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Faculty of Fine Arts • LASALLE College of the Arts Singapore • Catalogue of Events 2011/12 • Sixth Edition 2012

NINE +/- 1 EXQUISITE CORPSE(S)

NINE became NINE +/- 1 within a year later, with Milenko stepping down as Dean to be a Senior Fellow & Hilary replacing Zainuddin in our faculty. A suggestion was made to see how we could have some fun asking questions among ourselves, and after some light-hearted email exchanges, the kinds of questions asked (of the Istanbul show, or asking both a 'relic' like Ian & a 'newbie' like Hilary to respond to the same question) had morphed into the following form:

Hui Neng's platform sutra of the *Sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism*:

Bodhi is fundamentally without any tree; The bright mirror is also not a stand.
Fundamentally there is not a single thing - Where could any dust be attracted.

Then

Shenxiu:

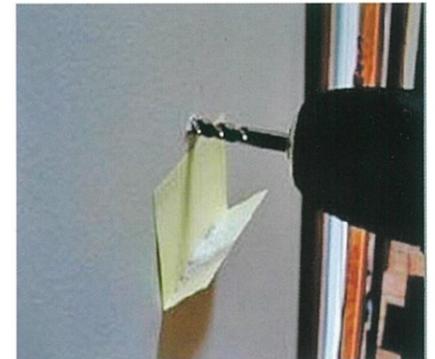
The body is the bodhi tree;
The mind is like a bright mirror's stand. **vs**
Be always diligent in rubbing it -
Do not let it attract any dust.

Huineng:

Bodhi is fundamentally without any tree;
The bright mirror is also not a stand.
Fundamentally there is not a single thing -
Where could any dust be attracted?

And

"The distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion." - Einstein



Adeline

Taking Einstein's quote as a departure point, I am thinking about how many things – the shows, even our work - are but illusions. In this society (and LASALLE equally complicit in this process as an institution) of forgetting, without documentation, all is but specks of dust, half flickering only if the right amount of light shines on them.

Dust and illusions, life and mortality. What would you most like to be remembered by?



Jeremy

It's funny you talk about dust as I find dust a big part of my work now, albeit unintentionally. Because my paintings have taken on a more monochromatic approach with attention to surfaces, the dust becomes un/settling depending how you see it. I am frustrated that the dust gets in the idealism of my paintings, they get trapped in the paint and beeswax, surfaces get dusty that I have to brush them off constantly. Yet sometimes I look at dust and it's magnificent, imperfect in all its glory – they add character and noise to the works; they form tiny air bubbles in the enamel that shimmer under the light. I remember reading about Francis Bacon and how he used dust in his paintings. Because of the materiality, I am reminded of my own mortality (we all turn to dust in the end, don't we?), right now it's all paint dust all over the studio from aerosol paint, and all the other debris the processes leave behind. I like how the paintings mediate between illusion of an inside but it's real from the outside, that's kind of how I see life. I am obsessed about protecting or preserving these works from dust because dust signals a kind of entropy.

How do you see your works?

Ian

This guy (Achilles) said something like he had to make history so that he can become a myth to people. I saw him in the movie Troy where Brad Pitt was Achilles. His rage kept him going. Kill Kill Kill. This painting 'The Wrath of Achilles', by François-Léon Benouville (1821-1859) is very nice. I think it is definitely covered with dust. All these paintings covered with dust - I like. But when they are cleaned up, I became disappointed. A good example is the Sistine Chapel.

So do not worry Jeremy. You are with the greats. You are thinking like one. Trust me. Men [sic] live on memory. Poor memory. Bad memory.

So if we live by the circumstances of our memory, I think much of interesting art births from the myth of misinterpretation or 'over interpretation'. Misinterpretation from our idea of history, archived truths as some form of human recollection. Actually any reproduction or interpretation is no longer the same as the 'truth' no matter how close it tries to be. A sense of 'Poor Memory'. Do you agree?



Betty

Perhaps there is something beautiful about it, that 'truth' takes shape according to one's version of it. It makes me think that perhaps we make art to gain some experience of 'the' ultimate truth, because we suspect that it is either always playing hide and seek and constantly changing its forms or it may not exist at all – just absolute emptiness, someone told me once that truth comes from the intensity of our own silence. That's why artists are romantics – we are pursuing a kind of romance we know that there is a high chance that we will not be able to achieve it - at the end, the dust and the passion are actually one. I think it was Robert Smithson who once said that when a thing is seen through the consciousness of temporality, it is changed into something that is nothing – everything returns back into that silence. But that consciousness is beautiful I think, it is so significant, Gurdjieff used to call it crystallisation – you find yourself in it.

Have you ever asked yourself, in what way do you find yourself in your own work?

Milenko

I like when I am able to step in my work, to be part of it. If I can do it – I am in a metaphysical space, flying!

Looking for the "truth" (or finding it) is like cleaning a mountain of dust. When I was young and naïve I was looking to touch that truth! Mission impossible.

I am intentionally covering memories now, nostalgia, past, history... Could be dust. If you are dislocated like I am, covering is the solution.

Are there dislocated artists without to be physically dislocated?

Hazel

I find that the artist is always meant to feel dislocated, even more so if one is physically in the place where he/she is meant to feel a sense of belonging.

Being in the place which defines our identity, sense of self, history, et cetera makes him/her question even more how art is suppose to make sense in that context. It's like being in the midst of all the chatter, and attempting to find that pocket/vacuum of reality. Art is a means to do that perhaps, and its language becomes even more critical and merciless (sometimes) when caught up in the 'epicentre' of where one 'belongs'.

I kept mentioning 'belonging'... how far do you think this word matters to an audience, that looking at art needs to remind one that it belongs to a particular place, or to an experience that is unique to the artist?

Hilary

Dislocation and absence have always been woven into my work. Absence of the body, dislocation from context. Now more than ever, after being far from home for a year, they have become the focus.



Failure, it seems, is a big part of that. My own failure to blend in, to have things in common, to understand words, and to be familiar with histories that I am now a part of. This failure feels almost physical, and the instances of failure replay in my mind. As time passes, my own discomfort with failure erodes, but the elapsed time simultaneously creates distance. Instead of covering up the distance, the videos that I am making are a reflection of it; I am performing failure and awkwardness, and hinting at strained relationships and nonlinear, fragmented narratives. In the past, when I finished a piece, I would be covered in sugar dust. Now I am exposed.

What do you choose to hide or expose in your work?



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**About the Faculty of Fine Arts,
LASALLE College of the Arts**

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

It houses undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Painting, Printmaking, Sculpture, Art Photography, Drawing, Graphic Novel and Time-Based Art.

LEGEND



EXHIBITION



SYMPOSIUM



ART TALK



INTERVIEW



COLLABORATION



TRAVEL



WORKSHOP



INTERNATIONAL
EVENT

FACULTY OF
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LASALLE
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singapore



Salleh

Of things that we said
Of dust, history and memory
Of 'truth' and temporality
Of place and geography
And of absence
As NINE ticks second away towards an absence and infinite
Love said to me to be a zero
For I am able to walk with the 1 (one)
April 25, 2012

Tender words we spoke to one another
Sealed in the secret vault of heaven
One day like rain they will fall to earth
& grow green all over the world
- Mevlana Rumi

**Have we escaped the questions of freewill and fate?
How long do you lay embracing a corpse?**

Gilles

Not so much a corpse as I did hold a skull. I even had one (real human skull) in my teenage room for many years. It was sitting on the table, next to a turn-table on which I would listen to Pink Floyd and Amon Duul. I painted it a few times, making vanity compositions



with mirror, ancient photograph, candles, et cetera. The romantic idea of transience at an age when one progressively realizes the fragility of things and the inescapable effect of time - look at yourself in the empty mirror and wonder when this is going to end...

I guess my question could be, "how long more do we have to go?"

Adeline

My immediate reply (which would complete the circle, the corpus) is with the last stanza of Robert Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

However, taking Salleh's cue, how long we lay embracing a corpse really depends on who we are and where we come from. If one is Muslim, a corpse is returned to the earth by sundown. In *Departures* (2008), the rituals of preparing a body for its final journey allows for slow, tender and respectful cleansing, followed by clothing of the person in the presence of the family - a sort of reconciliation and

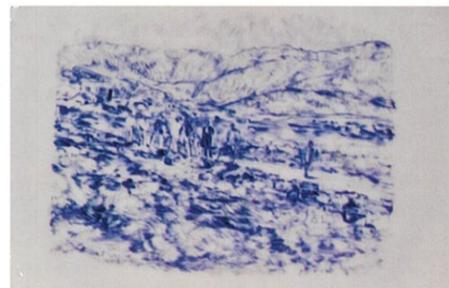
Having been the founding faculty of LASALLE College of the Arts in 1984, the NINE +/- 1 exhibition was held in Sabanci University, Istanbul (from March 26 to April 20, 2012) in conjunction with the faculty's 28th anniversary. The exhibition curators were Betty Susiarjo and Salleh Japar.

closure. For the twisted, perverted some (like some serial killers or artists), we could really hold on to the corpses long past decay - til the flesh rots off or stays aqueously plump, depending on what material we apply to it.

Besides, Murakami said it better in *Kafka on the Shore*:

It's all pointless - assuming you try to find a point to it. We're coming from somewhere, heading somewhere else. That's all you need to know, right?

I think that is all we need to know. For now.



Oct 5-16, 2011

FORIS: A portal to a long lost feeling?

by Chen Kerui



Our ability to filter most of our real time sensual experiences has enabled us to pay attention to what is necessary. This passive position has allowed these perceived unimportant sensual experiences to pass through us, without interfering with our conscious thoughts.

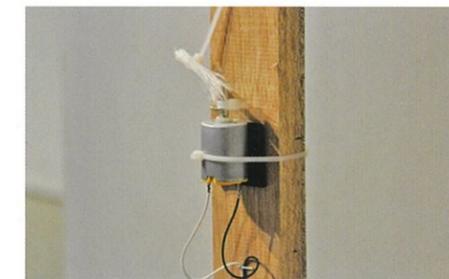
As visual creatures, such 'background' audio experiences are often dismissed easily, yet sounds play more than a secondary role in shaping the experiences of our everyday life. In fact, as Lawrence Chin pointed out in his earlier article in Glossary on Foris: "We might also come to realize that we know what we see, largely because we had probably heard it first before anything else". Indeed, sounds and noises add to our sight, spatial and temporal dimensions, and enable us to navigate and position ourselves within our surroundings.

