, Atisha, Chinese pilgrim, Yijing (I-Tsing) and a renowned Sumatran master, Lama Serlingpa. The procession involved the entire village community, including the chief of Muara Jambi, as well as other dignitaries. Led by a band of *kompang* (hand-held drums) players, the procession moved into a temple compound where the meeting was held. Being received by Lama Serlingpa, gifts by the students were bestowed and in exchange, the guests were honoured with music and dance. At the end of the hour-long procession, everyone gathered and immortalised the celebratory moment with photographs.

Before leaving for Singapore the next day, the villagers put up a final show to which everyone gathered to participate by cheering and dancing along with the hosts and children to some famous Jambi music. It was a bittersweet moment, one in which the community of Muara Jambi welcomed us with open arms, across the Straits.



Borju holding up one of the hand-made *topengs* (masks) that are frequently featured in performances put up by Padmasana Foundation.



Morning refreshments of banana fritters and sticky rice prepared by the women of Muarajambi Village.



Delicious local fare prepared by the villagers on colourful hand-woven *tikar* (traditional woven mats) for a communal meal.

Image courtesy of William Kung

Image courtesy of Tan Luo Yi

Image courtesy of Tan Luo Yi



Acrylic painting demonstration conducted by Arif and local artists for the village children.



Artist Heri Dono painting a mural of Muarajambi's rich history together with local artist, Putra.



Borju explaining to the village children about the craft workshops that LASALLE students would be conducting for them.

by Tan Luo Yi, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 3 (2017)

“Crossing the Straits was a beautiful learning experience which gave us an opportunity to collaborate with a group of passionate artists who did not call themselves artists. Their selfless dedication to protecting and contributing to their own community was as unquestioningly necessary in their lives, a brilliant facet to their mission, as compared to the self-centred pragmatism that we were used to expecting.”

“Kopi, roti”? You like?” Borju, the founder of the non-profit cultural organisation Padmasana Foundation, asked with a big smile while handing me a container full of sticky rice wrapped in banana leaves to be shared during our boat trip across the picturesque Batanghari River from Jambi Town to the archaeological temple sites near Muara Jambi village. His curly hair was held away from his face with a batik bandana and he had a pair of mirrored sunglasses resting on his crown. More containers were soon passed around with fried banana fritters, toast, and a delectable durian paste, that was surprisingly a bright green colour, made by the local women in the village. As he explained more about the Batanghari River, we sipped our kopi and chewed at the sticky rice dipped in durian paste, enjoying the wind kissing at our faces.

Crossing the Straits was a multi-disciplinary elective based on historical and socio-political research into the archaeological sites that surround the village. These sites are the Muara Jambi Temple Compounds, believed to hold the remnants of an immense ancient Buddhist university that flourished from the 7th to 14th centuries. This was a large university that accomplished students from around Asia visited in order to seek the wisdom of the great Buddhist teacher Serlingpa, before travelling back to their own lands to share his teachings. The people of Muara Jambi are proud of this piece of precious history that sits on their land, protecting and treasuring it as an essential part of their identity. This is all due to the conservation efforts of Padmasana Foundation, having spear-headed educational tours programmes that educated the villagers about their own history. Within this education, there are four departments: namely Sekolah Alam Raya Muara Jambi (Saramuja), Macro Film International, Dwarapalamuja and Pemuda Peduli Lingkungan (PPLMJ).

These four have collaborated seamlessly, working together to promote the conservation of the history of Muara Jambi, with Saramuja being concerned with educating children of the history of Muara Jambi, Dwarapalamuja being concerned with the advocacy of conserving the temple compounds, Macro Film International involved with documentation and campaigning for the programmes run by Padmasana, and PPLMJ being concerned with the environmental upkeep of the temple compounds.

It was our first morning with Padmasana Foundation, having only a brief meeting the previous night as they welcomed us at the hotel lobby before we settled in to rest with great relief for the night. The whole of the day before had been agonisingly filled with flight delays and never-ending customs clearances. Our group consisted of nine LASALLE students, Fine Arts lecturers Gilles Massot and Shirley Soh, prominent Indonesian artist Heri Dono, and French author and researcher Elizabeth Inandiak.

We only learnt later that the Padmasana team, made up of young people from Muara Jambi village, barely caught a few hours of sleep themselves; after waiting for us for hours at the hotel lobby just to give us a warm welcome, they had returned to their headquarters immediately after to continue with work, just to ensure that plans for our visit would go smoothly in the days ahead. For the rest of our time there, Borju and his team of dedicated young people, who were as young as 15-years old, did their best to ensure our well-being, from camping outside the guest house that we resided in to ensure our safety, to riding us to and fro on the backs of their motorcycles. Needless to say, their bright, genuine spirit and sincere hospitality was a refreshing experience as one of the highlights of this educational trip.

Ultimately, our trip to Muara Jambi was meant to be a community outreach project in collaboration with Padmasana Foundation as well as the villagers there. This was also in line with Padmasana Foundation and their objectives. In one of the afternoons there, we conducted silkscreen printing, wire sculpting and acrylic painting workshops together with the children of the village, while Heri painted murals on the existing structures together with the local artists that depicted the history and heritage of Muara Jambi and the Temple Compounds. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day and marked only one of the ways of community art in which Padmasana engaged with the community; other ways included organising cultural events, performances and even performance art of socio-political nature.

Considering that Padmasana is a non-profit organisation, the resources they have is precious little and not a lot of money could be dedicated towards art materials. However, Borju and his team are highly innovative in nature, utilising inexpensive

materials and improvising to craft impressive props for their work. In one of the performances that we were privileged to see, the members of Padmasana performed an intense scene that expresses the theme, man-versus-industrialisation. During the performance, ominous music plays while the performers, dressed like machines and contorting intimidatingly, surround and eventually overcome a lone man while he laments the tragedies committed against the environment as a result of rapid industrialisation. It was an emotionally charged performance that left us clinging to the edge of our seats despite our not being able to fully understand the content of the words being performed due to the language barrier.

Afterwards, Borju told us that cost was a big consideration for all their performances and he had struggled with the question of making something impactful while also keeping to something affordable within their means. Eventually, he improvised by wrapping the limbs and torsos of the performers with aluminium foil, and also by making use of the naturally pitch black environment and manipulating the lighting effects to bring out the mood of the performance. Despite the limitations, it led to an extremely effective performance that was at once intense. Additionally, much of the very professional work that they have produced in their outreach efforts, such as photography, videography, graphic design and silkscreen printing, were self-taught by means of watching Youtube videos on the internet. There is much to be learnt from the resourceful and innovative spirit that Padmasana has exemplified in our short time there.

Ultimately, *Crossing the Straits* was a beautiful learning experience which gave us an opportunity to collaborate with a group of passionate artists who did not call themselves artists. Their selfless dedication to protecting and contributing to their own community was as unquestioningly necessary in their lives, a brilliant facet to their mission, as compared to the self-centred pragmatism that we were used to expecting. All of us agreed that this was an experience that has affected us extremely and it would stay with us for a long time to come.

On the last night of our stay there, I spoke with Borju to convey my gratitude for the hospitality that we had received and my respect for the work that he and his team had done. Shaking my hand, he shared briefly about how Padmasana had struggled hard when they were divided, and how only by combining all their efforts and working as a team did they manage to reach their objectives. With a wide grin, he wished me all the best and hoped that I would work just as hard with my own community back in Singapore with whatever I have learnt while in Muara Jambi.

“Just like how many hundreds of years ago, people also came here to learn and study from Serlingpa. Now you’re doing the same in the 21st century,” he laughed.

¹ Coffee, bread?

MINIMA AKADEMIKA IN “THE WORLD PRECEDES THE EYE” INTERVIEW WITH ZEYNO PEKÜNLÜ

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore

by Maisarah Kamal and Desiree Tham, BA(Hons) Fine Art Level 1 (2017)

Zeyno Pekünlü is an artist from Istanbul who works very closely with found materials. *Minima Akademika* is an expansion of her on going project where she collects ‘cheat sheets’ written by students in Turkey. This exhibit also comprised contributions from France, India and Singapore. From her own archive of materials, such materials, often seen as redundant, are ‘tools’ that open to a great store of knowledge. This interview aims to discuss Zeyno’s personal background as an artist as we unravel more information on her work.

Maisarah Kamal and Desiree Tham (M & D): Can you tell us what inspires you most as an artist?

Zeyno (Z): Most of the time, curiosity is my starting point. As an individual, I have interests and engagements in life. So things around me that relate to these interests and engagements capture my attention. When a phenomenon calls my attention, I start to investigate it. Not all of my investigations lead to projects but this is how it usually starts.

In recent years my areas of interest are concepts such as masculinity/patriarchy and the production and distribution of knowledge. Most of the time these themes overlap with each other. For example, in my recent collage video *How to properly touch a girl so you don’t creep her out?* (2015), I focus on a man advising other men on tactics of how to approach women. At first the focus of the video seems to be on the construction of popular masculinity. But the video also investigates the role of the Internet in the distribution of knowledge and technologies of ‘self’.

M & D: Your works revolve mostly around the everyday materials. Is there any reason why you are fascinated with these materials?

Z: Instead of creating something from zero, I like to investigate things that already exist in our culture. There are many texts, objects and images around us whose significance or hidden meaning we don’t really think about. So I like to collect and rearrange habitual materials from

our daily life to create a critical space to re-think them. Sometimes it can be “cheat sheets”, other times it can be melodramas or YouTube videos.

M & D: Your work *Minima Akademika* is a really interesting piece; could you explain more the concept behind it?

Z: Until recently I was working as a lecturer in a university. Being a lecturer gives you a position of authority regardless of whether you want it or not. While teaching I found myself questioning my relationship with knowledge. How does the university system work and what are its failures? How do students relate to the courses and ideas of knowledge? What kind of knowledge are we producing when we teach? Is such knowledge simply repetition? And what insight do we give students about the gap between the ideals we teach and what happens in reality?

With these questions in mind, I started to collect small papers that I found on the ground after student examinations. At first I started to collect them because I found them beautiful and interesting. Then I started to think about their meaning and purpose, and this thinking led me to create *Minima Akademika*.

As *Minima Akademika* took shape, I focused on a few aspects:

The first was the collection value of the cheat sheets. Nowadays more and more students are cheating using iPhones rather than with handwritten cheat sheets. Seeing these sheets as a disappearing tradition makes the project a real collection.

The second was interpreting cheating as “hacking”. Students don’t only cheat because they are lazy or didn’t study enough. It is also a way of hacking the education system and emphasising its failures.

The third was more like a fantasy: the idea of collecting all the academic knowledge on earth via cheat sheets. So I have designed *Minima Akademika* as an ongoing project, which expands every time it is exhibited.

M & D: Can you tell us more about the challenges you faced while collecting the cheat sheets? How did you overcome them?

Z: When I first decided to expand the project, I asked for help from my colleagues. I wrote invitations inviting them to participate to the project by collecting and sending cheat sheets of their students. Yet my colleagues claimed either that they couldn’t find them or that their students didn’t cheat. So I asked for their permission to visit their classrooms where students’ examinations were held so that I could check the classrooms after the students had left the room. Then I realised even the students in the best universities cheat, you just have to know where to look for the leftover papers.

So my biggest challenge was to collect the pieces one by one by hand, and to extend the exercise by visiting different universities. It was a funny experience trying to explain to the cleaners what I was doing under the tables and desks and why I was going through the rubbish bins!

M & D: Is there any intentional message you would like to draw the viewer’s attention to, or is it truly open to his or her own interpretation? Why is this the case?

Z: I don’t like telling how a viewer should interpret the work. As I explained earlier, I have some thoughts about the work, but these are not the only ways that viewers can read or connect with it.

M & D: There are other materials that may be thought of ‘tools’ as well in the acquiring of knowledge. What is the reason behind your interest in cheat sheets in particular over other various forms of students’ learning materials (eg. notes, textbooks)?

Z: I think the answer to this question is tied up in my explanation earlier about the concept behind it.

M & D: Since this is an ongoing project, what are your hopes and aspirations for the end of this project (audience response, future projects and so on)? How long do you think it would take and how do you foresee it to look like at the end of the project?

Z: I would like to expand the project through new exhibitions. I would also really like to add more disciplines and languages to the project. And maybe when the collection is big enough, I would like to make book out of it.

M & D: Can you share what other upcoming projects or aspirations you have beyond this project?

Z: Right now I am in the early stages of a new project exploring the memory of the Internet and discussions around the viability of online knowledge. I am currently still developing the concept and form, but I hope to be able to share more soon!

