

## McNALLY SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS STAFF SHOW: STILL LIKE A HUMMING BIRD

Ican Gallery, Yogyakarta Indonesia • 23 February – 22 March 2018

by Gilles Massot, Lecturer in Fine Arts

Images courtesy of Liu Liing



*“The main challenge for an artist today might well be this unavoidable obligation to negotiate the mounting presence of continuous stimulation generated by the digital society, the need to control it in order to keep the creative practice alive and focused despite the constant onslaught of distractions.”*



Opening speech by Hazel, Jeremy and Grace Samboh (left to right)

Anyone old enough to have escaped being raised on a regime of iPad pacifiers will probably readily agree that the pace of today's lifestyle has transformed so radically over the last 20 years or so, that memories of life in the last century seem to belong to another world.

It is probably no mere coincidence that the first mobile phone camera was launched in November 2000, just as the first year of the new millennium was drawing to a close, or rather, technically speaking, the last year of last century. Dates and calendar might well be nothing but constructs meant to enable human society to function, but still... it is somewhat thought provoking, especially now that we can reflect on the radical impact this tiny device has on our everyday life, to consider how timely its apparition was in the grander scheme of things. The new millennium needed a new tool: it turned out to be a pocket computer that could record and communicate instantly with the world.

The desktop computer had been diligently fulfilling its envisioned function for sometime already: it computed steadily on a desk. But instead of creating more free time as idealistically, or rather, naively prophesied in the last century,

it has in fact filled up life with more data and subsequently, more things to do, since faster processing also means more processing.

Then emails arrived. Ho! Wonder! We could communicate almost instantly with the whole world, send and receive images and text in virtually limitless quantities and faster than ever. Ok, modems might have been a bit slow at first, but once all this found itself in the pocket, bundled as a device that could be taken and worked on anywhere, it was total bliss, or so it seems.

Last but not least, the attached camera, at first innocently convenient, finally reveals the full power of its distorted and distorting nature when it forcefully entered the virtual arena of the social media, giving birth to a range of new virtual phenomena, the selfie being only the most prominent.

Suddenly, images, text, data, info, work, leisure, study all came at once, in one go, at the touch of the screen, anywhere, anytime, instant data for the instant me. Eventually, the level of business resulting from the amount of information reaching us daily and the speed at which we are expected to process it turned out to be a bit of a surprise, in fact an overwhelming

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About McNally School of Fine Arts  
LASALLE College of the 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 to another new edition of Praxis Press, and we are officially 12 years old! Twelve is certainly a magical number in our everyday life: 12 hours on the clock, 12 signs of the Zodiac, and 12 notes on the musical scale! As for us, 12 stands for an incredible landmark of a newsletter that has continuously committed itself to being the most comprehensive means documenting the achievement of McNally School of Fine Arts.

In this issue, besides featuring important exhibitions by students and staff, learning trips and workshops of the 2017/2018 academy year, I proudly introduce a new Alumni Column that is dedicated to our Fine Arts alumni. In this column, we present three papers by alumni Moses Tan Qian Yi, Siong Chung Hua and Susanna Tan, sharing their professional engagement in the outside art world after their graduation, either through their artistic or curatorial practices.

I am very grateful for the contribution of student assistant editors Liu Liling and Lim Jia Qi from BA(Hons) Fine Arts Level 2. On every page of the issue, there is their very personal touch, from identifying topics, discussing with the writers, gathering the papers and images, arranging design layouts to handling the printing of the newsletter. They have played an irreplaceable role ensuring the newsletter is another successful edition.

I hope you enjoy the read, and do let us know if there is any topic you would like us to cover in our 13th edition!



one, although it was pretty clear from the start that a fuller time-space would logically generate more entropy. But that realisation came too late. And what could we do about it anyway... since this was PROGRESS.

For many people, contemporary urban life seems to have turned into an endless race against time to fulfil expectations and requirements, be they professional or personal, imposed or chosen. And we all feel the pressure in one way or another. Taking or finding time to do things that are not directly task orientated has become a luxury... finding time to do things such as... art works for example. The making of art works demands a subtle type of time-space in which stillness can give birth to fluidity and reflection produce spontaneity. Accessing such a refined dimension has always required great discipline, will, and effort. But as a result of the loud technological lifestyle in which we are now constantly immersed, the task seems to have become more daunting than ever.

The main challenge for an artist today might well be this unavoidable obligation to negotiate the mounting presence of continuous stimulation generated by the digital society, the need to control it in order to keep the creative practice alive and focused despite the constant onslaught of distractions. And as a result of this evolution, it appears that among the many questions concerning the creative process that have emerged in the 21st century are the following:

How do we embrace and exploit purposefully this permeating agitation, at once both physical and psychological, to stay socially "connected" but still find ways to harmonise its pressing requirements with the unbounded freedom of a personal space of peace and quiet in which an artistic process can grow and unfold at its own pace?

How to adapt to business and favour being?

How to be at once flustered and yet focussed? Scattered and yet fluid?

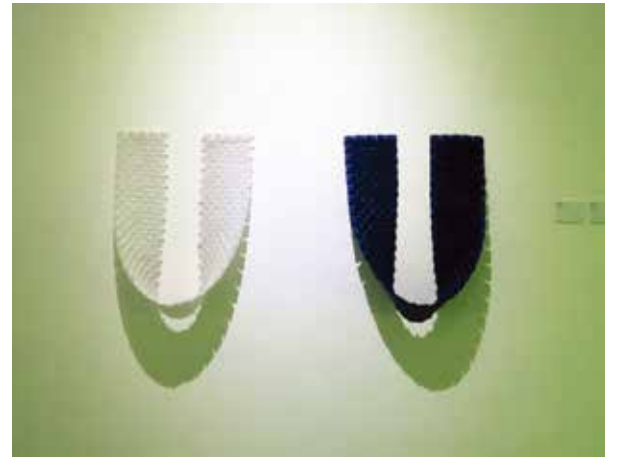
How to be still like a humming bird?



Adeline Kueh, *Everything but gold*, 2017, video, 5:00min



Gilles Massot, *ho temps suspend ton vol 1*, 2005, Archival print, 60 x 85cm



Hazel Lim, *Ellipse No. 3*, 2018, Vellum paper, dimension variable

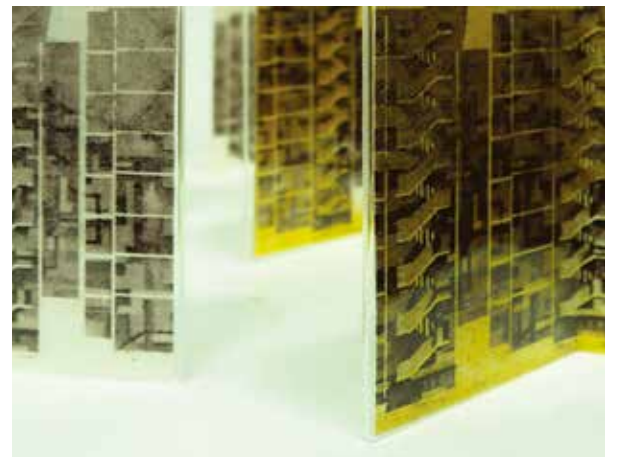
Hazel Lim, *Shadow No. 1*, 2018, Vellum paper, dimension variable



Ian Woo, *Why is Aristotle's brain in the shape of a triangle?* 2017, Projection, 4:41min



Jeremy Sharma, *Spectrum (extended)*, 2018, Projection, 360:00min



Lim Bee Ling, *Love on Site I - V*, 2018, Aquatint, intaglio print, 15 x 20cm (5 pieces)



Salleh Japar, *Jamarat Series*, 2018, Mixed media on paper, 23 x 23 x 3cm (3 nos)



S. Chandrasekaran, *Unfinished Drawing*, 2010, Paper/pen, dimension variable



Vinson Puah, *Used to be*, 2016, Inkjet archival print, 29.7 x 42cm (9 pieces)



Wang Ruobing, *Social Cycle*, 2018, Slide viewer and slide, 7.5 x 15 x 13.5cm



Zarina Muhammad, *Memory at These Speeds*, 2018, Performance lecture

# AN EXHIBITION IN COLLABORATION WITH PADMASANA FOUNDATION: TO LEAVE HOME IS ALREADY HALF THE JOURNEY

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore • 27 January – 21 February 2018

by Aarushi Gurnani, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 3 (2018)

Curated by Gilles Massot, *To leave home is already half the journey* presented works by McNally School of Fine Arts' lecturers, students and alumni to showcase installations, paintings, sculptures, text and performances. The works were produced following a BA Fine Arts elective, Crossing the Straits, a field trip to Muara Jambi in Sumatra, Indonesia, in December 2016. There, the students spent time with members of the Padmasana Foundation, an organisation working on the preservation of the Buddhist temple compound area of Jambi, the most extensive archaeological site in Southeast Asia.

A year later, in January 2018, seven artists – members from the Padmasana Foundation – from the village of Muara Jambi, 'crossed the straits' in the opposite direction to prepare for the exhibition in Singapore. The artists stayed in Singapore for a week to prepare for this exhibition.

One key artist-in-residence, Borjoe, a performer, activist, writer and artist, and a very colourful character, led the performance that kick-started the exhibition on the opening night. He recited a poem in Malay that he wrote himself which approximately translated to "disaster in the historical land." The title of the exhibition was drawn from writings by Indian Buddhist monk Atiśa (982–1054 CE), who is believed by scholars to have spent time at Muara Jambi in the eleventh century. In a way, the group from LASALLE attempted to recreate this journey over the sea, and to reach for the 'other' across the Straits.

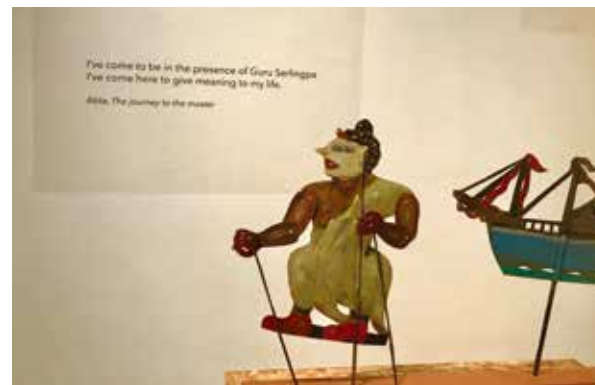
The exhibition is a reflection of the experiences of the participants both from Singapore and from Jambi, who attempted this cultural exchange by travelling, conducting in-depth research, and working with the community living around the temple area over a period of a year.



Borjoe, Padmasana Foundation performance, 2018

I was also fortunate enough to tag along in an informal trip in September 2017 circling the Riau Archipelago in Indonesia with Gilles and some students from the elective. Although the research in Jambi would have been very different, I was able to experience the several boat and ferry rides, and only imagine what it must have been like journeying to Muara Jambi. The entire process was a multi-layered collaboration of artistic and historical exploration that involved social and cultural interaction; it also marked the outline of a detailed narrative.

Dr Imran bin Tajudeen, a lecturer from the Department of Architecture, National University of Singapore, and the guest of honour for the event cast a new light on Malay history. His speech was most informative and inspired us to reconsider what we already learnt about the history of Southeast Asia, and the connection of Singapore with the region, which was essentially the whole idea of the project.



Heri Dono, 2018

The titular quote from Atiśa that suggests that any journey, physical or spiritual begins with leaving one's zone of comfort, is reflected in the works' evocations of home, Singapore and encounters with Muara Jambi's architecture and surrounding communities. The works clearly reflected this sense of leaving one's home, and the exhibition brought out this shared experience. The intermingling of works of diverse forms, materials and mediums greatly highlighted stories of home and what it means to take that first step out to the 'other' from both sides of the Straits.

**Participants:** Borjoe, Priyageetha Dia, Heri Dono, Iman Kurnia, Elisabeth Inandiak, William Kung, Roy Mardianto, Gilles Massot, Muhammad Arif, Muhammad Masuri, Pebrianto Putra, Siong Chung Hua, Shirley Soh, Tan Luo Yi, Gerald Tay, Ian Tee, Dionne Yap.

# DIPLOMA IN FINE ARTS: CROSS-DISCIPLINARY PROJECT EXPERIENCE

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore • 31 March – 6 May 2018

by Aneesha Shetty, Diploma in Fine Arts level 3 (2018)

Is a common ground for communication and interaction possible when we beings are trapped in a space? Is there a way of escape?

*Provoking The Silence* draws on some intense personal experiences for Cassie Shi and myself and sets out to test the very limits of human resilience, using performative video art. Cassie is from the BA Dance faculty while I am from the Diploma in Fine arts faculty.

An attempt to converse with one-another, using the body as a medium to understand, speak and interpret the body's language through movement and gestures is explored.

Trapped within a confined space there is a struggle to come to terms with the surroundings. As bodies collide, dance acts as platform for communication and self-expression.

In this conversation between Cassie and myself, we speak about the challenges, limitations, compromises and negotiations that underpinned the process and the eventual outcome of this cross-disciplinary project.

**Aneesha (A): What does the body mean to you?**

**Cassie (C):** The body to me is more than just the body itself. It allows me to say things beyond words. To bend, to mould, to dance, to break free...the body allows me to speak beyond words.

**A: Have you ever felt trapped?**

**C:** Trapped by what?

**A: Circumstances...life...yourself?**

**C:** I started by studying traditional Chinese dance. It had its own rigour, discipline, style. You had to follow the rules. There came a moment when I felt fully trapped. Whatever I tried I could not break free. Then contemporary dance happened. And this is not to say that contemporary dance is not dictated by its own rules. It is. But it gives me the freedom to do more with my body. I can shape some of the rules. The borders, so to speak, are boundless and open. Yet there is no saying at this point in time that I wouldn't be trapped by it.

**C: What about you? Have you ever felt trapped?**

**A:** Many times. I started off with painting and there was this feeling of being confined by the rigid frames of a limited canvas. I wanted to go further. My mother had sent me to classical dance classes for years. Now that I think about it, all art forms are indeed related. I wanted to meld painterly qualities and blend them with the sheer aesthetics of dance. There is something so fluidly beautiful about watching a dancer's body. As I struggled with my paintings, I became more and more intrigued by it. Could I possibly even dance even if I could conceptualise the project. There was a constant struggle to



Aneesha Shetty and Cassie Shi, *Provoking The Silence*, 2018, Digital Video, 5:33min, dimensions variable

navigate this turf. There were nights I felt I could go no further. The feeling of being trapped sometimes leads us to places we never imagined. I think what became *Provoking The Silence* eventually did.