Language itself is also built on sound; the words we hear in our head trigger imageries, concepts and meanings. Listening to horror stories can thrill you,

"... it is not always the case that we can focus and re-hear what we had missed or were mistaken about."

but watching a horror film without sound just doesn't get you near the same excitement. The qualities that sounds bring transcend mere aural effects and accompaniment, and add emotional connections, sublimity and cathartic values. Sound is the vital component that sets off inextricable links between visuals and imaginations, words and meanings, and that of memories and emotions.

Foris is an installation that attempts to draw out these links through its concepts, presentation and delicate mechanisms. The word Foris is not merely an allusion to the word Forest, but more significantly, its etymology refers the word to a door, or a portal, to the outside. Visually, wooden frames were constructed to serve as a literal reference to the door. A mixture of self-operating and motion-triggered solenoids and motors were added onto these frames. Hanging wires, electronic components and other peripherals referred to the foliage and insects of the forest. Aurally, these mechanisms produced sounds from the hammering, plucking and brushing of nylon strings with each other and with the wooden frames as well. Overall, Foris looked to appropriate the ambience, complexions and qualities of the

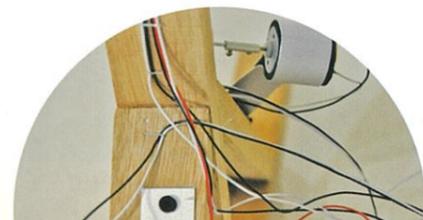


forest, while the added interactivity allowed for the audience's presence (and the sounds they make) to be part of the soundscape.

Exploring the materiality of sound was one of the main objectives. As such, sound has gained such a visual reification. The fine tunings of the speed, tempo, rhythm and positioning of the sounds during the process were visual by nature. The sounds produced mental imagery, and meticulous adjustments had to be made to ensure the imagery 'made visual sense'. The combination of tapping and rapping had to be in an interesting composition. After all, there is a fine difference between sound and noise, and distinguishing such a difference was crucial to produce a pleasant impression.

Of course, exploring acoustic ecology was always in the picture. Impressions and memory become important elements in such an aspect. To quote Lawrence again: "... it is not always the case that we can focus and re-hear what we had missed or were mistaken about." The relationship between the audience and the sound is often determined by the vague memories of previously heard sounds. The translation from audio reception to visual imagery and then to memory dilutes such audio experience, and we can never be quite sure what was heard, which could point to an incident, an emotion or a period of one's life. Perhaps this is the reason why such ambiguous sounds give the nostalgia, familiarity and intrigue that one could not exactly mentally locate.

Foris was an exhibition that sent us into an aural simulacra of the past - listening, repositioning and reliving what we had once unconsciously passed up.



DRAWING RELATIONS

by Samantha Ng



The act of drawing is a strange thing. It is a process that has been done by humans for centuries and is still being done today. We surround ourselves with numerous types of drawings and these images bombard our everyday lives.

Advertisements, posters, signs, for example, are things that have invaded our systems so continuously and have become so normal that we do not take conscious notice of them anymore. What exactly makes drawing so special? What is it that compels us humans to draw? The need to draw is an inescapable one. It is as primal and deeply ingrained as human instinct comes. Early man recorded what they saw on cave walls, Leonardo Da Vinci drew to record and learn from observations, and now we draw for an infinite number of reasons. Personally, I feel that any drawing captures the spirit, soul, life and vigor of a person. It is the ability to project one's thoughts and emotions through materials, whether it is done through creating or recreating what we see, through studies and even doodles. As John Ruskin once said, "All great art is the work of the whole living creature, body and soul, and - chiefly the soul."* Thus the

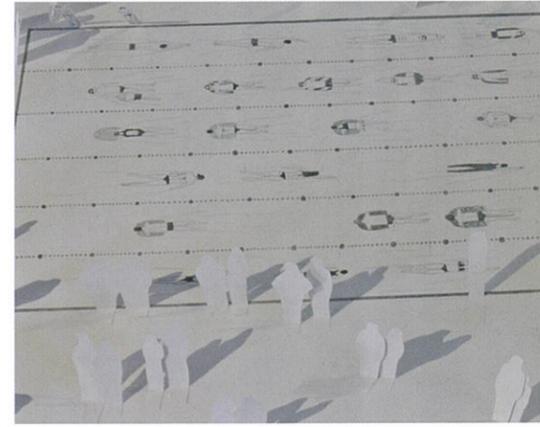
creation of any type of art is evidence of the human presence and its consciousness.

The "Drawing Relations" exhibition showcased works created by first year Drawing Specialism students and second year undergraduate students for Studio Drawing of the Fine Arts Bachelor of the Arts (Hons) programme. They created works using a wide range of materials. Some of us used paint, pencils, ink and even video to create our works. As defined in the Oxford dictionary, drawing is "a picture or diagram made with a pencil, pen or crayon rather than paint." Although it played an essential part in realizing ideas and was one of the basic techniques used to create new artworks, drawing was only seen as the skeleton of a painting for a long, long time. Now, drawing can be seen as being complete by itself. Chong Yan Hong's drawing, titled "Site#1", was done using charcoal and paper. As the constructing and demolishing of buildings and structures in our urban spaces have always fascinated her, it is only natural for her to use this notion in her artworks. By using this cycle of constructing and deconstructing, she created her drawing by taking away and reapplying charcoal on paper to create her structures.

"All great art is the work of the whole living creature, body and soul, and - chiefly the soul" - John Ruskin

Drawing has become limitless. It has escaped the confinements of paper and canvas, to grow away from it. It has crossed the line from traditional media, and drawings are created by using more unconventional ways. As such, drawing is seen in a different light now and alas, it has evolved to a stage where it is no longer restricted by materials. This was explored in the work of Ronald Cheah entitled "Shuttle run". He used video to create a piece based on the concept of time. By recording himself racing back and forth at a traffic light crossing in a shuttle run, he marked out invisible lines through his running movements to create his drawing through the concept of demarcation; an act of creating a boundary around a place or thing.

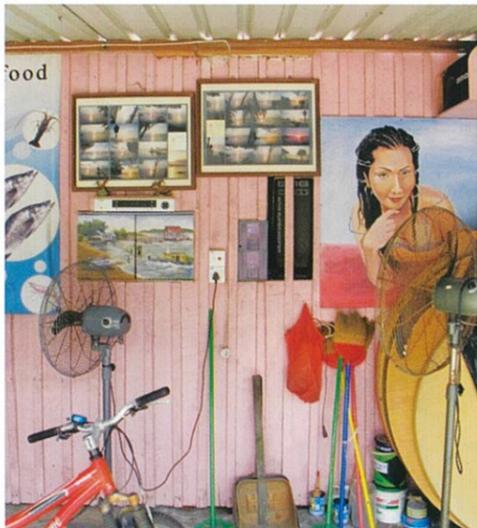
Drawing is a form of thinking whereby the pencil and any medium is the medium for our thoughts and the way to project them into a physical space. However, drawing is no longer just about making marks on paper. Drawing is about exploring different types of spaces. Now, even some installation works can be considered a type of drawing. As seen in Chelsea's work, "Untitled", she used unbleached cotton thread to stitch geometrically symmetrical and perfect patterns onto a plastic cylinder. By doing so, she



wanted to create an illusion by using this pattern that was to be preserved and suspended in the middle of the container. This piece she did was linked to her major and dealt with the notion of transience. She wanted to 'preserve' fragile things through time, which is why she used the plastic cylinder as a skeleton and then thread to create a pattern out of soft material.

Can drawing still be restricted by anything? When will it be that we push the boundaries too far, to the point where a certain piece of work can no longer be considered a drawing? Drawing is thus, alive and organic. It is constantly growing and evolving to be even more than it already is.

*Book of quotations by Geddes & Grosset, page 31



Now in its 5th year, the Tropical Lab workshop is an annual event organised by LASALLE to bring together MA students and artists from around the world in Singapore.

Participants are given a theme to work on and to interpret based on their backgrounds and knowledge and to come up with an exhibition at the end of the workshop. While they are here, participants are taken around the galleries and other places of interests, and introduced to local artists, and, some would say most importantly, local food.

There were 16 participants this year, hailing from the United Kingdom to China, and to nearby Indonesia. The theme was *Masak Masak*, the colloquial Malay term for play cooking. With such a delightful theme, Tropical Lab 2011 was a passport for the participants' adventure in food paradise from the word go. And it was bound to spark new friendships and connections with these countries.

I was a student volunteer on the project. Expectations ran high in the weeks before the first arrival on our shores. The online community blog was constantly peppered with comments from overseas participants and, preparatory notes from our side to ensure the foreigners a proper welcome, and a seamless transition here.

The workshop began with an opening address from the College's ex-President, Alistair Pearce, who gave a warm, light-hearted speech describing Tropical Lab in a rather interesting configuration of phrases, bordering between something scientific and something relating to the weather. Two other speakers, Venka Purushothaman and Adeline Kueh introduced Singapore as the food capital of Asia with a variety of cuisines from every race and culture to tantalize the taste buds. That was followed by presentations from the participating artists. It was an eye-opener for us, as it introduced to us the issues that artists from different countries were concerned with, also, the distinctively different approach in creating art. It was interesting to visualize what each artist would bring to the table, interpreting the theme one way or another.

Throughout the workshop, the participating artists were introduced to a variety of cuisine ranging from peranakan to Indian, prepared by local artists and veterans in the art industry. It was both educational and gratifying as they had the opportunity to savour authentic home-cooked meals while indulging in the company of the hosts. Gallery owner Marjorie Chu and artist Henri Chen were among those who

very kindly hosted participants to feasts in their homes and galleries. There were also performances by Artist Zaki Razak and Amanda Heng, involving food as their medium of expression. Throughout the Art Food sessions, the participants had a great time experiencing new dishes from the different cultures, especially the brightly coloured food and drinks.

