

# PRAXIS PRESS



Faculty of Fine Arts • LASALLE College of the Arts Singapore Catalogue of Events 2013–2014 • Eighth Edition 2014



## Interview with Bala Starr

By Dr. S. Chandrasekaran

# EXHIBITION- MAKING IS A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



▲ Based on a True Story: Geoff Lowe 1972–92 and A Constructed World 1993–2012, the Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2012.

“The ICA Singapore is in many ways a gregarious organisation with all kinds of demands on our time. Our work extends beyond negotiating curatorial ambitions. We work with numerous artists and multiple curators, with staff and students across the LASALLE campus, with architects, designers and writers, and we engage professionally trained technical staff, researchers, and gallery invigilators.”

**Praxis:** Your previous experience has been grounded in the Australian contemporary art scene, in Melbourne as senior curator at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne, and earlier at Gertrude Contemporary. You were also director at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia. Can you talk about your motivation in coming to Singapore and how your experience will translate here?

**Bala:** There are strong relationships between people in the art scenes of Southeast Asia and Australia that go back decades. Perhaps most of us only realise their significance when we get together at large regional events, but the number and effect of these relationships in contemporary art still surprise me. Perhaps they shouldn't, especially given the exchange through art schools over the last few decades.

Singaporean artists are mobile, their outlook

is international. Singapore is building as a regional hub for contemporary practice and as a central point of connection. Arts organisations here are interested to facilitate contemporary practice well beyond just their own geography. This is refreshing. In many ways Singapore can play a role in Asia that for economic reasons other countries can't, or national prerogatives just haven't allowed broader priorities. I like this idea of pan-Asian internationalism – where national priorities, which in many instances have held artists back, can be put aside. I see the next wave of contemporary practice coming out of direct connections between artists and curators right across the region, from India to Australia to China and Korea. It's a phase that many interesting people find exciting.

Speaking of my background, synergies help in new jobs, but I wasn't looking for them exclusively when I considered the move. ▶



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**About Faculty of Fine Arts  
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With its established history offering one of LASALLE's pioneering programmes, the Faculty of Fine Arts provides the most rigorous and professional training for full-time practices as a professional artist. The Faculty emphasizes reflection and self-evaluation, demanding enquiry, commitment, self-discipline and a level of collaborative works.

It houses the Diploma, BA and Postgraduate programmes that emphasizes on interdisciplinary studies and research.

**LEGEND**



Exhibition



Art Talk



Workshop



Interview



Collaboration



Travel



International Event



I was actually looking to get geographically closer to where I think new ideas around art and exhibition-making will develop in the near future. I was also attracted to the idea of working in an environment closer to a large student population, aware that this allows for more experimental processes and specific kinds of audience participation. In many ways the art/design campus audience provides a very clear focus for ICA Singapore.

**What curatorial vision do you hope to bring and how might this evolve from your previous curatorial interests that have included most recently exhibitions by A Constructed World and Philip Brophy?**

One of my last projects at the Ian Potter Museum of Art was actually Gigi Scaria's *Dust* (fig 1) and he is one artist I am hoping to work with again. Gigi is based in New Delhi. There will always be individual artists who for different reasons merit repeated attention over time. But there is great new scope and I'm not interested to casually bring forward relationships I have already established. Since arriving I have regularly met with artists, guest curators and writers, and made studio visits, which I enjoy. I'm seeking to learn about the interests and motivations of artists here, and to contribute firstly by questioning and engaging in discussion. I'm interested to ask what exhibitions at ICA Singapore can and can't do and, with my team, artists and curators, to consider the purpose and character of the detailed work that goes into production. How can we better connect works of art, curatorial practice, exhibitions and the public? Why should the public be interested in what artists and galleries are doing? What is the meaning and function of an exhibition?

I'm also interested in working with independent curators on special projects and pursuing the idea that group exhibitions are now especially strategic in testing new perspectives on contemporary art. The group exhibition offers an opportunity for curators to apply particular perspectives by building discourse and knowledge around art practices through research and production processes. With the model of the group show, the curator is able to shape pathways between individual artworks, and in so doing build whole exhibition frameworks – this is a role that asks more than simply categorising artists within existing types or chronologies or relying on the fact of an artwork's contemporaneity. With the group exhibition the curator has the opportunity to form and articulate new models and terms.

Exhibition-making is also a learning environment and we will continue to see projects by emerging curators and artists in our program. I'm very much hoping that emerging curators or artist-curators will come from the ranks of the Faculty of Fine Arts and that the ICA Singapore can 'road test' some

of their ideas for exhibitions in our galleries. I expect some of these projects to be the most provisional and experimental in the program.

A third focus I intend to bring to the ICA Singapore will be to develop a particular production model for international exhibitions, where exhibitions are less inhibited by cost pressures or production values. This model of exhibition or series of international exhibitions will foreground the first-hand involvement of artists, collaborations in Singapore and one-on-one partnerships. For instance, international freight is expensive, and sometime it is more important to have an artist in Singapore for a time than to transport their works of art, and of course many artists plan and construct their work in situ or in ways that are more malleable and responsive to conditions on the ground. I'm interested in these adaptable, less cost-driven means of production – types of production arguably more suited to regional practices and the artistic economy here.

**What are the challenges and concerns in situating ICA Singapore as one of the leading Singapore art institutions, both internationally and locally?**

The Institute of Contemporary Arts has had a leading role in Singapore's visual arts scene for nearly thirty years. The institutional ground here in Singapore, however, continues to change rapidly. I am keen to work with other contemporary art spaces in the city, such as Substation and the Centre for Contemporary Art, to extend and develop the conditions and audience for the most interesting contemporary art practices. Next year too the new National Gallery is slated to open and this will have a huge effect on the local public's engagement with art.

The ICA Singapore is able to provide more extensive exhibition outcomes by partnering international organisations to develop opportunities for artists and curators. Potential partner institutions might include established organizations like Khoj in New Delhi, or Alternative Space LOOP in Korea, which is organising the third meeting of the Asian Arts Space Network in Gwangju this year. However, art infrastructure in North and South Asia is forming very differently and it will be important for us to look further than organisations 'like us'. We need to be adaptable and to initiate models for collaboration within these growing arts environments. This might involve seeking out partnerships with, say, private museums in China or private galleries in Manila or Taipei – organisations that are often independent of government. We will need to trial working methods in changing Asian conditions.

**How have your first six months in the job unfolded and what have been your major concerns? In what ways do you foresee our Fine Arts students at LASALLE**

**gaining from your appointment and the new curatorial directions in which you plan to take the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore?**

The ICA Singapore is in many ways a gregarious organisation with all kinds of demands on our time. Our work extends beyond negotiating curatorial ambitions. We work with numerous artists and multiple curators, with staff and students across the LASALLE campus, with architects, designers and writers, and we engage professionally trained technical staff, researchers and gallery invigilators.

One of our biggest challenges is in communicating across the range of people who are involved in any given initiative, and of course many of our initiatives are running concurrently. The ICA Singapore needs to be resilient in order to continually refocus from project to project. In such a demanding environment I'm particularly interested in the wellbeing of our staff and their individual opportunities, and in extending our capabilities to handle more complex creative productions.

A rewarding initiative recently has seen Hafiz Osman, who leads our exhibition preparation and installation team, travel internationally to meet with his peers in museums and contemporary art organizations in Melbourne and Sydney. As well, late last year I worked with LASALLE Arts Management lecturers to initiate an internship program. Over the last semester we have had the pleasure of working with Yew Siew Ling, May Andrea Gue Yao and Chong Jing Ru. In future I would like to see interns working with us from Fine Arts and other faculties too.

This year Patricia Ong has joined us as a consultant documenting and reviewing the permanent collection. It is gratifying to have the opportunity to bring to the organization someone with Patricia's expertise as a curator, and her work with the LASALLE permanent collection of Southeast Asian art will help make it available for further research by Fine Arts students. As well, very soon, I am pleased that we will be appointing two curators—from mid-June, Melanie Pocock is joining us as Assistant Curator, and another curatorial position will be advertised shortly. With these two positions, as well as the curatorial interests each of the staff members bring, we will be able to pursue external resourcing more systematically, where we can connect and articulate individual projects to targeted sponsorship opportunities. It's an exciting time. ■

*Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore Director Bala Starr was appointed in November last year. Bala was previously Senior Curator at Melbourne's Ian Potter Museum of Art. Praxis spoke with Bala about her curatorial direction and interests, and her plans for exhibitions and projects in the context of Southeast Asia and the programmes of LASALLE.*



Fig. 1: Gigi Scaria: *Dust*, the Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2013

# RESEARCH, PROCESS AND VISION



## Interview with Prof. Yvonne Spielmann, Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts

By Dr. S. Chandrasekaran



**Praxis:** Can you please share with us your area of research at present?

**Yvonne:** At present, I am focused on writing a book on contemporary art on Indonesia, giving a background on the transition from modernity to contemporary. Of course, it has to be told differently and not parallel to the Western post-Second World War movement, contemporary and postmodern culture. As there is a time lapse in-between, so the context needs to be carefully considered and framed in its own right. Further, contemporary art needs to be contextualised within the traditional culture of Indonesia, in relation to its masks, wayang, batik and woodcarvings. Therefore, this context needs to be mediated and critically reflected in the context of the contemporary arts where these resources are digested and reworked. All of these together can give an overview of the specificity of the art scenes in Indonesia. The art initiatives and galleries also need to be discussed because they fill the gap in the overview as spaces with non-existing funding from art institutions. Herein, the collectors, together with non-profit art spaces, play an important role to inform about and display Indonesian modern and contemporary arts. This is different from Singapore and the European art scene where there exists a robust infrastructure.

**What are the research directions that you are setting for our Faculty in the area of research?**

To support the Faculty in developing the research profile in arts and culture within a broader region of Southeast Asia, and to rebalance Western approaches because this region is also attracting research from international scholars who are coming from different countries, such as Europe, USA and Australia, and who are not located in this region. And, also to expand the research profiles by employing staff with research expertise who coming from this region or from abroad. Another area is to encourage staffs to undertake research that is connected to Southeast Asia.

**Since we are situated as part of Southeast Asia, how do you foresee our connections with art institutions in relation to research?**

As, I have said, the profile is still developing and there are not many institutions or research initiatives with a research stance in this region. Basically, the research and scholarly works are largely kept within Singapore and Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, the Asian Art Archive is very active. Other initiatives in this region are Thai Art Archives in Bangkok and Indonesian Visual Arts Archive (IVAA) in Jogjakarta. Such initiatives collect materials about the region, acknowledging the need for such resources. Basically, it is important to connect to such resources. It is not in the first place about connecting to institutions or educational institutions whose interests are in theoretical or practice-focused studies. For the researcher, it is important to connect with the archives and local initiatives because within these systems, are 'experts' who have the knowledge of how to retrieve materials and how to connect to the discourse. They also organise talks and programs that bring together researcher, artists and initiatives from different countries and with different agendas. For example, the art talks in early July in Jogjakarta that was organised by IVAA together with Langgeng Art foundation, brought together different art communities and was attended by a large international public in Indonesia.

**Within the context of research as practice, do you foresee our Faculty being the forefront in the Southeast Asian region?**

Not yet, and it is because we are still building up the research about Southeast Asia. Also, I don't think any single institution in this region can be at the forefront. It is because all of them are still in their pioneering stage. It is important to connect and share ideas, and not to be competitive. Also, we need to define ways to set a different research profile, and not just copying from the Western model. I think a lot of discussions, negotiations and debate about the discourses among different kind of experts, scholars, critics and so forth are needed. Not any one individual researcher and institution can do it, as it needs a large and long-term initiative. I think it is at the moment important to connect with each other and build all sorts of critical mass across institutions, and from this platform, diversify expertise and develop them into more specific profiles.