**A: But enough about me...what made you work with me on this cross-disciplinary project?**

**C:** I liked the idea. I liked that it was promising to take me out of my comfort zone. Like you were feeling limited by the confines of your canvas, I was starting to feel limited by just dance itself. I was curious to test the possibility of possibility.

**A: And did you succeed?**

**C:** Working with someone from a non-dance background is very different. We had to dance on plastic with paint all over our bodies. It was really hard. Both the process and eventually ridding the body of paint each night. We had to consider not just ourselves in the space, we had to consider the camera, the sound, the confinement. But this, in my view, is the very purpose of art – navigating terrains we are unfamiliar with, taking the process as a journey towards understanding and growing and communicating in fresh ways.

# DIPLOMA SHOWCASE: BEYOND THE SPECTACLE

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore  
16 September – 17 October 2017

by Aneesha Shetty and Dylan Chan, Diploma in Fine Arts level 3 (2018)

*Beyond the Spectacle* marked the annual exhibition showcasing works produced the year before (in Year 2), from the current year's graduating batch, .

Helmed by a team of four curators, Lewis Choo, Calista Siow together with the two writers of this article, this exhibition presented a collective body of works that showcased the multi-disciplinary talents of the students, from prints, sculptures, paintings, drawings and more. The different outcomes and conceptual approaches stemmed from the thematic projects which acted as departure points for students to explore and play in various mediums, to realise their own individual visual interpretations. The exhibition comprised of both experimental and resolved pieces accumulated over the span of the year, giving a fantastic summary of what the programme had to offer.

As curators, we chose the title, *Beyond the Spectacle*, because we wished for our audience to look past the physical elements of the work to try to understand the meaning and intention of each aspiring artist. And further, to understand how each artist reflected on the teachings provided in the programme, in creating works that presented a balance between concept and aesthetics.

What is a space? How do we view a space or how do we confront it? These were questions that we asked ourselves when presented with the gallery space. It was not only important to understand the artworks but also the space.

This project, being our first introduction to curating within the walls of a gallery, gave us an insight to the complexities of placement of works. To elaborate: how can different works be exhibited together, to complement one another in the gallery

space, despite their being conceived from different viewpoints. Throughout this curatorial journey, we picked up on the various factors that make up an exhibition. Outside the confines of each student's assessment space, where his or her work enjoyed a primary spotlight, this exhibition challenged us to be aware of the qualities each work possessed, and to strategies its placement within a group format.

As art students, we are often confined to our studios where we work to create pieces that inform our individual art practices. This process of creating and working is usually solitary. Contrary to this, for the exhibition, we were drawn to an environment that made us rely on one another, not only to carry out tasks but also to ensuring the exhibition runs smoothly. Each individual has his or her own view and finding a common ground that everyone agrees on was a challenge for us.

We were able to gain experience that we would not normally attain with the main curriculum. The ability to observe and be attentive towards smaller details which we would commonly overlook and to be sensitive towards our peers' works and their intentions. These are points we picked up upon during the time spent last year.

As student curators, we embarked on a journey that reflected the desire to grow, our active engagement with the artists, works and the space, to understand the various contemporary narratives that overlaid the show. Not dismissing the frantic running around and the stress that came along with the responsibilities of being a curator, the exhibition provided a chance to learn from one another.



Images courtesy of Weizhong Deng

Images courtesy of Pham Anh Ngoc and Lim Bee Ling



On our first night, we went to CASE Space Revolution, where Thai artist LOLAY was having his solo exhibition, *Mokutan*.



Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook's *An Artist is Trying to Return to 'Being a Writer'* at 100 Tonson Gallery.

## DIPLOMA AND BA(HONS) FINE ARTS STUDY TRIP: BANGKOK, REVISITED

BANGKOK, THAILAND  
4 – 7 January 2018

by Chok Si Xuan, Diploma in Fine Arts  
level 3 (2018)

In January 2018, ten Diploma of Fine Arts students together with our fellow schoolmates from the Bachelors of Fine Arts went on a trip to Bangkok, Thailand for four days. Having the opportunity to travel with my peers and lecturers was definitely one of the more exciting moments of my experience with LASALLE. It was a chance to interact with our peers personally and to experience art in a space free from modules and syllabuses.

We went to several art spaces and galleries such as CASE Space Revolution, WTF Gallery, Bangkok CityCity Gallery, H Gallery, to name a few. We had the privilege of having artist Dusadee Huntrakul bring us around the spaces, as well as give us tips on local food and shopping.

We got to experience many works of different disciplines in several unique exhibiting spaces. Personally, seeing Araya's works was a highlight. In addition, learning about how practitioners explain their works and their efforts to juggle their practice as well as practical needs was something that came up in the conversations, something that I was extremely interested in. In these conversations, I saw the importance of

addressing something everyone could relate to, and potentially something we would all face upon graduating.

After visiting galleries, we had some free time to rest and explore Bangkok. Chinatown, Rod Fai Ratchada, TrueLove @Neverland, Chatuchak Weekend Market were some of the places we went to on our last two days. Back at the hostel, we would sit around the common space to chat into the wee hours.

For many of us who have been to Bangkok before, we had anticipated that it wouldn't be much of an eye opener. However, being with a mixture of familiar and unfamiliar group of people, the way we spent our time was distinctly different from the usual indulgent trips that Bangkok is known for.

As we rushed from airport to hostel, hostel to museums and galleries, I think I could speak for all of us when I say that we were all exhausted to the bone. To add to the itinerary, were the short-lived moments of unspoken interactions in foreign environments, the honesty of simple exchange of experiences which weren't dictated by sit-down-get-togethers but just by being present. It was truly an enjoyable trip with my peers and lecturers and I'm grateful that we were offered the opportunity.



Images courtesy of Adeline Kueh



Keynote by Milenko Prvacki



Presentation by Green Zeng



Keynote by Ho Tzu Nyen



Keynote by Weixin Chong

# MA FINE ARTS POSTGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM 2017

The Study Room, The Ngee Ann Kongsi Library, LASALLE • 6 October 2017

by Dipali Gupta, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 3 (2018)

The MA Fine Arts Symposium at LASALLE was an exemplary illustration of additions to our creative vocabulary, not of words, but of expanding artistic lexicons. A roster of remarkable artists shared their creative practices and research methodologies, having pushed themselves to the limits in search of their very own idiolects. It was the combined creative vocabulary, guided by keynotes, of the very experienced and highly acclaimed artists, Milenko Prvacki, Ho Tzu Nyen and Weixin Chong, that turned this symposium into a stellar glossary of transforming world views. The research presentations touched upon diverse topics yet, they remained relevant to the present through creative strategies of re-rooting, overturning, taking back and highlighting the forgotten, happily accommodating the past and creatively defining the current.

It was the inspiring keynote of Milenko Prvacki that moved me to reflect on what we do as artists. In all that we create, we are constantly building a language, be it personal, visual, textual, poetic, virtual, fictional or digital. It takes no particular form; it is a mixture, a 'luggage' as Milenko would call it, of ideas and materials that touch, inspire, irritate, upset and transform us. A mixture of processes and methodologies that helps us question and extend our limits. As a mentor, Milenko shared several nuggets of inspiration. My favourite one is this: the creative process hurts no one even if you make a mistake, unlike the case of a doctor, lawyer or taxi driver. Your luggage is yours to analyse, integrate and express.

Artist Ho Tzu Nyen handed fantastic insights into his ongoing project, *The Critical Dictionary of South East Asia*, a collaboration that uses interactive internet platforms and cinema to create an endless stream of visual and audio materials that answers the question – what unites the region called South East Asia? (<https://aaa.cdosea.org/#about/a>) His is a dictionary that is ever changing. Based on found footage, he, along with his collaborators, use algorithms to conjure the image of a unified Southeast Asia. For a region that has never been unified by religion, language or political system, this dictionary reveals underlying commonalities through stories, sounds and imagery.

Weixin Chong, the youngest keynote speaker, had some positive advice to share on destabilisation, dislocation and de-fraction. Similar to Milenko's shared experience of existing outside his comfort zone which allows for newer discoveries, her beautiful theory on *Debris and Dust* and digital abjection emphasises the idea of the 'discarded'. That idea that what is discarded can be very expository was wonderfully expressed through her research and works. Her endnotes – "I touch, I see, I feel;" "my art cannot speak for anyone else or vouch for anyone else;" "I have to experience it" – inspires me to adopt these as mantras.

I experienced the works of these artists through their self-created lexicons and each one peeled, open layers of ideas one better than the other. All I did was sit there, like a sponge, and absorb the stories they had to share which incited my own dictionary to multiply.

## THE 38TH INTERNATIONAL TAKIFUJI ART AWARD WINNER: MUHAMMAD MASURI BIN MAZLAN

by Muhammad Masuri Bin Mazlan, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 3 (2018)

In early November 2017, I was elated to receive the news via email that I was selected for the coveted International TAKIFUJI Art Award conferred by TAKIFUJI Foundation for its 38th edition. Some of the past winners include prominent artists such as Yoshimoto Nara and Kenji Yanobe. My application for consideration was evaluated and screened by the leading figures in Japan art world on one body of work, *What The Water Gave Me* that I have produced for my Year 2 Studio Practice module. This win will not be possible without the recommendation of my programme leader of BA(Hons) Fine Art, Hazel Lim. The scholarship enables aspiring artists to produce more work of art by providing grants leading to the final year of their studies. The event was hosted by Japan Traffic Culture Association (JPTCA), a non-profit organisation in Japan whom graciously planned a memorable trip for five days four nights trip to central district Tokyo, Japan.

More importantly, I am exceptionally blessed by the opportunity to visit Japan with my mentor, Hazel Lim. This trip enriched me with new exciting experiences that allows me to understand the Japanese culture and customs and the chance to learn from others. We also met with other lecturers and students from reputable institutions from all over the world such as Ecole Nationale Supérieure Des Beaux-Arts de Paris (France), Pratt Institute (USA), and University of London (UK) to name a few.

On the first day of the trip, we arrived in Japan in the early morning. As we jostled through the bustling morning crowd, I was amazed at how fast-paced and hectic the city was. Exiting the Hamamatsucho station that brought us from Haneda airport, I could feel the crisp and refreshing autumn breeze on my skin. There was so much to take in as we rushed to take Toei Oedo Line from Daimon station to Aoyama-itcho station near where the hotel was located that had been booked for us.

After a short power nap, we headed to a couple of sightseeing sites and settled down to an authentic scrumptious Japanese dinner in the wee hours of the night.

On the second day, JPTCA staff arranged an excursion for all of us for a visit to CREARE Atami-Yugawara studio in Shizuoka, Japan. It is a place where they produce large-scale glass and ceramic commissioned works of public art. As we reached the location, we were briefed on the history behind the creation of the studio. The group of friendly artmakers taught us techniques that concern with the handling of glass and ceramics. We then proceeded to have our lunch, specially crafted in a wrapped bento box. During this time, we took the opportunity to converse with everyone in English, and for our Japanese speakers, we were helped by our interpreter, Ayumi Takahashi. After lunch, we proceeded to participate in two workshops - mosaic craft using glass and ceramic pieces. We were tasked to create four sets of work, of which two sets to be left behind for the studio to be kept as a token of appreciation. Although the entire day had been quite tiring and exhilarating, both Hazel and I continued to explore the city by foot with other lecturers and students for the rest of the night.

On the early morning of the third day, I remember I was rehearsing the Japanese script that I have written with the help of my dear friend, Sharifah Naqibah. I donned a sleek wool tuxedo for the award ceremony at Meiji Kinenkan. As we arrived at the beautiful ancient palace, we were greeted by the hospitable staff of the event and the musical quartet serenading classical sounds for the guests who graced the eventful evening.

The ceremonial event began with a congratulatory speech by the Director-General, Japan Traffic Culture Association, Mr Taki Hisao. Though the address was made in Japanese, we



were guided by an audio guide that translates in real-time. I was so touched by the gesture of the organising committee to provide such privilege for us to enjoy the evening. We had the opportunity to exhibit snippets of photographs, samples of our artwork to be shared amongst the visitors that were present for the event. It was nerve-racking to present my speech delivery in Japanese but I mustered the courage to thank my mentor, the judges and guest-of-honour in front of a large group of eager audience.

On this note, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to LASALLE McNally School of Fine Art as well as my Head of Department, Dr Chandrasekaran, programme leader and mentor, Hazel Lim and studio lecturers Chen Kerui, Gilles Massot and Shirley Soh. Thank you to all my lecturers and friends. My hope is that the future recipient will enjoy the same experiences that I had; and I wish him or her all the best!

# A REVIEW OF SINGAPORE ART WEEK EVENT: STATE OF MOTION 2018: SEJARAH-KU

12 January – 11 February 2018

by Fatima Bano, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 1 (2018)

*State of Motion 2018* brought through quite a journey of exploration in the history of Malay cinema in pre-independent Singapore. This year's edition comprised six locations for the mainland tour; artists had created a work of art as a response to each location and the histories they carry. Each stop in this tour holds a significant place in Malay cinema as many iconic films had been shot at these locations.

Before the tour officially began, we were shown clips from selected movies at the National Library. The theme for this year's *State of Motion* tour was *Sejarah-ku* which translates from Malay into My History in English. The selected scenes from the array of movies that were screened did not make much sense at first, until we saw the actual location. The scenes felt haphazard and it was much like we were flung into unknown, uncharted waters, but when we eventually were on site at the actual locations, we could better understand the relevance and context of the scenes.

The best part about this journey was the random order in which each tour bus was brought through the locations. My group started off with at Shaw Villa, a quaint little property now

occupied by a kindergarten. *0.25 Seconds Before an Image is Void* work by Tan Peiling was a work of art in the public space that could easily go unnoticed until and unless one knew what they were looking for – for instance, the iconic house that is Shaw Villa itself, which has not changed much since the time it appeared in one of the films.