Images courtesy of Cassandra Koh



INTERVIEW WITH CASSANDRA KOH: MULTITUDES IN CARNIVAL

by Muhammad Masuri Bin Mazlan, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 2 (2017)

Young Singaporean artist Cassandra Koh (b.1992) started her foray in artmaking at LASALLE College of the Arts from which she earned herself a Bachelor’s Degree in Fine Arts - Painting (with Honours). Though painting is her main mode of expression, Koh also challenges herself to experiment with other unconventional medium to materialise her artistic aspirations. Her research proposal has helped her clinched the prestigious Winston Oh Travel award to visit Taiwan in 2014. She received notable commissioned project by Taman Jurong Community Arts and Culture Clubs to execute a large scale mural painting in lieu of Singapore’s 50 years of independence. Koh also had the opportunity to showcase her work in various group exhibitions such as Singapore Street Festival and *Luminance! Singapore’s Youth Light Arts Festival*.

Not long ago, the sweet and endearing artist had the opportunity to debut her colourful yet playful solo exhibition titled *Multitudes in Carnival*, a commissioned work by Esplanade, Theatres by the Bay, that ran from January till April 2017.

Her thematic interest lies in her contemplation of the contemporary Singapore identity by the impact of the nation’s ever-changing architectural, political and cultural landscape on our soft Generation Y. She explores the characteristics and stereotypes of our ‘strawberry generation’ in her work. The term was coined to describe how millennials are mollycoddled in a pampered environment by their overprotected parents and that they are weak in comparison to their forefathers’ generations who went through hardships just to make ends meet.

Through Koh’s triptych of pastel and neon tinged painting, our youths are represented as caricatures – derivative of local icons and mascots that roams through the imaginary landscape inspired from notable architecture such as Gardens by the Bay and Esplanade in Singapore. The composition of the painting is like a still-motion of a game scene featuring anthropomorphic and chthonic creatures caught in a flight-or-fight response, battling for the survival of the fittest. The sequential nature of the painting suggests the next level of



TECHNOLOGY TAKES OVER EVERY MOVE YOU MAKE

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore
27 January – 23 February 2017

by Prakriti Jassal, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 2 (2017)



Images courtesy of Prakriti Jassal

Every Move You Make, curated by Hyrol Sami'on and Sufian Samisyyar, showcases works of five artists that explore how urban environments and conditions of work affect artists, their artmaking, and their processes.

The artists that were showcased in this exhibition all maintain part- or full-time jobs alongside their artistic practices, which is a very typical scenario in Singapore. Often these jobs are viewed as 'limiting' of an artist's time and energy but this exhibition shows otherwise. What had been presented here gives a sense of how productive and focused their practices are, sharing the core of their ideas together with their sources for ideas and materials. This is evidenced in the works of Shazwany Aziz and Faiz Bin Zohri.

Shazwany Aziz works with collages that are made from stationery stocked in her office. Her work is of a diminutive size, a result of the short time she gets to spend on her artmaking every morning before work. Her work comes across, to a lay audience, as a series of blueprints of several places in Singapore and more as, for me personally, they seem to evoke the sense of a concrete jungle imbued with a culture of artificiality.

The installation by Faiz Bin Zohri represents a "hollowed niche" echoing the trace of naturally prolonged seating underneath a local bridge. He describes his practice as "landscape architecture."

The other three artists in this exhibition look at the transactional relationships between people and things (mainly technology).

Through her work, Eugina Tan highlights the reciprocal nature of social interaction through a text that loosely transcribes a conversation between an artist and a curator. Her work can be viewed as a text-as-image creation.

Ezekiel Wong Kel Win showcases a suspended sculpture of black trousers, commonly worn by blue-collar workers, in an attempt to depict "the fabric of society and mechanisms of social ecological systems." It also portrays the vicious circle of poverty. Personally, this work is one of the most relatable; however hard one works, it's almost impossible to escape this constant state of poverty and 'middle-class-ness.'

The interactive installation of Teow Yue Han urges our reevaluation of 'space'. His work was highly influenced by the introduction of new virtual reality games, like *Pokémon Go*, which makes its users redefine the spaces around them and give them a new meaning. During the show's opening, he also presented a live performance that used algorithmic software to stream live footage of two dancers moving around the gallery with a phone, to convey the influence of technology on our lives today. The video documentation of this performance becomes part of his work.

This exhibition, in my opinion, successfully shared its thematic ideas very well while engaging different artmaking styles and processes. It showcases installations and interactive work, which would satisfy a layman's idea of what contemporary art is, as well as collage that sort of bridges the gap between traditional painting and modern and more contemporary forms. With this range and variety, this was a show that had been very exciting to visit and cover!

battle through the movement of the creatures on the chequered battleground. Her choice of pastel palette cleverly subdues the brutal nature of a battle. In Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *Carnavalesque*, he opined that the "carnival extracts all individuals from non-carnival life" and as the subject-matter are stripped of their hierarchical positions during carnival, "ideologies which manifest the mind of individuals cannot exist." Koh insists that there is no separation between the participants (the creatures presented) and spectators (the viewers) by illustrating the dynamic nature of a carnival.

The following is an interview with the artist Cassandra Koh in which she shares her thoughts, processes and inspiration that spearheaded her inaugural solo exhibition.

Masuri (M): Cassandra, the first time we met, it was during your graduation show at Winstedt. It was a splendid work of art that you have put up for the show! So, how is life after you have graduated from LASALLE McNally School of Fine Arts and what have you been up to?

Cassandra (C): I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to do a few group shows and a solo showcase after my graduation last year. Currently, I am busy with a few things like preparing for my group exhibition at Mulan gallery and a mural showcase at *Street Art Festival* this coming June. At the same time, I have been juggling my responsibilities as Chairman for the visual arts segment of *PassionArts Festival* (PAF) which will be held at Taman Jurong Greens in July.

M: I would like to congratulate you on your first solo exhibition, *Multitudes in Carnival*. I am such a fan of your work. How long does it take you to complete the series of painting for the exhibition?

C: Approximately two months. One of the paintings was from my Final Year Project (FYP) in LASALLE's McNally School of Fine Arts.

M: Can you share with us your creative processes that spurs the creation of your work

C: I am interested in hybridity, myth-making and alternate realities. I have a natural inclination to draw hybrid creatures inhabiting an alternate reality. All of my creations seems fantastical but it is rooted in contemporary social concerns and questions of identity.

M: Who inspires you? Do you look to other contemporary artist's work during your artistic process?

C: Contemporaries David Jien, Kliu Wong, Paul Noble and Richard Coleman. Not forgetting, old master Hieronymous Bosch.

M: Is there any particular reason for the choice of colour palette as reflected in your work? For some reason, I am compelled to be reminded that your work could be possibly referenced or inspired by the intricate motifs and vibrant colours of the Chinese traditional clothing for an opera performance. Is there a link to that?

C: Neon has an irresistible energy which sucks you in. Whereas, pastel is a nice contrast to neon and eases the tension. I like to strike a balance with my colour palette. Also, neon-pastel palette is like a hybrid. My aesthetics are reminiscent of Chinese opera aesthetics as they are mostly in neon and pastel colour scheme. It also partly relates to my quest of my "Chinese" identity.

M: Let's move on to a less serious questions. If you were to be given the liberty and the money to own any work of art that existed in this world, what will it be and why?

C: *Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch – my kind of paradise, and it is inexhaustible in its own right.

M: Finally, do you have any words of encouragement for aspiring artists who are struggling to share their work with the public? In your opinion, how can one sustain their art practice upon graduation?

C: One strategic way of doing is to capitalise on social media and to go for gallery openings and meet new artists, curators and art writers. One has to be resilient and constantly seek out for opportunities. Secondly, do not be afraid to volunteer your time in art-related activities/events and work alongside with like-minded artists who can spur you on in your art practice. All in all, collaborations are useful to ignite new dynamics and interactions.

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Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1941.

LASALLE-RMIT POSTGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM

The Study Room, The Ngee Ann Kongsi Library, LASALLE
13 – 15 September 2016

by Maisarah Kamal and Daniel Chong BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 1 (2017)

“She explained how her work with natural materials like grass and young trees evokes a sense of place for her; nature as a medium conjures direct relations to her past experiences and associations of those places.”

The fifth LASALLE-RMIT Postgraduate Symposium saw presentations and exchanges between postgraduate fine art students from LASALLE College of the Arts and RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. Serving as a platform for students across continents to share and discuss their practices, the symposium began with key note addresses by Sally Mannall, RMIT MFA’s Senior Lecturer, and our very own Jeremy Sharma, a lecturer for the BA(Hons) Fine Arts Programme at LASALLE.

Leanne Waterhouse were among the presenters of MFA students from RMIT. She shared with us a series of her artwork that investigates space and placehood in the context of an urban environment. Growing up in the tropics, Waterhouse defined space by its surrounding nature. During her 20-minute presentation she shared the evolution of her public-based works that largely involved nature as a material.

She explained how her work with natural materials like grass and young trees evokes a sense of place for her; nature as a medium conjures direct relations to her past experiences and associations of those places. One work in particular comprises of a series of interactive wearable backpacks; each containing

a single medium sized tree. Referencing artists like Tattfoo Tan and Vaughn Bell, Waterhouse talked about the mobile garden and how the backpack when worn, becomes a personal object that she can carry along with her. She discussed the connotations of ownership associated with a backpack and also the advantages it has in its mobility and ease in transport.

Our very own Tan Cheng Ying from the MA Fine Arts Programme at LASALLE were among those who presented their ongoing projects. Titled *The Mended Project*, her work functioned as a platform to engage the public through openness and acceptance. Spending two hours a day at void decks in Kallang and Toa Payoh region, Tan installs herself with her sewing equipment including her sewing machine and offers to mend the clothes for strangers for free. In the course of her project, she interacts directly with its viewers-turned-participants.

For her presentation, Tan shared the intimate interactions with the participants and the conversations and friendships she created. Believing that art acts as a catalyst to transform spaces and strengthen social relationships, she declares art as activism and the artist as an interventionist.

Images courtesy of Ian Woo



I LIGHT MARINA BAY 2017: RELOCATING LOCALITY

The Promontory @ Marina Bay Sands
3 – 26 March 2017

by Donna Lu, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 2 (2017)



Production and assembly



Installation on site



Image of courtesy of Donna Lu

Relocating Locality (2017), LASALLE College of the Arts
(Andreas Schlegel, Kray Chen, Joel Chin, Nicholas Lim, Maria Claire Khoo, Eugene Tan, Donna Lu, Tristan Lim)

In the fifth edition of *i Light Marina Bay*, LASALLE was invited to create a work aligned to the theme of ‘light and nature’ at the waterfront.

Relocating Locality – a series of interlocking pavilions, made from raw and natural materials such as wood and bamboo – was presented by LASALLE’s Media Lab and a group of BA(Hons) Fine Arts students.

Based on the concept of ‘rest areas’ in parks, man-made spaces from which to contemplate nature, *Relocating Locality* re-situated the pavilion into the cityscape.

Historically, the pavilions of gardens are a site of retreat from bustling city life. The pavilions become markers, the nodes, the rendezvous points – that become spaces of relation. For instance, the Green Pavilion at Singapore Botanical Gardens is a landmark for the Botany Centre – dually functioning as a site of

leisure and conservation. Building on their observations of signs of deviation from the ubiquitous daily grind of urban life, the team also looked at different formats and purposes of lighting in the city. The colours and lighting choreography took inspiration from the street light decorations that traverse entire roads during festive seasons, the aesthetics of lighted Chinese altars, as well as makeshift stages for the *getai* performances that are usually found in the suburbs during the hungry ghost month.

Taking the familiar elements of fixtures from the heartlands and the social architecture of parks into the manicured city centre, the work served to add an extra dimension of vibrancy that normally cannot be experienced within the financial hub of Marina Bay. As a series of connected open pavilions on the grass, visitors were encouraged to pass through, move about, socialise and interact with the space. To further insinuate this idea of slowing down and relaxing, the work featured tarpaulin

covered cushions and wooden pallets designed as reclining seats. In this context, the pavilion serves as an inviting rest area toward which the audience find themselves compelled to gravitate.

Located at the Promontory at Marina Bay – an open field backed by the Marina Bay Financial Centre and facing out into the bay – from either direction, *Relocating Locality* was framed in stark juxtaposition against the cityscape.

The rawness of construction materials used, as well as its lighting reminiscent of void deck coffee shops lent contrast to the work’s polished surrounding environment. The work offered an alternative perspective to the existing buildings – as a hyper-manicured picturesque frame – as a heightened contrast to the building blocks of construction set against the bay with the skyline in full view. In this way, *Relocating Locality* acted as a mediator between nature, the city and its inhabitant citizens.



Images courtesy of The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore

DIPLOMA SHOWCASE: CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THE ECHOES

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore
16 September – 6 November 2016

by Denise Yap Yun Xin, Diploma in Fine Arts Level 3 (2017)

I had the privilege of co-curating an exhibition with my fellow classmates Viet Anh Capi, Jia Qi Lim and Vivian Loh last year. This exhibition featured Diploma in Fine Arts Level 2 students' artworks (currently Level 3) that were produced over the course of a semester. During this semester, we had been given three themes as starting points: "Corners and Edges", "Bodies Interior and Systems", and "Networks". The works produced came from a variety of specialisations – painting, printmaking, photography, sculpture and graphic novel – each resulted in different styles and colour palettes.