**Can you share with us, what is your vision in setting the goals for our Faculty to be a part of contemporary art practice in Singapore?**

I think, the advantage that we have here is that we can combine theory and practice. As an art school, it has a strong focus in diversity of practice, and also because the staff profile is diverse. We have staffs who are purely practitioners, and some who are predominantly academic, and some are both, practitioners and academic. It is an advantage, as it is different from other educational institutions in Singapore. This will help us to develop practice-led research, which is already acknowledged in other regions, particularly in UK and Australia. So, I think, there is a demand from students in MA program to combine theory and practice. The interest goes across from aesthetics to humanities in general. We can share this expertise in two directions: in one, as I have said, we practice a balance between applied and academic methods; and in the other, we need more research in Southeast Asia as well as need to be connected to comparable debates that are established in aesthetics, critical theory, cultural studies, social studies and so forth. However, these are still dominantly a Western discourse. I think, on these two axes, we need increase the profile and nurture the directions.

**Any advice for researchers?**

As I said, more field research is needed in art areas. As the discourses in the areas are not developed, it is because the resources are limited. Particularly, field research starts with interviewing different people and different activities that surrounds the institution or artist. So, one cannot just sit in the library to do research on Southeast Asia. One has to go into the field to get first-hand information and insights on the issue. So, any researcher or artist, who wants to undertake research, has to adopt this sort of field of study. ■

*Prof. Yvonne Spielmann has over 20 years of experience in research, teaching, and knowledge transfer in the Higher Education at international level across Europe, the US, and Southeast Asia. She is an internationally renowned researcher who has established new interdisciplinary approaches in arts and culture, media, and technology.*



# CONTEMPORARY ASIAN ART IN A GLOBALISING WORLD

By Dr. Caroline Turner



“Singapore has been a leader in thinking through the long and complex cultural histories of this vast geographical space of Asia. The Singapore Art Museum and now the new National Gallery of Singapore are playing a vital role in documenting the art of the region through archiving, researching, collecting and publishing and with exhibitions such *Negotiating Home, History and Nation*, curated by Iola Lenzi, in 2011 at the Singapore Art Museum.”

Recently I had the opportunity to give a lecture and to engage with staff and students at LASALLE College of the Arts - an enriching experience for me personally, and I thank everyone involved in my visit. It was also a great pleasure to meet with Singapore artists who had exhibited in the Asia-Pacific Triennial (APT) exhibitions, including Amanda Heng and S. Chandrasekaran.

I was Project Director of the APT at the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane Australia in the 1990s. The first three APT exhibitions in the 1990s showed 220 artists from the region, chosen by cross-cultural curatorial teams from 20 regional countries. One of the APT's key objectives was to provide a series of exhibitions about contemporary societies in the Asia-Pacific region and, at the same time, connect with emerging debates about the nature of contemporary art. The topic of my lecture at LASALLE was *Art and Ethical Responsibility: Contemporary Asian Contexts*. That was one of the key themes of my 2005 book *Art and Social Change*. The question of what art can do in society and thus the role of the artist in society in terms of ethical responsibility was also a key issue of the first three APT exhibitions in 1993, 1996 and 1999.

In 1993, eminent Singapore based historian Professor Wang Gungwu wrote that: “The modern world... has made people aware of similarities and differences among themselves to an extent never dreamed of in the past. Being thus more aware, people can never be the same again” and he also noted the need for scholars “who can help turn self-consciousness into a disciplined examination of the cultural bridging that has made... art exciting and relevant”.<sup>2</sup> The exchange of ideas that Professor Wang referred to has become more rapid, especially as new technologies, including the internet and social media, greatly expand connectivities. Political, social and cultural changes have impacted with tremendous force on art practice in this region but there is equally the effect of cultural engagement regionally and globally which transcends simple global/local dichotomies. Globalisation has generated new debates about differences, similarities, art histories and art practices that necessitate multifaceted responses. These extend to multiculturalism within nations, hybridity and multiple identities, globalised mobilities, and new and extended global interactions in terms of individual lives. As noted Singaporean academic Lily Kong has commented: “The reality is that our lives [today] are shaped by both the global and the local, the transnational and the nation”. And US-based Australian art historian Terry Smith has made the point that “...contemporary art is — perhaps for the first time in history — truly an art of the world. It comes from the whole world, and frequently tries to imagine the world as a *differentiated yet inevitably connected whole*.”

This is the definition of diversity: it is the key characteristic of contemporary art, as it is of contemporary life, in the world today”.<sup>3</sup>

The work of artists, art historians and curators, and of art educational institutions such as LASALLE College of the Arts, has been vital in our region in mapping this diversity. Scholarly research is critical in building knowledge and frameworks for art scholarship and artistic creativity as are courses such as the Masters programme at LASALLE on modern and contemporary Asian art histories convened by Jeffrey Say. Art historians, critics and curators in the region, such as renowned Singaporean art historian Professor T.K. Sabapathy, have made enormous contributions to these debates about contemporary art over recent decades. Their work encapsulates the necessity of wider and richer historical and theoretical perspectives than those of just the last 25 -30 years.

Singapore has been a leader in thinking through the long and complex cultural histories of this vast geographical space of Asia. The Singapore Art Museum and now the new National Gallery of Singapore are playing a vital role in documenting the art of the region through archiving, researching, collecting and publishing and with exhibitions such *Negotiating Home, History and Nation*, curated by Iola Lenzi, in 2011 at the Singapore Art Museum.

But it is not only museums and more formal art and educational institutions which support contemporary art in Asia. One of the most significant factors is that so many

artists are striving for direct communication with communities. Artist-run spaces, artist organisations and projects initiated by artists have been critical as sites of experiment and creativity. It is, after all, artists who create art. ■

*The article was written by Dr. Caroline Turner, who presented at the MA Asian Art Histories Annual Lecture Event organised on behalf of Faculty of Fine Arts, LASALLE, College of Arts on 24 May 2014.*

*Dr. Caroline Turner is an Adjunct Senior Research Fellow in the Research School of Humanities and the Arts, Australian National University. Prior to joining the ANU in 2000 she was Deputy Director of the Queensland Art Gallery. She was co-founder and Project Director for nearly 10 years in the 1990s for the Asia-Pacific Triennial exhibitions (1993, 1996, 1999) at the Queensland Art Gallery and scholarly editor of the three major catalogues for the first three Triennials.<sup>1</sup>*

1. Wang Gungwu, 'Foreword', in Caroline Turner (ed.) *Tradition and Change: Contemporary Art of Asia and the Pacific*, University of Queensland Press 1993, p. vii.

2. Lily Kong, unpublished paper delivered to the 2012 conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia.

3. Terry Smith, conference abstract for 'The World and World-making in Art', Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, 2011.



# WHAT THE BODY WOULD BE ACTUALLY DOING



**Interview with Stelarc**  
By Dr. S. Chandrasekaran

## Master Class Research Workshop – One-Minute Performance Workshop by Stelarc

The Master Class Research Workshop was organised by Dr. S. Chandrasekaran from Faculty of Fine Arts, LASALLE College of the Arts. It was conducted on 12 February 2014 with the support of the President's Office.

### Stelarc's Dialogue Session with the Participants

**Praxis:** Please share your experience in teaching our students during the workshop.

**Stelarc:** The students at LASALLE College, even though they did not generally have any performance background, were interested and engaged in the One-Minute Performance workshop. An overview of performance was first presented and discussed, from performance art to body installations to Butoh dance. Through seeing videos of the performances and considering the theoretical underpinnings of the work, the students were better prepared to approach the planning of their own short performances.

**For some of the students, it has been their first experience in engaging with performance art during the workshop. Do you think the "one minute" performance had an impact on them?**

Well I was pleasantly surprised by their performance outcomes, given art backgrounds. We had also discussed the importance of how to "frame" their performances, also considering the documentation. In other words, how can one image adequately represent the performance?

Performances often are recalled because of a particularly striking experience or image. It was also important to elaborate on the elements of a performance, with such considerations as - how to position the body; what the body would be actually doing; would the performance be done in silence or is there sound and if so is that sound an ambient one, or one produced by the performer live and how will the body be lit. So there are lots of elements for the students to consider in how they would structure their performance.

**As you know, most of our students who were involved in the workshop are painters. What were the challenges you foresaw in teaching them?**

It was not difficult to shift the students' focus from painting to performance. They are both modes of expression where having a body is essential (ha, ha). But with performance the mode of expression is also the means of having experiences. You have to take the physical consequences for your ideas. If you want to create a *Stomach Sculpture*, you have to insert that into your body. There are medical risks. If you want to engineer an ear on your arm, it's a long and sometimes painful experience involving several surgeries. This particular project, *Ear on Arm*, was conceived in 1996

but it took 10 years to find three surgeons to do the procedures. And it'll take another five years to develop and insert the electronics to internet-enable the ear. So students need to be dedicated, patient and persistent and think through the consequences for their ideas.

**I believe you have been constantly pushing boundaries to develop new knowledge through research collaborations. Some of these research collaborations are not within the guideline of academic institutions. Do you think such forms of engagement should be encouraged in our teaching pedagogy?**

Certain projects like the *Stomach Sculpture*, *Blender* and *Ear on Arm* would never have received ethical approval within university research. Our institutions are becoming so risk averse, so health and safety conscious that some artists' projects would not only be discouraged but also not allowed. Of course, if you are involved in a BioArt project and you are using human cells or what may be classed as bio-hazardous material, there are lab constraints and lab equipment that need to be used. But we need to be careful that art produced under the auspicious of universities (and most art schools now are part of universities) neither becomes sanitised nor made without accepting the necessity for risk-taking.

**As a contemporary artist, do you think research is important for art students?**

I feel uneasy about the "research" paradigm applied to the arts. It's an institutional strategy to authenticate arts practice by associating it

with the sciences, where we usually associate doing research with. Art is more about affect than information. It's more about intuition and the accidental than doing methodical research with particular aims, methodologies and with expected outcomes. What's interesting about art is the slippage between intention and actuality. About incorporating the unexpected. About generating more questions than providing answers.

What advice would you give to our young generations of artists?

Art is about generating contestable futures. Ones that can be examined, possibly appropriated and most often discarded. This goes beyond affirming particular aesthetics and ethics. Artists provide alternate possibilities, often by exposing, undermining and even upsetting the status quo. Art should be surprising, sometimes even shocking. It might be messy, it might even be pornographic and certainly, it should be challenging us about what a body is and how a body operates and becomes aware in the world. ■

*Stelarc is a performance artist who has visually probed and acoustically amplified his body. He has made three films of the insides of his body. Between 1976-1988 he completed 25 body suspension performances with hooks embedded in the skin. He has used medical instruments, prosthetics, robotics, Virtual Reality systems, the Internet, and biotechnology to explore alternate, intimate and involuntary interfaces with the body.*



# SIMPLE, SHOCKING, BUT YET BEAUTIFUL, PAINFUL,

By Moses Tan Qian Yi

In mentioning the name of Stelarc, one would associate many things to the modern day polymath.

Some may recall his third ear or the pain which he subjects himself during performances, and for others, they may recall his stomach's sculpture.

One thing about Stelarc that comes immediately to my mind: his laughter. As described by a fellow participant and friend, he has a stereotypical laughter of a mad scientist. In describing the best of the fictional 'mad scientist', Stelarc's interest also lie in combining technology in his performance and most of all, using his body as a "blank canvas".

One could really fully understand the rationale behind why Stelarc describes the body as a blank canvas. Like a painter, who prepares a blank canvas, Stelarc stretches his body through the notion of suspension – by having hooks pierce through his skin and then, wires attached to the hooks lift his entire body into a state of suspension.



▲ Moses's Performance during the workshop



▲ Moses presenting his performance concept during the workshop

"Simple, shocking, painful, but yet beautiful". Here, the beauty lies in the strength of the body and how the skin can take the of the weight of the body during the suspension.

I attended the workshop with with a limited understanding of how the relationship between biology and technology had been interpreted in art. The workshop was conducted by Dr. S. Chandrasekaran, and it took place from morning (9am) to mid-afternoon (12pm). It included a one hour lecture by Stelarc, and was followed by two hours of performance workshop in which each participant were required to do a "one-minute performance" act.