While most of my tour mates really enjoyed Mintio's work at Tanah Merah Besar, which truly was immersive and monumental, my personal favourite was the ending duo in our tour – Izzad Radzali Shah's *Wayang Terbiar* and Wu Jun Han's *Tutup at Jalan Ampas*. I like the former because of how approachable and accessible the work was. The mini-theatre diorama was most engaging because of the quirky pictorial style and diction employed. Finally, our tour was concluded with a sound recording (played over headphones), right in front of the Shaw Malay film studios at Jalan Ampas. The audio recording was a response to a speech from the film *Mogok* which too was filmed at the same location. The audio clip left a lasting impression at the close of the tour because of its strong provocative sentiments. The rich emotions were beautifully captured and conveyed by voice artist Izzad Radzali Shah.



Swaying images of lost loved ones, reunited.



Izzad Radzali Shah, *Wayang Terbiar*, Jalan Ampas.

## WORKSHOP BY JESSE JONES: THE OBJECT OF THE STATE

Winstedt Campus, LASALLE College of the Arts • 16 – 17 August 2017

by Gemma Kearney, MA Fine Arts (2018)

*The Object of the State* was a two-day workshop conducted by Irish artist Jesse Jones, with participants from the BA(Hons) and MA Fine Arts programme. The workshop sought to inculcate a way of thinking about politics, subjectivity and art making. We began with considering our own methodologies as arts practitioners and how we can utilise those to consider possible new strategies for art making.

Jesse then gave a presentation of her two-year long research and performance project made in collaboration with artist Sarah Browne, titled *In the Shadow of the State and The Touching Contract*. This work was an investigation into the role of the State with regards to the regulation of the female body. During the presentation Jesse shared with us some of her own methodology and research contained within her practice, during which we learned that working in collaborative contexts have played an important role in the development of her work. Notably, Jesse highlighted Silvia Federici's seminal text *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. This text by Federici played an important part in the development of a work, which Jones first presented at the Irish Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale titled *Tremble Tremble*.

As a group, we made a visit to *Law of The Land: Highlights from Singapore's Constitutional Documents* at the National Gallery, to delve into an archive of Singapore's legal history and journey to independence as presented to us by the State. We sought a common trajectory among us, as a starting point to view or navigate and discuss these archival documents and material objects. In essence, this act of dialogical exchange became the methodology we would adopt throughout the workshop.

In day two, everyone brought an object that somehow tied us to the State or made us consider the nature of our status in the eyes of the law of the State. These objects that we presented

became our own personal archives that documented the lives and experiences of the workshop's participants. Each object then became a starting point to open up a conversation and debate about its meaning and significance in the contexts of political structures and systems, and then in turn to consider their implications on us as individuals. During our discussions, we touched on ideas of privacy, autonomy, agency, the construction of a national identity by the state and their efforts to preserve this identity, the role education plays in the creation of an ideological state and we recognised and acknowledged the varying experiences based on race, gender, class, nationality and sexuality.

In the sharing of our anecdotal responses to the objects chosen, we were able to scale up and consider the structural implications of our experiences. All of what we discussed raised ideas relating to the symptoms of late capitalism, and we acknowledged and considered Foucault's ideas of bio-power and Federici's ideas of primitive accumulation. Federici suggests that primitive accumulation does not just predate capitalism but is a fundamental tool of capitalism and here in the workshop our own experiences paid testament to Federici's claims. What is the object of the State? The answer is obvious. The answer is us – citizens of the State. Systems of governance can be and are internalised by the individual and depending on aspects of one's identity or sense of self, affect us to varying degrees.

The workshop highlighted the possibilities of the act of conversation to open up spaces for us to engage collaboratively, while developing a methodology of explicating and extracting information from material. It showed us the potential political implications that our own artworks can contain and how, in claiming our own agency, we can as artists comment on the socio-political through material sensitivity.



# WORKSHOP WITH TANG DA WU: HAK TAI'S BOW BROTHER'S POOL AND OUR CHILDREN

The Ngee Ann Kongsi Galleries 1 & 2, NAFA Campus 1

by Joanne Chee, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 3 (2018)

On entering the Gallery, I encounter six large skeletal forms; there were four sheets of glass between them and caught in the reflection, were cars and passers-by in the street outside the gallery; this gave the impression of people walking among these skeletal forms.

There was a large makeshift table that was surrounded by heavy metal chairs. The table's surface was made up of several large transparent acrylic sheets supported by metal legs. Various objects were left on the table and they cast shadows onto the paper that was placed under the table; the shadows resembled drawings, ephemeral, as they were subject to the light and the moveable objects on the table. I sat invited at this table with others, as the artist, Tang Da Wu, took on the role of a teacher and welcomed us to the workshop.

Da Wu began by sharing with us his perspectives on art, his processes and works. Despite speaking gently, he commanded the room with a charismatic presence. He shared how he creates works not to suit exhibition format but creates intuitively before placing it in an exhibition, if a suitable one comes along.

It was an honour to have Da Wu take us through a personal tour of his works. He shared some ideas on the six 'horses', which he had carved by himself, expressed in motion at different speeds, which represented six foundations of art education – coined by Lim Hak Tai, the founding principal of Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, who guided the development

of art education in Singapore. The reflection of 'society' over the glass is the attempt to consider how all these values could still be relevant today.

He also shared his process of making the work *gong*, which is a pictorial Chinese character of the word 'bow'. He shared his thought processes of making as he explains to us that the wooden bow we see was not the first model he designed. Initially he had carved, then painted and varnished the wood to gain a smooth finish. However, the bow eventually snapped as the paint had caused the fibres in the wood to become brittle and break. He went on to share with us this simple tip about handling wood and its raw potential to be bent and manipulated in a curved form.

What engaged me most in this workshop was not the advice that he shared with us young budding artists, but how through the workshop, he embodied the ideas of art education which he himself advocates. I can see his desire to share and his openness to tell us of the road blocks he had faced and how he overcame them. The exhibition spoke strongly for art education and passing it on to the next generation. After having participated in the workshop, I would personally consider the workshop as a work itself within this exhibition.

I left the workshop feeling encouraged and inspired by Da Wu's passion for Art and his generosity in sharing his belief in educating the next generation.



## AN EXHIBITION BY LEOW WEILI: ENTERING OUT, EXITING IN

Presented as part of the Affordable Art Fair Young Talent Programme, ION Art 1 – 24 September 2017

by Ian Tee Wang Loong,  
BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 3 (2018)

Leonardo Da Vinci famously said: "Art is never finished, only abandoned."

It is the interstice of these throwaway moments that inspired Leow Weili's recent paintings-and-sound installation in her solo exhibition *entering out, exiting in*. It was presented as part of the Affordable Art Fair Young Talent Programme winner's showcase, and Weili's first solo exhibition since graduating LASALLE in 2016.

I had asked her prior to the show whether the paintings were completed. She laughed and said: "Paintings are never complete. But they have given back to me so much that I feel ready to let them go."

Reflecting on this 'incomplete' gesture as I walked through the show, I am moved by its honesty. When the vocabulary of the 'unfinished' is so prevalent in contemporary art, I think Weili's sentiment is less about the signalling of some future potential or the cynical failed gestures, than just about, breathing. The sensation of breathing out, release, clearing space so as to move on.

The most successful paintings in the show exude this quality, a lightness in a mood of relaxing restraint. A painting of an intimate size, *come back to the safe space*, features two white trapeziums within a dark-toned square, situated slightly off-centre. A horizontal white line bisects the picture from the left stopping just before it reaches the other end, enough to create dynamism without disrupting pictorial balance. The entire composition sits on a bed of lightly textured pale blue with orange underpainting peeping through.

The exhibition's title is evocative of idea of the open door, manifested as an abstract motif in this body of work. The artist spoke about this rhythm of constant movement that became synonymous with her life after graduation — of finding herself in and out of many things in order to sustain her art...*entering out, exiting in*.

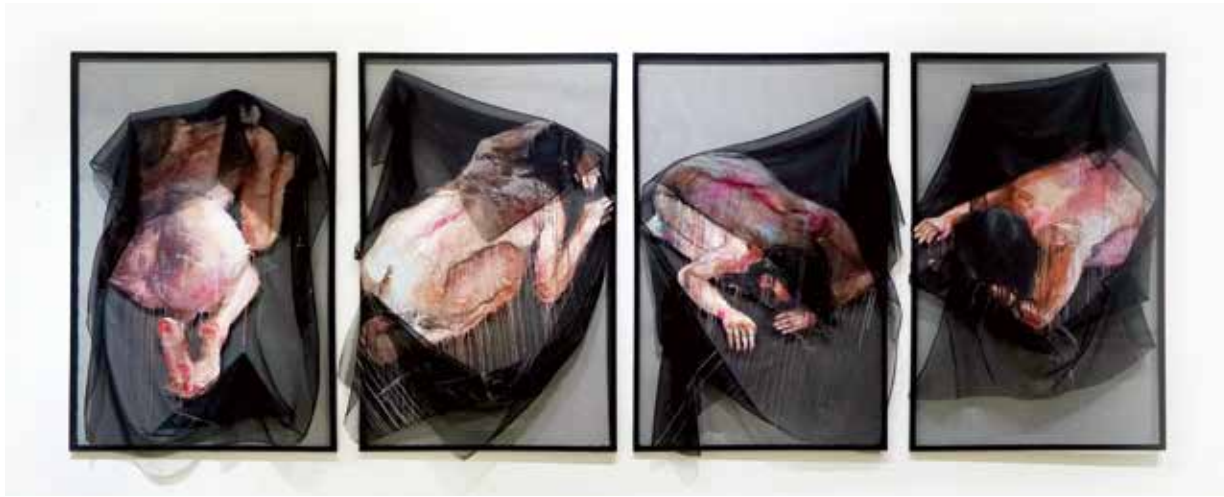


Leow Wei Li, *come back to the safe space*, 2017, Oil on Linen, 15 x 23cm



Leow Wei Li, *listening to things but hearing nothing, listening to nothing but hearing things*

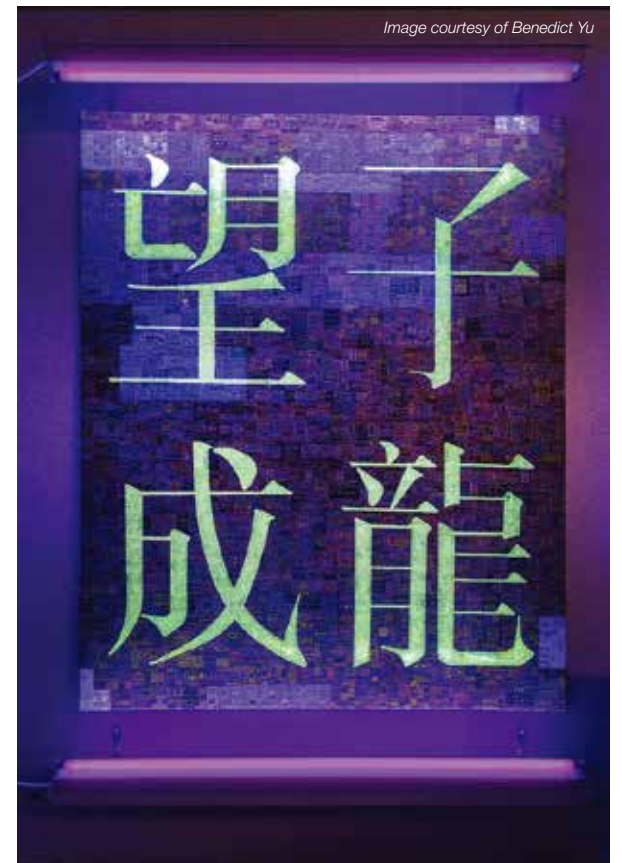




Lim Charlotte, *good girl*, 2017, Oil on Organza, 150 x 100cm, Quadriptych



Kayleigh Goh



Benedict Yu, *Untitled*, 2017, UV paint on collaged newspaper, stretched on canvas, 121.9 x 101.6cm

## GROUP EXHIBITION BY LASALLE AND NAFA STUDENTS: THE NEW NOW

Gajah Gallery • 26 August – 10 September 2017

by Lim Charlotte, Diploma in Fine Arts level 3 (2018)



Artists Lim Charlotte and Benedict Yu at the opening of *The New Now*

Last year, several LASALLE students and graduates and NAFA students as well, had the honour of exhibiting in *The New Now* at Gajah Gallery, Singapore. This exhibition featured works of many different mediums aimed at grappling with 'micro-narratives' in a time where larger socio-political issues seem often to dwarf the personal. It was, for many of us, an opportunity: dipping a toe in the water to test it before taking what we call our "great leap" toward art as a vocation.

The title of the exhibition, *The New Now*, holds a multiplicity of meanings. The first and the more obvious meaning is that it refers to our place as the next generation of artists; second, it refers to the particularity and mundanity of the subject-matter of the works, and serves as a commentary on how the unimportant and the banal hold meaning in a generation of pandemic self importance; and lastly, it also refers to the delicate whimsy of the trivial.

To help elaborate more on this theme and the exhibition, I have put together some insights from three artists: Kayleigh Goh (b.1993), Benedict Yu (b.1996), and, not the least, myself (b.1998). These comments express our visions, artistic processes, and how we see ourselves as emerging artists within an industry rather than as art students.

Kayleigh Goh, a recent BA(Hons) graduate (2016), creates architectural spaces with cement, wood and other industrial material, no doubt influenced by her experience of a large metropolitan city like Singapore. She aims to "construct still and quiet places that encourage pauses in hectic city life." While many prefer to escape city life altogether for these pauses, more often than not, the demands of life and the constraints of borders instead necessitate more keen observations of and appreciation for stillness. Kayleigh will soon have her own solo exhibition at Gajah Gallery.

Benedict Yu, a recent Diploma graduate (2017), also experiments with industrial material, utilising cement as paint in his practice. Like Kayleigh, he takes from his experiences in large metropolis, in his case, Taiwan as well as Singapore to inform his work. He analyses both countries' infrastructures and explores his own cultural duality, most notably the pressures of filial piety, or in his words, "望子成龍" (to long for one's child to succeed in life). Benedict is currently preparing for his group exhibition in Barcelona, Spain as well as a solo exhibition in Tokyo, Japan.

Currently undergoing my Fine Art Diploma, I work with a multidisciplinary approach using photographs, text, oil painting and fabric, circulating themes of hierarchy and power in association with sex and intimacy. *good girl*, 2017, was created to begin a dialogue with an earlier work, *space is inevitable when people have seams*, 2016. The poses I adopt tread a fine line between the depravity of sex and the innocence of adolescence. The foetal position could be construed as extremely deprived (open and ready to be penetrated), or an infantilising and vulnerable pose. That paradoxical image

epitomises my own confusion with the coming of age – in conjunction with a deep fascination with Sigmund Freud's theories on the Oedipus and Electra complex. The use of translucent organza and organic draping throughout the work highlights the softness and warmth of humanity while juxtaposing it with the irreconcilable rigidity of distance between people.

