

Genevieve Chua – Jeremy Sharma – Ian Woo
Curated by Dr. Charles Merewether

s i d e
–
g l a n c e

Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore
Praxis Space, 19 April - 9 May 2013

Dr. Charles Merewether

Director

Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore

“a momentary equilibrium in an ever-changing reality”
(Henri Michaux)

Drawing has for many presumed a personal if not intimate approach, a sense of proximity between the head, the hand and the subject. In the academic tradition of the Nineteenth Century, drawing was a still a rudimentary skill to be acquired by artists. Even in the Eighteen Eighties, when artists were freeing themselves of oil painting through the development of oil sketch, drawing remained fundamental. By the Nineteen Thirties, the Surrealist movement and its exponents gave even greater attention to drawing as a primary form of expression and engagement, such as the concept of automatic drawing and also, the ‘exquisite corpse’: a technique in which artists collaborated by continuing line drawings begun by another artist. There was a ludic dimension to the practice of art that drawing allowed for. Some Surrealists used drawing to directly engage, if not to displace priority given to other mediums, in particular painting and photography.

Abstraction too came under the influence of drawing with the emphasis on mark-making and gesture, as practised by artists such as

Henri Michaux or Mark Tobey. From this perspective, their approach allowed for any material or instrument with which to make a mark of lines, textures, of forms and patterns that were of primary interest, as distinct to a means to an end. These marks were produced through a stain or a trace that served as a sign, perhaps representational, suggestive of a form but not necessarily so. Michaux’s work often suggests a mobile, restless form, the movement of line momentarily creating form – if only to lose it and run on into another nest of intersecting lines. As gestures, these marks also remind the viewer of the artist or maker, an action that expresses the movement of the hand and the body. This led to what Harold Rosenberg referred to as ‘gesture painting’, in which painting itself appeared to be under the direction of the body as distinct from the subject.

Three artists of three generations in Singapore are brought together, representing three approaches to the concept and exercise of drawing. The idea of ‘side-glance’ reflects the uncertainty of the event. The act of making a side-glance is not

considered the main event, but that which is at the fringes of an event. Taking a side-glance entails slowing down, taking a look again from another angle, another point of view. As such, 'side-glance' describes the act of looking after looking. In one sense, this is an experience of seeing something that is peripheral to what we are looking at. It is 'outside' or more strictly, the periphery and edge, of what we see. As such, we could say that it implies a sense of insufficiency in what we ascertained as having seen.

While the drawings of Woo explore "fluctuating fissures", Sharma takes a very different approach to drawing – not to do with perception so much as the changing forces of the constitution of the image. He depersonalises drawing. It is a part of a man-made world, not autonomous so much as contingent on the material manifestation of a fabricated world in which we live and which almost imperceptibly conditions our perception. Unlike Woo, it is not a matter of sustaining a moment between wholeness and fragment but, of a perceived geometry around us, a geometry that seems to shape the

contours of our perception. In a manner which appears to be almost subliminal in its influence, Sharma's minimalist drawings reflect an observation of discrete form that shapes the world in which we live and move.

Chua picks up where the Surrealists left off in regard to a ludic intervention in the photographic image. The children's game of 'cat's cradle' become a form of provisional drawing that overlays and disrupts the photographic image. It disrupts the concept of '*nature morte*' or 'still-life' and activates the transforming character of nature. The authority of photography is checked by this playful intervention that slows down our perception. It provokes a sense of lack that may cause a certain caution even suspicion in our perception of the principle image or subject that we may have or have not seen.

The drawings of Genevieve Chua, Jeremy Sharma and Ian Woo demonstrate how drawing is not simply a form of practice and enquiry into perception but can also disturb the subject matter of perception itself.



Genevieve Chua

Tillandsia Usneoides fig. 2 (2013)
Ink and giclée on newsprint, 45 x 34.5 cm

Also called “long moss”, *Tillandsia usneoides* is an epiphyte that drapes itself on trees. In forests it prefers trees with reduced foliage or far-and-wide reaching branches. Its wiry stems can festoon in the same place for years and flourish even after its host tree is dead. Old festoons occasionally coil themselves around the limbs of the tree appearing to have some enclosed connection with the bark. When left unmoved it can be subjected up to two months of rainless exposure and strong winds without injury. Often, the weight of a dense growth of *T. usneoides* would cause the small limbs of trees or twigs to break and fall off. However, in high winds, a detachment of the long moss could possibly and quite casually latch itself on another tree.

Genevieve Chua (b. 1984, Singapore) researches the fear of the unknown. This process involves the appropriation of Southeast Asian horror towards new narratives. These new stories are often realised as a website, installation or drawing. She was a recipient of the NAC Georgette Chen Scholarship in 2003/4 and the Young Artist Award in 2012 conferred by the National Arts Council, Singapore.