Not only did I learn a lot from Stelarc, but I also learnt from observing other participants during the performance workshop. I can recall a few performances - a woman participant who wrapped a length of cloth around her head,

and spoke about the female role in religious contexts; another woman participant who traced and mapped the organs of her body; and finally another male participant who performed as a rock star on stage. The simple one-minute performance conveyed ideas in a language that was distinct from that of the 2- or 3- dimensional forms of practices. I left the workshop with a great appreciation of the beauty that performance art is capable of evoking. Most of all, I got a better understanding about the body as a blank canvas. Stelarc is a truly inspiring artist and will be one of the many modern day polymath that I look up to. ■

This article was written by Moses Tan Qian Yi, who is currently a student of BA(Hons) programme in the Faculty of Fine Arts.

“ Like a painter who prepares a blank canvas, Stelarc stretches his body through the notion of suspension – by having hooks pierce through his skin and then, wires attached to the hooks lift his entire body into a state of suspension. ”

I was invited by Dr. S Chandrasekaran to join the workshop conducted by Stelarc for the fine arts students. Stelarc's practice was relevant to my own art practice, as it involves the research and presentation of wearable technology with video and audio extension and capabilities.

Stelarc began the first part of the workshop with a slide presentation of some major critical art works and artists together with some of his own works where he raised some research issues and fielded questions.

In the second part of the workshop, each of the participants gave a 1-minute performance, after which Stelarc proceeded to briefly comment on and critique them. I gave a

demonstration of a current work of mine, entitled Life Circuit that I had started in 2009. The following is my research extract:

*"The work becomes an extension to the artist's anatomy in replacing human perceptions and expressions, using reconstructed industrial headgears, such as welding goggles, gas mask and earmuffs and reconstructed into video and audio wearable gadgets for live-feed images and sounds that are captured via the gadgets, and manipulated electronically with interactive elements."*

Stelarc provided very constructive comments on my work as he did for the other students' works. The overall workshop was very helpful and eventful. Above all, having had the opportunity to meet and talk to Stelarc proved to be an invaluable experience. ■

## POST-WORKSHOP SUMMARY



By Ulrich Lau Wai-Yuen

This article was written by Ulrich Lau Wai-Yuen, who is currently teaching in Diploma Level 1 Visual Studies, Faculty for the Creative Industries.



▼ Ulrich's performance during the workshop



# PRUDENTIAL SINGAPORE YOUNG ARTIST AWARD



By Jacqueline Sim

“In a world highly driven by success – defined by a climb up a hierarchy – the chase for awards and qualifications that serves to draw distinctions when there is already so much ambiguity in what is defined as a good artist or good artwork, becomes a dubious practice.”

► Nominees for Prudential Singapore Young Artist Awards - Jennifer Mehigan, Jacqueline Sim and Kray Chen KeRui



For this year, Prudential Eye Awards was held in Singapore to celebrate emerging artists across greater Asia. To showcase young talents from the LASALLE College of the Arts and the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) a special award was initiated *Prudential Singapore Young Artist Award*. Our Faculty of Fine Arts garnered three award titles in the category of painting, video, and installation: the awardees are Jennifer Mehigan, Kray Chen KeRui and Jacqueline Sim (myself) respectively.

On 17th January 2014, the usual void and stillness of Suntec City Exhibition hall was filled with artistic rhythms and vibrancy, soaking in the presence of cutting edge contemporary art. Upon entering the exhibition space, one is welcomed and energised by a feeling of enthusiasm with the array of sonorities emanating from TV screens to background chatter of artists, curators and media in the real space-time continuum. Live streaming of the symphony of the artists' dreams and journeys, fuel and invade the exhibition space. Feeding off the positive vibes, our feet become wheels that erase the proximity between the artworks

and artists; an organic situation that is shared through a communal interest.

As we made our way through the exhibition space, the segregation between the emerging artists and young artists becomes apparent. We found our works displayed behind a partition right at the end of the exhibition space, making a clear distinction between the polished and unpolished gems. Being my first invitation to a black-tie event, I found myself feeling overwhelmed and underdressed. Concealing my awkwardness, I politely checked out the formal attire of others. The 'polished gems' (emerging artists) appeared seasoned to such situations and completely at ease: they struck up conversations with anyone and everyone with an air of confidence.

The reception eased into the award-giving ceremony. The winners of the individual categories were announced with great enthusiasm. Underlying the genteel ambience and congratulatory applause, there was a certain air of uncertainty. Every one of us is hoping for to be the ultimate winner for the nominated award. Finally, the overall winner

for the *Singapore Young Artist Award* was announced, and it was presented to our competitors from NAFA. Initially, we felt disappointed, as we did our best; we were hoping to bring recognition to the College. However, we became philosophical about it, as there has to be a winner and a loser in every competition. So, we did not feel that our competitors were any less deserving in receiving award.

Reflecting back on the event, we are grateful to be selected for the award and to represent the College proudly. There is also a feeling of nostalgia - the adrenaline rush in the preparation for the show and the glamorous night, which were now the memories of the past.

It also calls to mind how awards are used to spur competition and judgment, galvanising the artist. Yet what remains subject to discussion is that the appreciation of art is considered as very much subjective and open to interpretation, that it makes one wary of any judgment of what is deemed superior to another. In a world highly driven by success – defined by a climb up a hierarchy – the chase for awards and

qualifications that serves as a need to draw distinctions when there is already so much ambiguity in what is defined as a good artist or good artwork, becomes a dubious practice. ■

*This article was written by Jacqueline Sim, who is a graduate of BA(Hons) programme in the Faculty of Fine Arts.*



Jacqueline Sim

## WINNER IN THE CATEGORY OF PAINTING

**Jennifer Mehigan**

Computer Gaze  
Acrylic and Enamel On Canvas  
120 x 180cm, 2013

“Jennifer Mehigan’s work explores the boundaries between physical existence and mediated space created by technology. She references phenomenological aspects of online worlds in her human-sized paintings, which operate as enlarged touch screens. She plays with notions of sensory deprivation and visual hyper-stimulation in her paintings, videos, and installations. Specific gestures: brush strokes, licks, screen swipes combine to form a fluid visual language that deconstructs desire, touch, and reality.” Hilary Schwartz



Jennifer Mehigan

## WINNER IN THE CATEGORY OF VIDEO

**Kray Chen KeRui**

Exercise now and fit a standard size coffin later  
Video, 2013

Kray talks about the notion of progress in everyday life and situations, revealing the absurd and futile conditions that we live in.



Kray Chen KeRui

## WINNER IN THE CATEGORY OF INSTALLATION

**Jacqueline Sim**

Beautiful Exchange  
Three Channels Video Projection, LED Lights in Frosted Acrylic, 2013

Beautiful Exchange is an attempt to present the ghost like existence of moving images, evolving changes of virtual and reality intercepting each other within the real space-time continuum we see in our life.

A collection of nine abandoned houses and their surroundings, tracing back of what was left behind as remnants of what was seen insignificant was part of what makes a home then. A journey where one discovers the associative link with their personal memories; using projection techniques on video format, the movement and shifts in scenes blurs the details, giving time to contemplate the basic elements we encounter in our daily lives.

# THE EXPERIENCE OF COS•MO

By Marilyn Giam Jia Min

First and foremost, the team members and I from the Faculty for the Creative Industries (Arts Management) Level 1 are extremely thankful for the opportunity and experience presented to us. Despite our participation being a concise one, it was sufficient to help us garner the required experience needed.

Initially, the feeling of intimidation was rampant because we were just students in our freshman year, thus we felt we were not equipped with the relevant skills to handle the Marketing and Public Relations for a live

exhibition. Fortunately, we were fortunate enough to receive guidance from our lecturer, Dr. Aleksandar Brkic, curator Gilles Massot and students from The Faculty of Fine Arts. Moreover, Gilles' dedication and passion towards COS•MO spurred us to put our hearts and souls into the exhibition.

COS•MO soon became not only Gilles' baby, but our baby too. In this exhibition, we also got to know more people from different faculties and the people in the industry, which were definitely an eye-opener for all of us. Apart from bonding with Gilles, we as a team

grew together and I believe the success of the Marketing and Public Relations of COS•MO can be attributed to the strong bond the group built. To Gilles, we are his COS•MO angels, and because of him, we will be able to remember this experience for a really long time. 

*This article was written by Marilyn Giam Jia Min, who is currently a student of BA(Hons) programme in Arts Management, Faculty for the Creative Industries.*



## BEHIND THE SCENES OF COS•MO

By Pragya Bhargava

COS•MO was curated by Gilles Massot. It was exhibited at Brother Joseph McNally Gallery from 8 to 24 November 2013.

COS•MO started with an email from Gilles Massot that stated he was planning an exhibition on the *Constant Self Recording Mode* or *Cos•mo* in November 2013 and was looking for volunteers. It sounds simple enough, so I jumped right into it without knowing how far it will go.

During our first meeting with Gilles, he told us that the Open Call had received a great response. Everything was going smooth. Not until Gilles mentioned that he wanted to curate this show with 30 artists in the Brother Joseph McNally Gallery that we realised that it was not

an ordinary show. Getting 30 artists with one or more works together, and curating a show in a modestly sized gallery, seems to be pushing the limits. And this was just the beginning.

The plans for *Cos•mo* grew from here. Everyone in the production team was delegated a task, and the energy and excitement was phenomenal. With every goal accomplished, a new one was set to take its place. Our team grew rapidly as Gilles roped in other faculties for this massive production. We got the rare chance of interacting and working together with students from other faculties toward a common goal. The show itself on the whole it was a different ball game. During the five days of setting up the exhibition, we gained vast knowledge about

the process of installing of artworks, which are of various scale and medium. Also, due to time crunch, we had feared that it was impossible to complete in time. However, to our little surprise, it all came well together in the end.

It was a great learning opportunity for me. Not only did I get the opportunity to learn about the curatorial process. But, I also learnt about setting up, handling, installing and de-installing works. It was an absolute pleasure to be a part of team *Cos•mo*. 

*This article was written by Pragya Bhargava, who is a graduate of BA(Hons) programme in the Faculty of Fine Arts.*



Fig.1 *Fleeting*, Performance by Morine Liang



Fig.2. *Recluse*, Performance by Jade Yeo



Fig.3 *Sound of Silent*, Performance by Terry Wee

“ Performance art is a dirty ploy played by art practitioners and audiences as it is always on the front page of contemporary art debate that justifies and challenges its very existence. ”

We were invited to exhibit at Asbestos Art Space in Bandung, Indonesia from 25 to 26 February 2014. The exhibition was called *It Is Not a Trap*. The show was curated by Kelvin Atmadibrata and Terry Wee, and it featured the works of nine artists.

From Indonesia, the participating artists were Dylan Christiawan, Kelvin Atmadibrata, Ratu Saraswati, and Ridwan Rau-Rau. From Singapore were students from the Faculty of Fine Arts, LASALLE, College of the Arts, and they were Chand Chandramohan, Hairolnizam bin Samion, Morine Liang, Terry Wee, and Jade Yeo Wen Jun (myself).

Artist and curator Kelvin explains, “Performance art is a dirty ploy played by art practitioners and audiences as it is always on the front page of contemporary art debate that justifies and challenges its very existence. The history of performance art remains a mystery. Many tracks its origin from the Dada movement in the beginning of the 20th century, or the Fluxus in the mid-1990s or even way back to tribal and ancient practices during pre-historic era. The riddle not only remains unanswered but levelled up in difficulty as witty labels such as Happenings, Live Art, Action Painting and many more propose alternative definitions of performance art. As if clarification will elevate its standing in the gruesome art world, artists, curators and art spaces who focus in the art form are often standing firm in their perceived boundary with performing arts, despite their similarities. This never-ending discussion seems like a constant loop of battles, one proposition ambushed by another, loopholes assaulted by supposedly more clever hypothesis that no



# IT IS NOT A TRAP

By Jade Yeo Wen Jun

longer result in dialogues about the art form anymore but simply pretentious display of one’s knowledge. Performance art is hence a trap. But this exhibition is not.”