All of us, the artists, extend our immense gratitude to the Gajah Gallery for the opportunity to present our artworks at this exhibition as it has increased our confidence, and allowed us to explore the connections necessary to succeed as an emerging artist. Through this show, Kayleigh have gotten to "know collectors, curators, writers and better understand the gallery scene." In addition, it has given her the opportunity to show with Art Galleries Association Singapore, Singapore Art Stage.

In his own words, Benedict thanked the gallery for the "many opportunities to share my experiences with my audience on how it is living both in Taiwan and Singapore. I have come across artists from different countries, which are also exploring topics of social identities within their cultures. Through many conversations, I have broadened my understanding and learned much more than I expected."

As for me, I have had a close working relationship with Gajah Gallery both as a colleague and as an artist, and can close this article with a heartfelt: "It has been a wonderful journey which has provided incredible motivation to work harder and even beyond expectations, seeing the faith brave gallerists have in young artists."

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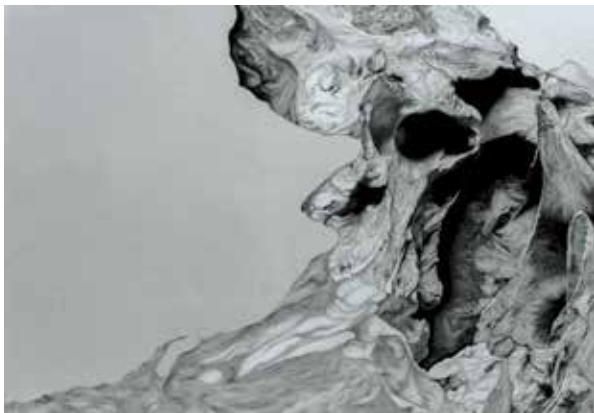
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<https://kayleighgoh.weebly.com/>  
 (30 March 2018 Date Accessed)

*“Researching and seeking for truths and answers broadens my perspectives and eliminates naiveness. It helps me think better not only as an artist but as a person.”*

Images courtesy of Justin Lim



Justin Lim, *The Drift Project*, 2015-2017, Installation View



Justin Lim, *The Drift Project*, 2017, Graphite, charcoal, white coal, white chalk on toned paper, 42.5 x 61.5 x 6cm

## INTERVIEW WITH JUSTIN LIM 2017 IMPART AWARD WINNER: THE DRIFT PROJECT

by Yoo Seung Gi, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 2 (2018)

Young upcoming artist, Justin Lim, has won numerous awards including the IMPART Award 2017 which is a new initiative by Arts Outreach to encourage and develop emerging Singaporean talent in the visual arts, spur creative exchange, create new platforms and help the most promising young art leaders develop excellence in their careers. The following is an interview with the artist:

**Seung Gi (S): Firstly, congratulations to you! What made you sign up for this award? Was there any particular reason?**

**Justin Lim (J):** I was pretty reluctant to apply for the award initially. I was thinking to myself: there are so many great artists out there. But nevertheless I still had to try, therefore I gave it a shot. The residency was a huge attraction that I know I can benefit so much from.

**S: Can you share with us more about your work?**

**J:** My work mainly revolves around the notion of mortality; that speaks about this existential need as beings – to always hold on to things that are ephemeral and transitory.

**S: About the driftwood in your project, what attracted you to it?**

**J:** It was merely aesthetic pleasure when I first chanced upon a piece of driftwood back in early 2016. However, as I spent more time observing the object, the more it became an obsession and relationship. It was an obsession that literally drove me to invest my time and research on. There were so much romanticising and many questions that I had and I guess the answers that I sought have accumulated many layers and dimensions to the project.

**S: We are aware of the residency program in Hubei, China, that you will be taking part in as part of the award. What are your plan/goals for this residency trip?**

**J:** I guess the ultimate goal is to gain as many insights in how artists from Hubei articulate their works. Besides exchanging of ideas and craft techniques, the thought process is as important. Seeing how other artists work out of Singapore will be an eye opener and my plan is to create a body of works based on my residency when I return.

**S: How has it been so far?**

**J:** It has been a wonderful journey so far. Thankful for and humbled by all the opportunities that come along.

**S: How do you find the balance between research and practice?**

**J:** I find the balance by asking myself: what is the purpose of my practice or what do I really want to achieve as an artist. I always knew that I wouldn't want to end up being a factory always producing works for commercial purposes. There is another side of me whom I always knew had many questions and who reminds me that being an artist is not just about producing works. Researching and seeking for truths and answers broadens my perspectives and eliminates naiveness. It helps me think better not only as an artist but as a person.

**S: You seem to be drawn into the medium of graphite and charcoal. Why? And will you consider other mediums as well?**

**J:** Six years ago, when I was searching for a particular suitable medium, I remember feeling an instantaneous connection to graphite and charcoal in comparison to other medium. I guess it best represents whatever that I aim to create. Since then, I have almost dedicated my entire practice and life mastering the craft and techniques of drawing. Although it is just a piece of charcoal and pencil, the versatility of it proved much more than I thought. And yes, I do work with other mediums as well.

I used to be a painter back in school.

**S: What is it like being out in the world? What would you tell and advise your juniors back in LASALLE?**

**J:** It's challenging and tough out there with many disappointments but it is truly possible to remain an artist. I guess my advice for juniors is to stay hungry but not picky. Be aware of any opportunity as it could be your key to other avenues.

## WORKSHOP BY ROY VORAGEN: EXPERIMENTAL POETRY

McNally Campus, LASALLE College of the Arts • 21 September 2017

by Peggy Ong, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 2 (2018)

Roy Voragen is a Bandung-based poet and curator from the Netherlands. To add more, Roy Voragen is a poet and curator whose works stem from the bedrock of minuscule, often overlooked facets of the very same life that each one of us experience.

Day 212 of his ongoing *To Play With Space* work reads: "Depart. Never arrive." And that was something that Roy imparted clearly to each person in his workshop, aptly named *untitled until further notice*.

Although the workshop was organised by MA Fine Arts and is part of the MA Fine Arts programme, a few of the BA(Hons) students, including myself, were lucky enough to be able to attend the workshop. With an intimate group of 10 students, the workshop began with a simple brief: look for text. We were advised to set our own constraints/limitations to finding these particular pieces of text and to complete the task in a few hours, giving us plenty of time to wonder and ponder.

The task is undeniably child's play but we found ourselves quickly inundated with a barrage of words, numbers, signs, even symbols. It was drawn to our immediate attention that the advice given by Roy seemed extremely appropriate. My challenge was to focus on text that had an authoritative tone. Naturally, I was hooked to looking for various sorts of signage, rules, and precautionary boards.

What became of my collection turned into a performance of sorts. Slowly, I recited all the things I usually take in without question: "I will not ride a bicycle;" "I will be monitored;" "I will not panic;" "I will get lost."

And I believe that is what Roy has learned to do with his very same directive. Perhaps, the most salient aspect of Roy's work is that he has learned to saturate himself with mundane language the way we surround ourselves with friends and family. While he has many ongoing, and perhaps, never-ending works, they all inevitably reveal one man's almost complete reliance on them.



At first impression, it may seem that Roy is one of a rare few, but my exposure to his practice in the workshop has taught me that words are the very same way to us as they are to him, that just as he had demonstrated in his workshop, we all "emit speechless messages," and only when we "linger, look, and listen," we might begin to acknowledge this.

# EXHIBITION (DE)TOUR: FLOWERS FROM OUR BLOODLINES INTERVIEW WITH ZARINA MUHAMMAD ON HER LECTURE PERFORMANCE

NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore • 22 September 2017

by Denise Yap, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 2 (2018)



Zarina Muhammad, *Flowers from our Bloodlines*, 2017, Lecture Performance, in collaboration with Stefania Rossetti, featuring Vivian Wang, Eric Lee and Tini Aliman

**Denise Yap (DY):** Could you start off with sharing your reservations on the term ‘magic’ and what exactly is it about magic and myths that entrances you?

**Zarina Muhammad (ZM):** That’s precisely the reason that draws me to these keywords! I see these keywords as having immense cultural baggage, cross-culturally as well and it comes with very complex polyphonic, multi-layered histories—which are often fraught with a lot of tensions. One of the general key tangents in my work is thinking about language and the role it plays in creating parameters for definition – I’m very interested in the question of translatability and cross-cultural equivalents/references to words like “witch”, “sorcerer”, and all these other terms pertaining to these vast histories of and intergenerational, inter-regional, diasporic understandings of ‘magic’, myth and mysticism in Southeast Asia. Magic is often portrayed as a binary to lots of other things like in opposition to religion, modernity, rationality or to science, I find that that is an oversimplification of two very complex things. I do think these ‘binaries’ have a lot more in common with each other, as opposed to existing as diametrically opposite categories. By mapping out the various definitions of magic from various spheres and disciplines to see the ways magic has been positioned in the historical formation of ideas, and in thinking through the dynamics between dominant and subaltern cultures, and via the ideas of diverging, fractioning and/or multiple global modernities. My work re-examines how these magico-religious belief systems have been historically documented, by whom and tackle questions such as: how have these histories been visualised, imagined and passed down or omitted within inter-generational and inter-regional contexts and across communities from varying cultural contexts? A lot of my work so far also draws from anthropological writing, texts by British colonial-administrator-scholars (Walter Skeat’s 1899 *Malay Magic* for example), oral history and the fieldwork that I’ve conducted for nearly a decade.

**DY:** Could you briefly explain your piece *Flowers From our Bloodlines*?

**ZM:** The lecture performance was held in conjunction with the exhibition *Ghosts and Spectres: Shadows of History* held at NTU CCA. For this work, I collaborated with Eric Lee, a filmmaker; Stefania Rossetti, a choreographer/dancer; Tini Aliman a sound designer/ foley artist; and Vivian Wang, a classically trained musician and interdisciplinary artist.

One of the departure points for the lecture performance was the fragmented nature of ancestral and indigenous knowledge within the Malay Archipelago, and the region’s tenuous shape-shifting relationship to mysticism and the immaterial. We were interested in exploring the the idea of therianthropy and how it has marked myriad myths and folklores across cultures and timelines and remains one of the most common tropes in narratives on magic, mania and the otherworldly. We also looked into cross-cultural understandings on possessing spirits, anthropomorphic entities, altered states of consciousness in dance, embodied knowledge and animistic belief systems whilst also tracing underlying connections to the exhibition by extracting themes and trajectories from the works. The key work that we chose to respond to from the exhibition was Apichatpong Weeraseethakul’s *Fireworks (Archive)*, which we felt presented a looking glass (quite literally!) where we could address these multi-layered and multi-headed narratives.

Drawing from the themes of the demonised and desired body, gender-based archetypes, ritualised magic and the broader contexts of myth-making, we also intended for this lecture performance to invoke family histories, the lineages of colonised histories and the legacies of survival and trauma. The performance unfolded through the sifting and un-turning of the different layers of personal memory, collective-documented history and the fragmented nature of ancestral and indigenous knowledge on healing, killing, shapeshifting and survival. We wanted to question the intergenerational, interregional and cross-cultural translation, adaptation and metamorphosis of these narratives through the act of storytelling, ritual, gesture, sound and embodied movement

Images courtesy of NTU CCA Singapore



**DY:** I remember Eric performing some sort of chant “01010101...” Uncannily, in mandarin, the pronunciation of ‘1’ and ‘0’ is yao (妖) and ling (灵), which refers to demons and spirits respectively.

**ZM:** To him the “010101...” was a form of resetting—he wanted to create his own chant and that was what he was writing on the overhead projector. So the chant acted as a closure to the performance.

**DY:** Were the scents of Kaffir Lime and the flowers performative? You called upon a flower shower to bless away the bad *ju ju*...

**ZM:** Every ingredient there was intentional, everything had a certain meaning. Either to ask permission from the space, guardians of the lands or for protection for the show and audiences and it depends on our various entry points, relationship or knowledge to some of the objects there.

**DY:** Since you mentioned closure, I am curious about the moment when we (the audience) were greeted by you and Stephanie walking backwards—like a slow introduction to the space.

**ZM:** Yes, we were very conscious about how we could open up and close the space. There was also the voiceover of a Javanese medicine man that was an opening prayer and to bless everyone in the space: for protections, blessings and that everyone would be healed.

**DY:** In your opinion, how do you see myth, magic and the arts situate itself in the current society today where our society is skeptical of non-scientific knowledge?

**ZM:** I am interested in questioning the category of truth when talking about science or in any discipline or sphere because I think that truth needs to come all ways with inverted commas, since truths are historically, culturally and individually specific and contingent. So how do we also move beyond the binary that is convenient especially because of the pace we live in? Our world is constantly moving, changing and we are anxious to keep up, That there can be a tendency to just want to classify and pigeonhole things to very fixed categories is an easy excuse. I have seen far too many times when it becomes a prop and it becomes something very much in trend. It’s a buzzword recently and I am aware of how I am also perpetuating this and unfortunately I think art ultimately has many limitations. There is only so much one and the arts can do and art does exist in its bubble and own privilege. It will also be for certain audiences, so how do we navigate these questions? There is no one answer. So how do we adhere and destabilise simultaneously? Is that possible to do that?

**DY:** Well these are questions to ponder throughout our lifetimes!

# A POST-REVIEW ON THE SECOND SEASON OF THE YEAR LONG EXHIBITION: ART MOVES II IN RETROSPECT

The Connoisseur Concerto • 9 December 2016 – 30 November 2017

by Susanna Tan, BA(Hons) Fine Arts Alumni (2016)

Images courtesy of Susanna Tan



A group photo with the artists.

LASALLE College of the Arts partners with TCC – The Connoisseur Concerto to present *Art Moves*, a one year-long exhibition (currently in its third season). The year-long showcase features artworks of varied mediums from the BA(Hons) Fine Arts graduates. Each year, two assistant curators are chosen among them to undertake the project, for which they are given a stipend every quarter year.