Unsurprisingly, the two days of interactions and feasting were fodder for artwork. Among my favourite on show at the ICA gallery was Chol Janephaphan's subtle yet compelling work of eraser strands stretched delicately across the walls. Janephaphan is from Silpakorn University in Thailand. The work resembles longevity noodles. Other works include a video performance from Indonesian artist, Monika Hapsari, who opted for a playful approach using food as a medium. Hapsari smeared barley and rice directly onto her face as a sensual experiment and allusion to concepts of beauty.

As a student volunteer with a background in printmaking, I had the opportunity to work with Matt Thomas, to create silkscreen ink drawings of local snacks. The prints created were rolled up and made into cones filled with crunchy kacang (peanuts), making it a perfect conversation starter.

On the last day of Tropical Lab, we were all invited for a peranakan buffet at Mikenko Pravaci's home. Everyone huddled around tables, indulging in their last peranakan meal, a reminiscence of how we all started when we had our first meal together from day one. The night was filled with laughter and farewell speeches, as we enjoyed each other's company one last time.

Tropical Lab 2011 has been a roaring success, with lots of new experiences and new friendships forged, something that we will all remember for a very long time. I have truly enjoyed the journey of Tropical Lab as it has been one of the most productive and enriching event I have participated.

See <http://tropicallabsingapore.wordpress.com> for more details.

Sep 15-24, 2011

TROPICAL LAB 5

by Karen Heng Shang Li Gonzales



"Thanks to everybody who made this a very unique and special experience for me, and one that will have an impact on my work for some time to come."

- Matt Thomas,
a MA student from the
University of Plymouth

COLLABORATIONS IN ART AND SCIENCE

(or why it is always a good idea to go out to play)

by Isabelle Desjeux/Madhura Nayak



It is tempting as you start your program of studies with the promise not to get distracted, think you know where you're going and just dash there with your head down. But that would not be recommended in LASALLE. For one thing, the campus is made of so many different faculties that it is difficult to ignore what the others are doing. And then, there are the opportunities that come knocking. Many artists who come through Singapore will want to make a stop in LASALLE to take a feel of the pulse, often giving rise to collaborations.

Just within the recent few months alone, there have been new opportunities for students to take a step towards science. There was a chance to learn microbiology and be involved in Biological Art Theatre (led by part-time lecturer/artist S. Chandrasekaran), and then there was a chance to get involved in the international event Decode/Recode, celebrating the 100th anniversary of Alan Turing (initiated by our new president Prof. Steven Dixon).

More recently, an ArtScience residency has been initiated at NUS, and students in LASALLE were invited by the first artist-in-residence Grit Ruhland to be part of her Board Meetings to curate her Cabinet of Curiosity at her place of residency, the Centre for Quantum Technologies (CQT). Grit is a German artist who trained as a sculptor. More recently, she has been working with new technologies, and her art deals with imparting artistic knowledge, participative working strategies, and constructing realities. For her residency, she proposed to explore ways of relating abstract high-tech knowledge to more imaginable and tangible dimensions. What she was really interested in was to engage the physicists working in CQT, as well as the students there, artists from outside and other interested parties to tackle the issue. For this, she set up a board of directors, which

invited anybody interested to participate. The board of directors was to meet four times, once a week, in to make decisions regarding the Cabinet of Curiosity, to be set up in CQT at the end of the residency.

The two of us were lucky enough to get to sit on the board. Madhura decided to explore this avenue, given her recent interest in discovering patterns generated in a scientific environment among other patterns. Isabelle's art is interested in the scientific culture and she was curious to see how the Physicists' culture might differ from the Biologists' culture she is more familiar with.

The resulting discussions were very exciting and opened unexpected lines of thought. There were all sorts of questions to negotiate, from language, to focus of discussion, where does the art lie, all the way to "what is a cabinet" (the German word "Wunderkammer" refers to a small room, and not a piece of furniture). It was unexpected to follow the process, akin to a democratic process, where after some ideas have been submitted, and discussed, the board would vote about whether to pursue each idea/project or not. Throughout the few weeks, the scientists who got involved were given a chance to "think and produce" like artists for a while. As artists,

we got to explore the esoteric field of Quantum physics as a new territory, all the while collecting stories, images and impressions. There was dynamic in the fact that the cabinet would have to be up by the end of the 4 weeks, allowing for intense work. It meant that the scientists were able to leave their research for a while and take time to collaborate and try something new. The success of the project and of this type of approach relied on Grit's gentle directing and absence of ego.

Eventually, Grit gave a talk at the ArtScience Museum, open to the public. She explained her intentions and her process, and placed the residency in the context of her previous work, characterised by participatory work where she goes to the people rather than having the people come to her. She made it clear that her work was not so much about the objects that would be placed in the cabinet as much as about communication. Eventually, her talk gave rise to interesting discussions relating to "what is ArtScience", "When artists and scientists collaborate, we see the result in the artists' exhibition of their work. How do we assess the impact on the scientists' work?" and, interestingly, from Nick Dixon, director of the ArtScience Museum: "We all know about artists-in-residence in labs, but could we have scientist-in-residence in a studio?"

As the day to the unveiling of the cabinet drew nearer, frantic activity sparked all over CQT. Discussion didn't cease but became deeper, with renewed respect towards each other by the scientists and the artists as they understood better each others' way and reasons of doing things. Eventually, the Cabinet of Curiosity was opened. A gallery of Qubit drawings by scientists, a display of Mind Maps about "Cabinet



of Curiosity" contributed by (science) student workshop participants and other board members, an interactive display demonstrating Schrödinger's cat, an inventive display of an absurd survey questioning the physicists about the "objects" they interact with in their work, a video produced using some discarded elements of research... Madhura's work was a collaboration with Scientist Lu Yin. Entitled "Atom-Trap", it was a sculpture of fabric inspired by how atoms are isolated and controlled in "traps" made of laser light for quantum experiments. Isabelle's artwork was the result of a collaboration with Johannes Gambari, entitled "Laser Conversations", it explored the interaction of the straight laser with various frosted glass surfaces as a metaphor for the professor talking to his/her students. Isabelle's other artwork consisted of a collection of small books documenting (through stories and photographs collected in the labs) the unexpected low tech tools required in the lab.

The Cabinet of Curiosity is visible on the 6th floor of CQT, and can be visited by making an appointment with Jenny Hogan (Jenny Hogan <jenny.hogan@quantumlab.org>).

Finally, we would like to echo the question posed by Nick Dixon: "How about a scientist-in-residence" in LASALLE? Pending that, maybe a number of science consultants, that would allow artists to cross the daunting bridge...

References:

Art Science Residency: <http://anclab.org/Art.Science.2012>
Grit Ruhland's Blog: <http://quantumcabinet.wordpress.com/>

Apr 2-16, 2012

FROM RAW TO CRAFT

A workshop and exhibition by YUL DAFRI

by Betty Susiarjo



Yul Dafri contacted me via Facebook almost a year ago. He introduced himself as a lecturer from the Craft Faculty at the Institute of Art Indonesia (ISI), Yogyakarta.

In the message he proposed to conduct a craft workshop to our students at LASALLE, to promote the significance of craft within artistic practice.

It was not until two months ago that I agreed to his proposal and invited 15 students from Level 1 and 2 to attend his workshop. He came to our first day by introducing various indigenous materials he had brought with him, such as bamboo, rattan, coconut shells, various beads made from different kinds of wood, and many others (some of which we have never seen before). The students were to be given these materials to make something out of them in addition to their own material collection. I was there mostly to supervise the running of the workshop and to distribute tasks for the preparation of the show From Raw To Craft.

It was a 3-day-workshop but it was relatively packed and surprisingly well attended, considering that the students were preparing for their final assessment as well.

Yul was always there in guiding the students, sometimes with his technical expertise, critics, while other times, with his jokes and funny remarks. The students were given a chance to create a variety of jewellery pieces, mini Javanese masks, spoons and forks made of coconut shells, bamboo figurines and many others. He seemed to be quite surprised by the students' attention to details as he praised the quality of their works to me. It was really rewarding to see that the students were given a chance to explore

natural and traditional materials, which are rare to find in Singapore and to then create something completely different from what they normally do. Each of the students' collection of craft objects was displayed in an acrylic box and was then displayed within the bookshelves at our one- and-only LASALLE Library. Having an exhibition in the library provides a new and exciting experience for the students – It was certainly a venue we may consider re-using for future exhibitions.

There was also a craft talk that Yul Dafri gave to all of us and the talk was something I found to be very inspiring and eye-opening. He was presenting the notion of craft and its importance, both in the field of Fine Art as well as in Design, and the different functions/roles it is playing within the two fields. He gave an insightful opinion towards the end on how craft has been and will always be a significant part in the evolution of humankind and that it is something which is able to situate itself through different times and periods. We thanked Yul for his generosity in sharing his ideas and knowledge to all of us and to help curating the final display of the students' work in the most dedicated manner. We were all very excited when he offered to receive a group of us to Yogyakarta for a more intensive course at traditional Indonesian craft. It is certainly an opportunity we will not miss!

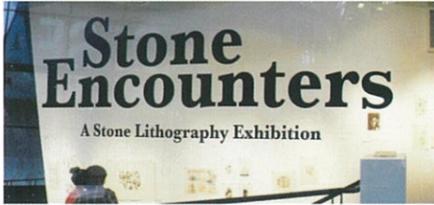
Mar 9-12, 2012

STONE ENCOUNTERS: A Lithography Exhibition

by Karen Heng Shang Li Gonzales



Stone Encounters was the first lithography printmaking exhibition held in LASALLE College of the Arts. It was exhibited at Project Space, LASALLE from 9th to 21st March 2012. It was a showcase of almost all the printmaking students in recent years who have encountered this ancient technique.



The works embodied a strong personal touch and individual style, and were all printed on paper. Signs of the embossed stone edges could be seen on some of the prints, creating an impression of the printing process. Mostly rendered in rich tones of black, these prints are a manifestation of the immense concentration and dedication that lithography demands.