As art is such an unbounded subject, we had to title our exhibition so that it can be a reference point in the curating process. A title helps in defining the exhibition theme and acts as a guide to how we should go about curating the space. The exhibition *Conversations Between the Echoes* reflects each student's search for his or her individual visual language and the works were curated so that the works echo and converse not only among themselves but with the space and the audience as well.

There were many factors that play in the curation of an exhibition. Primarily, we had to take space constraints into consideration, as there were many works. Every corner and edge of the gallery space was seen as an opportunity for a work to be displayed. What I felt was vital to the process of curating was to experiment with every possibility that presented itself to ensure the optimal presentation of every artwork. Each artwork carried its unique form and concept. In order to instigate an ongoing conversation among the works, for each to bounce off and to echo the next, a close study and consideration of the form and character of every artwork in relation to the space was necessary. Understanding the work will aid us in our organising the works within the space. After we had established what was best for the artwork in our preliminary plan, we invited each artist's own input on the placement of his or her artwork. A discussion may ensue until the arrival of a resolution to the satisfaction of both parties.

Apart from ensuring the artwork was placed in a suitable location, another factor to consider was the public. This was highly crucial to the process of curating, for not only does the space have to be conducive to allow the audience to reflect on and converse with the artworks, the artworks must also

guide the viewers around the space enabling a smooth viewing process. For example, Marian's graphic novel, *Trapped*, filled the space such that it does not hinder or pose any danger to the public but still allow for the audience to fully experience the artwork. Works also had to follow the architectural structure of the space. My painting, *7 Sins*, was installed right above the steps and as the visitor walks up or down the steps, the painting would correspondingly be viewed in an ascending or descending order respectively. This allowed for a smoother transition in viewing for the audience.

The show was, for some of us, a new experience in having our work exhibited as well as our taking on the role of curators which made the experience extra special. At the reception, I had the honour of giving the opening speech alongside Melanie Pocock. It was absolutely nerve wrecking and yet exciting to speak to large numbers of the public. The experience was surreal yet invigorating, with the smell of pizzas, taste of wine, the huge crowd of art admirers and the conversations that arose with it.

Speaking of conversations, there was a musical response to *Conversations Between the Echoes* by Tim O'Dwyer, Brian O'Reilly, Dirk Stromberg and Frank Gratoski. Held at LASALLE's Brother Joseph McNally Gallery on the 6 October 2016, the improvised and electroacoustic event was a saxophone performance and in surround sound. Although I have no knowledge of music, the musical tones played were very distinct and different and yet there was harmony within the diverse tunes. I reflected that likewise for the exhibition, each and every artwork had a separate style however, when viewed all together it proved to be a melody.

Thank you to all who came down and supported *Conversations Between the Echoes*. Many thanks to Silke Schmickl, Lim Bee Ling and Sufian Samsiyar who provided guidance and assistance throughout the setup of the exhibition.

BA(HONS) FINE ARTS TAMAN NEGARA STUDY TRIP: A JOURNEY TO FIND YOURSELF

by Vidushi Srivastava,
BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 2 (2017)

Sometimes you need to get lost to find your way.

In the six weeks of rigorous effort to cross the finish line, marked by the final studio project, the end seemed to recede farther and farther away. The vision became more blurred as we moved forward with the works over the weeks. We were going onward inadvertently, unaware of the path that we were walking on. What was needed at that point of time was to stop, take a breath and walk in another direction in order to find our ways back to the right path. The trip to Taman Negara was that distraction, which then became one of those unforgettable trips of a lifetime.



Images courtesy of Gilles Massot

Taman Negara is a vast national park in Malaysia. Being one of the largest and oldest (130 million years) rainforests, it is deeply rooted in its heritage. With its thick jungle and fast flowing rivers it calls out longingly to nature lovers and adventurers.

Getting to Taman Negara is an experience of its own, a 14-hour (approximately) journey by road and waterways; the scenery changes from the busy and stressful manmade corporate jungles to the calm and beautiful hills and valleys of Taman Negara.

Away from our millennial lifestyle of internet we were on a path to reflect on our thoughts and explore our individual minds. As art students it seemed a detraction to our learning, to be travelling to Taman Negara, a place where you would not find art works created by artists; this however is a place where one would travel to for inspiration. This place truly makes one understand and realise that art exists all around. Nature on its own is art which we have forgotten to appreciate. Being close to nature brings us back to our roots and opens up our imaginations even more. What once was a blocked stream of creativity, flows again.

During the trip we had the opportunity to interact with people from the Orang Asli village. Orang Asli stands for 'natural

people'. They are the oldest inhabitants of peninsular Malaysia. To most, they would seem backwards and unaware but they are the ones living in the most natural way that was meant to be. Seeing them in the natural environs itself and understanding their lifestyle is enlightening and insightful. Living in the most natural sense involves skills which we, as advanced human individuals as we believed we were have lost along the way. Spending time away from the clockwork cities in solitude at Taman Negara reunites one with one's natural being.

Apart from learning about the Orang Asli tribe and exploring the wilds, we had what was the more exciting adventure of trekking after the sun goes down. It was an unforgettable experience. It was strangely beautiful how the same view could be so different at a different times of the day. The forests were more alive in the dark; we saw things that we could never see in the light. It made one realise that even in the darkest places, beauty exists, one just have to be aware of it.

The stay at Taman Negara could only be described as heaven on earth. There is a feeling of being truly free when one gets close to nature in all its forms – may it be the glorious golden waters or the tall secretive jungles – by getting lost in the most spiritual way in this majestic rainforest, we truly found ourselves.



ONE NIGHT ONLY 2016: A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Winstedt Campus, LASALLE College of the Arts
4 November 2016

by Loh Hui Ying Abby and Darshinee Seeraz, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Levels 2 and 3 (2017)



"Any artistic achievement that is tailored to conform to social demands rather than to the real, uninhibited, feelings of its creator, is destined not to reach the heights of achievement, or even fail. It is only when an artist is dis-inhibited that he or she can reach the heights of artistic achievement." Semir Zeki.

On Friday 4 November 2016, at 6.30pm, LASALLE Winstedt campus was ready to welcome the public to the *One Night Only* (ONO) show. As its name suggests, *One Night Only* is a one-night show that takes place annually at LASALLE. This show features the works of BA(Hons) Fine Arts Levels 2 and 3 students from their semester-long elective modules.

Each student chooses to work in any of these modules: Ceramics; Systems and Materials; Darkroom Photography; Video Art; Drawing Machines; Crossing the Straits; Performance Art; and Performing Discourse. The final works intervene with and occupy various pockets of spaces at LASALLE Winstedt Campus, the choice of site complementing each medium's distinctive charm.

This year, new electives have been introduced. In fact, these electives provide students the opportunity to investigate and experience its challenges, and to incorporate the methods into their practice and research. The aim is to look into the

expansive nature of interdisciplinary areas by introducing a broad range of concepts and technology-based mediums.

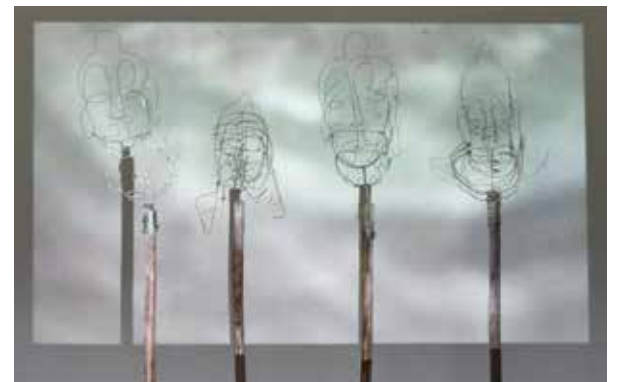
All artworks produced by students were curated by a group of students under the elective, Artists as Curators. The curators of the show aimed for better understanding and good exposure of the students' work, and were challenged to employ individual strategies working in groups and organising the event. The marketing and advertising group, for instance, created a Facebook page, Instagram and an ONO website to promote the event.

Students from Crossing the Straits module were expected to undertake a journey the next month from 12 to 17 December from Singapore to Muara Jambi, bearing gifts (artworks) and to participate in an exchange of ideas and performances with the Jambi community. This trip was based on the concept of mapping, visualising and narrating an imagined place. Students were expected to develop contemporary interpretations and expressions of the human, cultural and economic exchanges. They had the chance to explore cultural heritage, history and memory, cross-cultural and spiritual encounters, sustainable development, hospitality and the gift culture. The objective was for the students to work individually to research topics and develop ideas from the trip.





“Any artistic achievement that is tailored to conform to social demands rather than to the real, uninhibited, feelings of its creator, is destined not to reach the heights of achievement, or even fail. It is only when an artist is dis-inhibited that he or she can reach the heights of artistic achievement.” Semir Zeki.



At *One Night Only* (ONO), every student from the Performance Art elective performed for a live audience. Works from the other electives such as: Ceramics and Dark Room Photography were installed around blocks A, B and the student lounge. While Ceramics students focus on the theme of arts-versus-crafts showing off their honed skills in clay-crafting techniques to enhance their work, Dark Room Photography students experimented with the formal qualities: shades, tones, contrast and composition of their subject, and how they can add atmosphere and story to the photographs to express their own selected themes.

On the day of *ONO*, it was very exciting to see people interacting with the works and the artists. The curators manned shifts at the drinks and food stalls during the event, and also welcomed guests including the lecturers who had been very supportive.

The curatorial team had the responsibility to ensure that the artists were satisfied with their chosen and assigned spaces.

To conclude, the feedback was very positive and encouraging. The objectives of the electives include cultivating a habit of conceptual thinking and critical discourse that were brought to fruition at this successful event, a culmination of students' efforts after 11 weeks. The lecturers from the curatorial electives, Wang Ruobing and Chen Kerui, had guided the students and ensured that the show was presented professionally. The art community was dynamic and everybody felt free to work and to engage across disciplines.



SINGAPORE BIENNALE 2016: AN ATLAS OF MIRRORS PLOTTING A REFLECTION

Singapore Art Museum & other venues
27 October 2016 – 26 February 2017

by Dipali Gupta, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 2 (2017)

"There is hope in our futures, past our current disruptions. No matter how grim the present may seem, as artists we will adapt, identify and discern the present to explore the possibilities it holds."



Han Sai Por, *Black Forest* 2016, 2016, Wood and Charcoal
Dimensions variable

The year 2016 has been an eventful one. It was a year where many of us saw, a shattering of norms. A year where predictability was challenged. Populism became the mantra of the day. A surprised rejection of the elites to bring into the limelight, the voice of the forgotten. And as I wrap my head around more of the daily news I see myself travelling back in time to an era which washes off all the progress we have made in our lives. As Stephen Hawking wrote: "What matters now, far more than the choices made by these two electorates (referring to the Brexit decision and the presidency of Donald Trump) is how the elites react." But on reading the reactions from all over the world skewing acutely towards rejections of populism by prominent influential communities of artists, scientists and celebrities, I feel the twain shall never meet.

I was working through these thoughts when I stepped into SAM to check out the Singapore Biennale. Now in its 5th edition, the Biennale had witnessed the polish and shine of smart organisation and positioning. An example of a well-oiled machinery that churns up finished products to delight the senses and make you yearn for more. Spanning across seven venues and nine sub-themes creating a lyrical contemplation of various topics relating to identity, space, borders, histories, culture and nature, the Singapore Biennale puts one in a reflective mood which is inviting enough to make the necessary connections. *An Atlas of Mirrors* is a vantage point from where one takes stock of past histories and reflects on how these affect the present. The premise is apt but I question – is this the right time to hold on

to the stories of our past? As learned men say – the past roots us. It is evident, the traces of the past, in the artworks of Agan Harahap's *Mardijker Photo Studio*, Fyerool Darma's *The Most Mild Mannered Men* and Titarubi's *History Repeats Itself*. These works acknowledge the lesser known aspects of our antiquity. A saga of colonisation, a history that deeply affects our present. A reminder of acquisitiveness leading to inequalities and grave destruction. These stories also highlight our differences and add to our complex web of dissimilarities. It is a backdrop to the inequalities we face today in terms of economic consequences of globalisation, accelerating technological change and serious political 'accidents'. This burden of our collective histories clubbed with our current inequalities neutralises progress and impacts our society.