Fresh out of the college, Leow Wei Li and I were honoured to be selected curators for the second season. We were excited for TCC's new direction in positioning themselves as art boutique cafes and we have a total of six café locations for the display of artworks. The plan is to put up artworks on the café walls for sale and the half the sale's profit would go to the artist, a quarter to *loveLASALLE* education fund and the remaining quarter to TCC to cover of their basic administrative cost. The exhibition would be supported by a series of artist-public activities and marketing proposals by us.

The project starts by shortlisting 13 artists from our graduating batch. In the process, we developed our understanding of each artist's practice, and collated these to present to the panel consisting of the TCC board and LASALLE team. All 13 artists were approved in an unanimous decision by the panel.

Another aspect of the project which we were particularly interested in was the exhibition's collateral activities and the marketing proposal. For us, it was new grounds to try out what activities could complement the exhibition for a more wholesome experience and what channels we could tap on to gain further exposure for our artists. We worked with a calendar full of prep-work meetings, installation/de-installation dates, exhibition opening programmes, artists' workshops, social media postings.



Kayleigh Goh explaining colour theory to the kids.

All the planning, meetings, email communication and hard work were celebrated with our artists, friends and families on the opening night, in this double-storey shophouse with ample wall-space for the collection of artworks.

Artists' workshops were one of our highlights of the proposal. The initiative of holding workshops in TCC premises was a way to attract existing food-loving customers to the exhibition space and for the public to know more about our artists and the year-long project. This season, we invited Moses Tan and Kayleigh Goh to run a weekend workshop with TCC customers. The workshops were planned and incubated with the aim to feature the coffee and food that TCC proudly champions.

Moses held a half-day workshop for adults in which he introduced his practice and the use of delicate strokes in his drawings. The participants mapped their own portrait and painted them in different tonal gradients using espresso coffee shots provided by TCC. For Kayleigh, she planned a workshop programme for kids, using food ingredients. With edible colourings and cornstarch, the kids created their own paints.

The entire year-long journey gave us great insights to the expectations of working with a commercial food and beverage operation. Wei Li and myself were able to nurture our friendship along with the continued connections with our peers even after graduation. Towards the closing of the show in November 2017, we were joined by the next batch of artist-curators as we shared personal experiences and shared valuable information for the next season.

*Art Moves III* is currently helmed by Nicolette Teo and See Kian Wee, the artist-curators for the current year (third season).

For more information, visit [www.artmoves.com.sg](http://www.artmoves.com.sg).

# THE WINSTON OH TRAVEL AWARD: WANDERLUST: AN AFFIRMATION OF BEING, BELIEF AND KNOWLEDGE

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore • 15 September – 17 October 2017

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

Considering most art in relation to travel, it is generally understood that the artist, after navigating her or his artistic approaches to unexplored frontiers – historically, culturally or socially – with other forms of research and knowledge, presents a visual engagement of senses addressing specific experiences. But considering the artist, in the financial capacity of a student, the idea is often relegated to combing one's backyard. By no means am I suggesting that this realm allowed to creative research is less important. Rather, as the late John Berger fondly puts across, it is something about the "artist's way of looking at the world... a representation of a recognisable incident," which provides greater meaning, desire, pleasure, and the ability to "increase our awareness of our own potentiality. (Berger, John. *Landscapes: John Berger on Art*, Verso, 2016)" What we take away on a higher plane is not just the memory of an experience, but also the suggestion of a minute relationship with the world: a vicarious doorway in which we relate, recall or even question this.

Generally overlooked in the context of white cube spaces, however, is the absence of the artist's beliefs, visual perspectives and methodology – the process of which she/he draws from a body of materials and experiences that precedes the artwork's presentation. In the end, we are left with a fragment of a practice, reducing its value to what it does, and not what the artwork actually is. Chuckling while sharing this anecdote during our tête-à-tête luncheon before the launch of The Winston Oh Travel Research and Practice Award exhibition held at the LASALLE College of the Arts, somewhere years ago, Dr Winston Oh, a cardiologist and the sponsor of this Travelogue Award, and Dr

Julia Oh, his British-born wife, visited a museum in England to soak in the multitude of exhibitions. Having stopped at a painting, Dr Julia Oh, herself a LASALLE alumna, passionately articulated her understanding of the vivid brushstrokes, movement, reducing it to a context constructed from the artist's intention. Having listened for a while, the cardiologist looked at the painting, said nothing, and walked away. He lamented, that while in front of him sat a beautiful painting, the lack of description of the artistic process or journey, further widened an invisible boundary between the viewer and the art.

Perplexing to many during a time when the endless debate about arts funding, here is a couple who have quietly walked the talk. For the past 18 years (and perhaps even more), the couple has been nothing but a fervent patron of the arts. While Dr Julia Oh, the social-anthropologist and arts therapist, channels her support to the National Heritage Board and other like causes, Dr Winston Oh took ownership by sponsoring the eponymous travel scholarships to students across the Fine Arts board annually – one of whom was prominent local painter Ruben Pang. "The idea is to enable students in their formative years to gain exposure to other cultures, environments, arts, to record their responses to this new experience," explained Dr Oh in a 2010 interview by *The Business Times*.

But who is this benefactor? There are two personal facts about Dr Oh that he humbly keeps hidden. The first is, Dr Oh is an excellent watercolourist having been under the tutelage of the late James Fletcher-Watson, John Yardley and Ken Howard. Singapore's

Images courtesy of Weizhong Deng



Gemma Kearney, *Flags can fall*, 2017, wood, synthetic polymer paint, rubber, synthetic polymer paint on resin, cloth 2 digital prints, 60 x 42cm/42.5 x 30.5cm, installation dimensions variable

pioneer artist Ong Kim Seng praised his work as "transparent, right to the point, and spontaneous," but Dr Oh had never formally enrolled in an art school, only seriously pursuing the craft after his children flew the coop. His love for plein air, the act of painting outdoors, is very much evident in his numerous classic landscapes. Second, Dr Oh is still as interested as ever after 18 years of being exposed to the contemporary ways of seeing.

After lunch, we moved to Praxis Space, one of Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore's managed galleries in LASALLE. It was a hot day and 10 recipients waited nervously inside. This time round, the 2017 edition titled *Wanderlust*, which capitalises on the strong desire to travel, was extended to providing support to travel further to places that were not readily accessible. This group exhibition took on a different nuance from the year before by providing a repository of memories, observations, and obsessions – footnotes of the mind.



Didier Mathieu, *Hantunopolis*, 2017, spray paint on wall 500 x 500cm approx

So what are the ten sites and sights of significance? Here, we became passive witnesses to Gemma Kearney's *Flags can Fall*, as she tries to understand the historical strife between the Loyalist Protestant paramilitaries and the Catholic Irish nationalists as an Irish citizen with an assemblage of deconstructed painted pallet wood and cloth, a rubber lion mask, and documented photos. The Master's student wanted to highlight her and the opposition's subjectivity in Belfast, Northern Ireland, a place where two opposing ideological standpoints and systems meet, and to understand the "physical manifestation of discontent and national identity" through its immediate physical environment and tourist paraphernalia.

In Justin Lim's *The Drift Project II* the paradigm of travel became the means of highlighting the hierarchies of political power, geographical boundaries, and immigration. What initially started as a purely romantic, aesthetic attraction to the mysterious form, led to an investigation of the identity of the object through a series of GPS tracking and trekking across India and Indonesia. We could only imagine what could have been the object's final movements through the undergraduate's mark-making journey and series of charcoal drawings.

Emblazoned across a wall is Didier Mathieu's colourful and retro-futuristic spray-painting masterpiece, *Hantunopolis*. The ephemeral, utopia-inspired city front is blown up to an extremely large scale influenced by the wall mural technique of fresco. During his Master studies at LASALLE, the experienced graffiti artist was so fascinated by this centuries-old technique, where painting is executed on wet lime plaster to integrally bond the effect to the wall, that it took this Colombian to Mexico. There he discovered David Alfaro Siqueiros, a social realist painter and muralist whom he credits as his inspiration.

Among her tourist encounters in Taiwan, while at the Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall in Taipei, Denise Yap chanced upon the Change of Guards which she began considering as a parallel to American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler's gender performativity theory. Using this for her work, *Untitled (Don't...)*, Denise Yap deconstructs the social roles and norms of homosexuality by her own experience in Singapore. In a single-channel video and installation, Denise demonstrated that the on-duty guards behind the Q-poles, end their 'performance' the moment they step off the pedestal, likening it to how homosexuals tend to have to 'perform' when in public which ends just as abruptly in a private space.

Parallel to a fellow classmate's expedition to Taiwan, Viet Anh Capi went in search of a growing Vietnamese community in Taichung. As a Vietnamese himself, he observed the differences in hospitalities against a context of how assimilation of a stranger begins in a foreign land. In *Catching Coconut; Rat's Wedding; Yin-yang Family*, the digital video animation collages that were projected separately on ceramic plates, narrate three scenarios: the migrant worker; the matchmaking process; and the unification of the two cultures through food.

If the fertility rate does not increase for Singapore, we would be having the same demographic profile and problems as the Japanese. The increase in the greying population triggers the battle between the living and the dead for space. Undergraduate



Eugene Tan, *PGS Introduction*, 2017, high-definition digital video animation, 16:9 aspect ratio



Justin Lim, *The drift project II*, 2017, felt-tipped pen on wall, installation dimensions variable

Eugene Tan believes that technology is the solution to dense urban cities. Using Singapore as the template, he proposed automatic access systems located at the common void decks of flats, in which one could easily command the remains of loved ones to their immediate presence rather than heading to a far flung columbarium. This satire was cleverly conveyed through digital video animations titled the *PGS: Introduction* and *PGS: Grave Corner Prototype*, that were screened from a makeshift altar.

South Korean Yeyoon Ann is fascinated by individualism and collectivism. The Winston Oh Travelogue award gave her the opportunity to examine and explore individualism by drawing some observations back in her own hometown. One of the aspects observed in a hierarchical country lie in the custom of addressing a person, which if doing so by name is culturally frowned upon. She uncovered pockets of mark-making where individuals vandalised certain public walls with their own names. Aptly titled *Names, Names, Names...*, Yeyoon believes that names are not only significant in representation but that it also represents the value of individuality and presence.

Intrigued by the premise of the Wallace Line, a faunal boundary line that separates the eco-zones of Asia and Wallacea (a group of Indonesian islands separated by deep-water straits), Foo Hui Wen travelled to Bali and Lombok in search of possible hybrid species from both sides. Much to her amusement in her initial research proposal of locating untouched reserves of nature, she found instead a different set of 'species' in these populated touristy areas. Through her topographical mapping in *The Line Between Where Myths Lie*, in drawings and watercolour, Hui Wen highlighted the discovery of these domesticated animals and introduces fauna as evidence of human's intrusion and intervention.

Moved by the power of Tibetan culture and the idea of peace that it signifies, fellow classmate Benedict Yu travelled to Lhasa where he learnt Tibetan religion, music, and words that went into the creation of a 'mandala'. Believing that souls are communication pathways between the heaven and earth, Benedict created his own song and praise in collaboration with his newfound friends, and putting these together into a ritual, he painted a mandala for his work, *Conversations Between Heaven and Earth*.

Recounting and reflecting back, it is evident that without the patronage and support from Dr Winston Oh, all the above journeys would not be realised. There would be no new explored frontiers, nor additional acquired knowledge. More importantly, there will be no more dreaming.

This writer is a fellow Winston Oh Travelogue Research Award winner. She travelled to South Korea in search of temple food against the background of a growing sensory-specific satiety phenomenon in affluent cities. Her sculptures demonstrated her conceptually-driven investigations behind 'eating' in *I Eat to Live I*. The Practice Award recipients are Benedict Yu, Denise Yap, Foo Hui Wen, Viet Anh Capi and Yeyoon Ann. The Research Award recipients also include Didier Mathieu, Eugene Tan, Gemma Kearney and Justin Lim. *Wanderlust* is curated by Adeline Kueh in collaboration with Caterina Riva.



Yeyoon Ann, *Names, names, names...*, 2017, tracing paper, embroidery on printed cardboard (3 parts\_ each 29.7 x 42 cm); 12 digital prints (each 12 x 17.5 cm); notebook, pencil overall dimensions variable

# GROUP SHOW IT'S BEEN A WHILE

15 – 29 March 2018  
One East Asia gallery

**Artists:** Susanna Tan, Dominic Khoo, Leow Wei Li, Victoria Tan, Debbie Cheung and Moses Tan

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

This is a rehearsal.

A show that explored the concept of silence, the concept of gaps and the notion of departure in various ways, *it's been a while* is an exhibition which could be seen as a rehearsal, a mid point, a prelude.

A project that happened well over a year ago with *One East Asia*, *it's been a while* happened originally to discuss silence through various trajectories. This then evolved slowly into an exhibition that curatorially hoped to also survey the growth within each of us two years after graduation (one of which is graduating this year).

A tension between complexity and simplicity (while it should also never be read as binaries), the need to constantly update and challenge and negotiate, between parties and between conflicting ideals within individuals. The challenge was to also negotiate ideas of reality with the ideals that were conveyed while in a safe educational environment, which this was not.

And this was a rehearsal.

A rehearsal in which our works became unguided scripts to be worked out, deconstructed and reconstructed in different forms and different ways. A rehearsal for an ideal post graduation exhibition and ideal post graduation hope.

This is a rehearsal. This was a rehearsal.

~  
Where do we go from here?

The state of constant contemplation and reflection; of arousal from melancholic stupors, of desires and of needs.

To ask questions of positions. To ask questions to position. To decide and derive, to draw parallels and tangents.

I'm not familiar with this contemplation. I'm not comfortable with this reflection.

But, where do we go from here?

Do we go parallel or do we go off the tangent into the unknown?

Do we consider these fragmented parts as discoveries or should we consider these as reflective journeys within melancholic stupors – unaware, unprepared and unrehearsed?