Stone Lithography is a traditional technique that was invented around 1796 in Germany by a Bavarian playwright, Alois Senefelder. He accidentally discovered that by writing his scripts in greasy crayon, he could print multiple duplicates by rolling ink over it. The unique quality of the limestone retained the marks made by the greasy crayon despite repeated inking and printing from the limestone itself. This led to the invention of lithography, where the word is derived from the Latin litho for stone and graph for mark.

Essentially, lithographic works use the simple chemistry of oil and water. Oil refers to the grease that is used to draw on the thick slabs of limestone and the water is used to repel the undrawn areas from any

grease marks. There are several steps to prepare and process a lithography stone before achieving a final print. The process may take a few days depending on the size of the stone.

Processing the limestone starts off by grinding the stone down using different grades of carborundum abrasive, to gently grind down and level the surface of the stone. Grease Charbonnel crayons and Tusche, which is liquefied grease, are the mediums used to paint on the stone. The stone is then etched using nitric acid and gum arabic, using a precise quantity of acid droplets according to the intensity of the drawing. The process is repeated and then laid to rest to proceed for printing the next day. The inks used to roll onto the stone require a precise consistency in order to achieve the richness of the tones drawn on the limestone. A consistent pattern of rolling on ink and moistening the stone is vital in creating an optimum quality of print. However, it is at every stage of the process that a printmaker must be fully conscious of the contact and reaction of the limestone as any mistake is transferred directly onto the paper, which is only visible when the process is completed.

Now, however, stone lithography is becoming a rare technique due to its arduous nature and the lack of availability of materials such as limestone. The stones are now replaced with aluminium plates, which are less expensive and readily available. Today, lithography is still used to print books, magazines, newspapers and also to create stunning art prints.

One of my works, Kinetica, was my very first lithography print. It is a drawing of objects in motion, forming a huge mechanical structure. It was inspired from Jean Tinguely's steel sculptures, a form of kinetic art. The movement and motion were captured in rich black tones by using Charbonnel grease crayons on the smooth limestone. When the print was lifted off the stone for the first time, it made me realise how sensitive and beautiful the lithography technique could be.

I recall how during my internship at Singapore Tyler Print Institute, I watched Chief Printmaker Eitaro Ogawa process an aluminium plate for a lithography print. I had the privilege to assist him in wiping the plate with a sponge, moistening every area of the plate while he rolled the ink with a roller in deft strokes. My arms ached with every round of sponging the A0 sized plate. Although it was physically demanding, seeing the final print at the end was something that was extremely fulfilling. Lithography is a technique not for the faint-hearted, as such, these prints are not just beautiful works of art. They are a result of the blood, sweat and tears of the artist.

The next time you look at a lithographic print, keep in mind the amount of passion, dedication and precision that the artist has put in, in order to create a single print.

"I like litho because its one of the printmaking processes where you can draw directly onto the stone or plate. As a painter, I like the softness of the lines and the tonal qualities of the marks and washes that can be produced by the different lithography materials."

- Chen Shitong,
a Fine Arts Level 2 student, who uses lithography

Nov 17 - Dec 7, 2011

INKIMAGE

A milestone in Chinese ink painting

by Shaynvin Sng



Inkimage is a group show featuring works by Lim Choon Jin and fifteen of his students in ink painting. It marks a milestone for the traditional medium, where it is executed in a contemporary approach.

This exhibition showcases the continuous development and new explorations in contemporary Chinese ink painting today. Many consider Chinese ink a traditional art form, yet it is open to constant renewal and experimentation in a manner that is equal to all aspects of contemporary practice. Nevertheless, essential to the course and development of Chinese ink painting is the artist's perceptual understanding of visual impressions, and conceptual manipulation of the medium.

The exhibition is presented in two galleries. ICA Gallery 1 features a selection of recent work produced by Lim's former and current LASALLE students. It showcases and marks the development of their ink-based practice. The diversified ink manipulation provides insight into how the medium can be interpreted by students from different cultural backgrounds. One particular work by former student Noreen bears an uncanny resemblance to a Batik print. Using a variety of dyes and ink, she recreates the traditional form of Batik painting on Xuan paper. Her creative use of the duo resulted in an eye-catching, batik-esque painting. Another painting to note is by Huang Yifan. A sculptor by practice, Yifan's work is executed in a bold yet abstract manner. Fusing various methods of ink manipulation, his paintings are alluring yet sensitive at the same time.

Often serendipity has a place in Art. Hailing from Sweden is Alexis Noakes, a current BA (Hons) Fine Arts student whose work examines the interplay of ink and water. Chance plays a primary role in his work. Alexis directs the flow of the mediums and lets nature takes its course in the formation of the painting. The results are often spontaneous and unexpected, in awe of the wonders of nature.

ICA Gallery 2 features 49 paintings by Lim between 2004 and 2011. The curator chose these years for the increasing experimentation evident in Lim's practice. Over the course of 8 years, Lim experienced a remarkable transformation in his practice of contemporary Chinese-ink painting, producing an impressive body of inventive works characterised by the spirit of exploration and distillation.

At first sight, one may be shocked, amused and even angered, because these paintings do not resemble what we have been accustomed to see as "Chinese ink paintings". The overwhelming chaos that confronts one is followed by a heightened sense of space and time in the paintings. The lack of clearly defined landscape, subject and object in the paintings are suggestive of the fact that the artist may have been influenced by European aesthetics in the early twentieth-century.

If one had this experience with the artworks, then the artist may have achieved his purpose, for the sole intention behind these artworks has been to liberate Chinese ink painting from its traditional formulated structure.

Nature, most notably water and light elements - which have been profusely featured in Chinese literature and its dramatic and artistic traditions - are the driving force of Lim's series of paintings titled White on Black. Lim drew inspiration from a trip to the Ganges River in India in 2000. He recalls fondly: "It was in the evening when I saw the beautiful gleam from the reflection of light on the river, the feeling stayed with me." It was not until 2006 that he found a suitable technique to interpret his emotions: lines. With constant repetitive line work, Lim laboriously applied ink layer by layer, without any evidence of brush strokes. What is left

is the elusive bit of white space on the Xuan paper, depicting reflection. The strident pictorial technique of spatial configuration was homage to Lim's favorite artist, Anselm Keifer. Drawing references from Keifer, Lim reinterpreted the former's influences in his work, through relentless probing, analysis and forging creations in a relatively uncharted realm in Chinese ink painting. The significance of the two exhibitions shows how Chinese ink painting continues to not only flourish but to renew itself through a critical challenge with the limits of its own traditions.



Lim Choon Jin, *White on Black*, 117 x 117cm

"The overwhelming chaos that confronts one is followed by a heightened sense of space and time in the paintings."

The writer is a student in the BA (HONS) Fine Arts Faculty and also a participant of the show.

ICA Gallery 1: Alexis Noakes, Andrea O'Ryan, Chua Chai Chen Christina, Huang Yifan, Koh Pei Chen, Lena Ah-Tune, Lim Siewli, Norreen Bte Rahmat, Peh Jiahao, See Shu Wen, Sng Geok Teng Shaynvin, Song Yiyong Jenny, Tan Jack Ying, Yang Xiuting, Yapp Poi Chee

ICA Gallery 2: Lim Choon Jin

Curated by Dr. Charles Merewether

Dec 8-12, 2012

A STUDY VISIT TO JOGJAKARTA

by MA Asian Art History Students

by Rohaya bte Mustapha



If you have only a few precious days to immerse yourself in Indonesian contemporary art, Jogjakarta is the place to be, a city which has more to say about it than any other city in the archipelago. It is not without basis that artist Eko Nugroho had said that if you throw a stone in Jogjakarta, you are bound to hit an artist!

Langgeng Art Foundation, a contemporary art foundation founded by collector Deddy Irianto in 2010, organised the tour and made all the special arrangements that allowed us exclusive access into the private homes of some of the most established and renowned Indonesian artists and collectors. We were privileged to have as our guide, Enin Suprianto, who is director at Langgeng and also a noted art critic, writer and curator. Enin accompanied us to some of the venues and played interpreter when needed as well as generously engaged us with his precocious understanding and opinion about Indonesian contemporary art over meals and drinks.

The artists we visited—Agus Kurniawan, Agus Suwage, S.Teddy and Nasirun—were extremely friendly and hospitable, allowing us to roam freely around their homes, work spaces and galleries. The sprawling spaces in which these established artists have at their disposal to create art, invite fellow artists over for social and artistic discourses, and large expanses of wall space to mount or display their work, made us appreciate the importance of one of the most basic needs of an artist—space—space for solitary contemplation as well as space for communal artistic and cerebral exchanges, something that most artists in Singapore could definitely do more with. An interesting observation among these established artists is their willingness to mentor younger

struggling artists and, when the need arises, even to buy their works in order to help them out with living expenditures. It is no wonder then that the art scene in Jogjakarta is so vibrant and dynamic.

We also visited the private galleries of collectors Dr Oei Hong Djien and Deddy Irianto. Dr Oei's significant collection of the early modernists such as S. S. Sudjojono, Hendra Gunawan and Affandi were a privilege to view. Deddy Irianto's modesty in claiming to collect more contemporary works because they are more affordable belies the extensive and significant collection spread out in his private gallery. He was also very personal in hosting a home cooked dinner after patiently guiding us through his collection.

Cemeti Art House, perhaps the earliest alternative art space in Jogjakarta, was another destination not to be missed by art students. Unfortunately, artist Nindityo Adipurnomo was away but his wife Mella was there to show us around the very tastefully rustic place and explain to us about the art residencies hosted by the Cemeti Art Foundation, which also accepts art writing and is not limited to art making. We also visited commercial art galleries Sangkring Art Space and Syang Art Space. And we were especially fortunate also to be able to visit the Indonesian Visual Art Archives, which is a treasure trove of information and records located in a humble neighbourhood. It is hard to imagine that they had started with the most low tech methods of simply cutting articles from newspapers and putting them into files. Our visit to Jogjakarta was also specially timed so that we could catch the 9th Jogjakarta Biennale in some of its venues. It was just not humanly possible to take it all in as there was far too much to see than we have energy to expand in those few short days.