The main objective of the show was to investigate various possibilities of performative elements that can be incorporated into drawings, sculptures, video, objects and installations. Most of the artworks were site-responsive to Asbestos Art Space.

The space is not only a site for an exhibition or performance, but it is also the home of an artist Willem Christiawan. It is alternative space for artists in Bandung.

Works were installed at various locations in the house – back lawn, along the stairs, central gallery space, kitchen and bathroom. For the opening night, there were several live performances, which contributed to the discussions about performance art and its position in contemporary art practice in today’s context.

The opening of the show commenced with Ridwan Rau-Rau’s performance at the entrance of the gallery. During the performance, holding a mirror to his face, he began ceaselessly plucking out his eyelashes. At the same time, he tried covering parts of himself with a doormat. The audience was then led into the gallery where they were greeted by Dylan Christiawan’s sculptures of mounted tiger skulls. Meticulously assembled, these macabre skulls set the tone of the exhibition.

On the staircase (fig.1), Morine Liang was seen sewing a traditional piece of cloth using a thread without a knot at its end for two hours. Occasionally, she breaks out into speech, conversing with her late grandfather in their dialect. During the performance, she painted herself white from the head to toe.

At the corner of the gallery (fig.2), I had propped my soft sculpture (a dubious human-like figure) into a sitting pose. I concealed myself with a blanket nearby and interacted with both the sculpture and members of the audience.

Hairolnizam bin Samion, decaled on small glass cups and placed them around the kitchen. At the same time, a video entitled *Vapour Rub* was projected onto the bathroom’s window screen, inviting the audience to be closer with the artworks. Ratu Saraswati, performed at the back of the house. It was a durational performance. She set up a tent on the grass patch and stayed in it throughout the night, weaving gathered foliage. Her hands and feet were protruding out of the tent’s entrance. It reflects the memories of her childhood.

In a more confined space (fig.3), Terry Wee struck sheets of paper with illustrated headlines on one wall, and on another two walls, he arranged sheets of blank paper. His performance involved the use of his breath: he blew the sheets of paper repeatedly.

Under Kelvin Atmadibrata’s suspended dolls and cloth installation on the front lawn, Chand Chandramohan’s explored the resonance of her voice in concurrence with her body. Her performance was a closing event for the night.

The night ended with a dialogue with the audience, which was led by Willem Christiawan. As we discuss the boundaries and tension between body and space, we also shared our observations about childhood, shelter, memories, suffocation and relief.

In looking at the traces of the performances lingering from the doormat to the unoccupied tent, it gives presence of the ‘performance’ to the audience without any physical intervention of the body.

The dialogue between audience and the artists provided a reflective perception about performance art and was very insightful in understanding performance art in the present context. It was a truly humbling experience to perform along with these artists, and to be hosted graciously by Willem Christiawan and his family in Bandung. ■

*This article was written by Jade Yeo Wen Jun, who is currently a student of BA(Hons) programme in the Faculty of Fine Arts.*



# LANDINGS: THE PECULIAR CASE OF THE SPEEDY VIEWER

▲ Landings: Graduation showcase of Masters of Art, Faculty of Fine Art

By Kray Chen KeRui

On one of the days that I happened to be stationed at the gallery, I observed an incident that would provide the departure point for this article. I witnessed one person standing afar, casting occasional glances and approaching the gallery in a nervous manner. As he came to the main entrance, not knowing the exact unlocked door out of four, and whether to push or pull, he rattled and banged hurriedly before finally entering the gallery. He shared a millisecond eye contact with me, took the catalogue and very quickly began to go through the works. He spends approximately a second at each work and proceeded to the next looking like he was on a speed-viewing mission. Literally within a minute or so, he had acquainted himself with every single artwork and left in the same speedy manner.

Astonished and a little offended, I wondered: Perhaps he was looking for a specific artwork/artist that wasn't in the show? Maybe he was squeezing time out of his busy schedule to catch a glimpse of the works? It could also be that he wanted to expend some in-between time? Or for all I know he may just be totally unimpressed by the works on show!

Whatever it could have been, the encounter with this visitor was for me a startling capture of the Zeitgeist of our time - we are always chasing after time! We have incorporated our mundane everyday with devices that constantly reiterate the need to "save time" so that we remain productive and efficient. In many situations, we count time by the seconds, with every "lags" and "hiccups" inciting impatience and frustration. With the mindset that "free time" hard to come by, any apparent unprofitable, uninteresting, unrelated or unnecessary things/situations can be procrastinated, shelved or discarded altogether to free up time.

The consequence of this is that we become passive to the very experience in front of us. We are familiar with the scene of office workers using their smart phones in a meeting or the scene of tourists at various iconic locations busy capturing their experience through devices. Central to this passive tendency is the idea of 'snapshotting', where the gist is enough

**“The appearance of the ‘snapshotting’ visitor magnified the need to reflect on the conditions and pace of current life. Ironically, the very artworks that he had glided by resonated with the attempts at redefining living by reacquainting us with the values that one finds in patience, banality and futility.”**

to represent the whole: the mere presence of the office worker completes his participation in the meeting; the photographs complete the tourist's experience. 'Snapshotting' becomes the coping mechanism that reconciles our desire to maintain utmost activeness and productivity with our inability to do so.

The appearance of the 'snapshotting' visitor magnified the need to reflect on the conditions and pace of current life. Ironically, the very artworks that he had glided by resonated with the attempts at redefining living by reacquainting us with the values that one finds in patience, banality and futility.

The show that I am referring to is *Landings*, the graduation showcase of the twelve Masters of Art Fine Art candidates that have just completed their round of research. Bridget Tay's installation challenges the notion of

painting through tongue-in-cheek play with basic texts, objects and images. Starting as a painter and now adopting the persona of a punk, Bridget satirises the exaggerated practice of convolutions in the art world. Cherin Sim, who works as a bag designer, similarly adopts this reflexive and satirical approach. She turns her back to consumer culture by creating monstrous impractical products with popular design motifs and takes a harsh dig at our hunger for luxury goods. Also working along the theme of commodification is Chua Ying Yi, a commercial photographer who has repurposed his selling skills to test the definition of sacrality by displacing religious objects, images and symbolisms in his photographic installation.

Filip Gudovic, on the other hand, upholds the sacred call of painters. Through formal aesthetics and with a convivial attitude, he realises the impossibilities of life in his paintings that he measures, and records with the actuality of reality. In another manner

of recording, Gilly Beal's paintings of linear gestures capture imperfections and reveals gaps and traces of a brushstroke. Like vinyl discs, her paintings transform every viewer into a stylus that uniquely playbacks encoded memories and encounters that the lines represent. This quiet aesthetics reverberates in Julienne Tan's object-installation that deals with the fragmentation and reconciliation of memory; they manifest in her act of paper pulp patching that provides the unwanted objects or structures with temporary new leases of life.

At the other end, my own video-installation of multiple clones of myself queuing up negates this fragility of memory with repetition and loop. While literally waiting for things to happen (on screen), viewers are invited to delve in the existential searches for purpose and value in the things they do.

Another way of prompting self-reflection is Krista Kim's projections of colour fields. Accompanied by mood-soothing music, she attempts to induce meditative experience through the visual play of stillness and light.

The notions of repetition and meditation culminate in Lee Pheng Guan's durational performance in which he expends his (life) time in the gallery building up and perfecting a giant sand ball held together by wax. Echoing this performative quality is Madhvee Deb's participatory engagement with individuals with gender dysphoria, translating their profound everyday struggles into photographic and visual dramatisations. While tapping on her own daily moments, Nadia Oh's poetic and sensitive craft of printed fabrics, cyanotype and stitching, function as gestural and imagery evidence of her attempts to document the everyday familiarities around her. Last but not least, Sven Stefanovic's video questions the tendency to "over-document" given the proliferation of camera devices today. Using a pair of metaphoric staring eyes, he reflexively asks what it means to be a photographer and how the function of photos has changed. ■



Opening of Landings

This article was written by Kray Chen KeRui, who is a graduate of MA Fine Arts programme in the Faculty of Fine Arts.

# HONG KONG STUDY TRIP: UNDER THE SURFACE

15 to 19 December 2013

By Marie-Pierre Mol

When the decision was made to go to Hong Kong for the study trip, my classmates and I were looking forward to having a good time in a city that we were already familiar with and had explored on previous trips. However, to our pleasant surprise, this study trip was an opportunity to discover yet unexplored cultural territories. In Hong Kong, like in Singapore, land is scarce and thus expensive, and exhibition spaces are limited. Despite this drawback, many independent, non-commercial alternative art spaces have existed side by side with glitzy commercial galleries and public museums.

## DAY 1

The Hong Kong Arts Centre is a non-profit organisation and a self-financed statutory arts organisation established in 1977. Located in a beautifully designed building, the Hong Kong Arts Centre not only hosts innovative

artists. Until recently, Para Site has been financed by the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, but there is no guarantee of such financing in the future.

## DAY 2

Founded in 2000, Asian Art Archive (AAA) is a private initiative which was launched to compensate for the lack of resources on Chinese contemporary art. It is research driven and its motto is "preserving by sharing". Today, the scope covered by AAA covers all of Asia, from Pakistan to the Philippines, from China to Singapore. Its programmes encompass various kinds of research projects such as archiving artworks in alternative art space, like Salon Natasha in Hanoi, residency programmes, and organizing "mobile library" projects in countries like Sri Lanka (2012) or Myanmar (2014) where cultural resources are scarce.

The Hong Kong Museum of Art, located on



▲ Our group with the artist, Wong Chung Yu in front of his installation, *A Transition Cycle of Dualism*.



▲ Para Site Art Space



▲ Hong Kong University

“In Hong Kong, like in Singapore, land is scarce and thus expensive, and exhibition spaces are limited. Despite this drawback, many independent, non-commercial alternative art spaces have existed side by side with glitzy commercial galleries and public museums.”

▼ At the Hong Kong Museum of Art.

exhibitions of contemporary art but also educational institutions like the Goethe Institute and commercial spaces. We had the opportunity to visit Distilling Senses, an amazing journey through art and technology in Asian contemporary art. In this exhibition, nine Asian artists (Wang Ningde, Team Lab, which also showcased at the SB 2013, Shilpa Gupta, Lee Yongbaek, Chang Yung Ta, Takashi Ishida, Wong Chung Yu, Nam June Paik, Samson Young) explored how technology shapes art and how artists use technology to sharpen our senses and enhance understanding of our surroundings.

Para Site, an established private art space located in Hollywood Road, hosts exhibitions and organises residency programmes for artists, writers and curators. Para Site publishes PS, a magazine, dedicated to visual arts and culture, books and exhibition catalogues. The ongoing exhibition was *Great Crescent: Art and Agitation in the 1960s – Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan*, which featured photos and videos by early avant-garde East Asian

beautiful Hong Kong Bay, has a rich collection of calligraphy and traditional Chinese paintings. We were privileged to see temporary exhibitions showcasing treasures from the 17th century as well as cutting-edge artworks from the Hong Kong Contemporary Awards 2012.

Were it not for our anticipating a Chinese banquet that evening, one of our classmates, who is a Chinese painting lover, would have never left the museum!

## DAY 3

The third day was dedicated to the visit of Hong Kong universities to learn about their art history programmes, and to visit their museums and bookshops. It was a great opportunity to put our Masters programme into perspective.

We started with the University of Hong Kong, which was founded by the British in 1910 and is the oldest tertiary education institution in Hong Kong.

Located in a beautiful old mansion, the University museum and art gallery is also





▲ Students in their studio at the Chinese University of Hong Kong

the oldest museum in Hong Kong. The latter was founded in 1953 to keep and display a collection of Chinese art and archaeology for teaching purposes. We met with the Chair of the Fine Arts Department and were surprised to find out that it only offers history and theory courses, and not studio-based ones. The focus was different over at the Chinese University of Hong Kong with its students' studios, which we visited before going to the museum. It was a great pleasure to meet young artists in the midst of their creative process.