Images courtesy of Moses Tan



Images courtesy of Maria Clare Khoo



# CROSS DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH SEMINAR: TRANS/MISSION 2018

The Study Room, The Ngee Ann Kongsi Library, LASALLE • 9 February 2018

by Lin Mengju, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 1 (2018)

*“This platform is designed to investigate common interdisciplinary issues regarding research methodologies, hypotheses and experimentations that students come across during their individual practices.”*



## INTRODUCTION

by Dr Wang Ruobing,  
Lecturer in Fine Arts

*Trans/Mission Research Seminar* (previously known as Dissertation Presentation) was first spearheaded by the Head of McNally School of Fine Arts, Dr Chandrasekaran, and co-organised with Dr Mitha Budhyarto (School of Spatial and Product Design) in 2016, to encourage interdisciplinary exchanges. Since 2017, the seminar has extended the invitation to other Schools within LASALLE College of the Arts. This year, 2018 *Trans/Mission* was co-organised by Dr Wang Ruobing (McNally School of Fine Arts) and Susan Sentler (School of Dance & Theatre). It featured 16 final year dissertation research of BA(Hons) Level 3 students from all eight Schools (McNally School of Fine Arts, Putnam School of Film & Animation, School of Creative Industries, School of Design Communication, School of Fashion, School of Spatial & Product Design, School of Contemporary Music, School of Dance & Theatre).

In the past three years, *Trans/Mission* has proven to be an invaluable and far-reaching platform facilitating interdisciplinary exchanges on the contemporary discourses that have informed and shaped the students' practices. Two BA(Hons) final year students, Diva'agar and Dipali Anurag Gupta, were selected to represent the McNally School. This column includes the abstracts of their presentations as well as reflective insights by BA(Hons) year 1 student Lin Mengju.

*Trans/Mission* gathers BA(Hon) Level 3 students from the above eight schools in LASALLE College of the Arts to present their dissertation research of their final year of study. This platform is designed to investigate common interdisciplinary issues regarding research methodologies, hypotheses and experimentations that students come across during their individual practices.

The seminar is split into four sessions according to their respective themes. We are presented with the following themes this year: A Singapore Lens; Social Bodies; Challenges and Creative Alternatives; and Transformation. Two students from McNally School of Fine Arts took part this time – Diva'agar took part in Social Bodies while Dipali Gupta participated in Challenges and Creative Alternatives. Regrettably, I was not able to attend Diva'agar's presentation.

Diva'agar's research, *Imaging Queer Solidarity: Spectacle and Other Strategies*, explores queer solidarity in Singapore in the form of queer movements and alternate representations. Through examining events and artists in the context of wider systems of control, Diva'agar concludes that enforced similarity, facilitated by national events and civic movements, protects heteronormativity's privileges in Singapore's society; contemporary art, on the other hand, brings light to individual stories and produces constructive rifts in the current generalising climate towards queer solidarity. He extends this research to reflect on his studio practice, which involves exploring how queer solidarity intersects with the private and public domains of his identity in his installational work.

Dipali Gupta's research, *Her Pleasure*, engages with the perception of female sexual pleasure in the context of an individualistic and controlled society. Her research covers the complexities of historical and religious influences that shape our attitudes today. Although female sexual desire is liberated, Dipali observes how it is widely considered as a self-indulging and unproductive act. Through reviewing the invention of vibrators, Dipali's research negotiates myths and social constructs surrounding reproduction, domestication and female desires and sexualities that challenge the binary and promote sex positivity. Her studio practice includes mark-making exercises and time-based performance art involving vibrators.

At the end of each session, the panel and audience members are encouraged to ask the students questions about their research. Of the numerous questions brought forward, Head of McNally School of Fine Arts, Dr S. Chandrasekaran, raised an intriguing question that sparked a healthy exchange among the students and audience. He questioned Eshan Denipitiya from School of Contemporary Music about his research methodology: since Eshan's work involves improvisational music arrangements, Dr Chandrasekaran wondered if Eshan's method of working with a template contradicts the idea of improvisation.

A member of the audience (I assume to be a lecturer from one of the eight schools) responded by quoting John Cage and Cunningham Dice to illustrate her point of view: "When you work with chance, you do set yourself rules." She extended the discussion to the other student presenters to talk about their methodologies that involve improvising with chance.

In response, Dipali shared the challenges and solutions to her methodologies – since she works with a vibrator, she established rules while she worked around the features of the object, such as only switching on and off instead of adjusting with the vibrator's movement when it comes off of the paper, using black ink to complement the object's behaviour during the mark-making process, setting timers for the object while in a public performance, and so on.

Valerie Lim from School of Dance and Theatre also shared how her immersive theatre project involves chance and improvisation as well, and through the balanced mix of scripted dialogues and impromptu reactions by her actor-dancers, she could bring about the genuineness of an immersive experience that she was looking to achieve. To conclude, the students and audience acknowledged the chaotic sensibility that improvisational practice brings to the table, which we, as artists, all fully embrace.

Through a full-bodied sharing and fruitful discussions, I learnt a lot from the student artists and their research. Particularly, the well-developed Q&A session at the end brought the sharing to an intermediate level, where we witnessed an affirmation that different kinds of creative practice share similar processes and philosophies. Such exchanges and evaluations reaffirm the importance of the *Trans/Mission* seminar as an encouraging and beneficial platform.

# IMAGING QUEER SOLIDARITY: SPECTACLE AND OTHER STRATEGIES

by Diva'agar, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 3 (2018)



Image courtesy of Diva'agar

Diva'agar, *The Soul Lounge*



Image courtesy of Maria Clare Khoo

The presentation started with a joke: I wished everyone a “ngee ann kongsi fa cai.”

I began explaining how Singapore's use of images perpetuates notions of nation building, focusing primarily on its representations of the major race groups in Singapore, that are evident from public advertisements to the smaller scale notices on school activities.

Analysing these images through the theory of the ‘imagined community’ as termed by Benedict Anderson, the images serve a purpose in creating an atmosphere of tolerance and racial harmony. I offered my analysis of nationwide events, particularly looking at the National Day parade through Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* which explains the correlation between proliferation of these images and the feeling of unity. At this point, I brought up Pink

Dot SG, regarded as Singapore's only and largest public representation of queerness, in spite of existing cultures of censorship and national narratives. During Pink Dot, the event runs in unison, with people dressing similarly, singing concertedly, and congregating for a common purpose. This is a strategy in which the event encapsulates an audience, through embracing similarity and not difference.

I continued this discussion by pointing to this environment of censorship, and how minorities were not able to express dissent within the existing narratives. The examples I shared were such as Josef Ng's sensationalised performance in 1994, who was arrested and charged with committing an obscene act; and Sangeetha Thanapal's online backlash as methods in which its content was silenced.

In the next part, I discussed works that have been more successful in presenting queerness in the arts in Singapore. Firstly, I identified Khairullah Rahim's practice and how his work are being exhibited within the galleries' network; his artworks uses subtle motifs obviating the need for a clear indication of queerness in the physical works themselves. Secondly, Simon Fujiwara's partially censored installation, *Welcome to the Hotel Munber*, in the Singapore Biennale 2011, was an interesting case; here, the final outcome of the artist's decision to close the entire installation (as opposed to a compromised partial censoring by the organising authority) pushed the topic of censorship further than his original work did. Lastly, Ming Poon's participatory performance project, *Hold My Hand*, revealed how the work, when performed in public, brought forward to the public, gay men's affection to counter the social stigma of male affection in public.

Finally, to end the presentation, I spoke about my own practice and how my current project, *The Soul Lounge*, presents a space almost exclusively for brown, queer people as alternative sites of congregation. I ended with a summary of my thesis statement and that while what this paper calls for is not a revolutionary overthrow of these systems that are already in place, it is rather an exhortation that minorities must continue to create our presences and remain visible within these larger narratives.

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## HER PLEASURE

by Dipali Gupta, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 3 (2018)



Images courtesy of Dipali Gupta

Dipali Gupta, *In Her Bedroom*, 2018, Video still frame



Image courtesy of Maria Clare Khoo

*Her Pleasure* deliberates on the perception of female sexual pleasure and its place in an individualistic and controlled society.<sup>1</sup> Commonly disregarded in the act of procreative sex, the place of female sexual pleasure today is a product of historical and religious habituation, their socio-political constructs and its psychosomatic effects. The workings of biopolitical mechanisms that have far reaching vectors in today's societies of control. Despite its liberation, female sexual pleasure is judged as a self-indulging, wasteful exercise that generates no tangible results.

Through the journey of the invention of female sex toys (vibrators), the research aims to subvert politically influenced myths of reproduction, denaturalise societal constructs of domestication and revive female desires that challenge the binary. The concept of the assemblage is at the heart of these explorations and the artistic practice. The creative processes applied by the artist involve mediums and materials that allow her to explore this nexus of the pleasure object and female sexuality in its constant state of becoming, regeneration and experimentation. And the relevance of such an assemblage is further assessed in a sexually liberal, but anxiety driven, over cautious and self-indulgent society pivoting on instant gratification and steering from emotional commitments.

While the starting point of this project is rooted in the historical location of women, the investigations lead one to think of assemblages as an approach adopted by women to disassemble and reassemble their collective and personal selves (Haraway 163), essential for survival in the current pharmacopornographic societies of control.<sup>2</sup> It is about engaging with societies of control, experimenting with the opportunities it offers, finding potential movements of deterritorialisation and possible lines of flight (Deleuze 161). The vibrator, as an integral part of such an assemblage, is not separate from the female body and in this context, it

is no longer about anti-reproduction, immorality or sexual indulgence but about being the indulgence, the desire, the immoral and the choice. Sexual autonomy requires access to pleasure and possibilities. Women, as part of such abstract couplings, are unafraid of their becoming, partial identities and contradictory standpoints (Haraway 154) and willingly partake in this pharmacopornographic culture that enables sexual variance and freely circulates knowledge about it (Comella 14). Clearly the Goddess is making way for the cyborg and embracing her pluralisms (Haraway 181).

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<sup>1</sup> The society we live in today is a controlled society where control is administered in miniscule and invisible ways giving the individual a false sense of freedom. I refer here to the concept of *Societies of Control* by Gilles Deleuze.

<sup>2</sup> Pharmacopornography, a term coined by Paul B. Preciado in the book *Testo Junkie*, referring to the integration of technocapitalism, global media and bio technologies that govern sexual subjectivity.



## WINSTEDT OUTDOOR SCREENING NIGHT: WAYANG MALAM

4 August 2017 • Winstedt Campus, LASALLE College of the Arts

by Tiffany Ann Dass, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 2 (2018)

A warm evening spent cross-legged on rolled out mats with platefuls of noodles and cans of beer while watching the work of our Fine Art Alumni, lecturers and selected artists, Chen Kerui, Loo Zihan and Massot Gilles to name a few, proved to be an excellent start to the semester. The term *Wayang Malam* directly translates into Night Cinema although the word *Wayang* suggests *Wayang Kulit* (Javanese shadow puppet shows). Inspired by those theatrical evenings, the event was held outdoors in the dark as films were projected onto the side of a truck, offering a very different cinematic experience. The turnout was small, but it made for an intimate evening with an abundance of seating and refreshment.

More popular for its unscripted plot and humorous subtitles was *Durian Picking* by our very own Chen Kerui. Ever wondered how we get to enjoy the very best of this King of Fruits? Chen explores lush forested areas with the experts, as he is taught to listen out for the right sounds of durians falling while trying to pinpoint the right trees, especially after sunset.

*Autopsy* by Loo Zihan features an unwavering and personal documentary of a conversation between Loo and his mother with regards to his sexuality. The dialogue takes us on journey of exploring gender, sexuality, Asian society and a mother's love, hope and dismay. Most poignant were some of Loo's mother's tear-jerking statements like, "You are my son, how

can I despise you?" and "As long as you're happy."

A thought-provoking inaudible film, *Hold Your Tongue*, by Nadia Alsagoff offered visuals as literal as its title. A girl, mouth open, her tongue held by a, presumably, male hand. Her tongue rests between his thumb and index finger as she proceeds to attempt to speak. Muffled murmurs escape her lips along with endless drool leaking off her bottom lip. Her saliva and incomprehensible words provoke one to think about the possible metaphor behind this very literal representation. Do we live in a society where we are forcibly silenced and barely understood?

Flavio Cury's *A Man With No Face*, based on the novel *The Land at the End of the World*, juxtaposes two narratives, one told through a voiceover and the second through the visual. The voice recalls the trauma of war as we watch a male body attempting to wash himself clean of an omnipresent black liquid. Present is a kind of visual poetry teased out in the tension between the two, suggesting an attempt to cleanse and forget.

LASALLE McNally School of Fine Arts' second run at the annual *Wayang Malam* offered all who attended, a night of compelling cinema, beguiling visuals and gripping narratives. I would like to speak for most of us when I say; we can't wait for the third!

## AN EXHIBITION BY SANYAA MEHROTRA: RAW/UNCOOKED

SPRMRKT • 27 – 28 November 2017

by Sanyaa Mehrotra, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 2 (2018)

*"It was an experience to cherish forever. There is so much that I learned through this, it helped me grow as an individual. I learned to be grateful for each person who helped me out, even by just turning up. It made me feel closer to home."*



Images courtesy of Sanyaa Mehrotra

5...4...3...2...1 HAPPY NEW YEAR! screamed everyone as I pressed 'send'. I had been pondering since September over whether or not to send in a proposal for a possible exhibition at SPRMRKT, an Art, F & B and retail outlet. The proposal along with my portfolio sat in the Draft section of the email for a month before I sent it. I had no hope of being shortlisted. I had no prior experience, no knowledge. Having recently made the decision to pursue Fine Arts and being in the first semester of my first year, I was extremely apprehensive. I hoped for a positive response with all my heart even though my practical self told me to expect nothing. After four months of subconscious nervousness, I was so sure the email would read the usual "unable to offer you..." but surprisingly, it did not. Instead, it was a request to schedule a meeting to start discussions on the potential works for the exhibition. I was ecstatic but still not fully ready to believe it was actually happening.

At the time of the meeting, I was working on my Text as Image and Self Proposed series which they liked enough to accept as works for the final exhibition. Things were falling into place and taking shape and then – the inevitable. I did not do as well as I had expected to in the school assessment – despite the intense journey in creating these works. I was upset; I was self-deprecating, doubted my abilities and questioned my decision to hold the exhibition. My then-PPD lecturer was kind enough to sit with me for half an hour to explain to me where I could have improvised and develop more the creative aspects of my practice. The root of all my problems has been indecisiveness. I promised myself to learn from the mistakes I had made. The exhibition would be my second chance at showcasing these works that I had worked so hard on.