In the art gallery of established artist Nasirun

Despite the jam-packed itinerary, everyone was in the best of spirits. And if it was possible to get art overdosed, we were all on high for sure. Langgeng art Foundation also made sure we dined well on good food located in a variety of locations. One of them was right in the middle of a padi field! Even the need to buy souvenirs was carefully included as part of the itinerary. We managed to squeeze just enough time to buy artist designed T-shirts as well as get the must have batik souvenirs. Of course a Jogjakarta trip would not be complete without a visit to Borobudur, which is a monumental work of art in itself. We had a most knowledgeable and animated guide who helped us appreciate the significant narratives and aspects of this grand monument. It also helped us contemplate the many connections which contemporary Indonesian art still makes with its rich histories.

All in all it was a most beneficial and unforgettable study trip and we felt very fortunate to have been a part of it. There is nothing like a class trip to improve bonding among classmates no matter how old you are. Great food, great art and great company made the study tour a definite highlight in our art history programme.

The writer is a final-semester student of the MA Asian Art Histories Programme.

From 8 to 12 December 2011, 8 students from the Masters in Asian Art Histories programme 2011/2012 and its programme leader, Jeffrey Say, went on a study trip to Jogjakarta, Indonesia to savour its art scene first-hand for themselves.



In the studio of renowned Indonesian artist Agus Suwage (middle standing) and accompanied by noted art critic and writer Enin Suprianto (middle kneeling)

Feb 28 - Mar 2, 2012

A FIELD TRIP TO VIETNAM



by Robyn Poh

Setting aside differences as lecturers and students, 24 from the Fine Arts Faculty proceeded to Vietnam for an enriching four-day cultural exchange on Project Week as travel mates.

Upon landing on Vietnamese soil from a short 2-hours flight, it barely hit us that we were in a foreign land until our tour guide was introduced to us. Our movie commenced as soon as we hopped onto a short bus ride that brought us to our next destination. A well-lit French-looking restaurant established our first ideas of Vietnamese food: crispy baguettes, sweet potato chicken curry, deep-fried spring rolls, fish fried in Vietnamese-style and a plate of refreshing sliced watermelon. To settle down, we headed to Le Duy hotel, our accommodation for the next few days. A quick change of clothes had us prepared for the next buzz: hyped-up Vietnamese nightlife. Pubs that were built like shop houses, were located in the alleys known to be a back-packers' favorite. We resolved to have a few drinks on the sidewalk of a pub, where tiny chairs were rounded up portable tables. It was a laid back setting where we discussed our first impressions of Vietnam. Walking advertisers promoting friendship bands, selling grilled cuttlefish and lighters, were all out to make a living. It was also a common sight to see young children helping out in such sales. Interrupted by a sudden commotion, we gained new insights to a rule Vietnamese stallholders had to abide by: No obstruction of walkways. Police trucks drove by and we were told to stay aside while the owners cleared our chairs and tables to avoid them from being confiscated. Soon, everything was set back into place and we continued our next round of drinks.

The next morning, several of us headed out for a true blue Vietnamese breakfast while the rest of us stayed

for the hotel breakfast. With our well-fed bellies, we were treated to a visual spectacle on the bus journey to Mekong Delta. Pedestrians were crossing streets at the speed of snails, which appeared gaspingly dangerous amidst the sea of motorcyclists covering the roads. We harbored doubts despite being reassured that walking slow was the safest bet to crossing roads, as traffic lights were merely guides. Along the roadsides sprouted hawkers busily setting up their businesses for the day, which sparked discussion on small eats we anticipated to have. Upon reaching the My Tho pier, the scenery was breathtaking for it has been a while since any of us had seen such big skies. We ferried to Quoi An village where coconut candy was made. It was emphasized that the coconut tree was an asset to Vietnam because nothing was wasted from it. The weather in the noon was sweltering, nevertheless, less humid than the Singapore weather.

Subsequently, we rode on carts carried by horses to a small hut where we could enjoy local fruits such as the pineapple, mango, guava and jackfruit. Traditional music was played while songstresses sang songs we have never heard of. After freshening up, we sailed down a stream on kayaks where everyone put on their Vietnamese hats and headed for lunch at Mekong Restop restaurant. It felt heartwarming seeing 24 of us gather at a long table to share individual experiences over lunch.

In the early afternoon, we visited Rich Streitmatter-Tran at his studio where he introduced himself and shared with us the establishment of DIA/PROJECTS. We were inspired by the conducive working space, filled with a library of contemporary books. Ending the visit with a short Q and A session, we proceeded for dinner at PHO 2000 where they served their

renowned Pho beef noodles. Following dinner, some of us haggled our way through the night market while others decided to wind down with a brow-raising massage.

Our third day in Vietnam was kick-started by a tour to the Notre Dame de Paris, a Catholic cathedral located in the heart of the city. Its neo-Romanesque style architecture draped in stained-glass windows and high ceilings fascinated many of us snapping away. Right across the Notre-Dame Cathedral was the Central Post Office, constructed by Gustave Eiffel. The French Colonial styled building was bustling with people. There were gift shops for tourists to purchase and mail postcards to loved ones. We soaked in the atmosphere while looking at the huge portrait of Ho Chih Min featured at the post office. A drive to San Art, an independent, artist-run exhibition space was an insightful experience as we listened to the obstacles, such as censorship and power play, the founders faced in order to run the gallery. Next, we were directed to Galerie Quynh, a leading contemporary art gallery in Vietnam. Before stepping into the white cube, we noticed hawkers laced at the street sides.

When asked if any of them ever entered the space, it was a dejecting no. However we were encouraged to find out that it welcomes international curators for the showcase of traveling exhibitions. After all, it promotes growth in the regional arts scene. We carried on to our next destination where we learnt about the laborious processes of Vietnamese lacquer painting, an ancient yet popular trade sustained over time. After scanning through the different forms in which lacquer painting could take, we managed our way to The Fine Arts Museum. Compared to the previous galleries we visited, the museum covered a greater area. The



large structure is housed in a former commercial building, displaying contemporary art by local and international artists as well as a collection highlighting the resistance to colonial rulers. We paced ourselves, contemplating over the works of art through the afternoon, a contrast from the fast-moving city life we were about to return to. Before dinner, we made a hasty quick round at Saigon Square, a shopping mall packed with people. Instead of bargaining for goods, we took the opportunity to explore the nearby areas where antiques were commonly seen. At dinner, truth be told, we were queasy from the sight of lavish meal prepared for us in a Hawaii-set restaurant. Although sumptuous, we were unable to finish our food. The night was still young after we returned to the hotel to freshen up. Allocated with free time on the last night, we set out to make it a memorable one. Some of us enjoyed each other's company on a slow night walk, while others partied the night away.

In the morning, with our luggage packed, we sleepily sipped on Vietnamese drip coffee, ready to head back to our homeland. Led back to the airport, we knew the movie was about to end when we recalled the experiences we were going to miss over the past three days. It was nevertheless a reminder of how blessed we were to be able to look through the lenses of a traveler in Vietnam.





UNFORGETTABLE SIKKIM

by Yang Xiuting



We arrived at Kolkata airport, together with the Sikkim Global Outreach Project team on 9th December 2011. What greeted us as we stepped out of the airport's confines was an orchestra of honking traffic. My lungs immediately filled with dry air while my heart pumped excitement in synchronicity with the honking. As I made my way with the others to our ride I felt my muscles protest under the strain of the 20kg backpack half my size. The air was thick with dust and I knew I would be covered in dirt in a matter of minutes. It did not take long, neither, for us to encounter our first communication barrier with our guide. I couldn't help but be amused by the similarity of our situation with those in the Amazing Race. This moment marked the start of my adventure.

We left the next morning for Sikkim under a grey and drizzling sky. The 8 hours long drive to our destination was strenuous. A vast field with here and there a herd of bulls and goats provided welcome distraction. It was a beautiful sight that compensated for our discomfort on the ride. As we drove through the mountains towards the southern part of Sikkim to Borong Porok, the temperature started to drop noticeably. The mist that cloaked the distant mountains only moments ago was suddenly swirling around us making the ride seemed magical. It got colder and colder as our vehicle climbed higher and higher up the twisting mountain road. It was so cold I could see my breath in front of me and I started to pull on more layers of clothing to keep warm. It was nightfall when we reached the village. Darkness enveloped us and we had to find our way to the campsite by the light of the torches we had brought along. That night, we burrowed deep in our sleeping bags and slept cocooned in thick layers of clothing.

The next morning, our hosts, Anand and Nir, and our chefs, DL and Pipi welcomed us warmly with gifts called Khada. After the brief introductions, the team was divided into their respective groups: Education, IT and Papermaking. It was time to get down to "business". Together with two LASALLE graduates, Michelle Lim, our team leader, and Mandy Tan, we headed down to the Borong Polok Handmade Papermaking Unit (PMU). Climbing uphill in cold, breezy air without a drop of sweat dripping down my body is an experience I cannot have in Singapore. However, getting around Borong Polok was no small feat. In a matter of minutes, I was breathless. Yet, what really took my breath away was the tranquil greenery around us.

I finally met Jagan, the manager of the PMU, whom I have heard so much about. From his knowledge in plants to his expertise in papermaking, one could tell how resourceful he is. With his inquisitive mind, he has learnt many new skills. I was awed that all these information was obtained from the tiny screen of his mobile phone. Thus, it came as no surprise that Jagan has earned an Artist Award for the innovations and creativity in products made in PMU. We were also very happy to hear that the Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom had sponsored one million rupees worth of enrichment courses for the PMU workers.

Among the people we met that morning was a designer from Assam who was residing at the PMU as a workshop facilitator at the time of our visit. He was teaching the workers to make lampshades out of Argali paper using the paper-mache method.

We were also introduced to a group of women who were always smiling, and taking responsibility and obvious pride in their work. It was heartwarming to see how they had applied what they learnt from last year's group to their product design. My favourite were the paper bags with striking silk-screened repeat patterns on them. We learned that these were also very well received my others. Jagan, who is clearly entrepreneurial, has also been inspired to have his workers prepare a big bottle of coloured paper-mache beads ahead of the football season. His plan is to produce a collection of merchandise in the national colours of the various competing teams for supporters of the game. With his vision and the positive attitude of everyone we encountered there, I am sure the PMU will make great advances in the future.