In this sombre light, I found a ray of hope in the work, *Growing* by Hemali Bhuta. Made from thousands of incense sticks trailed together and suspended in a small room in SAM, the work conveys a sense of stillness - its fragrance having a calming effect on my senses - convincing me to slow down and weigh my thoughts. Hemali's work falls under the essential sub-theme – *An Everywhere of Mirrorings* - that comments on space and place and how this is reflected in real, surreal and imaginary ways. Hemali's work was positioned directly opposite Made Wianta's *Treasure Islands* which reflects on the forgotten historical relationships of the past. Made's work refers to the island of Rhun which was highly sort after by the Dutch in 1667, for its richness in spices. The island was bartered for New York purely for its profitability. Today, ironically, Rhun has faded into oblivion while New York keeps making the headlines. In this sense, *Treasure Islands* echoes the philosophy of Bhuta's work which talks about the cycle of birth, growth and death. An island once famous for its richness has been forgotten in the global scheme of things. Similarly, if one were to burn the rows of incense, it will turn to ash within a short period of time. Its smell and form are both short-lived. We learn to evolve with the changes that take effect around us. There is hope in our futures, past our current disruptions. No matter how grim the present may seem, as artists we will adapt, identify and discern the present to explore the possibilities it holds.

When hit with misfortunes, we tend to search for the crystal ball that will foretell what lies in the future. I stood in front of Chia Chuyia's work, *Knitting the Future*, at SAM 8Q, wondering if I should include, in my diet, an intake of leeks! In her

performance, Chuyia slowly knits a body length garment with leeks. Chia's work smoothly integrates cultural symbolism with environmental challenges. It appropriately falls under the Biennale's sub-theme, *Culture of Nature*, which highlights the relationship between Culture, Nature and the implication of living in the natural world of today. The link between eating healthy and a brighter future is well informed by the artist's Chinese upbringing. The body suit is her way of protecting the self from the uncertainties of a future wrought with grave environmental upheavals.

The distressing results of human development especially the impact of deforestation is a cause that is close to heart for Han Sai Por. Her *Black Forest Series* is an ongoing commentary on the devastations caused due to industrialisation and urbanisation. The work in black and white looks remorseful and disheartening. With increasing sombreness, I walked around the room filled with charcoal, wood blocks and logs, shades of black in a stark white space. I felt guilt. Guilt at wanting a sophisticated life filled with comfort and luxury. Somewhere in me, I felt partly responsible for this devastation. And I was caught wondering what will reverse this galactic mess we have created. I wish the answer would come crashing down. We don't need more walls than we already have, we don't need more technology than we already have and we definitely do not need any more money than we already have. If there is anything we need, is humility: to acknowledge we are failing and summoning up the courage to set this right.

"For the last decade or so we've been engaged in an intensive art-history rebalancing act," says Jerry Saltz. The Singapore Biennale with its positioning on the Southeast Asian region, reflects on, re-plots and rediscovers these themes of the past from the arc of our shared histories. Given the rapid changes pulsating through the present, we do not seem to be spending enough time to historicise the 'now'. *An Atlas of Mirrors* tends to put the identity of the present in a state of jeopardy. Identifying ideas and art of the present is a responsibility of every artist, gallery and museum. And this needs to be done consistently to bring about change. I am reminded of the Biennale theme of 2013, *If the World Changed*. It has. The question is how would we plot what this mirror is 'now showing.'

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Chia Chuyia, *Knitting the Future*, 2015, 2016
Performance with knitting needles and leeks, Dimensions variable



Fyerool Darma, *The Most Mild Mannered Men*, 2016,
Plaster and marble, appropriated replica bust and plinths
180 x 55 x 55cm (each)



Hemali Bhuta, *Growing*, 2016, Incense Sticks, monofilament threads, metal weights, tape, staple pins and hooks
Installation dimensions variable

SINGAPORE BIENNALE 2016: INTERVIEW WITH DR S. CHANDRASEKARAN

by Sharyl Lam and Nguyen Viet Anh, Diploma in Fine Arts Level 3

It was a clear Wednesday afternoon when we first met Chandrasekaran at LASALLE and we still recall how cool and calm he was and what he wore: he was casually dressed in a comfortable black t-shirt and breathable shorts. We settled down to an easy conversation, before coming around to the topics of his recent performance for the Singapore Biennale, a subject which he had been silent about since, and censorship in Singapore. We indulged in a little more chit-chat in which he shared his plans for 2017.

Unwalked Boundaries was a performance piece that was not carried out in the end due to the censorship laws in Singapore. Chandra was inspired by the history of British colonisation and learnt that in the 19th century, South Indians were captured as prisoners for being involved in rebel groups that resisted the British.

These Indians were then shipped to parts of the world where the British have colonised. Some of these prisoners were then shipped to Singapore, a British colony, where they were made to do hard labour.

When they arrived in Singapore, they were differentiated from the mainstream society by having identification numbers tattooed onto their foreheads by the British. These markings deterred them from committing crimes or escaping the country. The tattoos on their foreheads made it easy for the British to keep them under surveillance.

With no means of escape or opportunity for causing trouble in the country, the Indians became convict labourers who were dispatched to the Bras Basah and Bugis areas of early Singapore. They were responsible for the construction of the SAM8Q, Raffles Hotel and several other landmarks and churches in the area.

During this period, these prisoners went through many hardships and torture, spending long hours in the construction of these buildings. They were the early people who are responsible for the development of Singapore and its significant landmarks. They are the unsung heroes of Singapore; although this information was acknowledged it did not have any recognition in the pages of Singapore's history due to marginalisation of the convicts and unfavourable treatment then.

In order to reenact the life of a 19th century convict labourer, Chandra had intended to wear a head gear with IC numbers printed onto them that references the convicts' forced tattoos, and also to pierce hooks into several parts of his body to allude to the pain they experienced back then. This was his way of paying tribute for the contributions they have made. With these

attributes as part of his performance, Chandra had wanted to walk through the areas from Bras Basah to Bugis, places where the convict labourer used to congregate and work.

The performance was not realised amidst speculations and disagreements of its potential impact on society. One possible cause of concern relates to Singapore's community of foreign Bangladeshi workers who work mainly in the construction industry; in the wake of the recent riots, this performance may hurt sensitive racial feelings and lead to societal disturbances. Another cause for concern is that it might also be offensive to the Hindus in Singapore, as the performance emulated the ritual of the Hindu festival Thaipusam in which devotees carry out similar walking rituals with piercings and effigies attached to them as part of religious worship and praise. In explaining the work then, Chandra publicly confirmed that the piercing tools that he used had not been blessed by any priest, and by this it may be argued it was not intended that the work carry religious references itself. Aside from these arguments, there was a fear this artwork may be the source of disruption in the socio-political environment in Singapore.

The title *Unwalked Boundaries* came about after the fact, a reference to his not being allowed to perform the piece. Another possible reason behind the disallowance was that the history relied on was not verified as it was not recorded as part of Singapore's history. This turn of events led to different approaches for the artist: *Unwalked Boundaries* became a piece of work that was about a performance that could not be carried out. Various paraphernalia, gears and tools replaced the performance as exhibits, and a blood oath that was carried out in response to this work was performed instead.

At the end of the entire event, Chandra was glad that he was not allowed to perform this piece as *Unwalked Boundaries* then became a platform for him to talk about the unwritten history of Singapore, and how he can ensure the credibility of the right information being circulated.

Chandra also wanted to clarify the information regarding the blood oath that was taken. The reasons were highly personal and have no relation to the Singapore Biennale. The oath was more related to his art practice in Singapore, and it was made under some self-questioning, as a form of reaffirmation of coming back to this piece to complete it. Any artist, who is being placed in a similar situation, would probably empathise with what he was put through. In such times, spiritual affirmations and rituals might help ease these tensions.

We asked him for his opinion pertaining to the blood oath. He had some very strong ideas but needs time to digest it all. He is



Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum

also planning a talk later this year to go more into depth about his blood oath.

As censorship exists quite prominently in Singapore, we asked Chandra about his opinion about it, how he deals with it and the relationship between the identity of an artist and censorship. He readily replied that an artist is trained and educated and they have responsibilities. Artists always should question their intention as there is always a fine line between being an artist or an activist. Society needs to recognise that artist has a social responsibility and that for any work they do they should be able to exercise free speech. An artist is responsible for any emotional expression of his own in the context of freedom of speech, and with this responsibility, an artist should be sensitive and not cross the boundaries where it may potentially create an upheaval in society. His practice in art should not affect his own beliefs of the roles of religion and family play in his life. As a role of an artist, with Singapore is getting more mature in the later years, we need to put all these things into question and to challenge these ideals for Singapore to progress as a better society.

And to all fellow Singaporeans out there, it does not matter who we are, or how we look like. We must be proud of who we are, believe in what we do and stand by it. For it is not only about the content but also about how much we believe. Of course, all this would take time and work to achieve, and to never stop believing in yourself, in your beliefs and your country.

This insightful and impactful conversation had to come to an end eventually. Much light and clarity was felt throughout the entire session. The ideas that were exchanged took root and lingered.

Chandra will be involved in several upcoming shows and exhibitions in 2017. He is also planning his sequel to *Unwalked Boundaries* later this year.

WINSTEDT OUTDOOR SCREENING NIGHT: WAYANG MALAM

by Megan Lam, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 1 (2017)

Wayang Malam was LASALLE's McNally School of Fine Arts' 2nd attempt at an outdoor film and video screening by staff, students, alumni and invited artists at the Winstedt Campus. It featured the works of Kent Chan, Joo Choon Lin, Dagrún Adalsteinsdóttir, Tan Pin Pin, Christabel Ngoi Jean Rou, Tan Rachel, Ahmad Anwar, Sussane, Pauli, Nur Nasuha Zakariah, Saga Unnsteinsdóttir, Adeline Kueh, Betty Susiarjo, Terry Ong, Shirly Koh, Kray Chen, Jeremy Sharma, Paul Hurlley, Trimurti, Ulrich Lau, Gilles Massot, Chen Sai Hua Kuan, Hazel Lim, Nick Modrzewski, Lim ShiQuan, Moses Tan, Isabella Andrews, Tan Guo liang, Hilmi Johandi, Tristan Lim, and Patrick Ong.

'Wayang Malam' is a Malay term for 'a night of theatre performance', traditionally for wayang kulit (Javanese shadow puppet) performances. As the name suggests, *Wayang Malam* was an attempt to showcase video art in a different and unusual setting.

A large white truck was parked at the courtyard of the Winstedt Campus, functioning as a screen on which the film and video works were projected, somewhat alike drive-in theatres we see in the West. However, in this case, carpets were laid out on the floor of the courtyard for viewers to sit on.

This event showcased video art in an unconventional setting. Instead of the isolated black box gallery spaces we are used to, *Wayang Malam* was held outdoors. This allows for a fresh and different experience of the works. Works like *Flora and Fauna* by Hazel Lim could be seen and experienced outdoors in relation to the nature that it depicted; and works like Tan Pin Pin's *80km/h* could be seen on an actual vehicle, making the experience more relatable. The borders between art and life were almost literally reduced, as the works were viewed outdoors, in a natural environment.



Image courtesy of Kray Chen

Furthermore, given that video art and film are increasingly relevant in the world of contemporary art, the collective showcase of such a variety of artists' film and video art help inspire the School's students, as this event is held in the same space as their studios. This also cultivates collaboration between lecturers, alumni, students, and other artists, as they come together to make this event possible.

Wayang Malam was an experimental means of showcasing video art, but it was no doubt successful in bringing a fresh perspective to the artworks. It pushes curatorial boundaries of contemporary art, and is in line with what the school aims to cultivate in our students.

DIPLOMA IN FINE ARTS CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME TO JAPAN

by Emil Nicodemus Chew Khai, Diploma in Fine Arts Level 2 (2017)



Taken outside Matsumoto Castle, built in the early 16th century and designated as a national treasure



Japanese and Singaporean students happily sharing ideas with one another to come up with a children illustrated storybook



During the exchange programme that took place in Hakuba High School where the Singaporean and Japanese students took turns to share with one another's culture.

"We have gained many valuable life experiences and insights that have, in one way or another, changed our worldview. With this gained experience and knowledge, we intend to share with others more about Japan."

In the midst of last December 2016, while everyone was busy preparing for the Christmas festive season, Brandon Goh Jin Le and I were selected to participate in a project in Japan with 21 other students from various institutions across Singapore. This sponsored exchanged programme was the auspices of JENESYS (Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths) 2016 in collaboration with the NBDCCS (National Book Development Council of Singapore). In this programme, the Book Council staff, Miss Prema and Mr. Kenneth Quek supervised 23 art students from Hwa Chong Institute, School of the Arts (SOTA), Singapore Polytechnic, Temasek Polytechnic, LASALLE College of the Arts and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) to Tokyo, Japan and Hakuba Village, Nagano Prefecture, Japan.

The aim of the programme was to provide an opportunity and experience for the students to understand and appreciate the rich culture and heritage of Japan. The outcome of this trip was to be a children's illustrated book that would be compiled and published as an e-book by student participants.

Brandon and I are currently second year students from the Diploma in Fine Arts programme. Brandon specialises in Printmaking while I major in Painting. We were both very excited and elated when we were informed that we were selected for the programme. Both of us share a common interest in

Japanese culture and arts so we are both very fortunate and grateful for this opportunity.