#### DAY 4

We thought that we had already discovered the most exciting places and exhibitions of the city. However, our Programme Leader, Jeffrey Say, had prepared a grand finale. After being warmly welcomed by the managers of two non-profit art spaces, Spring Workshop and Videotage, both located in unconventional and unexpected locations of the city, we headed

to the most prestigious international galleries and to the much anticipated new contemporary museum of Hong Kong, M+.

As a pleasant transition, between these two opposite worlds, we stopped for a delicious lunch in the Aberdeen Marina, where luxury yachts have replaced the traditional junks and sampans.

Opened in 2012, Spring Workshop is a beautifully designed art space anchored in an industrial neighbourhood of Hong Kong. This creative and innovative institution focuses on international cross-disciplinary programmes of artists and curatorial residencies, exhibitions, music, films and talks. Some of its projects were developed in collaboration with Para Site. Our group particularly enjoyed and identified with the concept behind an Installation called *The Social Contract, A Constructed World*. Among the texts included in the installation that we meditated on, was the quote by Frances Ferguson, "A group seems most completely

▼ Ai Wei Wei, *Fairytale-1001 Chairs, 2007, Qing Dynasty wooden chairs [1644-1911].*



▲ Cattle Depot Artist Village

a group when the individuals in it share a maximum number of beliefs..."

Videotage is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the promotion, presentation, creation and preservation of video art. It was established in 1986, with support from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. Its location in a former slaughterhouse, known as the *Cattle Depot Artist Village*, makes this art space particularly intriguing.

After this exploration of the most cutting-edge art spaces, we could not miss what Hong Kong is famous for, namely its high-end art market. In Central, at 12 Pedder Street, the 301 Pedder Building houses the most prestigious international galleries such as Gagosian, Pearl Lam, Lehmann Maupin, Simon Lee and Ben Brown. In the latter, we particularly enjoyed the exhibition called *EXPRESSION: A Philosophical Portrait of Human Kind*, works selected by Martin Klosterfelde. The photo of our group, with each one of us standing behind a Qing Dynasty chair by Ai Wei Wei, testifies to this!

We had no time to climb the Peak but the peak of our visit was the presentation of the M+ project. M+ is a gigantic museum project aimed at becoming both an iconic building and cultural concept in Hong Kong. This museum is dedicated to 20th and 21st century art, design, architecture and film. It will be located on Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour, in West Kowloon and should be completed in 2017.

Much more could be said about the good time we had: enjoying the food, 'book hunting', and debating every possible topic. In a nutshell, despite the terrible December weather, which was cold and rainy, the Hong Kong study trip will remain one of the best memories of this Masters programme. ■

*This article was written by Marie-Pierre Mol, who is currently a student of the MA Asian Art Histories Programme. All photos courtesy of Derelyn Chua. It was first published on the Asian Art Histories website [www.asianarthistories.com](http://www.asianarthistories.com).*



▲ Mural work at Vishranthi

# OUR BANGALORE TRIP



By Severine Miaja Arambulo and Raymond Wu



▲ Visit to National Gallery of Modern Art, Mysore

Six students of different levels were given the opportunity to go on a trip to Bangalore with lecturers Salleh Japar and Dr. S. Chandrasekaran, to be involved in a community project, to experience another culture and generally, to be inspired. The Fine Arts degree students invited for the trip were: Faris Bin Mohamed Salim from level 3; Jade Yeo and Morine Liang from level 2; and Moses Tan, Raymond Wu and Severine Miaja Arambulo from level 1.

We stayed at Vishranthi Trust which is a multifaceted facility for senior citizens, orphanage, primary, and vocational training centre for the rural poor, near Jadigenahalli on Hoskote in Bangalore. It is run by Madam Sarasa Vasudevan. At Vishranthi they organically grow their own fruit, vegetables, herbs, and spices in

their garden. They strongly believe in being self-sufficient and in helping the local community by raising awareness and informing local farmers of sustainable agriculture. For example, there are many eucalyptus plantations in the area. Madam Sarasa has been trying to educate the local farmers that this plant is not suitable for the soil as it is too water absorbent and this has led to a reduction of the water levels of the land.

We met the orphans that live at the Vishranthi. There was a girl and four boys, whose ages range from three to six years old. Their names were: Sangeetha, Prajwal, Sagar, Chintu, and Yashwant. Although shy at first, they quickly warmed up to us. They and the children from the local village school, worked

with us on the mural.

We taught the children how to use stencils and how to print on the walls with sponges. It was very fun to paint with the children, although the most challenging part was probably trying to control the mixing of colours so that everything did not become an ugly brown! It was great to see the place come to life with colour, and look more like a kindergarten or playground.

We went to the town's commercial street. It was bustling with people shopping and selling from boutique stores to street vendors. We all pooled some money together to buy clothes for the orphans and gifts for Madam Sarasa to be given before we left to show our gratitude. ▶

▼ Orphanage in Ashakiran, Laggare



“An amazing skill of the people in India is that even though they are not guided by rigorous systems, they are still able to thrive and work in some measured order and organisation amidst the chaos. Not everything is clearcut; there are limited resources but people there learn to adapt to a dire situation where moments of brilliance, strokes of genius and innovation can be observed.”



▲ Students of Kattigenahalli

Art classes were held at two different schools; one was in the Muslim village called Kattigenahalli, where we taught the children drawing and colouring with oil pastels. We also played some games with the kids and had fun doing so!

At the second school, which is also an orphanage in Ashakiran in the Laggare, located in a slum area of Bangalore, we taught young orphans there some simple coloured sand art. This was a smaller and more focused group. The children were much more rowdy here.

When working with the children we noticed that they were shy and hesitant, and wondered if this may be because art lessons are new for them. Nevertheless, there were a few who showed much flair and potential. We also realised the children would often seek affirmation, and they are delighted when praised or complimented on their work.

We toured the sites of Bangalore and around the state of Karnataka. We went to a cow sanctuary, which housed 30 of the 32 existing species of Desi cows. They made full use of the bi-products through processing and recycling, thus achieving a fully organic and self-sufficient sustainable system. They aim to expand and promote their organic way of life. Slowly but surely, there are more converts who try to restore Bangalore's once very fertile land.

With the exception of the cow sanctuary, our other sightseeing tours are very much related to the arts and culture.

There is the sculptors' village for instance. In India, there are villages that are dedicated to certain crafts and this one specialises in stone sculptures. Every home is filled with stone sculptures of different types of stones and designs. Sadly, we did not stay too long as it was getting dark, and we had to leave.

We also visited the National Gallery of Modern Art where we met Madam Rehana, who is the Assistant Director of the gallery. She gave a private tour.

At the Mysore Jagenmohan Palace, we saw



▲ Palace of Mysore

paintings by Rembrandt. The Rembrandts are part of the late King's private collection of art, known to be one of the largest collections of artworks and artefacts in South India.

We visited the Palace of Mysore, also known as the Amba Villas Palace. Commonly described as Indo-Saracenic, the architecture is a blend of Hindu, Muslim, Rajput, and Gothic styles. Echoing this architectural direction, the artefacts, murals, paintings, and materials used hail from various origins.

Handicrafts and wooden toys are common sights in the many Emporiums in Mysore. The city is well known for manufacturing the wood products.

Our final stop before heading back to the Vishranti, was the Brindavan Gardens, Krishna Raja Sagare and the dam. The Brindavan

Gardens has a botanical park with fountains, boasting a fountain show in its programme. We were amazed and humbled, at how enthusiastically the audience watched the show despite the simple fountain that they had, in comparison to the more extravagant one in Singapore.

The trip to Bangalore made us reflect on how we tend to take what we already have for granted, and how happiness is not only measured by material wealth. The people in India are beginning to become painfully aware of the harmful effects of uninformed farming as the land's fertility depletes. Short-term profits may result in the land being unable to sustain itself for future generations.

The essence of their culture and everyday life is also reflected and apparent in their arts

and crafts. It is not just a result of superficially adopting visual aesthetics but springs from a deep-rooted sense of a culture that spans thousands of years, and as such, proudly celebrated in their art works and films.

An amazing skill of the people in India is that even though they are not guided by rigorous systems, they are still able to thrive and work in some measured order and organisation amidst the chaos. Not everything is clearcut; there are limited resources but people there learn to adapt to a dire situation where moments of brilliance, strokes of genius and innovation can be observed. People went about with their lives, without getting too engrossed and caught up with their work. The pace of life is different from that in Singapore.

It was definitely an eye-opener and enriching experience for all of us, working with the needy or also taking in the sights of wealth and luxury. We are very grateful for this opportunity and it definitely widened our perspectives. ■

*This article was written by Severine Miaja Arambulo and Raymond Wu, who are currently students of BA(Hons) programme in the Faculty of Fine Arts.*

After just a couple of hours' flight from Singapore, we landed at the quaint International Airport at Bandung, Indonesia, which was roughly the size of a largish garage, overgrown with creepers and looking like an abandoned hangar. A bracing and wonderfully refreshing (and most comfortably dry) breeze whipped our hair about as we made our way across the short runway to immigration. A large group of passengers rushed past us to the very plane from which we had just disembarked, bound for a trip back to Singapore. We hustled into "immigration" which turned out to be two guys behind a desk who checked our passports. Those who had to get a visa on arrival had to go to another desk to get their passports stamped. In the meantime, we waited in an adjacent room for our luggage to be unloaded by a guard in uniform. The walk through the airport to the exit took about five

had just seen.

Next on our itinerary was the famous Sari Ater, a hot spring "park" in Bandung. Roughly an hour later, we were there. As if the welcome heat seeping into our very bones as we dipped our feet in the water was not enough, the place was also stunningly beautiful. The late afternoon sunlight drenched the pines around each steaming pool in a shimmering golden light, turning it into an aesthetic fantasy for us artistic types. We tried to divide our time between taking pictures of the gurgling streams of tepid water and its surrounding greenery, and just sitting still as we enjoy total relaxation with our feet soaking in the delightful warmth.

All too soon, this was over as we were rushed off to dump our bags at the Jayakarta Hotel, an opulent affair with plush rooms and beds. We spent the rest of the evening shopping and eating out at the sprawling Cihampelas Walk,

cafe decorated in the ever-popular grunge chic style, the Kampiun Bistro.

This time accompanied by great coffees and teas, the hearty lunch was quickly polished off, after which we piled into the bus, and headed for the Selasar Sunaryo Art Space in Cimencyan. A beautiful, sprawling, serene space, set up by the artist, DRS Sunaryo, the Art Space contains working galleries, including Sunaryo's permanent collection, an amphitheatre for performance art, a small library, gift shop, and cafe. In short, it is heaven.

Situated at the top of a small hill, surrounded by greenery and graceful mist, it is quiet, calming and uplifting place to visit. One could take in Sunaryo's impressive works at leisure, read or watch videos and documentaries on art at the library, or sit at the café and enjoy its impressive menu, and meditate on life. There are always art workshops and events taking



# TRIP TO BANDUNG, INDONESIA

24 to 26 February 2014



By Aparajitha Vaasudev

“We met their warm and friendly students and lecturers who took us around the many impressive studios and workshops, and filled us in on anything we had questions about, from the course structure to the art market in Indonesia. A well-stocked (and more importantly, inexpensive!) bookshop located within the fine arts building yielded up a few of its treasured tomes to our hungry students.”

minutes. We were then bundled into the bus that would serve us for the rest of the trip.

The landscape grew more rustic as we made our way to a restaurant for lunch. The friendly guide gave us all the tourist facts about Bandung as we settled in for what turned out to be a one-hour ride. Buildings and houses gave way gradually to lush, terraced tea plantations shrouded in mist. The restaurant, Saung Balibu, in the Lembang area of Bandung, was beautiful, constructed entirely from splendid thick beams of wood, the vaulted ceilings hung with bamboo chandeliers. Our sumptuous lunch was served to us on the second floor, overlooking the restaurant's very own stone amphitheatres, around which couples sat cuddled against the chill. After we stuffed ourselves with our meals, complete with a dessert that reminded of blancmange, we took pictures of the endless fields around us, enjoying the wonderful weather.