On our part, we conducted workshops in jewelry making, paper marbling, envelopes stamping and journal making for the PMU workers. Products from the PMU are entirely made from their argali paper. The purpose of our workshops was to share a variety of skills with which the PMU can create new products from their paper. It was a lot of fun conducting these workshops because of the cozy environment at the PMU. Sometimes, when it gets chilly indoors, we would carry the tables outside to get some sun while we worked. For Mandy's jewelry making workshop, a bonfire was lit to keep us warm and toasty. This was immediately relaxing and very conducive to bonding. I found myself easily gravitating to the bonfire area in search of the bonhomie.

We were also very happy to learn from the women in return. They taught us the dip dye technique used in their products. In a blink of an eye, the PMU grounds were "littered" over with our enthusiastic output. The bright, contrasting colours of so much freshly dyed argali paper were a sight to behold.

One of my most treasured experience during the trip was an excursion to a hot spring, called Tato Pani. This was because we were able to look in on Nir's and Anand's grandmother on the way down. Our hosts' granny bore an uncanny resemblance to the glamorous, elderly Rose in Titanic! It was heartwarming to witness the close bond between them. After the visit, we continued on our journey lined by a few wildflowers. It was about 3 hours later when I picked up the sound of gushing water. I could feel my pulse quickened with my footsteps. And then, quite suddenly, the rapid water was before me. I was overwhelmed by the sight and sound of it. And my soul reverberated with the bass of the pounding water. I couldn't wait to get in there and soak myself in the healing water with the magnificent view of nature and clear blue sky above. But, good times flies quickly and, our pause in Paradise was short-lived. All too soon, it was time to go back. Now, my heart

filled with dread at the thought of climbing my way back up to where we had come. Indeed, the climb was the most challenging ever. The endless flights of steps leading up and up were, after the indulgence of the hot spring, like a stairway to hell. I had to stop several times for breath. By the time we were near the top, it was dark. I stopped for another break and, by chance, looked up. And that was when I saw the Milky Way. The night sky was full of shining stars twinkling like diamonds through each passing cloud. A soft veil of magic descended then and all the complaints from the climb were blanketed out.

On the way home, Sikkim played in my mind like flash backs from a vintage film. I couldn't help but smile to myself at the recollection of the many precious moments. Struggling for the best words to describe the place, I looked out the window of the plane and saw before me, the familiar splendor of another setting sun, an apt reminder of the beauty of the country I had just experienced.

The experience has changed me in ways I couldn't have anticipated. I returned home with memories tugging at my heart. Writing this article has made me miss Sikkim more than ever. As a city girl, I value these opportunities to escape the city and travel the country because nature has an unknown force to calm the mind and restore the soul. Everywhere I went in Sikkim, I was welcomed with open doors and hot tea. The experience has taught me to be more appreciative towards others and the slow pace of life made me look at things and gave me time for reflection. Sikkim is like a happy medicine for me. When I get too sick of the bustling city, I know where I can go. Thank you Sikkim.

A khada is a silk scarf symbolizing purity and compassion and given out in welcome to visitors in Buddhist traditions.



Initiated by Dr Winston Oh to help young artists travel abroad to expand their artistic experience, The Winston Oh Travel Award is an annual grant given to selected students from the Faculty of Fine Arts. This overseas experience, now in its 12th year, aims to support students in their formative years of art education by offering the opportunity to immerse themselves in a different environment and culture. To test their observational skills as they learn to assimilate new sensations and experiences, the students headed to various parts of Asia, Europe and America this year.

May - Aug 2011

TRAVELOGUE

Q&A with the Travel Practice Award winners from
The Winston Oh Travel Award 2011 (Diploma)



by Filip Gudovic/Kray Chen Kerui/Yapp Poi Chee/Shen Xin



Kray Chen Kerui

Q: Why did you choose this particular place to travel to? How extensive was the experience in relation to the cultural identity of this place?

Filip: I have experienced some of the south East Asian countries before, so for this travelogue I have chosen to visit a country farther from this region. The place I visited was Chengdu, Sichuan in China. Not knowing the language and place I decided to travel with my friend Kray, also a winner of the Travelogue award. Another advantage was that our friend Shen Xin lives in Chengdu during her holidays so we chose to visit her place.

During the visit, which lasted for about 12 days, I experienced a new environment and discovered new cultural behaviors. Traveling within the city but also on its outskirts (Sichuan province), I enjoyed differences within this highly populated place. Visiting various places ranging from the local restaurants and hang out places, museums and shopping districts to a more high class hotel in the mountains. This enabled a versatility of travel that is impossible to do alone.

Kray: The decision to travel to Chengdu, China was impromptu. The decision was made together with Filip and Shen, as we had already decided to travel together whether we will all win the award or not. I have always wanted to go to China. Being Singaporean Chinese, I have always wanted to go back to the country of ethnic roots to draw similarities and connections to my own ethnic identity. The overall experience was quite surreal for me. I felt like an outsider more than I thought I would, the geopolitical boundary became especially distinct when I think about the biological/physical similarities.

Poi Chee: Since I was a child, I have been exposed to Taiwanese culture through their entertainment and documentaries. I grew up listening to and watching Taiwanese songs and shows, and I gradually developed a familiarity towards the culture and the people in Taiwan even though I had not yet physically been there. Taipei is the vibrant center of culture and entertainment; it is one of the few places on earth where ancient religious and cultural practices still thrive in an overwhelmingly modernist landscape and is known for the mix of its old and new culture. It is a place where old architecture and traditions are well preserved. One of the experiences I had and would like to highlight is the 5 hour long train journey from Taipei to Kaohsiung and back. Through this journey, I got to see different landscapes and lives of the local community by looking out through the cabin window. From the city to the farmlands, when the train passed through different stations, the experience resembled a journey through a different time and space.

Shen: Both Moscow and St. Petersburg are filled with ancient architecture, historical monuments, and a vast collection of paintings. The spirit of maintaining the past can be seen everywhere in these lands. What interested me most is how all this substance, however it managed to survive, interacts with different people's lifestyles both mentally and physically in this contemporary time. I intended to explore these ideas through painting, animation, and mixed media collages, as a continuation of my practice and interest for figuration, and spaces that these figures occupy. I travelled with my family as well as my Mongolian friends who have been living in Russia for years. There weren't that many interactions with the chosen places

in depth, which is a pity due to how unfamiliar and distant these places seem to me. That is also why the works I produced later were bonded to figuration, for me it was the observational nature of the trip that influenced the approach of the works as well.

Q: What are the interesting changes in your practice caused by this project? How has the Travelogue shifted or enhanced your practice?

F: This is the first time I choose to travel somewhere with the goal to trigger ideas for some artistic and creative project. Before traveling I learned about the exotic food and spices that are famous in the Sichuan area. In my practice I have always been dealing with everyday subjects that are situated in a modern world and popular culture, hence I thought it could be a good way to incorporate the idea of taste and painting.



Filip Gudovic

"The travel experience opened me up and I found myself becoming more receptive towards visuals, sounds and experiences."



Yapp Poi Chee

Ayano Hattori

Recipient of the Winston Oh Postgraduate Fine Arts Research Fund 2011

In my video-/photography-based performance series entitled *Confidences Trop Intimes*, I dealt with the fear and anger of my traumatic stalking experiences in Japan and Singapore over the last 4 years. On September 11, 2001, an unforgettable tragedy befell the city of New York. 10 years have passed. My research concern is how, in the process, New York narrates the trauma into its own history and redefines its identity. Because of the existence of a similar dilemma in *Confidences Trop Intimes*, the process of overcoming and healing are those that redefine one's identity, re-entering its identity into its own relations to the world, and giving an orbital self-recognition of one's own history. This is what I expect to realize in my practice at the end of this research trip.



“The Travelogue project is meaningful to students as it encourages students to think while travelling.”

In the end, coming up with the series of drawings I did in a hotel was the main source that informed my installation. The drawings consist of multiple narratives that I have created in this CHILI WORLD, thus the name for the installation The Circle of Chili.

Certainly this travelogue has enhanced my practice and enabled me to think about different possibilities in my works, structurally but also spatially. I have become more aware of the subject matter that I am interested in and some formal elements that I found in Buddhist paintings influenced my recent works.

K: The travel experience opened me up and I found myself becoming more receptive towards visuals, sounds and experiences. More importantly, the award provided the confidence boost and the unrestricted opportunity to experiment and showcase. I took the chance to collaborate with a computer engineer, Mr. Chang Poo Hee, and explore the use of computer programs, electronics and interactivity. Aesthetically, I could also be as ‘casual’ and playful as I want, and then find the impetus to create curated visuals from such spontaneity. Such an opportunity that enabled me to take risks, experiment, collaborate and play is hard to come by within the academic structure, therefore this project opened up the floodgates for ‘rebelliousness’.

P: I rarely have the chance to travel alone and this research project gave me the courage to do so, hence this trip is very different from the rest I had. As a solitary traveller, I was spontaneous when it came to planning and directions, and I spent most of my time walking on the streets and cycling around the cities. While strolling around, I took photographs of things that caught my interest and did sketches and documentation of my experiences. I didn’t really plan for destinations throughout the trip, so when I was there, I met some very cheerful Taiwanese friends and they invited me to stay at their home, and brought me out to places where local communities like to go. I enjoyed asking people on the street for recommendations for places they would normally like to go to for food or to hang out, because I wished to experience the lifestyle of the local communities. Through this trip, I got to appreciate the sincerity and serenity of the lifestyle in Taiwan.

S: Before this project my works were very informed by classical compositions of figures, usually focusing on the interactions between figures of two, and how my practice of painting could portray these figures differently. I guess absorbing a huge amount of images of these actual classical paintings in Russia pushed this approach of mine towards something more specific. I started to crop parts of classical compositions and

based my paintings on these ready-made “sketches”, what comes after were the varieties of treatment of paint that transformed these ready-mades into something else. This development helped me to actually strip off more of my figurative concerns, and moved me even further in connecting these concerns with the essence of paint, which is my current direction. This project helped me formulate many initial thoughts and motives that then helped me understand my painting practice as something that is gestural, and how to work with paint and to open up discussions through this medium with different experiences.