After a long and arduous flight, we arrived at Narita Airport, Japan, on 13 December around noontime. Keen on getting the programme started, we quickly cleared immigration and collected our luggage. The unfamiliar yet strangely familiar chatter of the Japanese language could be heard as we walked through the airport. It was our first experience of winter in Japan. The moment we walked out of the airport, a blast of cold air hit our faces, sending a chill into our bones. It was like being in a freezer! Outside, an overcast shadow seem to envelope the scenery and the buildings in hues of grey and blue. Everything seemed so white and misty.

The first thing that struck me most just right outside the entrance of the airport, was the series of enclosed booths for people to smoke! It is apparent that Japanese have a very strong social responsibility, being considerate to the people around them which is something perhaps that we can all learn from.

Over the span of a week, the programme included scheduled visits to the scenic and iconic landmarks of Japan such as Matsumoto Castle, Chihiro Art Museum Tokyo, National Diet Library (International Library of Children's Literature), Daio Wasabi Farm, Homestays at Hakuba Village and Hakuba Valley office, to fully experience for ourselves the Japanese culture and tradition. This programme was organised by the Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE) with the support of the Japanese government.

During our stay at Hakuba Village, we did an exchange programme with the students from Hakuba High School. We shared more about one another's culture and then exchanged ideas for the children's illustrated book, on which we were working toward the outcome of the project. With the help of some simple hand gestures, and despite our little understanding of either Japanese or English language, we

managed to communicate our thoughts and ideas. We happily shared stories with one another, had our lunch together and enjoyed each other's company that morning. It was a little sad when it was time for us to leave since we were having so much fun together. We exchanged our contacts and said our goodbyes. In Japan, goodbyes often mean "see you again." The students continued to wave enthusiastically till our coach left the school compound.

Another unforgettable experience was the homestay at Hakuba Village. The interaction with the families, included enjoying delicious homecooked food, sleeping on a tatami mat, playing in the snow and going to the public onsen together. The host family did its very best to accommodate and was hospitable in giving us the most unique experience possible. Definitely one of the highlights occurred when our host, Matsumoto-san, brought all the guys out to a public onsen within the village. The whole experience of one baring all and bathing together was an eye opener. Bathing together somehow bonded and brought us closer to one another. Did I forget to mention that soaking in an onsen in the middle of winter is extremely relaxing too?

On the final day of the trip, it was with heavy hearts that we left Japan, leaving behind a time that we truly enjoyed, looking forward only to sharing with our friends and family this memorable experience. Brandon and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff from the Book Council and Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE) for organising this exchange programme and in making this trip a success. We also thank our programme leader, Miss Lim Bee Ling, who helped to make this opportunity happen for us. We have gained many valuable life experiences and insights that have, in one way or another, changed our worldview. With this gained experience and knowledge, we intend to share with others more about Japan.



Posing with students from Hakuba High School, guy in red jacket (Emil), Brandon on the right and Jia Ling at the bottom left from Hwa Chong



Taken at the site of Hakuba Ski Jumping Stadium where the 1998 Winter Olympic for Ski Jumping was held



Group picture with the Singaporean and Japanese students right outside the entrance of Hakuba High School

DIPLOMA IN FINE ARTS LEVEL 3 SHOWCASE: IN HINDSIGHT

1 – 30 April 2017

by Benedict Yu, Bettina Sim and Lim Jia Qi Jacey, Diploma in Fine Arts Level 3 (2017)

In Hindsight presented 23 specially selected works by Level 3 students from Diploma in Fine Arts. From installation, embroidery, drawing, sculpture to video, the works explored notions of the body, technology and human consciousness, and found expressions in different manifestations.

The exhibited works were selected from two guided projects in the Level 2 Studio Practice modules: *Bookworks: Form, Text, Sound and Image*, and *Assemblage: Skin and Machine*. These modules prompted students to investigate the tensions between visual and physical elements, and the transformation of everyday objects through the use of unconventional materials.

The current Level 3 students - Callista Ng Jing Yi, Yasmin Mitchell, Chelsea Casanova, Kyaw Ktoo Bala, and Harmita Singh - jointly curated this exhibition. This being their first assignment of a curatorial nature, they found it a daunting task of putting together and make coherent a large body of work from different participants, works that vary extremely in terms of their aesthetic qualities and medium, as well as presentation and installation requirements.

This resulted in an unconventional placement of works, unrestricted by a frame, with curatorial emphasis on the role of the body and the human senses in its aesthetic interpretation. Materials such as dog fur, soap, or bubble-wrap, which may seem an unlikely medium for artmaking, were also features in

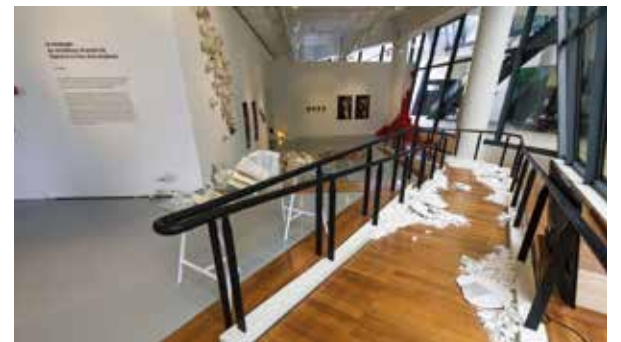
some of the works, exploring the connections and contrasts between the physical properties of materials and their symbolic connotations.

Callista Ng, one of our student curators, opened the show with a welcome speech, expressing appreciation and gratitude to the curatorial team at large and students involved in the exhibition. As the night went on, guests mingled and gathered to enjoy the show and lively debates were generated among the visiting guests and artists who were present. The opening reception of the exhibition was well received, with attendees ranging from college staff, students and other visitors. Much to the relief of the curators, visitors appeared to respond positively to the interaction between the artworks and the gallery space.

The exhibition title, *In Hindsight*, as it was appropriately coined, represents the process of students' relentless reworking of ideas and materials over time as a result of critical reflections. It is also noteworthy that the exhibition took place in the second semester of the year. For the level three students, this signifies a critical timing as students were preparing for their final year self-proposal projects, which would conclude their diploma studies.

In Hindsight serves as an ideal time and place for reflection, to review and mark our progress, spurring us on to a final push in critical analysis at this juncture of our academic journeys.

Images courtesy of Institute of Contemporary Art Singapore



Installation view of work

Images courtesy of Ken Chua



CROSS DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH SEMINAR: TRANS/MISSION 2017

The Study Room, The Ngee Ann Kongsi Library, LASALLE
10 February 2017

by Kheyton Lim ShiQuan, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 3 (2017)

Trans/Mission is a two-year old initiative that was conceived to provide the platform for interested students to share their Final Year Dissertation research with their lecturers and peers. For eight fruitful hours from 9am to 5pm, a diverse range of topics, hypotheses and experimentations were presented by a total of 15 BA(Hons) Level 3 students from seven Schools in LASALLE. The participating schools were LASALLE's McNally School of Fine Arts, School of Creative Industries, School of Design Communication, School of Fashion, School of Spatial & Product Design, School of Contemporary Music, and School of Dance & Theatre. Although they are distinct academic disciplines, the seminar had proven their fields of research to be interdisciplinary, where interests, concerns and methodologies overlap. The four sessions of the seminar carried different themes, presenting research topics under: "Singapore as a Context", "Social Bodies", "Methods of Power", and "Creative Processes".

Participating in the seminar were three students from the McNally School of Fine Arts: Joel Chin, Tan Luo Yi and myself. Joel's and Luo Yi's research presentations were considered under the session "Methods of Power". Joel's dissertation explored the potentiality of words or texts as autonomous agency and even "consciousness" in art. He understood that interpretations of texts are very much influenced by desires of the readers, therefore, he had intended to liberate the text from the imposition of judgements and interpretations by subjecting a selected body of text to translations beyond its form, context and literal meaning.

Luo Yi's dissertation investigated how confessional art incites emotional responses for viewers despite the highly private nature of the artist's emotions and experiences invested in the art-making. Tapping into her personal memories and trauma experienced from living as a homeless person and a vagrant, she further explained the nuanced relationship between the viewer and artist in confessional art.

As for me, my research topic was presented under the theme "Social Bodies". With reference to existing literature and lived experience, I identified the agencies that are responsible for inhibiting the ability for LGBT individuals to approach the subject of sexual differences within the local domestic setting. I had briefly explained how these agencies - affective, cultural, and sociopolitical - caused one's identity to be repressed and contained within the individualistic realm, thus unable to situate itself in effective interaction with the others outside the metaphorical space of the "closet".

The research seminar was an opportunity for each of us to take a step back from our practice to review our own ideas. At the end of each session, feedback was given and perspectives offered by the audience that comprised of lecturers and peers from across the faculties. The seminar concluded with a certificate giving ceremony and words of encouragement by Vice-President (Academic) and Provost Mr Venka Purushothaman.



Images courtesy of Kray Chen

INTERVIEW WITH KRAY CHEN KERUI: I'M A STEAMROLLER BABY

Tunnel, the Esplanade. Curated by Sam I-Shan.
13 January - 2 April 2017.

by Kheyton Lim ShiQuan, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 3 (2017)

“With the body, identity, and behaviour of each musician isolated and put in focus, we are also looking at how the music is being played. I like this balance between being the individual and being part of a collective, between performing the music and performing the musician.”

Just before I entered the installation space, my curiosity was piqued by the intermittent sounds of hasty footsteps that echoed through the Tunnel that connects CityLink Mall and the Esplanade. I was soon greeted by an 11-channel video installation that spanned the 85 metre-long wall to the other end of the tunnel. After a quick survey, one began noticing that the footsteps came from a figure who was caught sprinting across short segments of track in the five respective video projections. Its fleeting presence shifted from screen to screen; it exited as soon as it entered.

In the scenes, the running figure appeared in a black fitness outfit, with bold yellow “910” superimposed all over. The colour of the attire were also the colour of the curbs along the running track. The footsteps from the persistent running figure were punctuated by short, discontinuous tunes, played by a symphonic band of four musicians. The appropriated melody originates from a song titled *I'm a Steamroller, Baby*, which the artist thought would be familiar to many of the local Singaporean men who had served the National Service.

Like a few of his previous video works such as *Not Sure What to Eat for Dinner* and *I Think of Eating When I Am Sleeping* and *I Think of Sleeping When I Am Eating*, the subject was represented by the artist himself. Kray performed as this hefty character who was seemingly trapped in a cycle of motion, expressing a sense of powerlessness and a tinge of self-deprecation. The cycles depicted in his videos were enhanced such that a sense of artificiality becomes pronounced. Correspondingly, the illusion of continuity in this work was created through the synchronisation between the five video projections; he had not actually run continuously for nine minutes ten seconds. In this way, video as a medium becomes a site where the artist is able to execute performances that transcend the limitations of his own body.

Chen's practice draws from his lived experience and largely deals with the notions of corporeality. By observing the movements, gestures and behaviors around him and of himself, he taps into their peculiarities to discuss the physical, psychological and sociopolitical circumstances in Singapore. *I'm a Steamroller Baby* particularly reflects the outcomes of social engineering and also the potentiality of bodies as productive entities.

In the following short conversation, the artist talks more about the influences behind his work.

Kheyton (Kh): The outfit the character wore is humorous. Humour is very much a characteristic of the works you have done. Why the touch of humour? Could you share with me the idea behind the design of your outfit?

Kray (Kr): Firstly, all credit should go to Dinu Bodiciu – he was the one who came up with the designs and even made the clothes!

One of the striking features of the service basement was a vehicle track that connects the carpark to the deeper part of the building (and that's where I ran), and marking this track was the familiar yellow/black curbs. It was also together with other 'warning' features that were painted with the same colour combination. It reminded me of the industrial, like the heavy machineries, and instantly, I imagined myself wearing the same colour.

I don't think I consciously thought about humour for this work, it sort of happens. But I got to say that my sense of the absurd and humour is strongly influenced by Hong Kong movies, like those from Stephen Chow and Jackie Chan, so I supposed my works have that sense of exaggeration, slapstick and deadpan.

Kh: You have in a way likened yourself to a heavy industrial machinery. Is that why out of the many songs and cheers unique to the National Service (NS), you have chosen *I'm a Steamroller, Baby* for your work? What is the significance of this particular piece?

Kr: It was the definitive song of my time in Pulau Tekong. I thought it was a commonly used song but apparently not. The story is that I was part of the obese company during training, and we were asked to sing this song as a joke, to tease us for our size. Through time, the joke wore off but the song announced our arrival. It felt rather empowering and we bought into this identity.

Kh: I have personally not heard of the song before when I was in NS. For me, the arrival of your character was instead very much announced by the footsteps that echoed through the tunnel, even before I behold the work itself. But he departs as soon as it arrives and then it repeats. It was almost like a game for the passerby to spot and identify the next screen he would appear on. After some time, one would realise that he is running in laps; the running pace is consistent; there is increasing tension from the counting by the digital clock, which restarts itself every nine minutes ten seconds; the same number “910” is a label repeated multiple times on the outfit; and the band was playing at a highly contrived tempo to stretch the song to the specified timing etc. It is apparent that the distinct sense of time, rhythm and repetition was an approach to reflect upon the standards imposed on your character's identity. Can you elaborate more on these standards and its influences?