Then it was back in the bus, as we headed for a breathtaking experience of a dormant volcano, the Tangkuban Parahu, which meant an "upturned boat" in Sundanese. Our guide told us the fascinating myth behind its name on our journey up the mountain. The volcano itself was a magnificent sight, with the clouds of mist clinging lovingly to its slopes. It began to rain gustily when we were at the top. Clutching our flapping rain ponchos and laughing over the sound of the wind howling at us, we managed a few selfies while taking in the beauty of the natural formation of rock, mud and ash. When the rain rendered further enjoyment of the view there impossible, we climbed back into our bus, and headed back, marvelling at everything we



a beautiful, mostly open-to-sky mall, where we roamed about to our hearts' content, enjoying the hospitality of the gregarious local retailers, and eating delectable, mind-numbingly cheap food. After the buzz of an exciting day, we headed back to hotel, where we collapsed, exhausted but contented from all the walking and general frivolity.

Day two began with a hearty breakfast at the hotel, followed by a trip to the Institute of Technology, Bandung, or ITB. It was an impressive space. Composed of large buildings of several levels cramped with studios, where students worked hard to produce the taxing work required of its curriculum, it was packed with inspiring work, equipment and a variety of material. We met their warm and friendly students and lecturers who took us around the many impressive studios and workshops, and filled us in on anything we had questions about, from the course structure to the art market in Indonesia. A well-stocked (and more importantly, inexpensive!) bookshop located within the fine arts building yielded up a few of its treasured tomes to our hungry students. Then it was time for lunch, at a local

place, usually within a few days of each other. One meets outgoing Indonesian artists, who are always happy to sit and talk about art for a spell.

We spent a couple of hours at the cafe, taking in the perfect atmosphere, and then had to leave for another concept art venue — the Lawang Wangi Cafe & Art Space in Lembang. This place was, if possible, just as beautiful, and we were all inspired by the concept — a real, working gallery, complete with sitters, an art shop, and cafe. What was so special about this place? They carried installations, sculptures, and 15-foot paintings. The scale of the place was awesome, and there was a permanent as well as a temporary collection. And the art was fantastic.

In addition there was a ramp that headed off into nothingness, just so you could step out and look around at the mist-shrouded, verdant hills around you, and it was nothing short of the best art space any of us had ever been to even if we did not sample any food at its cafe.

Our guide then decided that we simply had to sample the local shopping in Bandung, but the problem was that we did not have a lot of time. We went around a couple of factory outlets, and the beautiful luxury mall, Paris Van Java, but very soon it was time for dinner. A local restaurant hosted us this time, and once again, we were replete after a hearty meal. After that it was back to the hotel for our last night in Bandung. Some of us were determined that it should not go to waste. We made a beeline to the hotel's massage parlour for an inexpensive, full body massage. As excellent Indonesian masseuses kneaded away our cares (yes, cares



– about the rest of the semester, of course!), and we sank into a heavenly, blissful stupor, I mused that this trip – most inspiring and beautiful – was undoubtedly one of the best that I had ever been on. We were truly sorry to leave the next morning. The only bad thing about the trip was that it was way too short and we all swore we would be seeing Bandung again very soon. ■

*This article was written by Aparajitha Vaasudev, who is a graduate of BA(Hons) programme in the Faculty of Fine Arts.*

“The most enjoyable experience came from the moments when some of the students became aware of the process they went through and expressed that to me, either verbally or in their evaluation reports. There was a lot of stress, breakdowns, miscommunication, crying, arguments... but at the same time, a lot of laughter, fun and memorable moments.”



# OFFBEAT@WINSTEDT

Interview with Dr. Aleksandar Brkic

By Dr. S. Chandrasekaran



▲ Fig 1. *Pulse* by Andreas Schlegel, Dhiya Muhammad, Mohammad Alif Ridhwan, Mithru Vigneshwara, Muhammad Izzwann Shah, Mohamad Nursoleh bin Mohd Yunos, Media Lab, LASALLE College of the Arts

## Praxis: Can you share your experience in conceptualising *Offbeat@Winstedt* Project?

**Alex:** I have to disappoint you and say that there was no centralised artistic leadership when it comes to the aesthetics and visualisation of the event.

There was an initial brief for the event, coming from the LASALLE Division of Communications and Advancement Department, as well as from Mr. Venka Purushothaman, LASALLE's Provost. The *Offbeat@Winstedt* concept was developed by LASALLE Level two BA Arts Management students, and was supervised by Ms. Emma Balázs, Programme Leader of BA(Hons) Arts Management, Mr. Derrick Chew, our Production Management supervisor, and me, as the overall supervisor of the learning outcomes of the project.

It is very difficult to find a balance between the professional standards of creating an event, and an event as a learning process for future arts managers. Professionally, as an events manager, I would say that aesthetically, conceptually, logistically, the event could have been better integrated and more consistent in many ways. As an educator, thinking about the process and the learning outcomes for the students, I am more than satisfied, since they had the opportunity to learn from the dilemmas, mistakes, failures, as well as from the success and perceptions of success of the final event.

## What is your experience in working across various faculties?

You have to be realistic when it comes to the inter-faculty collaborations in education, anywhere in the world, not only at LASALLE. I have to say that in the initial stage, our students reached out to almost every department in LASALLE, and it meant investing so much energy in communication. We all work hard at LASALLE, and the amazing results can be seen, for example, at The LASALLE Show.

However, to be able to have more collaborative projects, we have to invest more energy to integrate them in the curriculums and communicate more between each other. Since an arts manager's role is to be the bridge between the artists and the audience, our programme in this case positioned itself as

a bridge between various programmes and faculties. I think that we did manage to create some good links at the end, which were visible at the event itself. The final event is not only the product of our programme but also a real collaborative work of large number of lecturers, staff and students of LASALLE.

## What difficulties did the students face when finalising the project?

There were many difficulties from which they could learn, such as the principles of communication with the 'client' (LASALLE management), as well as the communication with and the administrative procedures within an institution.

Other difficulties were related with the event itself – complexities of artistic leadership; artist management; working on the production process with the artists from the idea to the production of the work; marketing of the event as well as the monitoring of the marketing strategies; audience experience connected with the event; stage management of a large event; leadership and teamwork; management of the technical production; handling the protocol and GOH/VIP guests; logistics of the event... et cetera.

Your role as an educator is to expose them to all these potential learning points, and to open them up for them. Some students picked up more, some less. One important element is always individual responsibility, and self-awareness of the processes one participates in.

## I enjoyed watching the opening. It was grandeur and there was a buzz of excitement in looking at every student's work. How did you organise the selection of the works?

Selection of the works was done in the collaboration with different lecturers from LASALLE, which are at the same time artists or curators. For example, Ms. Melanie Pocock (FCVA), conceptualised and curated *The Open Field* exhibition, and our Arts Management students worked closely with her, learning what it means to curate an exhibition. The whole music segment was selected and supervised by Mr. Brian O'Reilly (BA Music), Mr. Andreas Schlegel (Media Lab) developed the whole new installation (Fig 1. *The Pulse*) in collaboration with the interdisciplinary group of artists and our students, and Ms. Hazel Lim and Ms. Shirley Soh supervised and developed the *Kampung Seniman* project together with the Fine Arts students.

Overall, it was a collection of existing and newly produced work that had the intention of reflecting on the different processes and dynamics of the environment we create within LASALLE.

## Please do share with us your experience in solving the difficulties that arose during the planning.

The biggest difficulty was to transform the perceptions of the Winstedt campus in the eyes of students, lecturers, as well as the community surrounding it. I have to say that our starting

point was not so bright.

Thanks to the other interdisciplinary LASALLE project I was involved in (*The Space Project*), I had the opportunity to include in this process Mr. Jean Guy Lecat, a French scenographer who worked with Peter Brook for many years in creating and conceptualising more than 300 performance spaces around the world. We worked with him at Winstedt, and he gave some important directions to students, concerning the perceptions and interventions in the space.

From an initial negative perception of the campus, we arrived at the point where colleagues were approaching us during the event and asking us how they can book a work space at Winstedt. This was one of the proofs for us that we did manage to answer to the important elements of the brief we received from LASALLE management at the beginning of the process.

## Finally, what is the most enjoyable experience you gained from organising *Offbeat@Winstedt*?

The most enjoyable experience came from the moments when some of the students became aware of the process they went through and expressed that to me, either verbally or in their evaluation reports. There was a lot of stress, breakdowns, miscommunication, crying, arguments... but at the same time, a lot of laughter, fun and memorable moments.

These types of projects are the reasons why we enjoy being the educators, why we love working with the young artists and why LASALLE is different. We are not afraid to challenge ourselves, to take a risk. Sometimes we fail, which is often a sin in the context of the Singaporean competitive and stressful social environment, but we do learn, and we do get better. 📌

*Prior to moving to LASALLE, Dr Aleksandar Brkic had been engaged as a lecturer/researcher at the UNESCO Department for Cultural Policy and Management at the University of Arts in Belgrade, and a part-time/guest lecturer at a number of academic programmes in Serbia. He worked for more than 10 years as an arts and events manager in Europe, collaborating within the events such as Prague Quadrennial, Venice Biennial, and others. Currently, he is a lecturer in the Arts Management Programme, at the Faculty for the Creative Industries.*

# TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTIONS

By Filip Gudovic



The following mini-essay expands on the work I did for the *Open Field* project, which marked the opening of the new LASALLE campus at Winstedt, called *Offbeat@Winstedt*. The concept behind the project was to feature visual art and performances on the large grass field in front of the campus building. As a participant, it was a unique yet strange experience to have an organised event in presence of multiple natural conditions as opposed to McNally campus, which is conditioned, and artificial. In the following paragraphs I will discuss the idea of *Temporary Constructions*, using my installation as a reference point (fig.4).

**What is a construction?** Construction is a generation of form, a constitution of materials that serves a function. Thus, construction is also the process, the way or organising these materials in space and making a conscious structure of supports. The final form serves as an outcome of such processes and is ready to be given an exterior structure - a membrane, skin, etc. The formation of support systems in constructions is akin to the connections between organs in our body, thus one could examine architectural construction as a system with a mouth, bones, veins and heart (including the other orifices in our body).

Modern architectural constructions are mostly utopian in their use of repetition, symmetry, and distribution of forces. The buildings and houses we live in have geometric and skeletal structures that impose architects mind-space onto our own everyday relationship to space. It is a utopian functioning structure - constructivism that serves social purposes and enables functionality of our industry and life in general.

**What kinds of constructions are there?** Whether a structure is found in its natural or artificial state, its modality is directly related to the functionality of a construction and its form. In the process of making the installation *Temporary Constructions*, I became aware of this different state of materiality and how multiplicity opened up my understanding of things I was making (you may call them

**“What is a construction? Construction is a generation of form, a constitution of materials that serves a function. Thus, construction is also the process, the way or organising these materials in space and making a conscious structure of supports. The final form serves as an outcome of such processes and is ready to be given an exterior structure - a membrane, skin, etc.”**

sculptures if it makes you more comfortable). Unlike constructivism, I was thinking more in lines with the formation of Arte Povera<sup>1</sup> and its usage of the everyday materials as means to critique the syntax of form.

Initially, the installation was supposed to be called “Readymade Constructions”, which I found interesting as I began observing the objects I was collecting as readymade objects and exaggerating their status further by multiplying and combining them with other objects (fig.1). At one point, the curator of the project, Melanie Pocock, wrote me an email and questioned me about the way I was altering the original functionality of the gathered objects. Also, she was keen in knowing what function the final objects would serve, if none at all. On this note, I decided to change the title to *Temporary Constructions*, as it was more relevant to the nature of the work I was making.

The readymade is one remove from material in its natural state, for example clay in earth

together with other materials is used in making a clay brick - a unit of architectural construction (fig.2). In this way, architecture deals with a readymade state of materials, a Lego-like combination of different blocks and colours. Then what is a brick but a unit in a large system, in the same way as the human system, like blood cells (fig.3) circulating through a body, sensitive to pain and destruction. The construction industry is a complex system that circulates materials vertically (up and down), excavating and adding on to the ground, a extending the natural body into machines.