In Singapore, selected solo exhibitions include ‘Adinandra Belukar’ at the Singapore Biennale 2011; ‘Child and the Beast’ at Objectifs Singapore, (2011); ‘As Brutal As: A Drawing Show’, Singapore (2007), ‘Raised as a Pack of Wolves’ at the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival (2009), ‘Full Moon and Foxes’ at the Atelier, National Museum of Singapore (2009).



Jeremy Sharma

I am interested in the idea of a drawing object as virtual and physical space, and in a deeper sense – psychic space – there and not there, becoming and disappearing. These works deal with the relationship between silver, line, light and imaging and the conflation of different techniques and media in time through digital drawing, silver gelatin print and silverpoint. They are derived from electronic and digital phenomena through a search portal of images. The title in parenthesis ‘*or the buzz between the eardrums*’ alludes to things we do not see anymore, like spectres in a controlled city-state environment; things that are ambient and a symptom of modern existence like the hum and buzz of machines and apparatuses. It also references Marshall McLuhan and his claim “Moving from print to electronic media we have given up an eye for an ear.”



Untitled (or the buzz between the eardrums) (2013)
Silverpoint on ground and paper, 76 x 56 cm

Untitled (or the buzz between the eardrums) (2013)
Digital silver gelatin print on fibre paper, 138 x 110 cm

Jeremy Sharma (b. 1977, Singapore) works primarily as a painter but his body of work encompasses video, photography, drawing, performance, sound and installation. He is also a musician, having performed, collaborated and recorded for albums, gigs, theatre and radio. He obtained his Master of Art (Fine Art) at the LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts in 2006, and his Bachelor of Art (Fine Art) with High Distinction from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Australia in 2003.

His solo exhibitions in Singapore include ‘Apropos’ at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (2012), ‘Variations’ at Art Forum Gallery (2011), and ‘The Protection Paintings – Of Sensations and Superscriptions’ at Jendela, Esplanade (2008). He has participated in numerous group exhibitions internationally.



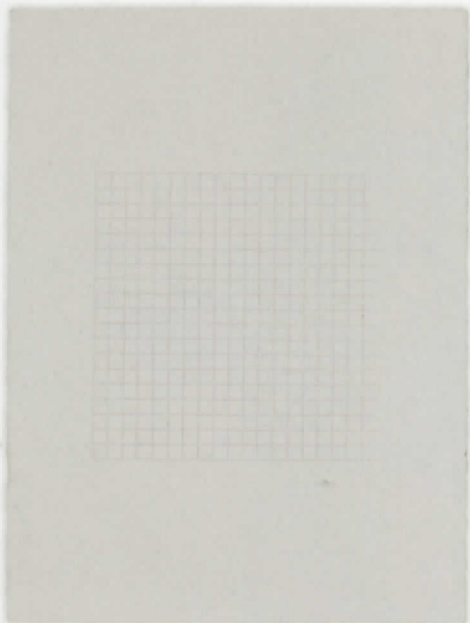
Ian Woo

Turnaround (2013)
Graphite and acrylic on paper, 120 x 80 cm

The idea is to produce a transparent line of thought to the emergence of form, using drawing as an intuitive schematic that tracks the process of the mind. The act of drawing is like a machine/device that constantly plays out a hypnotic tracking of mental decisions where the developments between form and space go through a series of enveloping changes. Punctuations and hesitant mark-making rhythms also have a look of something that has been fossilised as trace, shifting between objectness while maintaining a sense of formlessness, a kind of oncoming eclipse that seems to be turning and evolving out of itself between the idea of a whole and that of the fragment.

Ian Woo (b. 1967, Singapore) began his studies at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (Singapore) in 1991. Between 1995 and 2006, he received a Masters in European Fine Art at the Winchester School of Art (UK) and a research practice DFA with RMIT University (Australia).

His recent shows include 'Ian Woo: A Review, 1995 - 2011' at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (2011), 'Island Vernacular' at Peninsula Gallery, Plymouth, UK (2013), 'Panorama: Recent Art From Contemporary Asia' at the Singapore Art Museum (2012), and 'Encounter: The Royal Academy in Asia' at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (2012). His works have been acquired by major private and public institutions.



[clockwise from top left]

Jeremy Sharma. *Untitled (grid)* (2013)
Silverpoint on ground and paper, 76 x 56 cm

Ian Woo. *The Voice* (2013)
Graphite and acrylic on paper, 99 x 72 cm
Genevieve Chua. *Tillandsia Usneoides fig. 1* (2013)
Ink and giclée on newsprint, 45 x 34.5 cm