Q: What are the interesting changes in your practice caused by this project? How has the Travelogue shifted or enhanced your practice?

F: The Circle of Chili is a wall installation made from vinyl stickers, collages and drawings. The narratives are not linear and they travel around this big circle made from vinyl sticker that has a certain reference to the cutouts of Matisse. The drawings consist of subjects like reinvented Buddhist paintings with chili forms, pandas, disco drunks, a very spicy guy, architectural forms with chili designs and some surreal looking forms made before sleep.

The show has shown different practices ranging from interactive installation, drawings, paintings, animation, to photography and sculpture. With lots of positive comments, this Travelogue show has been a really successful one.

K: The installation is made up of found objects - boxes, crates, metal piping, and electric motors. These objects are then wired with electronics, controlled by a computer program, which reacts with the presence and movements of the audience. The movements are tracked by a motion capture “eye”, which relays a set of randomized instructions to trigger any 4 of the following actions:

- 1) A phone rings, and the audience gets to listen to an edited conversation in Mandarin.
- 2) An industrial fan turns on, blowing up a big red plastic carrier.
- 3) A motor attached to a candy dispenser spins; the candies drop into a metal drain through centrifugal force
- 4) A card shooter embedded into a milk carton shoots cards with single Chinese characters.

The various interactions serve to depict the social experiences during my trip. The main gadget, the tracking eye, talks about the idea of the gaze, particular of the gaze towards the foreign (myself as foreigner; Chengdu as a foreign land). The candy

dispensing machine, the ringing telephone and the blowing fan relate to the sexual fantasies/tendencies of the exotic. And the reading card shooter describes the cultural disillusionment (I as an ethnic Chinese visiting China). The concepts of chance and failure are also important in this installation. They are the two recurring themes on my mind during the trip. The chance of happenings and the failure of non-happenings, as well as the expectations, obligations and compromise as a response to them.

P: My Travelogue trip to Taiwan is about merging both my virtual familiarity of a place and the personal experience. I had great experiences travelling on trains and buses, cycling and walking around the cities. One of the ways I used to document my visual experiences was using photography and drawing. From the texture of an old apartment to the night cityscape of Taipei, I captured scenic and poetic moments to show my impressions of the place. For my work, I combined my photography and drawings together to create images of these experiences. I did a series of digital images on watercolor paper titled *Remembering Taiwan*. I am interested in creating landscape imagery from memory. I did watercolor paintings of what I’d remember from the trip and later merged these paintings to the photographic works digitally using computer software. These 3 mediums worked together to create imagery of Taiwan in my mind. I intended to create imagery that reflects my experiences.

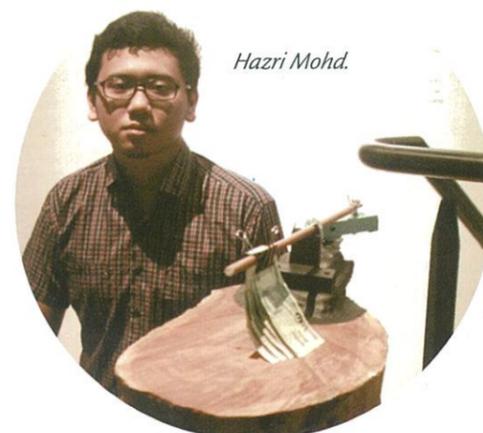
This project gives opportunities for art students to work outside the studio and having an exhibition to showcase these works allows another form of experience with the audience. The Travelogue project is meaningful to students as it encourages students to think while travelling.

S: I showed three paintings that were derived from 3 different original classical paintings, and an animation piece. The paintings all bear a religious look, yet the structures and systems within the painting are reconstructed through manipulations of the material, and left with the look of their own substantiality. The animation piece, which was created with oil paint, was based on the observations of how people occupy the traditional buildings, or locations in different ways, and how these spatial qualities interact with people’s everyday lives. The works that were shown in this travelogue show varied in medium and approach. Praxis was a good space to hold such an exhibition for it creates an experience of a walk-through and Dr. Charles Merewether also helped in curating this successful show. It was very exciting to see how different experiences in diverse locations put in a show together draw similarities with each other because of the nature of the project. And I wish to thank Dr. Winston Oh without whom this great experience would not have been possible.

Unfortunately Hazri Mohd is not able to join us in this conversation as he is currently a full time national serviceman.



Shen Xin



Hazri Mohd.



Jodi Tan

Recipient of the Winston Oh Travel Research Awards 2011 (BA)

My concerns in regards to the theme “Peripatetic” lay mainly in the notion of movement and migration. The drawings/prints present ‘objective’ data-like records of my travel, developed by tracking movements made and plotting spots visited. Yet, certain ‘visual effects’ are combined to add subjective trivia to each diagram, based on my interpretations of my experiences during travel (which are affected by past experience). While this adds more information to the ‘data’, it also makes it lose its initial ‘objectivity’.

On the other hand, my paintings suggest the idea of migration of elements (shape, colour, texture) within an image or between two or more images. In a separate painting, the migrated elements are presented in a new context, displaying the changes in its characteristics when placed with varying elements. This migration creates a visual that in turn triggers movement in the viewer’s gaze that collects perceptual data—identifying similarities and differences—which are rearranged and then interpreted.

LANDSCAPES AS ALLEGORIES AND INNER WORLDS: The Works of Donna Ong

by Jessica Lai



Donna Ong is an artist, educator and arts administrator. She is also currently a Masters student in the MA Fine Art programme at LASALLE. In her practice, Ong uses found objects in elaborate and intricate installations that are more akin to stage sets. There is an almost theatrical quality to her work. Looking at works such as *Secret, interiors: Chrysalis* (20-22) (2006) and *Landscape Portraits (In a Beautiful Place Nearby)* (2009), one forgets entirely that one is looking at common, everyday objects, seduced as we were by their ethereal beauty.



My first encounter with Ong's work, during the President's Young Talents exhibition in 2009, was bewildering. There were so many fascinating things to look at. She had included two works in this show. *Dissolution* (2009) consisted of a long acrylic block made up of layers. Sandwiched between the layers were pieces of Chinese Ink paintings. The sensation of depth, an abstract concept in Chinese ink painting, was suddenly tangible and real. I could literally see into the painting. *Landscape Portraits* (2009) was equally intriguing. I entered a darkened narrowing space where the only thing obvious at first was an image of what seemed to be a coral bed at the bottom of the sea. It took me a minute more to realise that the "corals" were actually made of nails, screws and other bits of metal hardware; and that the image was actually a video projection of the real objects laid alongside the corridor. The meticulous nature of her work could be due to her training as an architect. These two works were indeed exquisitely made and I was left a little in awe.

Ong's past works have been described as "transcendental". These miniature landscapes made of cut up of glassware, Chinese Ink paintings, and metal bolts and screws; secret rooms filled with personal objects that represent private, hidden thoughts, are other-worldly. These works ignite the imagination and allow the viewer to create their own narratives in their imagination. In *Sixth Day* (2008), it's almost like one is entering Ong's personal space. Indeed, one feels like a voyeur. No doubt the artist invites us into these spaces but one gets the feeling that they are treading in private spaces; meant to be hidden and precious.

Bewildering and transcendental Ong's works may be but after that early encounter with her work in 2009, I was left wondering how the works fit into

the larger context of art making in the region. After all, these works do not fit into other labels which we have become used to in the discourse about Southeast Asian contemporary art. Terms like "social commentary", "art as voice and empowerment", "neo-traditionalism" and "community-based art project" do not apply. Perhaps, it is because Ong spent most of her adult life in the United Kingdom that she feels she does not know enough to speak about socio-political issues. Perhaps it is as Enin Suprianto says of "post-contemporary" artists who, in a time where there is more freedom of expression, are struggling less with political oppression and censorship. They become more introspective, more self-reflexive and contemplative.

By Ong's own admission, her practice is not the "social activist" type. Rather, Ong begins each work by drawing from, as she puts it, "an honest place". Her own hopes and fears are reflected in her works like *Sixth Day* which stems from Ong's own insecurities about her health. However, the work contains metaphors for the potential of life—the egg representing hope of new beginnings. The title itself alludes to the book of Genesis in the Bible in which God created the earth in six days and then rested on the seventh. Hence the work is actually about the binary relationship between despair and hope, barrenness



and life. These kinds of contradicting dualities are present in other works. In *Chrysalis*, one of the judges' chambers contains a miniature version of a larger work titled *Crystal City* (2009), except this crystal landscape is contained within a cupboard representing a cave that is both comforting and terrifying. Ong's inspiration came from a story about the sun goddess of Japan. She hid in a cave because her brother bullied her and found comfort in the darkness. However, had she not allowed herself to be cajoled into emerging, the world itself would have been in darkness. Ong's allegory of the cave represents her internal struggle to continually step out of her comfort zone. Her works remind us that inner dualities exist within us all and we all struggle with ourselves privately.

In 2011, Ong decided to take up the Masters programme in fine art at LASALLE. Part of her reason for doing so was that she felt her work needed a new direction. She had been getting comments that her work had become "consistent" or predictable. Ong's recent work for the MA programme continues her theme of landscape but this time the landscapes themselves are the found objects. One work (in progress) which she presented at the MA Fine Art symposium in October 2011 consisted of screen shots of archetypal landscapes from movies. The landscape then becomes the

site of the quest narrative; stories about the journey of the protagonist towards enlightenment and self-actualisation. Hence, the landscape itself becomes an allegory for the protagonist's inner mind and his eventual salvation.

Another current work consists of found images of botanical illustrations and Renaissance images of the Virgin Mary. The botanicals create a garden in which Mary resides. One Mary is full of hope as she awaits the annunciation. The other, at the moment of Christ's death, realizes the hope she once had is now lost. For Ong, these Renaissance paintings are familiar and comforting. These were the images she grew up with as a child and informed her early ideas about what art was. Perhaps Ong's decontextualization of the Virgin Mary is akin to her own sense of disjuncture. Ong has to continually reconcile her adopted Western art history "heritage" with that of the Singaporean context which she has returned to. This work could be an allegory for the disjuncture we all feel in a globalized world where geographical spaces are increasingly sites of plurality, ambiguity and negotiation.