On the other hand, temporality of a construction is found in its unfinished and non-functional state. *Temporary Constructions* is the banality of the architectural: non-symmetrical, non-repetitive, imbalance of forces, etc. *Temporary Constructions* subverts the modality of a functional construction, thus it presents objects in their pure states of not serving a function they were “designed” for.

This idea may sound almost anarchistic, yet it reverts the readymade objects back to their original material presence, an autonomous de-humanised state. In other words, a clay brick returns back into a block of clay and not a unit of architecture.

**How do we construct things?** I think of process of constructing as a vertical one, one that starts at some point and stops at another, with an infinite line of variations. Relational field of materials enforces the relationship of the singular structure and final design. A readymade is connected with another readymade, a multiplicity of systems of support that inform our notion of interior and exterior spaces. Alike a human body or a tree, the construction ages, rusts and decomposes along other constructions, although unlike life, which subscribes to a ecological cycle, in this case, its parts can be replaced with another readymade. ■

*This article was written by Filip Gudovic, who is a graduate of MA programme in the Faculty of Fine Arts.*

1. A modern art movement (1967-1972) that means literally poor art which began in Italy as a radical subversive movement against institutions, power and culture. It is identified with the use of unconventional art materials such as everyday objects in the works, in the attempt to break down the barrier between art and life.

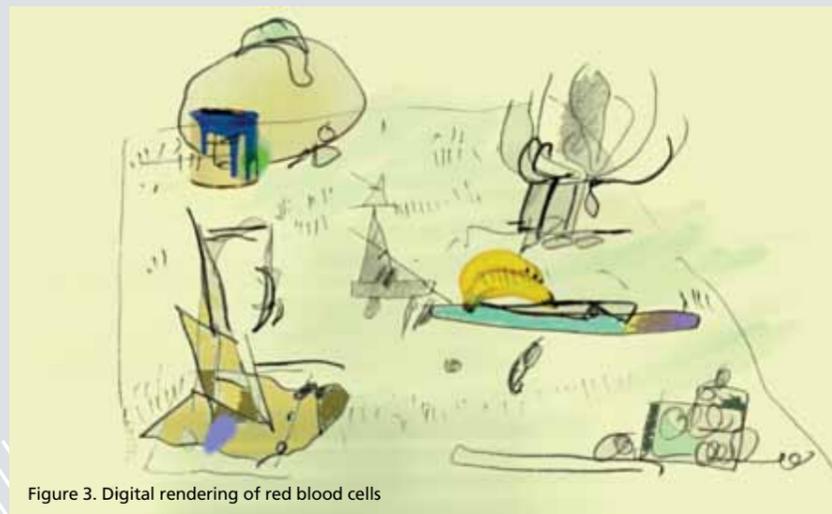


Figure 3. Digital rendering of red blood cells



Figure 2. A clay brick



Figure 1. Preliminary sketches



Figure 4. *Temporary Constructions*, installation at Winstedt LASALLE campus, March 2014

**K**ampong Seniman (fig.1) is an installation that was created by a team of Diploma of Fine Arts Level 3 students, comprising of Andrew Lim, Laurie Maravilla, Victoria Tan, Yuri Dahlan, and Joel Chin (myself). It was created in conjunction with *Offbeat@Winstedt*, the official opening of the Winstedt campus on the 4th of April, 2014. The work itself pays tribute to the historical background of the premises as well as the idea of a communal spirit within the school.

The team and myself first got together in December 2013 to work on the project after it was briefed to us by Hazel Lim, our lecturer. We felt that it was a great opportunity to test out the idea of a collective, whose members come from various backgrounds and disciplines, working together to create a cohesive piece of work. The initial ideas we were to work with, was the idea of creating a space that deals with contemplation and community. For example, among the first few ideas that came up was the idea of a Japanese Zen garden.

When the project officially started in January 2014, we were introduced to our supervisor for the project, Shirley Soh, who has been instrumental in guiding us along this project. With her guidance, we researched more the history of the place and from there, we found the direction that was needed for the installation itself.

Coincidentally, Andrew used to be an alumni of the now defunct Monk's Hill Secondary School, which was situated just directly opposite the Winstedt campus and is currently occupied by Anglo-Chinese School (Junior). Having witnessed first-hand the changes to the place, as well as having an intimate knowledge of the place, he was able to provide us with a history of the site. Before LASALLE took over the compound, it was a madrasah, and way before that, the whole area was a monastery, hence the name Monk's Hill. Based on this, we concluded that the site bears a deep spiritual history, and this provided us with the skeletal structure of the entire work.

Further discourse led us to relate the idea of creativity as an aspect of spirituality. We felt that everyone in LASALLE, regardless of discipline, is an artist. Being an artist channels creativity from within. This led to the idea of creating a



“ We felt that everyone in LASALLE, regardless of discipline, is an artist. Being an artist channels creativity from within. This led to the idea of creating a kampong setting – based on the concepts of community and sharing, as well as the yearning for closer relationships between the different faculties. ”

# KAMPONG SENIMAN

By Joel Chin

▲ Fig. 1 Kampong Seniman

*kampong setting* – based on the concepts of community and sharing, as well as the yearning for closer relationships between the different faculties. Tying these two ideas together, we looked to spirit houses/altars found in Asian cultures to model our own version of a *kampong* spirit house, an amalgamated representation of these two ideas.

Not only was it the first time that the team worked together, it was also a new experience working with a team of BA(Hons) Arts Management Level 2 students. That said, there were challenges in how both teams function as well as in considering their concerns regarding the project. One of the biggest challenges was having to work around a budget. The majority

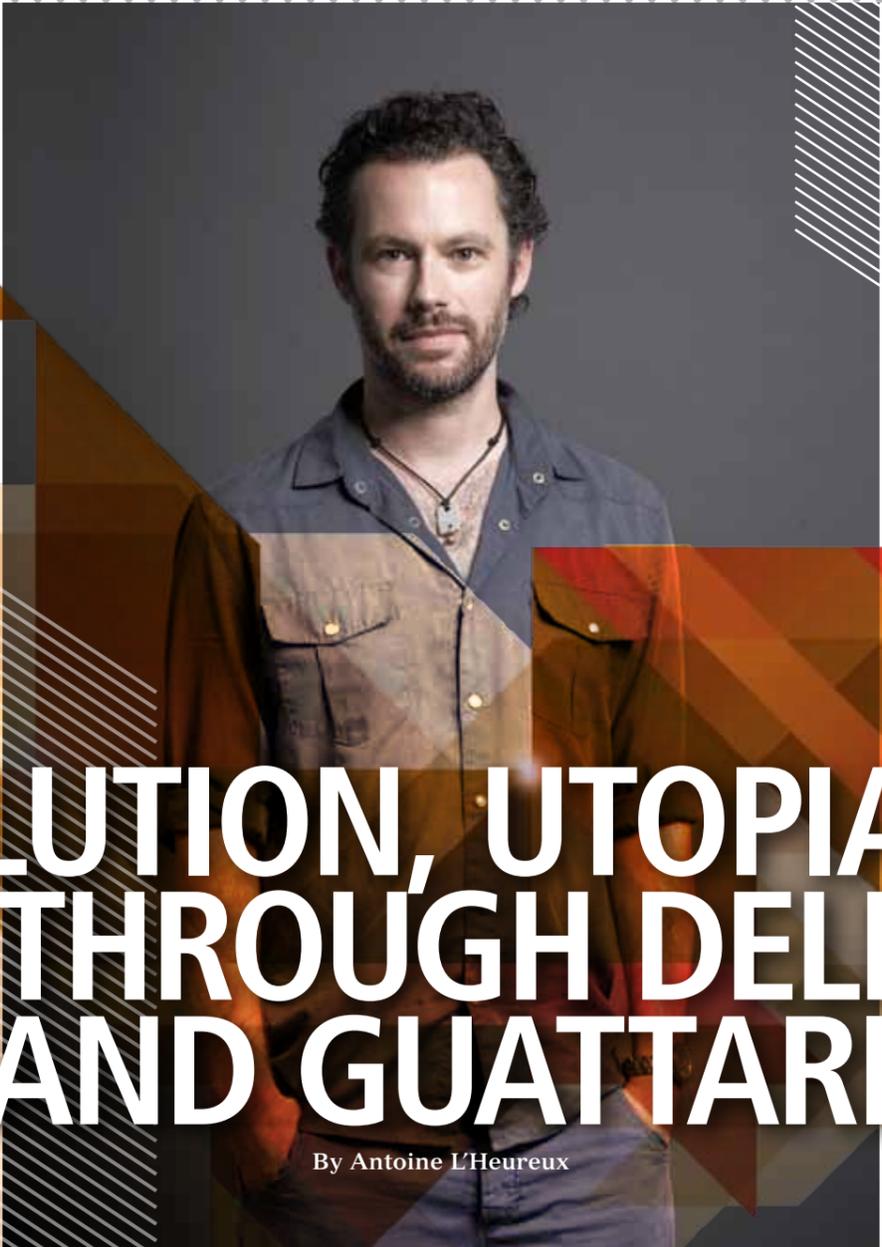
of my team, myself included, had no idea how to work around a budget as we often had to fund our own projects in the past. It was a good and pragmatic lesson in managing a budget: with such a scheme came the realisation that money does matter, and the sharpening of the ability to make the best of what we have.

Some would argue that having five artists in a team would prove too much in respect of negotiation and agreement toward a consensus. While there were times that test this, especially at the conceptualising phase, I personally felt that we learnt more from each other and in how to manage the differences in opinions. It was a liberating and humbling feeling to not push individual agendas over others for the sake of

art. The work is beyond the individual. As such, this project really exemplifies that. In hindsight, looking at the work itself, there was no ‘me’ but rather, there was ‘us’, further alluding to the idea of community.

The biggest reward from this project was the appreciation and good feedback we received on the opening night and after. In spite of the challenges that we faced during the project, knowing that it was well received by the audience was hugely satisfying and comforting. Perhaps, deep within us, we realise that recognition is the greatest reward. ■

*This article was written by Joel Chin, who is currently a student of Diploma programme in the Faculty of Fine Arts.*



# REVOLUTION, UTOPIA AND ART THROUGH DELEUZE AND GUATTARI

By Antoine L'Heureux

Revolution and utopia seem intuitively linked: ideally, the revolution leads to the utopia, or at least is a step towards it. In Deleuze and Guattari (DG) this articulation can be thought to be reversed: the utopia *is the revolution in itself*.

“... the success of a revolution resides only in itself, precisely in the vibrations, clinches, and openings that it gave to the men and women at the moment of its making” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 167). As opposed to the common understanding of utopia, for DG the utopia is not a fiction or a representation created in the past or the present as a goal to achieve in the future. The success of a revolution does not reside in that which it gives or results in (a new societal, political, cultural, environmental etc. “context”) but *in the becomings* (vibrations, clinches, and openings onto a future) that the women and men live through their revolution. And this success, these becomings, constitute in itself the utopia. DG call this an ‘utopia of immanence’:

“to say that revolution is itself utopia of immanence is not to say that it is a dream, something that is not realised or that is only realised by betraying itself. On the contrary, it is to posit revolution as plane of immanence, infinite movement, absolute flight, but to the extent that these features connect themselves with what is real here and now [...]” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 96)

The plane of immanence is itself defined as ‘Life’ (Deleuze, 2003, 361), i.e. becomings as infinite movement as absolute flight constitutes this plane, the plane is “Alive” and this plane-Life attained through processes of revolution constitutes the utopia. Life is not the ordinary lived or the living, both of which correspond to our ordinary experiences or perceptions nature.