For the exhibition, I had to make several compromises, especially for the series based on *Menstruation*, considering that SPRMRKT was an F&B site. I wanted to push ahead with my ideas but not at the risk of not having the exhibition, so I made changes in the titles, removed explicit items and found ways to express my thoughts in subtle ways. To help me cover

the costs that went into the exhibition materials, I took up a job as a waitress; I wanted to be able to exhibit using money that I had earned on my own. I collaborated with Sally's Room, a candle crafting business, which created a candle scent for Diwali inspired by the exhibited works. I called it, Noor, meaning Light of God. The packaging was done, the press coverage – I'll be honest – made me ecstatic. Titling the exhibition *Raw/Uncooked*, I designed the flyers for the exhibition and submitted it to SPRMRKT to handle the print and advertising; everything was ready.

I was given about a hundred flyers to pass on, a few of which I shyly presented to my lecturers as per my Indian tradition and some to my peers. The rest, I stuffed in a bag and tucked away in my room, almost embarrassed to distribute them. I was not ready to hear criticisms. I was at a point where I wanted lots of people to come and at the same time for no one to be there at all. I was homesick, I wished for my first exhibition to be back in India where I would be surrounded by a large number of familiar faces and unquestioned support, instead of here.

On the eve of the opening reception, my beautiful best friends threw me a congratulatory Bollywood themed surprise party – the most precious thing that has ever happened to me. It meant the world; I discreetly cried – in a cool way, of course. On the day of the opening, it was raining so hard that I was myself 20 minutes late. By this time, I was sure that my four friends and I would be the only ones there, which would still have made me happy. I was wrong.

The number of people that showed up was overwhelming. To me at least, considering my low expectations. Some incredible people turned up, despite the rain. An uncle flew in from India – my parents were on video call. My tutorial lecturer came with her daughter. Some classmates, house neighbours came with their friends. Some were there having learnt of it from Instagram and there were some through the press coverage and flyer publicity. One turned up even though it was his birthday. My best friends were being paparazzi and reception hosts at the same time. And then there were the long-distance supporters who were by my side in spirit...and through social media. It may not be a big deal to most – there are so many people who have done bigger, better things. This was a small event but nonetheless, very special to me. Being my first, being far away from the comforts of home, it was an experience to cherish forever. There is so much that I learned through this, it helped me grow as an individual. I learned to be grateful for each person who helped me out, even by just turning up. It made me feel closer to home.



# BA(HONS) LEVEL 2 WORK-IN- PROGRESS SHOW: LOADING... PLEASE WAIT

Alliance Francaise de Singapour  
1 – 24 February 2018

by Desiree Tham and Megan Lam,  
BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 2 (2018)



The start of this year saw an exciting showcase of works by the year two students in an exhibition titled *Loading, Please wait...* held at la galerie of Alliance Francaise de Singapour. The exhibition is an accumulation of LASALLE second year BA (Hons) Fine Arts' work-in-progress, curated by a team of student artists.

With a great turn up of year one and year three students from the course, along with lecturers and the French public, the gallery was overflowing with visitors on the opening night of the show. The palatable refreshments and drinks could not compare to the captivating works-in-progress by the students. Throughout the night, visitors were constantly engaged in conversation with the student-artists present to share more about their works, hinting at the success of this collaborative exhibition.

To find out more about the process of putting together this show, we have interviewed two of the five student-curators, Tiffany Ann Dass and Denise Yap.

**Desiree and Megan (D&M): How did your team derive the title, *Loading...Please wait* for this show?**

Tiffany and Denise (T&D): Thinking along the lines of "work-in-progress" and "development", we chanced upon "Loading... Please wait," initially as a joke. We wanted the title to be relatable to the artists as well as the audience as most people of our age and generation would not be strangers to the internet or electronic devices. Additionally, we also did not want to put the spotlight on any artist's work and gave the work of every artist in this show equal attention. So this "joke" turned into something all of us really liked as it encompassed characteristics of not just the show but also of the cohort.

**D&M: Was this your first time curating? How was your experience working as a team of artist-curators?**

T&D: For some of us, it was our first time curating but generally, this experience was rather new for us. We learnt that there is a big difference between being a student curator vis-a-vis a curator. Going through this process taught us more than just research and writing or planning our own works. There were also challenges faced that helped us to learn along the way. We needed to maintain and attend to such as working with professionals in the gallery. Nevertheless, *Loading...Please wait* would not have gone well without the team's effort. We

really played up to our strengths as some of us were good at writing, visualising or designing. As aspiring curators, this was a really enriching experience for us.

**D&M: Speaking of challenges, could you go into detail about some of the challenges faced while putting this show together?**

T&D: Space constraints! That was one of our main concerns throughout the planning process. There were in total of 22 selected artists' works from the cohort and among them were many large works. When curating the gallery space at Alliance Francaise, we were focused on considering the flow of colours and sizes within the exhibition. Our main goal was to achieve a well cohered and lively exhibition to be in. As a team of curators, we gave ourselves different roles so that decisions made could be clearer and coherent. Each of us were in charge of four artists to allow for better communication between the artists and ourselves. It was also important that we involve the artists in the curatorial decisions rather than take overall charge of the curating for them.

Another huge role of ours was to communicate with the gallery and understand what they were looking for in this exhibition. One challenge was working with the architecture and structure of the gallery. Going into a space that was new to us, we had overlooked certain constraints. One example would be a work that we intended to hang. However, due to the weight of the work and the false ceiling constraints in the gallery, we had to alter our plans. This involved liaising with both the gallery technicians, staff and the artist to ensure that all parties were satisfied with and agreeable to the outcome. This was really new to us and we were glad that we managed to find a compromise. We were very fortunate to get a good team of student artists in this show. Hence, overall, we felt that the curatorial process went well!

**D&M: Would you and the other curators consider doing this again?**

T&D: Yes, some of us would be keen to do this again! We definitely do hope that we can curate more exhibitions in the future. In fact, our lecturer-in-charge Gilles Massot has expressed interest in continuing to do a series of work-in-progress shows for the subsequent cohorts! We hope to see our juniors work on the next editions of this show.



# TROPICAL LAB 11 CITATION: DÉJÀ VU

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore • 3 August – 6 September 2017

by Yeyoon Ann, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 2 (2018)

Images courtesy of Yap Yun Xin Denise



2017 was the 11th year of hosting for *Tropical Lab*. *Tropical Lab* is an annual international art camp and exhibition organised by LASALLE College of the Arts. On 19 July, about 30 practising artists and students from major international art schools and institutions descended at LASALLE and embarked on a collective journey to explore history, geography, economics, and aesthetics of Singapore in two weeks.

One of the distinctive features of *Tropical Lab*'s programme is that it openly invites the participants to communicate and exchange the ideas with another student artists from different countries. This year, *Tropical Lab* drew 26 artists from all over the world: America, Switzerland, Indonesia, Mongolia, Japan, UK, Australia, Hong Kong, China, Germany, and Thailand.

11th *Tropical Lab* explored the theme of citation: *déjà vu*. During the first few days, participants attended a seminar with the guest speakers: Bala Starr, Jesse Jones, David Thomas, Shubigi Rao, and Tony Godfrey. On the fifth and sixth day, participants made a trip to Pulau Ubin, Haw Par Villa, and ArtScience Museum to experience the various different sides of Singapore. As I was present during the trips, I found it interesting to hear how artists found the aspects of Singapore comparable to the country of their abode. The artists were impressed by the natural 'jungle' in Pulau Ubin and especially by the monkeys who occasionally rob people of their food. At Haw Par Villa, artists were fascinated by re-enactments of the Chinese myths related to the afterlife through the coarsely made sculptures. Above all, many of the artists reacted to the streamlined, new, clean architectures of modernity in the central area, provoking them to contemplate about the meaning of such development of the city. After the excursions, over the next seven days, participants had to create an artwork based on their experiences in Singapore, bearing in mind the *déjà-vu* theme.

Later, during the interview, one of the participants described *Tropical Lab* as a safe place for artists or thinkers to be freely experimental, inasmuch as it is a 'laboratory'. For the opening night, the artists showcased their experimental performance art along with the different artworks made by the artists inside the gallery.

On 2 August, *Tropical Lab* held its opening night in the ICA galleries. The works of many artists reflected their reactions to how advanced and systematised Singapore is, and they raised questions about what we could be sacrificing from that technological advancement. Aside from works of various different artistic approaches exhibited in the gallery space, several artists also showcased their performances in the campus green area.

Satya Cipta from Indonesia performed a traditional Indonesian dance in the middle of the contemporary architecture of LASALLE. Sara Stern from America, wearing a shower gown, performed with the students from the Theatre department, on the artificial grass area; they dipped their feet in the fountain playing off the weather in Singapore that was almost sauna-like. Also, Jessie Wright did a performance as a human satellite, expressed through the delicate movements of her body.

One of the more memorable works was the performance by the mower-robot in the middle of our college. The artist, Stefan Tschumi, introduced this machine to discuss how our environment searches for the real things by producing the fake things, such as the carpet of fake grass in our campus.

The participants later shared their experiences: it was an enriching space where a lot of cultures were able to come together. I foresee that every artist coming from a different part of the world, will prolong his or her cultivated friendships beyond *Tropical Lab*.

*"It was an enriching space where a lot of cultures were able to come together. I foresee that every artist coming from a different part of the world, will prolong his or her cultivated friendships beyond Tropical Lab."*



# TROPICAL LAB 11: CITATION: DÉJÀ VU SEPTAL NECTARY AND THE TROPICAL POLLINATORS

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore  
3 August – 6 September 2017

by Duy Hoàng

Images courtesy of Duy Hoàng



Duy Hoàng, *Septal Nectary*, 2017, Plants, water, food coloring, containers, tools, light, wood & fabric, dimensions variable

*“Tropical Lab provided a sharing, nurturing atmosphere to all of our curiosity. Like pollinators, we utilized the nature of our impulse for a collective development to engage others, gather knowledge, and contribute ideas to the blooming community of curious beings.”*

*Tropical Lab 11*, inspired by the theme Citation: *Déjà Vu*, coincided with my return to Asia after nearly fifteen years. Confronting the site, where its details seemed so familiar, yet, its larger-than-life mega landscape is far removed from my comprehension. Floating between two extremes, I found the experience to be a search for a common ground of what was, what is, and what will follow.

For two weeks, Singapore as a place was not the only destination of exploration, but also the encounter with thirty-plus artists, staff, volunteers from all over the world that gathered to share our diverse cultures, point of views, and ways of making. From Thailand to Australia, from Mongolia to Switzerland, from England to Japan, and many more, we eagerly invested ourselves in learning about one another. An exploration in others became a discovery in ourselves. *Tropical Lab* provided a sharing, nurturing atmosphere to all of our curiosity. Like pollinators, we utilized the nature of our impulse for a collective development to engage others, gather knowledge, and contribute ideas to the blooming community of curious beings.

The constantly evolving Singaporean landscape naturally reminded me of the idea of septal nectary, where the seductiveness of a flower's nectar production lures pollinators to receive their rewards, and in return, distribute the flower's information as they disperse. Engulfed in the state of collective exposure, recurring memories, and possibilities of experimentation, my work adopted the information-accumulating behavior through our day-to-day immediate experiences. I began to gather plants and flowers which

felt immensely nostalgic of my memories of Vietnam; where 'home' is embedded in the physical traits of the materials, yet the connection is further abstracted.

*Tropical Lab 11* was filled with activities that examined the country's multifaceted characteristics. We weaved through bike trails over the island of Pulau Ubin, where our journey amidst the landscape gave us a closer, more defining glimpse of the natural, tropical environment. Haw Par Villa, on the other hand, presented an experience of a man-made amusement park where folklores and fictions were sculpted and composed re-enactments of recurrent history and underlying wisdoms. Singapore's spectrum ranging from the modern green-initiative, high-rise architecture to the humble street level beauty of little India, from the state-of-the-art shopping malls to markets compressed with clothes, electronics, food, and everything in-between. Our studio at LASALLE became an incubator for these collected senses and they translated themselves with the site-specific materials and processes, compiled during the session. The idea of placing ourselves in the apocalyptic nature, intertwining with the pristine urban development inevitably surfaced through any visual experimentation and subconscious, purposeful making.

In my brief encounter with Singapore, the experience shaped itself by simply allowing all senses to be in contact with the foreign space, letting go of what was and how things are supposed to be. *Tropical Lab* incited the nostalgia of a child at play, invited new forms of error, and encouraged naivety, all in the hope of conjuring a *déjà vu* that goes beyond the familiar.



# ONE NIGHT ONLY 2017

Winstedt Campus, LASALLE College of the Arts • 3 November 2017

by Soo Mei Fei and Megan Lam, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 1 and 2 (2018)

*“Lecturers and students had to work closely with LASALLE’s support staff to put this show together. The entire event provided students with the opportunity to understand and experience the exhibition-making process and emphasised the importance of collaboration.”*





*One Night Only* is LASALLE's annual showcase of works from semester-long elective modules taken by the Year 2 and 3 students from the BA(Hons) Fine Arts Programme. As its name suggests, the event was held from dusk to night, from 6.30pm to 9pm, at the College's satellite campus at Winstedt. The event was graced by Michelle Ho, Director of National Technological University's Art Design and Media (ADM) Gallery.

The show featured a vast variety of mediums, materials and practices. Compared to previous years, this semester introduced some new electives. Plants and organic materials were a fresh sight at the annual show as the elective Gardening as Praxis was newly introduced by lecturer Shirley Soh. This was the perfect chance for students to engage with nature and land art, which transformed the gardenscape of the campus between blocks A and B. In contrast to this section at Winstedt, another corner of the campus carried a theme less 'lively'. Near the back gate of Winstedt campus was a cluster of artworks relating to the theme of Death that came out of the new elective *Welcome to the Jungle* – about social practices. Providing yet another contrast to the stillness of death-related works, kinetic sculptures by students taking the new *Kinetic Structures* elective were installed nearby. Their works featured the use of energy generated from various sources such as sound, wind, electricity and light. *Fiction and Narrative* showcased works created in response to notions of narrative, across various mediums. Apart from the newly included electives, the *Dark Room Photography* elective produced some more two-dimensional works to the space; and *Video Art* elective was screened theatre-style with a line-up introducing various genres of video art. The Performance Art students

took centrestage at the courtyard, exploring performance as a medium of interaction and communication. As is customary, the students from the *Artist as Curator* elective curated the show, managing the other electives' artworks, as well as organising the logistics and marketing of the show.