Kr: It takes more effort for me to perform physical activities, and I mean that I pay extra attention to the way I expend my energies. So it started with the physical tests (in school and during service), I calculated specific tempos to motivate myself and to keep pace. This is primarily how the idea came about. This sort of approach doesn't sound out of the norm, many sportsmen have that strategy, but I think as I grow older and bigger, it became a sort of habit of being extremely calculative with physical effort: I would observe the countdown at traffic junctions or bus arrival timings on my phone so that I don't need to dash unnecessarily. There are plenty more of such mechanisms I developed for myself, which I was beginning to be very conscious and critical about. It felt like I was dividing my time and rounding them up into such units, in many ways I am playing into and perpetuating the regimentation of my body and behaviour. The question then becomes how through my work could I undo this habit, and how can the work express duration, pace and rhythm? How can I stretch and manipulate the time (one takes to traverse the tunnel) materially and sculpturally? I'm aware this condition is rather specific to me, but I think this sense of efficiency and calculated-ness, also a common laziness is something rather universal.

Kh: Your performance of the character is contrasted to that of the musicians. While the running subject is able to shift its presence around from screen to screen, the musicians are individually presented on separate screens, framed and confined by the thick black borders. At times when the musicians are not playing, they were staring right at the audience (the camera) with an almost impassive gaze. How does this association communicate the relationship between the audience and the character you have performed?

Kr: The way I instructed the musicians was actually rather straightforward - to play the score with a certain duration of rest in between each loop. This is a very normal situation in an orchestra, sometimes we perform rest for long periods. With the framing, it sort of transformed this act of performing into a performance. I mean, with the body, identity, and behaviour of each musician isolated and put in focus, we are also looking at how the music is being played. I like this balance between being the individual and being part of a collective, between performing the music and performing the musician. The viewers responded to this very interestingly. I observed that some people waved at the screens, thinking that it was two-way live feed, some posed for photos as if they were real people, especially when the running scenes looked like they were from CCTV. It was really fascinating for me to see how this sense of the being, of the corporeal, transform across different planes of reality.

KOTA TINGGI STUDY TRIP: BACK TO NATURE

19 – 21 September 2016

by Foo Hui Wen and Tan Wei,
Diploma in Fine Arts Level 3 (2017)

Held in the middle of the school term, our trip to Kota Tinggi was troubling despite it being a getaway.

Still groggy from the sleep debts we had racked up from the previous night in our attempt to finish parts of our semester project, we woke early in the morning to catch the bus that would take us there. We half expected to doze off while travelling but all the excitement put us off sleep and we stayed awake, chatting among ourselves for the entire duration of the journey.

Upon arrival, our minds darted hither and thither while we were out on a hunt for inspiration. After all, we all came along for the trip as a breather from our school project hoping to restore balance in our artistic regime. Work, play, rest and of course, a little spice from the adventure we were about to undertake.

Thus we began our adventure at the rainforest resort.

Divided by a suspended bridge, the resort was demarcated into two areas which were occupied by two groups: one took part in activities such as paintball and flying fox while the other



spent some leisure time relaxing, either entering the pool for a dip or simply, exploring the grandeur of nature.

After twilight fell and a short dinner, we promptly set out in the bus for the highlight of the day: firefly-watching amidst the starry night sky.

We were led to a huge boat where we began our expedition. The journey started off extremely dark until we were greeted by spontaneous bursts of twinkling lights that flickered before our eyes, leaving us completely entranced by their soft iridescent glow, a sight incomparable to tinsel lights strung across christmas trees.

The luminance emitted a kind of warmth that reminds us of the beauty of nature and its phenomena; the constant flow of energy within life itself. A kind of perfect harmony that called forth life, altogether shrouded in mystery itself.

After a day spent with nature, we stopped by a night market to soak up the atmosphere while sampling street treats before



Images courtesy of Tan Wei

being sent back to the resort where we promptly hit the sack, exhausted from the day's adventure.

Next morning, the rest of our time was spent washing up and taking photographs. When the bus arrived, everyone was even rowdier compared to our first arrival. Brimming with stories to share with one another.

Before bidding goodbye to Malaysia itself, the bus stopped by a mall near the Customs where we had lunch and indulged in some retail therapy before making our way back to school. Throughout the bus ride back, everyone slept soundly.

This short one and a half day trip may have been brief but despite it, the sights and conversations we had taken in, while the insight may not have struck us immediately, played an important role in our growth which will eventually find expression.

The soupcon of adventure we experienced in this short getaway will eventually be part of the works that we create.



Image courtesy of Moses Tan

Moses Tan, *you cannot climb mudan mountain*, video and book variable dimensions



Image courtesy of Moses Tan

Moses Tan, 牡丹园, 2016, photograph, 1080 x 1920
Beijing LGBT Center PFlag Session



Image courtesy of Weizhong Deng

Travel Award: *The measure of things*, installation view, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, LASALLE College of the Arts, 2016

THE WINSTON OH TRAVEL AWARD: MU DAN MOUNTAIN IS IN FACT A HILL

by Moses Tan, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Alumnus (2016)

The Winston Oh Travel Award is an annual grant given to selected students from the McNally School of Fine Arts. As part of the research award, students are given the chance to research an area of interest and conduct it in a country outside of Southeast Asia.

With rows of weeping willows that fold around it in circular patterns, it connects the ends of two parks. Mu Dan mountain is called a mountain because of its steepness that is hidden by the clump of trees that hides whoever is within. It is because of this steepness that people are recommended not to attempt to climb it, although it provides a place of solace for any individual seeking to be hidden.

I've been to *Mu Dan* mountain. I've climbed it and seen its pockets of trees. In the brightest time of day, the trees provide shade. It casts shadows on the ground and these shadows are big enough for people to lie down on and be completely hidden.

And I've seen men lie down in these shadows. Their faces turned slightly towards any intruder and their bodies relaxed. They were home.

On the top of *Mu Dan* mountain, there was a little canopy. I heard it was what was left behind of an ancient palace.

~

"Have you gone into the palace?" a man who looked like he was in his 40s asked me. "It's small but it is enough for two."

"No."

He led me up, occasionally turning his head sideways.

"Are you from here?" he asked.

"No."

"Yeah. I thought you did not sound Chinese."

"Why are you here then?"

"I'm here to take a look."

"You're not one of them right?" he asked and stopped to study my face.

"No."

He believed me and continued climbing up the steep slope.

~

They come here to check up on us. To see whether we are in the shadows.

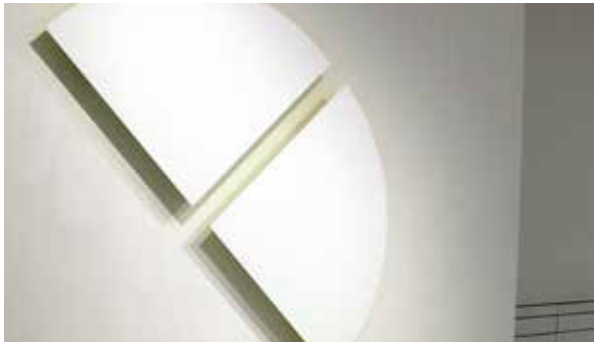
They took my friend away. He does not come here anymore.

Mu Dan is a fictional mountain based on two slopes in two cruising sites in Beijing. Inspired also by the petals of the peony flower, Mu Dan mountain is in fact a hill is based on a research trip to Beijing funded by The Winston Oh Travel Award.

GROUP EXHIBITION BY LUKE HENG, JEREMY SHARMA AND WARREN KHONG TURN LOOSE THE MERMAIDS

iPRECATION Art Gallery
16 September – 1 October 2016

by Nerissa Tan Hui Min, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 2 (2017)



Warren Khong, #101, 2016
Aluminium panel, whitewash paint, industrial paint, 65 x 65cm (Set of 2)



Luke Heng, *Composition no.8*, 2016
Colour pigment on mild steel, 48.5 x 71.5 x 2.5cm



Jeremy Sharma, *ILOUAUB*, 2016, 36 wedge-shaped polystyrene modules, nylon rods, custom light panel, LED monitor with video, laptop, sub-woofer, text printed on paper, 2 parts, dimensions variable

Images courtesy of Nerissa Tan

Titled *Turn Loose The Mermaids*, the group exhibition by Luke Heng, Jeremy Sharma and Warren Khong alludes to the fabled sea creatures. Beyond that, these artists explored and entwined medium, space and materiality to push past the formal qualities of painting to evoke the imaginary and the unconscious. Each artist brought to attention how form and material can engage viewers and spark ideas, aiming to add new knowledge and discourse to a field that has a long history.

Grounded in experimentation, these works were extensions of their previous explorations of art and the notion of painting through the eyes of formally trained painters. Cutting into the white walls of the gallery, Luke Heng investigates the deconstruction of oil paintings and the wooden support. Black metal frames hung on the white walls with streaks of blue running through and past the boundaries of the frame in what seemingly felt like a sense of rebellion against the immaculate space. The heaviness of the black and striking blue hues grabbed my attention as I walked into the gallery. You would see the splashes of blue contained first within the painting's frame, and then feel disconcerted at the streaks that had slipped out slightly, sometimes falling completely outside, the borders of the frame. The experience was like watching a pair of dancers attempting to negotiate the steps of a dance, new to and yet familiar with, the lines of their partners' bodies. Yet, in the simplicity of the lines, it allowed for a balance of power between the shock of colours set by the jarring lines and the sterile walls of the spaces.

As I turned away from Luke Heng's works, I found my path obstructed by three rectangular boxes in the middle of the space. Centred on ideas like materiality, Warren Khong's works are a contrast to Luke's with the employment of the colour white. So pristine, you could almost be forgiven for missing the work as they would have blended into the clean white space of the gallery if not for the light reflections and shadows cast from the gloss of its paint on the walls. In some sense, where Luke's works toyed with my attention and emotions, Warren Khong's incited in me an obsession over how he had employed the use of the colour and its application to the objects and materials of his choice. The meticulousness with which he had applied the paint to the various objects showed his care and attentiveness to both the medium and objects. With a sense of deeply humbling respect for the medium, Warren's work was a delightful contrast to Luke's playfulness.

As if to shake off the dream-like state induced by Warren's works, Jeremy Sharma's *ILOUAUB* first met me with a white wall formed by 36 white, polystyrene wedges stacked on top of each other. Illuminated by the gallery lighting, it seemed as if some parts glowed from within while others cast shadows of a weave-like pattern resembling a rattan wall. Exploring the fragmentation of current-day's society in the Age of Information, Jeremy employed multiple mediums like sound, photography and sculpture. Moving from the metaphorical into the physical, I had to walk past the white wall to view the throbbing LED light panel installed on a white metal rack. Covered on all sides, I had

to move around it in order to see the LCD monitor over which images taken of a fishing trip flickered on and off the screen. Simultaneously, I heard sounds so muffled and deconstructed coming from the subwoofer placed at the bottom of the rack. I strained my ears to hear it while attempting to make sense of the images flashing past my eyes, both teasing my sense, leaving me grasping for information when it ended.

As though this was not enough, I walked around the back of his white wall only to be greeted by a massive wall-mounted, floor-to-ceiling work. Comprising 32, custom-framed, digital archival prints, *The Castle* featured various historic chess endgames. At first glance the work looked like pencil sketches of inconsequential games until you read a slip of paper, listing the players' names, pinned on the wall at the side. Spanning across multiple geographical locations, it included personalities like Marcel Duchamp, Che Guevara, Fahim Mohammad and Deep Blue. The work covered chess prodigies and computers to artists and dictators, and it was only by reading the wall text that I realised these were not pencil drawings but digital prints. I wondered if Jeremy was having a private game of chess with me.

It was upon leaving that I realised that all the artworks had the effect of teasing my visual senses, tickling them and baiting me to understand the questions upon which the entire exhibition turned.

HISTORIES, PRACTICES, INTERVENTIONS: A READER IN SINGAPORE CONTEMPORARY ART A BOOK REVIEW

by Elaine Chiew Peck Leng, MA Asian Art Histories (2017)

This cogently compiled reader by its editors, Jeffrey Say and Seng Yu Jin, provides a useful snapshot of 'the period of the contemporary' in Singaporean contemporary art. The period covered by the reader begins with Cheo Chai Hiang's seminal 1972 article *New Art, New Concepts* and ends with its most recent 2014 essay by Lindy Poh on photography, published in this volume for the first time. As a collection of 33 essays by certain eminent writers in the world of Singaporean contemporary art such as T.K. Sabapathy (always a pleasure to read for his insightful perspectives), C.J. W-L Wee, Kuo Pao Kun, Gunalan Nadarajan and Kwok Kian Woon, the partnership of the editors here and their curated selections are suggestive of a mutually-reinforcing cohesiveness in historical narratives.