Life is the plane of immanence inside which we *necessarily* exist and live (nothing transcends the plane of immanence) but which is ordinarily invisible to us. Our ordinary perceptions nature hides or covers Life insofar as they are relative thresholds of perception *on* this Life inside which we bath and which bathes inside us. “Threshold of perceptions are relative, there is always one capable of grasping that which elude the other: the eagle’s eye ...” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, 344). What different perceiving subjects see or experience of Life depends on the mediation operated by their respective threshold of perception which itself determines

the respective nature or world inside which they live (an eagle’s nature or world). But beyond any relative threshold of perception, beyond the eagle’s nature, beyond a man’s nature, an absolute flight, an infinite “movement in itself *continues* to occur elsewhere”: Life (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, 344).

Art for DG is the expression of ‘Life in the living’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 163), and as such art “liberate[s] life where it is imprisoned” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 162). Life is imprisoned in the living. Artists are, for DG, unique individuals who see and experience Life in the living, i.e. Life hidden in or covered by our ordinary perceptions. Whereas we all have views of the living, artists have visions of Life beyond any relative threshold of perception.

These visions expressed in the artist’s works are the expressions of the Life the artist lives beyond the ordinarily lived, i.e. the expressions of the becomings the artist goes through and that constitute the plane of immanence, and as such, simultaneously, the works are also expressions of visions of this plane. These visions express the plane of immanence as Life, as becomings, and it as such that the artist actively participates in a revolution that is in *itself* an utopia of immanence.

“Man imprisons Life”, Deleuze has said in *L’Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze* (Boutang, 2004). It is *in* and *by* ‘man and his world’ that

“There is a revolutionary society of friends, a society of active artists that, from all ages, meet in this utopia defined as movement-Life-landscape. They form a timeless and endlessly renewed society. A strange society of rather lonely artists who find friends in encountering artworks from all eras.”

Life is imprisoned. Although man bathes in Life and Life bathes inside him (or her), man cannot trust Life to launch him and his world towards new possibilities, as if man was to sit back and watch himself and his world being captured by Life and made to go through an infinity of becomings as if launched towards a pre-determined destiny. But this is not because man cannot trust Life, it is because man cannot trust *himself*. Deleuze explains through his writings on Nietzsche that man and his world have as its essence the imprisonment of Life by

the very fact of being an actualization of Life (Deleuze, 2007, 192). In Nietzschean terms man and his world are the ‘becoming reactive’ of the reciprocally presupposing ‘active forces’ that Life is, and it is this becoming reactive which forms the essence of man (Deleuze, 2007, 192).

Revolution as utopia of immanence is as such a revolution against the very essence of man and his world, against its incessant becoming reactive. When DG write that “we lack resistance to the present” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 104), they mean that we lack resistance to the prisons inside which man imprison, constrain, obliterate Life. Also, against our ceaseless becoming reactive, artists are active and “To think actively is “to act in an untimely fashion, therefore against time, and as such on time, in favour (I hope) of a time to come” (Deleuze, 2007, 122). Art resists man and his world by opening the present onto itself, therefore onto the absolute that Life is, and as such, towards an unforeseeable future to come, in an untimely fashion in relation to the present.

Such an opening leads to a visionary expression of Life which takes the form of a *possible universe*, a landscape as it were, a landscape attained through a revolutionary process against man and his world, a landscape which expresses the utopia. The possible is for DG an ‘aesthetic category’, it is that which art gives: “the possible as aesthetic category (“the possible or I shall suffocate”)” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 168). Man and his world is suffocation, it is suffocating. It is through the possible universes it creates that art ‘remediates’ this suffocation with a breath of fresh air and participates in a revolution. ▶

1. ‘Man and his world’ is an expression used by Deleuze in his writings on Nietzsche; it needs to be understood as what has been termed the ordinarily lived or the living. DELEUZE, G. 2007. Nietzsche et la philosophie, Paris: Presses Universitaire de France.

The revolution as such involves a movement towards the possible *through* and *beyond* man and his world. This *very movement* is the becoming or Life the artist goes through and expresses (affect, becoming), simultaneously a landscape or 'geography' of the utopia (percept, vision).<sup>2</sup> A *becoming-vision-Life-landscape* that comes to be experienced as a possible universe. These possible universes are not fictions or representations to be achieved in the future, they are expressions of the becomings or Life the artist *lives* in the present, here and now. But they nevertheless resist the present in opening it onto itself and as such onto Life, onto the plane of immanence *itself* utopia.

Possible universes are not fictions of universes transcendent to the plane of immanence like for example the Paradise or a commonly understood utopia, both posited as external to the here and now (co-existing to this world but transcendent – Paradise, or non-co-existing to this world but only possibility of the future – common understanding of utopia). Possible universes are not fictions but 'creative fabulation[s]' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 161), a concept which Deleuze appropriates from Bergson. Fiction can be conceptualised as an umbrella term with different interpretations which all oppose themselves to fabulation: fiction can be a dream, a 'fantasy', an 'imagination', a 'memory', and it involves a "projection of the self"<sup>3</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 161, Deleuze, 1993, 13). The universe given to experience by fiction can be said to be created through and involve a mode of aesthetic experience described as a *projection* of the self onto a transcendent universe outside this world (dreams, fantasies, imaginations and even memories involve *projections* of the self outside the here and now). In opposition, the universe given to experience by fabulation involves a *becoming of the self*. The possible universe given to experience by fabulation is not a *transcendent* universe but an expression of the *transcendental*, i.e. of becoming or Life, which although ordinarily invisible to us does not transcend the nature or world one's ordinarily experiences.

We need not confound the immanent universes expressed in art with the transcendent universes religions or mass culture entertainment that gives us as "easy escape" from man and his world. The utopia is to be incessantly reconquered in a constant combat against man and his world, but it is realised and lived here and now in the present; the utopia is neither a fictionalised future, nor a flight towards

dreams, fantasies, imaginations or memories which by nature transcend the here and now.

We might also be under the illusion, for example, that the communications of the masses, that our new means of mobile and networked communications remediate the suffocation that man and his world is by opening it onto new potentially possibilities. But man's incessant communications, his world of ceaseless exchange of clichés, photographs, perceptions, affections, opinions and ready-made concepts provides none of the vision (percept) and becoming (affect), or Life that art expresses. Perceptions, affections and opinions are not Life, they are that which Life needs to be liberated from. "We do not lack communication. On the contrary, we have too much of it. We lack creation. *We lack resistance to the present*" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 104).

We need not also mention the dangers involved in authoritarian utopias, the possible universes proposed by political authorities who then attempt to implement them through their "revolutionary programmes".

"There always is in the utopia [...] the risk of restoring transcendence [...], so there is a need to distinguish authoritarian and transcendent utopias from libertarian, revolutionary and immanent utopias." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 96)

Against authoritarian and transcendent utopias, and most importantly now against the reactive masses is the utopia of immanence expressed by the most "aristocratic" visionary artists.

The revolution or resistance to the present *itself* the utopia is a utopia that is ahistorical or outside History: it has no programme as it were, it aims not for a historical development or goal; hence the complexity in the use of the term 'utopia' in view of its common understanding tightly linked to History:

"Utopia is not a good concept because even when opposed to History it is still subject to it and lodged within it as an idea or motivation. But becoming is the concept itself. It is born in History, and falls back into it, but is not of it. In itself it has neither beginning nor end but only a milieu. It is thus more geographical than historical. Such are revolutions and societies of friends, societies of resistance, because to create is to resist: pure becomings, pure events on a plane of immanence." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 106)

The creation/expression of becomings or Life is a very lonely affair for the artist. If there are societies of resistance in art, they exist as collections of rather lonely individuals dispersed historically but assembled on the 'more geographical' plane of immanence, a milieu with neither beginning nor end, the utopia thought of as "geography", vision as becoming as Life as landscape. This is what DG calls "a new earth and a people that do not yet exist", and that which art 'calls for' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 104).

The artist's creations, her visions, her expressions of Life as possible universes, "summons forth" or calls for a new earth and a people "to come" without as it were being representations of potential futures (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 166). These visions are not a future to be achieved but they can be said to be "future-oriented" by their "summoning forth" of a new earth and a people. Life, i.e. the "forces of the future" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, 383), or art following DG's conceptualization, calls for a new earth and people because it gives us the vision and becoming that launch us towards an unforeseeable future to come. The artwork operates a thrust, a flight, a movement, and it is this movement *itself* that needs to be thought of as a geography of the utopia.

The difficulty resides in understanding the artwork not as vision of the future but as vision of absolute movement in the present. It is only in understanding the artwork and the utopia it embodies as movement towards a future *forever to come* that we can grasp them both not as a fixed destination but as a thrust or flight forward. And yet again this very movement needs to be thought of as landscape, as *movement-Life-landscape* itself as geography of the utopia. To ask if this landscape is not then a destination is like asking whether movement in itself is a destination.

Movement or a geography of the utopia can and needs to be thought of as destination but as a destination that when attained has already propelled us towards a future which itself remains unforeseeable, to come.

The new earth and people to come that the artwork thrusts us towards is forever to come, not that it is unattainable but that it was, is, and will forever be *available* to the strong spirits of active women and men who have and will reconquer a breath of fresh air *beyond yet immanent* to the suffocation that man and his world are.

There is a revolutionary society of friends, a society of active artists that, from all ages, meet in this utopia defined as *movement-Life-landscape*. They form a timeless and endlessly renewed society. A strange society of rather lonely artists who find friends in encountering artworks from all eras. They are 'the most aristocratic' individuals in comparison to the reactive masses; their works calls for an "earth and people that will not be found in our democracies" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 104). They are the emperors of a grandiose land filled with movements and Life but desolate of a people, and through their artworks they look back at us, the reactive masses, and they whisper, or shout, "Join me!" ■

*Antoine's art practice is closely intertwined with his philosophical research. He uses painting, performance, and photography, as well as video and sound, to create "semi-autonomous" works presented together as installations. His works, often built around fictional/conceptual figures, explore through different narrative forms the relationships between notions of mode of existence and affirmative, post-critical, resistance. Currently, he is lecturing in Undergraduate programmes with the Faculty of Fine Arts.*<sup>4</sup>

2. The percept is not a perception, it is a 'non human landscape of nature', a means to refer to Life as landscape, as vision: a radical ontological vision of the world entirely decentred from humans, us inside the plane of immanence and the plane immanence inside us. The percept is inseparable from the affect, the latter being a 'non human becoming of man', the ordinarily hidden Life which conditions our affections, the affection being that which is ordinarily experienced of the affect. DELEUZE, G. & GUATTARI, F. 1991. Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?, Paris: Éditions de Minuit.
3. 'Creative fabulation has nothing to do with a memory, however amplified, or with a fantasy' *ibid.*; '[...] fabulation, the fabulating function, neither consist in imagining nor in projecting a self' DELEUZE, G. 1993. Critique et clinique, Paris, Éditions de Minuit..
4. <http://www.lasalle.edu.sg/About-Us/Our-Academics/Faculty-Member/Dr-Antoine-L-Heureux>

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## THE FAMILIARITY OF THINGS



By Hazel Lim

Held from 12 April to 11 May 2014 at the Brother Joseph McNally gallery, this exhibition presents works of 27 Fine Arts students from Diploma Level 3. For a small team of students, this exhibition is also a result of their time spent in organizing, conceptualizing and helping in the publicity of this show. As part of their Community Engagement and Industry Placement module, this team of students helped put these works together from its earliest conception to the final presentation, working closely with staff from Institute of Contemporary Arts and gaining some helpful insights about installing an exhibition and understanding how to present works to audiences.

The selection of these works were made from the last two projects that this cohort of final year Diploma students had undertaken. In Found Objects, students were encouraged to apply skills learnt in their respective specialism

mediums to a range of unpredictable objects and materials that they found and encounter. In Text as Image project, the idea is to challenge the students into re-looking at how text can be a material and form that can be sensed aurally, visually and textually, or engaging with all these experiences at the same time.

For both projects, the students had similarly adopted strategies in thwarting, subverting or redefining the original meaning and context of their choice materials. Through the re-imagination of these objects and words, they attempt to free the materials from the confines of their familiar meaning and significance. In the end, the final works are meant to evoke oddity, wit and a strange kind of poetics. ■

*This article was written by Hazel Lim, who is currently lecturing in undergraduate programmes with the Faculty of Fine Arts.*