Preparations began early in the afternoon, as students and lecturers from various electives worked alongside LASALLE's Facilities staff members to set up the artworks and spaces. Our esteemed Guest-of-Honour arrived early to have a comprehensive tour of the exhibition before the opening ceremony. This gave the students an opportunity to interact with an accomplished curator in the industry, and also for Ms. Ho to better understand our students' practices.

A map with each work's location and schedules for the performances and video screenings were provided. But it was also quite an experience to chance upon the works while roaming the campus. The site – Winstedt – shaped the curatorial direction of the show. First and foremost, as a studio space for the faculty's students, the campus embodies the spirit of openness, curiosity and risk-taking explorations. As most studios were located on the second and third floors of the buildings, the show was held mainly on the first floor. The works were showcased all around the campus, both indoors, such as in classrooms, as well as outdoors, in the courtyard and corridors.

Guests were invited to explore the campus grounds as artworks were also placed in areas less frequented, such as behind Blocks A and B. The works showcased within classrooms and along the corridors allows one to peer into the working spaces of the students – chanced encounters while looking for more works to view. Having the studio spaces within such close proximity with the works showcased gave the works a sense of being works-in-progress, in the sense that the artists behind the works are still in progress of learning and exploring.

Since the event was held late in the day, the outdoor works had to consider the specific environment that they were in – with little to no light, and a dark backdrop for the works. The courtyard served as an excellent outdoor space for the crowd to mingle – food kiosks, performance works, couches to lounge in. Friends and families of the artists as well as the artists themselves took time to watch and ponder upon the works over ice-cream sandwiches, chips and beer.

Overall, the event was a success not only because of the high visitorship numbers. The planning and execution of this event as part of the curriculum brought the faculty closer together. Year 2 and 3 students went through the electives together, sharing ideas and critiques throughout the semester, and Year 1 students from the programme also volunteered to help with the setting up and documentation of the event. Lecturers and students had to work closely with LASALLE's support staff to put this show together. The entire event provided students with the opportunity to understand and experience the exhibition-making process and emphasised the importance of collaboration.





## BA(HONS) FINE ARTS GRADUATION EXHIBITION: A DIVE, SPLENDID! A FAITH IN THE UNKNOWN

20 – 24 April 2018 • Winstedt Campus, LASALLE College of the Arts

by Pooja Nansi

*“And this is exactly what I imagine a deep-sea dive would feel like. A faith in the unknown, a brave exploration of things below the surface, a desire for more depth, an embrace of darkness, accepting that some times it is difficult to breathe, but plunging anyway because what can be experienced when we relinquish control is that our whole universe expands, we know there are things much more vulnerable than ourselves, things we must work to understand and protect.”*

Walking into Lasalle’s Winstedt Campus to meet Hazel Lim, the BA (Fine Arts) Programme Leader, I was immediately struck by how I feel transported into another time and space. It was as though noise stops, and the outside world was shut off. This building belongs in the early 30s, it felt relegated to the quaint, maybe even the unobserved as does Art many times in our city.

Hazel and some of the students I met on my visit tell me about the initial disgruntlement at being relegated to this campus – less central, less swanky than the one on McNally Street – to the eventual realisation that this move has instead transformed their creative practice for the better.

How apt then that the theme they have chosen for this final exhibition is *A Dive, Splendid!* The unknown or undiscovered is at the heart of any creative work, and as any artist knows, can be both the most exhilarating and debilitating part of the process. As I am taken from one studio to another, each housing a community of eight to nine students, I am aware of having the experience of submerging myself into worlds previously unknown to me.

Each room functions like an eco-system in itself and it is easy to see how the work each artist did lend a little breath or colour to another artist’s work. Themes whispered to each other; asking questions, giving answers. Some rooms were filled with textures and movement, other rooms were still and meditative and others playful and irreverent. Experiencing all of the work together only served to deepen the conversation about individual pieces. I was struck, not only by the more finished pieces on the walls and tables and corridors, but also by the quite beautiful mess of work experiments that had been discarded, left as testaments – the remnants of old work still informing new creations, the number of young artists who tell me “I’m not sure yet,” saying that phrase with more confidence and calm than most people learn in their lifetimes.

As I talk to the artists, I sensed my brain, my chest muscles, and my understanding of the world pry open. This is what I am sure deep sea diving must feel like. Odelia Tang’s *The Fallen Child* was a painting I stared at for a long time, one I almost didn’t want explained to me because I have never felt such grief radiate from a static canvas. I tell her this. She replies: “then I must be doing something right.” I found out that she





was exploring in her work, a culture of excellence that drives our children to suicide when they feel they cannot meet the demands of society's enforced rigid benchmarks. Her work broke my heart but in the most useful of ways. It reminded me we are all fragile at our very core. It reminds me to be kinder.

Ng Hoi Weng's *Kitchen* was a poignant cartography of physical space and details: a homage to his parents, a kind of obsessive need to record and categorise lineage and love through objects. A kitchen counter, a fridge, plastic bags became love songs to his parents' love, work and sacrifices.

Then there were works that seem playful and delicious on the surface like Dipali Gupta's *Her Pleasure V*, in which the artist uses sex toys and ink to create squiggles of wild abandon. The viewer, however, was also made immediately complicit in our feeling of transgression because it questions who is allowed to express pleasure most freely in our world. Why should this work feel "naughty"?

Prakriti Jassal's *Web of Lies* that explores the female body and ritual in Hinduism was another work so visceral it makes you immediately aware of how your own physicality restricts and defines you. Her use of *mauli*, the religious thread used in Hindu ceremonies meant to connect one to highest consciousness made you experience instead the webs of belief that entrap us.

As I turned the corner I see *The Soul Lounge* by Divagaar, a physical installation of a bar with deep purple walls, some photos of Solange, a space I feel like I should not enter. When I enquired about the work, I found out that the artist is exploring the notion of safe spaces for double minorities. It was hard for me to articulate how he had achieved this feeling of sanctity or why my presence felt like trespass, and that is testament to how well the artist had captured the ineffability of issues of identity.

There was work that was incredibly focused on process without overt concern for outcome, work that was primarily about the act of making. Work that was trying to smash through boundaries, work that was interacting with boundaries

by wilfully creating more constriction, work that was so surreal like Polina Korobova's glitter-filled work space and Mariah Carey as Kwan Yin in Howie Kim's oil paintings, that I found myself wanting to literally plunge into it to be outside of myself for a while.

And this is exactly what I imagine a deep-sea dive would feel like. A faith in the unknown, a brave exploration of things below the surface, a desire for more depth, an embrace of darkness, accepting that some times it is difficult to breathe, but plunging anyway because what can be experienced when we relinquish control is that our whole universe expands, we know there are things much more vulnerable than ourselves, things we must work to understand and protect.

The rules of competitive diving state that the body should be vertical, or nearly so, for entry. Technically, it is physically impossible to achieve a completely vertical position throughout the entry, as because of inevitable rotational momentum while the body is entering the water. Divers therefore attempt to create the illusion of being vertical.

And this was what one precious afternoon in a seemingly quiet campus at Winstedt road taught me. That these young artists were doing the most difficult, emotional, physical work of all. The work of unflinching questioning and exploring, no matter how difficult the answers are, with the knowledge that we are always the better for wanting to live fully and multi-dimensionally, even if those dimensions are in messy contradiction with each other.

"We must recognise and nurture the creative parts of each other without always understanding what will be created," says Audre Lorde. And how else to honour our humanity but to Dive right in, and revel in all of our Splendid.

About the Writer:

Pooja Nansi is Singapore's first Youth Poet Ambassador. Her work is entrenched in both text and performance. She is the author of two collections of poetry and was a recipient of the *Young Artist Award* in 2016.



# A SHORT FILM BY GILLES MASSOT: SCREENING OF SINGAPORE FROM BW TO C v2.0.17

Presented by Grey Projects, Screened at Singapore National Library • 7 October 2017

by Ian Tee Wang Loong, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 3 (2018)

*Singapore from BW to C v2.0.17* is a short film by Gilles Massot reflecting on his personal journey and relationship with the Singapore art scene in the early 1980s through animation of still images and a running narration. It continues the conversation started by curator Jason Wee in the exhibition *Tints and Dispositions*<sup>1</sup> which revisited the same subject: Gilles' first exhibition in Singapore in 1985, of a series of black-and-white painted photographs. The one-night only event at a factory in MacPherson was titled: *Singapore from BW to C*.

To write about the film purely from the perspective of revisiting the 1980s is to do it a disservice to the personal narration that accompanied the presentation. It was less an authoritative historical account than a heartfelt flipping through of the artist's photo album. The film's rich archival information and biographical details could suffice as content that one takes away from the screening. But knowing Gilles, I felt that the presentation was more than this, and had a lot more to do with experiencing the 'now'. In photography, this "seizing the moment" perhaps is championed by no less than the French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson.

At one point during the post-screening Q&A, Gilles spoke about the absence of nostalgia when he revisited the sites in those photographs. While much is lost in the pace of urban development, there are still many lingering traces of that "there

and then" in today's "here and now". I think this is precisely what his narration did with the images, to make both temporalities simultaneously 'present'.

Just as Gilles' hand-tinted black and white photographs was an artistic intervention his documentary cache of a Singapore in transition, the film once again puts this material through the lens of his eyes and experience. While the impulse to pick up the brush and paint over images then might have been a subconscious expressivity from restless hands, it was adding something about Cartier-Bresson's notion of the decisive moment to it without necessarily contradicting its spirit. It was a conflation of both mediums, their respective sensations of time and space into a singular image.

The 1985 exhibition had been slated to be Gilles' farewell to Singapore, and as such, to make this film in 2017 that re-examined that event formed decisive moments. To borrow Cartier-Bresson's words: "the simultaneous recognition...of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organisation of forms which gave that event its proper expression."<sup>1</sup> One can interpret the decisive moment to be about enjoying this 'present', and to be sensitively attuned to one's time in the present or the past. This can be applied here in creative practices: to recognise and make a poignant contemporary articulation through forms.

It could be to click the shutter and to capture a frozen moment amid rapid change, or to throw a wild disco, partying late into the night, or to organise an island-hopping road trip exploring the Riau Archipelago by boat, or to deliver a performance lecture on art history to students. It has always been about living and the ephemerality of being in the moment.

Link to Facebook event:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2021720088114903/>

Images courtesy of Anna Chan Hui Fang



<sup>1</sup> *Tints and Dispositions* was presented at Grey Projects from 21 March to 22 April 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment*, New York: Simon and Schuster (1952) pp. 1–14.

# AN EXHIBITION BY JEREMY SHARMA: SPECTRUM VERSION 2.2

Sullivan + Strumpf • 29 July – 20 August 2017

by Lai Yu Tong, BA(Hons) Fine Arts level 2 (2018)

*"It is a work of art that falls uncertainly ahead or before its time."*

Jeremy Sharma's recent 2017 solo exhibition *Spectrum Version 2.2* at Sullivan+Strumpf, Singapore, thrusts its viewers into an otherworldly space that straddles between dystopia and utopia. The entire gallery was painted in a uniform tone of white from floor to ceiling. The doors and windows were tinted with a layer of grey film, denying natural light from entering the space. Horn speakers amplified a sound work, composed by Sharma; it consists of snippets of writings by Haruki Murakami, Marie Darrieussecq, Donna Haraway, Ernest Hemingway, Yann Martel, and even prayer books.<sup>1</sup> The hoarseness of the sounds rendered through the speakers made the words unintelligible, reduced into barely inaudible whispers, but one can say they resembled routine prayer broadcasts from mosques.

The landscape sets the stage for several unlikely main characters — multiple video sculptures lit the space: videos playing over screens had each been rendered unrecognisable when shown through several outdated Philips light boxes and hanging light nodes. Anchoring the exhibition, as part of the work called *Spectrum* (Mahi Mahi), a rack of light boxes had been mounted and arranged on a metal rack that glowed in soft modulating hues. This constituted 'machine' probably would not deserve the term 'futuristic' considering its individual components (retired light boxes, cables, and various familiar pieces of digital hardware). However, unlike other man-made

machines today, this one carried functions that may just be either too advanced or too basic for many to comprehend—it's main function simply being to display shifting hues of colours and blurred semblances of images and videos. It is a work of art that falls uncertainly ahead or before its time.

"An organism's response to light with motion is known as phototaxis. Positively phototactic organisms, such as moths, move towards light sources."<sup>2</sup> In an interview, Sharma mentions a desire for his works to connect to viewers at least at a primal level, often creating works that provided sensorial experiences, be it aural or visual. Even if the abstraction of video into light and colour proves to be either too simple or too difficult to look at, viewers seemed to be naturally attracted to their comforting glow.

In the artist's talk during the exhibition, Sharma expressed an interest in gaps of understanding, touching on various forms of translation, and in the process of translation, an almost inherent lack of control and a sense of ambiguity. The works presented in *Spectrum Version 2.2* particularly open up gaps between perception and knowledge—how do we translate what we see, feel or sense into comprehensible information? What are we looking at when we look at colour? As Sharma explains, the exhibition sets up further questions about colour—what happens when colour bounces off walls, comes through screens, is experienced in a warmer space, or (in referring to *Curtain* in which a humidifier was included as part of the work) in a wetter space? Interestingly enough, as viewers struggle to translate light, colour, sound and even moisture into useful information, Sharma's works were created using similar



Jeremy Sharma, *Curtain*, 2017, six alternate strips of light nodes, custom programme (3.03 mins), power data supply, cables, iPlayer, humidifier, wireless speaker, dimensions variable

processes of information translation, as various videos that he had shot were fed through computers that converted them into data that would transmit sequences of light and colour.

The weaving of science, data and information into art has been a central aspect to Sharma's body of work. However, instead of merely appropriating the beauty and artfulness of science into art, he borrows the lens of abstraction, in teasing out concepts, phenomena and experiences that we cannot yet explain or understand. Perhaps there is no need to do so. Interestingly, despite studies on the behaviour of moths dating back to as far as a hundred years ago, there has still not been a single conclusive explanation as to why they are attracted to light.

<sup>1</sup> Information based on an interview with the artist on "Spectrum Version 2.2" <http://artradarjournal.com/2017/09/16/ beating-a-rainbow-to-death-singaporean-artist-jeremy-sharma-in-conversation/ 05/01/2018>

<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://www.iflscience.com/plants-and-animals/ why-are-bugs-attracted-light/ 05/01/2018>