Their goal is laudatory: to spark dialogue and discussions to counter what they have lamented as a lack of 'discursive density' (borrowing critic Lee Weng Choy's coinage) within Singaporean art history. Despite the editors' best intentions of not wanting to canonise, the invisible weight of history presses upon these selected texts.

The essays are structured along three continuums: theories on the contemporary; artistic interventions within a zone of mediation with the State, art institutions and the public; and lastly, artists' reflections on arts practices in Singapore. There is an attempt to include interdisciplinary considerations such as playwright Alfian Sa'at's *Censorship Manifesto* and William

S.W. Lim's autobiographical architectural paean. There is also a good mix of insider versus outsider takes – a couple of stand-out essays in this regard are Ray Langenbach's examination of Josef Ng's incendiary performance work *Brother Cane* which brought the censorship gavel of the State down on performance art and Joan Kee's compelling idea of how artists respond to what she considered a 'hollowness' within Singaporean urban psychopathology in tension with Singapore's bid to be a 'world class city'. Particular unplumbed depths were mined by Susie Lingam in her essay on rhythms and 'accents', essentially identifying emerging arts practices that produce and reproduce difference.



BA(HONS) LEVEL 3 WORK-IN-PROGRESS SHOW: NEITHER GLIMMERS NOR GHOST

The Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (ICAS)
4 – 26 March 2017

by Nicolette Teo Wan Xiu, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 3 (2017)

How does one curate and organise a show with such diverse pieces and large number of works? With over 40 students' works to showcase in two linear galleries, putting this together was no easy feat. The team had a major task ahead trying to collate and fit everyone's ideas into a cohesive space, one that is exacted to exude energy, energising the works to interact and speak to each other rather than merely sit together comfortably together.

For the work-in-progress (WIP) curatorial team, consisting of Tan Rachel, Kheyton Lim, Firhana Almuiddin, Eugene Tan and myself, it was a learning opportunity under the mentorship of Tan Guoliang and the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore team, on what it takes to put together an exhibition of this scale.

The team began the process of curating with vague ideas of everyone's work and an insufficient understanding of the layouts of the two gallery spaces, Praxis and Project. Despite our limitations, we tried our best with weekly meetings to work on drafting the placements of artworks, constantly flipping through thumbnail photos and poring over scribbles of names and symbols. It was an arduous process of calculating the space required for each person, especially difficult with installation works with variable dimensions. However, after many trials and errors, we finally settled on what appeared to be the right formula for the layout.

Set-up day came by and the works got into position. Everything was laid on acid free paper according to plan; the gallery started to be filled with warmth from the works, people and the lack of air conditioning. As we surveyed the works, it began to dawn



Akilili Zakara, *Another Kind of Hijab*, 2017, Dimension variable

on us that our initial plans may not seem to come together as well as it did in our heads. Some works had changed while other works had to change to adapt to the space; this was the time where we could play around in the galleries to find the best possible outcome for the show.

With help from Guoliang and ICAS team, we went through multiple rearrangements between Praxis and Project to create a cogent flow through the space that allowed different energies to activate when one moves around or in having different artworks come together in ways that one did not expect. It was not only about how each work looked but also what the juxtaposition of works help bring out the best in every work. Making use of the architectural character of the galleries, many of the works had opportunities to become more than what they initially intended to be. With Akilili Zakaria's *Another Kind of Hijab*, sharing the different meanings of the 'Hijab' that many are not aware of, came in the form of multiple strings wrapped around the suspended beams of Praxis space, providing the gallery a barrier or curtain to the outside world. Another work, *Fleeting Space*, by Firhana Almuiddin utilised an awkward corner that is usually ignored. Her cardboard installation of a home setting talks about the search for space for artmaking and the ephemerality of that space.

Interactivity with the works by the viewers was also a major element to consider. Some works interacted with each other with different sounds from some works resonating throughout the gallery space, complementing sounds from others. With works such as Nicholas Lim's *Chore*, visitors were the work as they had to wear cleaning slippers to walk around the gallery,



Nicholas Lim, *Chore*, 2017, Dimension variable



Firhana Almuiddin, *Fleeting Space*, 2017, Dimension variable

giving the cleaners a break for that period of exhibition. This gives the visitor the experience of the art and becoming part of the art at the same time.

Besides the placement of artworks within the space, communication played an important factor in this organising process. Between the curatorial team, our lecturers, the ICAS team and most importantly our fellow coursemates, phones were buzzing constantly with messages regarding details and deadline checks. As a team, we probably learned enough about personal relations to maybe start our own PR firm in the future. What is the most appropriate way to chase others for artworks and details? How does one tell another that his or her work would take too much space for a work-in-progress and that we needed to fit all the 40 students into the galleries? In general, a crash course on how to say things nicely.

Everything came together, our working dynamically with one another. This was not just about those few moments of placing works in the gallery but about the many weeks of preparation beforehand, the relationships built along the way, learning how to work with one another and solving hiccups while trying to keep a cool head. And lastly, not breaking down on the night of the opening.

Ironically however, the picture that emerges is not Lingam's polyvocal scene of producing or reproducing difference. Rather, a certain 'constellation of critical moments' (to use Seng's term) cast their long shadows of influence over the state of the Singaporean contemporary art scene. Some of these are undeniably the performance of *Brother Cane* (1993); Tang Da Wu's historically canonised *Don't Give Money to the Arts* (1995); the experimentation with found readymades; and the geographical explorations of *The Artists Village* in the late 1980s and 1990s. Multiple essays examined their significance from the angle of censorship to the exclusion, however, of alternate trajectories. Notably, there were other accents that made softer footprints but deserve equally deep excavations, such as the *Trimurti* (1988) and *Text/Subtext* (2000) exhibitions, the Women Artists' Project (w.a.p) *Hope* exhibition at CHIJMES (2000), and *XX Personae II* organised by Suzanne Victor at

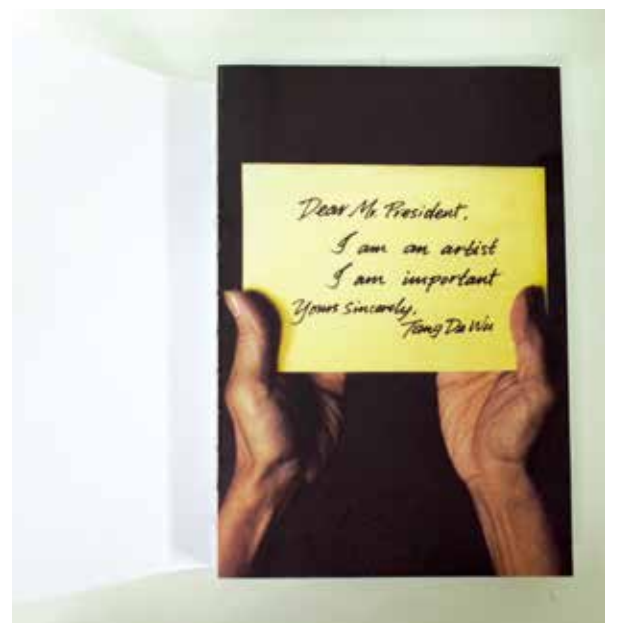
"The essays are structured along three continuums: theories on the contemporary; artistic interventions within a zone of mediation with the State, art institutions and the public; and lastly, artists' reflections on arts practices in Singapore."

Kandang Kerbau Hospital in 1996. Even so, a richness can be found in the carefully-parsed nuances and inflections within this selection of essays even as one agrees with the editors that art writings in Singapore are lacking in viewpoints and perspectives that would provide a situation ideally where these 'merge and collide' and proliferate to generate a heterogeneous cloud of ideas. Indeed, such contradictions may cheerfully exist in a system that is developing and in flux.

However, inclusion also raises the spectre of exclusion. Here, some holes remain: the lack of a varied scholarship along gendered, racial and sexual orientation lines; the sidelining of photography in Lim Kok Boon's introduction to the art practices section; the mere passing nods given to the roles of alternative spaces and art collectives without in-depth exploration thus unquestionably privileging *The Artists Village*; the exact contributions of arts publications like *focas* or *Confabulation*; and the complete lack of any museum study on the contemporary missions of museums in Singapore. While bolstering the editors' argument about discursive thinness, the exclusions also problematise the selection filter: was focusing only on key historical moments or significant turns too narrow, given that so many essays have been attentive to those moments? Could essays have been commissioned to address some of the holes above?

Regardless, the emergent picture this anthology reinforces is the fact that much work remains to be done if these terms, 'alterity' and 'difference', are to be more than artspeak and

gloss or marker of the contemporary. C.J. Wee's assertion that "an openness to the margin was necessary" if the emergent centre was not to "eviscerate the margins" is as true now as it was then.



IN CONVERSATION WITH 2016 YOUNG ARTIST AWARD WINNER: EZZAM RAHMAN

by Sanyaa Mehrotra, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 1 (2017)

Image courtesy of Pearl Lam Galleries Singapore



Ezzam Rahman is a multi-disciplinary installation and performance artist. He graduated with a Masters in Arts, Fine Arts from Goldsmiths University of London in 2017; Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Fine Arts from the University of Huddersfield in 2010; and was formally trained as a sculptor from LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts. Ezzam has participated, initiated, organised and co-curated numerous local and international group exhibitions, events and festivals. He has presented his works in Australia, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Macau, Malaysia, Philippines, South Korea, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand and UK. He was awarded a joint winner of the Grand Prize for the President's Young Talents 2015 and the People's Choice Award by the Singapore Art Museum. Ezzam has been awarded the Goh Chok Tong Youth Promise Award 2016 by Yayasan Mendaki and the prestigious Young Artist Award by the National Arts Council, Singapore.

In conversation with Ezzam Rahman:

On himself:

"I like to describe myself as four different personas. A serious clown, a filial infant, a curious informer and an accidental solver. I don't know why, but that's how I see myself: in four different roles (laughs)."

On why Art?

"For me, at the moment..art is almost like something I can't live without. At this phase of my life...It's just something that I have to do and I don't question why...I mean I did, but not anymore. Its something so familiar and comfortable. The question of why I am an artist became redundant. Why am I an artist..Because it's me."

On discovering his creative self:

"Since I was young, I've always been a person who would sit down and create my own puppets or paper dolls or cardboard

houses. So I've always been this little kid who is constantly making something with his hands. Drawing or whatever. Not having a lot of toys when I was young, I have to use my own personal imagination to create and that I think triggered the creativity part of me being an artist. Looking at different materials, finding different materials around the house. Just by joining them together or cutting them apart. Things I can find at home and playing with them. And that's the reason why I signed up to be a sculptor when I was in college."

On work space:

"I never had a studio until I was in school or college. Those were the only times I had a place to work in. Now, I work from home and I work in my room. So a lot of conceptualisation happens in my room. The things I have to create by hand, if it is manageable I do it in my room. But when there are certain exhibitions I need to execute on a larger scale, I'll get them fabricated. It's just how you play around and work with the sources you have so: that's how I work personally."

On what drives him:

"For me, it's hunger. As artists I think we all go through different phases in our lives. There were times when I made a lot of things but didn't show them. But now I am just hungry to show more. We have chosen the right career. One in which you can go all the way. There's this hunger, this desire to show more, to create more. A hungry desire. A passionate hungry desire. Being an artist is not only your occupation, it's also your a job. Your role. It's what artists do. Artists don't just sit down, do research and keep it to themselves. Artists need to share and inform his or her audience. To share with the audience no matter how small the audience is. It is important for an artist to keep on producing, to keep on showing. No matter how small or big the work is. Show as much as possible."

On the beginning

"The beginnings were really difficult. In the early 2000s, there weren't as many opportunities for young artists. There are more opportunities for young artists now to show works. I would always look for open calls. Any poster around school or anyone looking for artists to show their works would incite me to try to take part. Any competition. Other than that I have a good group of friends who are also artists so if we don't get invited to group shows, we create our own group exhibitions. This includes, our applying for funding, our approaching galleries. We sell our content and idea. I personally learned how to professionally curate and organise exhibitions from there. We started by inviting our own friends and former lecturers."

Changing over time:

"There were a lot of changes but only in terms of presentation and material choice. But the themes remain almost the same.

The content or the meaning of the work has not wavered much from when I started. It had, rather, just expanded over time. The presentation is always different because I don't like to restrict myself to just one medium.

What is the best way to present..is what I'm always asking."

Best piece of advice he's been given:

"It's very funny but...grades are not everything. Your practice is the main thing. It's not about grades but about how much you want to practice. That was one advice that I received at a time when I was very very upset over my grades which were not so good, and my peers had better grades than me. I just kept on going and didn't stop. It came from a lecturer when I was doing my diploma. It may not make sense now but it makes a lot of sense after a while, you'll see.

The other piece of advice was: it's going to be a very lonely, long journey. And indeed, it is going to be a long, lonely journey for me. But I take that as a very positive. There's nothing wrong with long because longevity is always good. Lonely... well sometimes you just need to be alone. So that you can concentrate on your work. And so that you have the least distractions. Journey...I hate the word, but that came along with the advice."

Advice he would give:

"You, do you. I've been saying that to most of my students because nobody knows best except you. So You do you. You can listen to whatever advice you've been given but at the end of the day, you have to make your decisions. Whether you succeed or not. You do you the best."

Currently...

"I have a few shows coming up. Most of them are overseas so I'm just preparing the works to be flown to Australia, I'm invited to performance festivals in Hong Kong and Iran. I'm just preparing myself physically and mentally."

On professional goals:

"I want to represent Singapore at the Venice Biennale one day. Who doesn't want to be a part of this huge, recognised, important event? I think it'll be an honour to represent my country in many many ways. And knowing and meeting the artists who have represented Singapore at the Venice Biennale and studying their works as well. Professionally I definitely want to be able to make it there. The main event. I would want to make my mum proud."

On Superpowers:

"I wish I can produce more skin at a shorter period of time (laughs). It sounds gross, like some mutant but yes, for me to collect skin faster so I can produce more works.

Or I wish to have the ability to fly. As a performance artist I use my body as the main medium and if I had the power of flight I can only imagine the kind of works I can produce in the air. Performance in flight."

On free time:

"I sleep. Just sleep. I think a lot of artists, including myself, we are all sleep deprived. In any given time, give me a bed or a corner I'll sleep. And do nothing...just sleep."

GRAPHIC NOVEL: MAKARA

by Andrea Rachel Danker,
Diploma in Fine Arts Level 3 (2017)



MA FINE ARTS STUDY TRIP: SETOUCHI TRIENNALE

Seto Inland Sea, Japan
3 – 6 October 2016

by Sunaina Bhalla, MA Fine Arts (2017)

Images courtesy of Sunaina Bhalla



The Seto Inland sea, also known as Setouchi, is the body of water separating three of the islands of Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu in Japan. This area in Japan has been almost abandoned owing to an ageing population and the decline of the local economy's vitality. In this beautifully tranquil part of Japan lies a number of small islands where the Setouchi Triennale is held in three editions totalling 108 days: Spring, Summer and Autumn.

LASALLE MA Fine Arts students went on a three-day trip in October 2016 for this fabulous experience of culture and art in the most amazing setting of nature and culture.

We stayed at the Uno port in a traditional inn, right by the sea. The Triennale artworks were scattered around all the 12 islands of the Seto inland sea as well as Uno and Takamatsu, each accessible by ferry rides, some as short as 20 minutes and others over an hour long.

With such a wide array of choices it was very difficult to narrow the list down to what we could cover in the limited time available to us. We decided to start with Naoshima, the biggest island, with the largest number of artworks and museums. Naoshima is internationally known as a centre for contemporary art with museums designed by renowned architect Tadao Ando, as well as the presence of works by established artists like James Turrell, Walter De Maria and Hiroshi Senju, among others.

The first sight to greet us as the ferry entered the docking point was Yayoi Kusama's red polka dotted pumpkin installation right by the water. A little further was a stunning installation by Sou Fujimoto, a work constructed with metal mesh but which had a lightness that was reminiscent of a mirage floating in the sea. Shinro Ohtake created an actual functional bath-house titled *I Love YU* where one could actually take a bath for a fee. The interiors of the bath-house were designed with varied artefacts as diverse as pine trees on the roof to stuffed baby elephants from a sex museum.

Perhaps the biggest project on this island is the Art House Project which was created over a period of 20 years, beginning in 1998. In this project, artists took empty houses and created works of art that inhabited these spaces, to bring back the memories and histories of when they were inhabited.

Some of the best works were housed in the Chichu Art Museum, a building designed by Tadao Ando. This museum, built under sea level so as not to disturb the natural beauty of the island, houses a stunning installation by James Turrell that plays on light and space. It also houses works by international artists like Walter De Maria, Jasper Johns, Jonathan Borofsky and Jennifer Bartlett.

Day two took us to Teshima island, where our one and only stop was the Teshima Art Museum. The day unfortunately turned ominous with warnings of a typhoon, and we had to cut short our visit and head back to Uno port on the last available ferry before we got stranded on the island! On the bright side, it gave some of us time to relax and soak our tired bodies in the traditional *onsen* (bath) and try some local cuisine.

On our last day, we dispersed independently to a few different islands, with some of us choosing to explore the other islands, and some heading back to Teshima to see the museum that had the collaborative permanent installation titled *Matrix* created by artist Rei Naito and architect Ryue Nishizawa. This museum is sited amidst rice fields, resulting in a beautiful fusion of nature and architecture, water and concrete, mimicking impressions of the flow between seasons.

We headed back that afternoon by bus back to Osaka for our flight back to Singapore, exhausted but exhilarated by the experiences we had, and the unbelievable smorgasbord of art we were exposed to. In the days and months to come, I know I will keep revisiting in my mind the fabulous art that has had a profound affect on my development and practice as an artist.

DIPLOMA IN FINE ARTS LEVEL 3 INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS: OPPORTUNITIES & CONNECTIONS:

November 2016 – April 2017

by Tiffany Ann Dass, Diploma in Fine Arts Level 3 (2017)

An internship is defined as "a position of a student who works in an organisation, sometimes without pay, in order to gain work experience or satisfy requirements for a qualification." One could however, interpret it wholly as an 'opportunity'.

Interview dates were set up once the various organisations and artists had taken their pick from the plethora of carefully crafted resumes. Renowned organisations and industries such as National Gallery Singapore, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore and The Substation were among the substantial list of choices.

The job scopes available for experience were wide and diverse. Students had the opportunity to teach in schools, archive historical documents, guide and run workshops and engage in the research and creative processes while assisting renowned artists. The duration of each placement differed and ranged from four weeks to four months. Students had to balance their immersive personal school projects with their respective internship commitments. This feat was perhaps the most challenging element of the entire experience as one student recounted: "The biggest stress of the past four months has been in juggling my school workload while allowing myself to be immersed in the internship experience and all that it entailed."

Each industry placement came with a unique job scope, which in turn offered varying challenges. A student who interned with a Primary School recalled that her challenges lay in the process of crafting lesson plans for the students' Art Club programme, in which she was required to ensure that the activities met with the expectations of the teachers while still being able to challenge the students' abilities in fun and engaging ways. Although the Primary School students were not captivated initially, she observed some progress made and growth not only in their artistic ability over the weeks but also in the ways that they worked with their peers who were often of different ages.

The National Gallery Singapore gave another student the opportunity to not only work with children, but also to engage in research for an upcoming exhibition. This gave him the chance to gain insights into curatorial research skills and understand



Images courtesy of Tiffany Ann Dass

the way a museum or gallery functions. He assisted primarily at the Keppel Centre for Art Education where he also guided the tours for children and families. His biggest challenge was in speaking in front of large crowds and finding various ways to reach out and engage people of all age groups. He especially enjoyed the research part of his internship where he gained insight into the variety of methods for sourcing information. This opportunity ignited his curiosity pertaining to the structure and functionality adopted by other museums and galleries.

A student had the opportunity to assist artist, Justin Lee, as a collaborative artist for Instinc@lon Orchard, an arts organisation that focuses on gallery art, residencies and collectives. Lee is one of Singapore's more prominent artists, who is involved in the local, commercial arts scene and known for developing his own Pop style in his Tin Can series. As an artist assistant, she helped Lee not only conceptualise, but create the artwork as well. She said this of the experience: "I adapted the usage of condensed milk cans into my work and created a series of paintings on the cans and also a painting on canvas, deciding to focus more on the old label which were used back in our grandfathers' days. The carnation flower was used as it symbolises love and affection, which interests me, as these meanings are not visible to the naked eye, but to the learned mind. It also dwelled on me that the imagery used in branding consumer products creates a disposition within the consumer towards their brand consciousness." Her involvement during

this internship was integral to the creation of Lee's work as she was spearheaded the entire process.

As a student, I too embarked on a journey during my time archiving at The Substation that has an extensive history of Contemporary Art in Singapore dating back to the 1990s. As authentic as the building itself are the documents pertaining to programmes, exhibitions and events hosted and run by The Substation over the years. My job, similar to the interns before me, was to organise and archive these documents. The experience was nothing short of exciting and insightful. The exposure to 27 years of Singapore's artistic history, embodied in The Substation, enhanced my creative process and gave me insights to the art scene from a professional perspective. The three months spent sorting through documents and forging relationships with the empowered staff paved the way for an extended opportunity, as I will return to continue archiving in the following mid-year break.

'Connection' was the unanimous word of the epoch as most of us agreed that the work opportunities offered to us the connections formed in our varying placements; it made the entire experience rewarding if not beneficial to our practice and future endeavours in the industry on a whole. This was not just an internship module; it was a significant opportunity that opened up for us many possibilities, and reminds us of all we can be.

AN EXHIBITION BY CHEN SAI HUA KUAN AND WANG RUOBING: GONE BY, JUST BEFORE THE PRESENT TIME

iPRECATION Art Gallery
11 – 26 November 2016

by Gerald Tay Chao Siong, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 2 (2017)

“The act of retrieving these memories that have been forgotten allows us to recognise how vastly these places and architecture have changed over time.”



Image courtesy of iPreclation

This exhibition featured the latest mixed-media works co-created by artists Chen Sai Hua Kuan and Wang Ruobing. By revisiting personal and collective memories of historical sites, the works bring attention to the landmarks that no longer exist in Singapore.

This series of works lead viewers down memory lane through the use of images of old and new landmarks. This provokes a sense of nostalgia for the past where these places were visited with our families and friends as valued places of interest. The act of retrieving these memories that have been forgotten allows us to recognise how vastly these places and architecture have changed over time.

The various images overlap each other to form a complex composition. Viewing the work in the physical space allows for an interactive experience. Seeing the images shift and reshape themselves between the old and new landmarks stimulates an optical illusion for the audience. These illusions break down the sense of familiarity, hence blurring our memories of these sites. This shifting images create a state of flux, highlighting to us the constant changes that are happening in our fast-paced developing world.

This series of works resembles a string of flat screen monitors and contemporary light boxes. Despite this heavy industrial look, every work possess the physical materiality that is evident by the traces of handmaking techniques. The artists had gone through many cycles of trial and error to achieve such desired effects. The choice of the technique featured prominently in their desire to communicate a sense of revisiting the past. To create a work resembling the place they had lived in, the artists gathered archival photos of the site, printed and rescanned them, before drawing and reworking on them. Thereafter, they would return to the present site to take more recent photographs. All the gathered materials were then cut out and recombined into montages to create a new visual illusions.

Through these reconstructed montage, both artists have effectively established how much the past had evolved alongside progress, and the ways in which history propel the future.

“It implicates a bold revision, of lived experience and imagination, with an accepting inclusivity.”

Images courtesy of Grey Projects



Gilles Massot, *Tints and Dispositions*, Installation view of White gallery

AN EXHIBITION BY GILLES MASSOT: TINTS AND DISPOSITIONS

Grey Projects curated by Jason Wee
21 March – 22 April 2017

by Ian Tee Wang Loong, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 2 (2017)

Tints and Dispositions was an exhibition of prints and photographic material from the studio archives of Gilles Massot. Upon entering the exhibition, one was greeted by a series of colourful images: hand-painted silver prints and digitally reprinted ones, which punctuate the Grey gallery; while the White gallery displayed related publications and early contact prints. It is the first exhibition by Grey Projects that focused on historicising the making of recent art. Notably, it re-contextualised the first exhibition Massot staged in Singapore in 1985: *BW2C (Black White to Colour)*, a one-night only party held at a factory block in Macpherson.

It was envisioned as a farewell for Massot, but as the way things went, his multiple returns and eventual stay was longer than expected. These images, though taken prior in 1985, somehow already indicated a kind of kinship with the place. From *Black White to Colour*: these painted marks, in jarring unnatural colours juxtapose the monochromatic photographic image beneath. As the exhibition titles suggest, this tinting and the preposition “to” reflect a disposition. One posed in the space between photography and painting – what the curator Jason Wee describes as “a playful alterity...liveliness of a different order...a claim of queer belonging.”

My experience of this exhibition began without its context, unknowingly taking the route of looking at the painted images before picking up on information in the artist’s archives and through our chats. Aptly, this did throw up a few important questions regarding the exhibition’s historical framing and its relevance:

What do these images offer, what do their stories entail?

Is it a goodbye, or hello?

For me, it still feels like a passing encounter. One in which I am the stranger or visitor to this place, one which lies outside of my time. A sentiment, no less, also felt interacting when with the man himself until the comfort of familiarity kicks in. Yet, what this exhibition proposes was precisely such a revisiting of images of the Self, and constituents of identit(ies) in a place set by histor(ies) of migrants. It implicates a bold revision, of lived experience and imagination, with an accepting inclusivity. Perhaps one similarly, requiring multiple departures and returns.



Gilles Massot, *Tints and Dispositions*, Installation view of Grey gallery