Of course, Ong's current works are still just works in progress and it is premature to make definitive assessments about where her practice is heading. However, what seems to be a constant is that Ong's works are meant to be read on many levels and there is no single construct of meaning. Her works are self-referential but also universal in that they are allegories that reflect the binary nature of the human condition.

The writer is a final-semester student of the MA Asian Art Histories Programme



Apr 3, 2012

ART TALK - Teo Eng Seng

by Rubin Hashim



I specifically remember entering that cold lecture theatre with little to no excitement, giving my best attempt at tailoring a grand plan to battle the sleep monster that was going to attack me in a few minutes but to my amazement the talk by Teo Eng Seng was far from what I had expected it to be. Shame on me for assuming all artist talks by old Singaporean artists can be boring. No, Teo Eng Seng's artist talk is nowhere near that assumption. This man had a particularly odd charm to him. He seemed humble about his achievements in his career but at the same time, he was boisterously proud of how he did what he did. I know this statement sounds contradictory but that's about as accurate as I can be with words in describing Eng Seng's strong personality.

Teo Eng Seng opened his talk with a bold, no-nonsense statement. "I wanted to be an artist because I wanted to be popular! I want to be remembered! That is the good life, no?" he exclaimed to the audience while spotting this intriguingly mischievous smirk as if to suggest that he has indeed achieved those goals. He continued his talk by elaborating on his intention and need to become an artist when he was young. He brought up so many captivating thoughts like how he regarded television, museums and galleries to be his actual source of education in the arts and how highly he deems travel to be just as important in educating one's self. This man's talk was a bombardment of

engaging thoughts and captivating quotes, so much so that it was dream come true for any journalist covering the event.

Amidst his stories of attempts at travelling as a young man and his funny dealings with painting as a student, one particularly interesting topic was his time with commissions. He said and I quote, "Don't do too many commissioned work; you are selling yourself bit by bit". He was somewhat aggressive in his stance, stating clearly that every time he would engage in a commission, it would've been a deal struck on his grounds and on his terms. "Don't conform, you must present a question that presents a question and so forth in your art" and with all that said by him, I knew this mature artist had a fancy for being a boss and this fact was made even clearer when he began talking about his time spent as an educator.

When Eng Seng was a teacher at the Singapore International School (now known as the United World College), he wanted to teach art to every kid there, and if he could've had his way, he would've made that place an art school. "Teaching is part of my art, it is a part of me", he said and there was no doubt about it either. We were hearing all sorts of stories about his experiences as a teacher. From the time he promised a student a meeting with Michael Jackson to the time he made the whole school turn plastic junk into art.

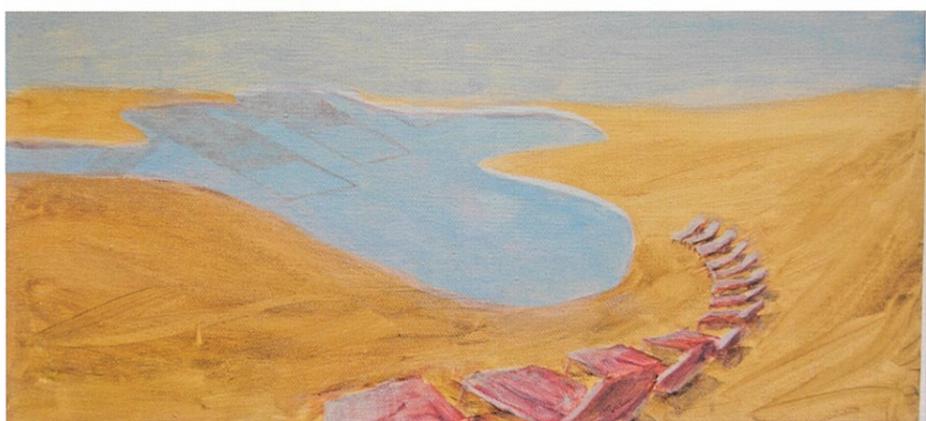
Regardless of the encounter, there was a certain sense of gusto to this man and his doings - the kind of gusto that secured him with a Cultural Medallion in 1986. Eng Seng was known for a phrase he coined, a phrase that still rings in the ears of many educators today. "I do not teach art to students, I inspire them to learn it on their own", he said with a firm sense of pride in the glint of his eyes.

By the end of the 2-hour talk, I remember having a smile plastered to my face thinking of how beautifully wonderful it was for me to feel that I could relate to this man and his every thought despite the fifty-year gap in our age and it was also then that I realised that Eng Seng is no different from my generation of emerging artists. He was a rampantly inspired young practitioner who knew how crucial it was to strike a healthy balance between artistic idealism and pragmatism. He understands the extreme value of education and inspiration, be it for yourself or those around you. And he knew that all he wanted to do was art and he did all of it like a boss. Teo Eng Seng is exactly what my generation of artists is or at least aims to be. With that boldly put, I suppose true awe deservedly goes to the practice of art and how it unites minds alike across cultures and generations. Bringing everyone together (with smiles plastered on their faces, no less!).



BREADCRUMBS

by Isabelle Desjeux



Breadcrumbs. I was expecting the remnants of a fancy meal, breadcrumbs strewn on the white tablecloth. Or else, the leftover scraps that the old ladies, clad in grey, feed the pigeons in the park on grey days. In any case, lots of little things in a large expanse.

The "Work-in-Progress" exhibition, staged traditionally about half way through the MAFA program, is a tough one to conceive. How does one show half-finished work? Half-painted canvas? Failed experiments? Tackling the white cube in a way consistent with a practice that often extends beyond the time and space allocated requires special skills...

Then, there is negotiating the space to be shared among artists who seem to have little to do with each other. "Seem". Because by the time they have gone through half the program, and shared a studio for a few months, the candidates share a certain culture, although most of them might not be aware of it, or care for it.

So, Breadcrumbs. Leftovers or nourishing scraps for birds?

The exhibition starts outside the gallery with Ayano Hattori's video, "Confidences Trop Intimes" viewed through the glass wall. The intimate setting of the video and its point of view angles make voyeurs of unsuspecting viewers. As you walk in, the calm, barely moving continuous shot of a carpet greets you on the other side of the double-sided video. The whole work requires to be viewed on a quiet day, alone in the gallery, alone with the subject. Slowly, the sense of an intruder's presence creeps up on you. "Am I the one?"

As you turn away to escape this discomfiting thought, the small, elongated paintings of Nah Yong En catch your eye. Like Hattori's video, Nah's paintings have barely a human presence. His paintings hint at a world created for people, but where people are conspicuously absent.

Further on, in a corner, the lively animations of multimedia artist, Baktiar (Bach)'s monsters play, back-projected on a screen, to his original music. This makes for more uncomfortable viewing as the mostly black, white and red figures morphed continuously on the screen, looking scary, but attractive, as they transformed.

On the other side of the room, the large paintings of Simon Ng Yong Heng allude to a different kind of presence and make the viewer again feel like a voyeur.

So, it is calming to view Carolyn Law's explorations with material. Seeing her mostly white paintings, with irregular textures is like a game trying to figure out how she has teased the cracks and drips out of her paint. In response to these white 2-D explorations trying to come out of the frame, is Moe Htet Htet's folded sculpture. Resting on a pillar as if it has spilled out of it, the intricate folding seems to be part of the architecture.

Walking to Madhura Nayak's work, I am reminded of my grandmother's intricate hand-scribbled and undecipherable knitting notes. The drawing shows the underlying process before a calm and soothing, seemingly random pattern of squares can emerge.

Finally, Donna Ong's table is an invitation to play at recognizing different kinds of landscapes. Taken from popular culture including films, the work makes us question what a landscape is.

These works-in-progress call to the viewer to be part of the process, the ideas. What they offer is a very intimate and raw experience. In sum, Breadcrumbs is no scraps but a substantial appetizer that will leave you looking forward to more!

Feb 22 - Mar 2, 2012

BEYOND LIMITS

- A Review

by Tseng Shih Jah



One is greeted by a variety of surprising and unconventional attempts at painting when walking through Praxis Space. The exhibition *Beyond Limits* features works by selected Level 1 painting students. From ambitiously tackling the subject to adopting a subtle and minimalistic style, it is definitely a refreshing experience that one might consider embracing.

As the eye wanders amongst the flurry of meticulously painted strokes, it is inevitable that the viewer may wonder about the journey that came along with the culmination of work, which brought this exhibition to fruition.

Curiosity seeps in as soon as the immediacy of each painting, alongside its visual language and subjective allure, steps into the frame. With regard to the journey of the process, I would conjecture that it may be interesting to share some of my personal thoughts as a fellow Level 1 painting student. Viewing it from hindsight, I can vividly and fondly remember the journey of painting from receiving the projects with enthusiasm to the working stages of starting out with a fresh new medium (for some) and juggling with uncertainties and taking chances during the process of painting.

When facing a finished painting, it is unavoidable that one should wonder what would be the driving force which directed the painter from the first brushstroke to the last. Aside from occasional consultations with lecturers, the painters themselves are required to be mindful of their own decision-making processes and constantly be on the verge of making choices, be it

consciously or subconsciously. Sometimes the painter may be tempted by the option of taking a chance of challenging him or herself. Never to be impoverished by a constant mindset of going for the safer options, the painter is hence acknowledged for the final piece of artwork that presents itself to the public in its final form and totality.

As a viewer, it may also be interesting to know more about the subject matter of the paintings. As both projects were non-representational in nature, they were constructed to introduce student-painters to the versatility of the oil painting medium and also for better handling of the medium. The paintings that were showcased in the gallery came from two projects, "Surfaces" and "Grids". It was up to them to interpret the projects in their own manner while keeping to the requirements and learning objectives stated for the projects. From examining the surroundings for interesting textures and surfaces to looking out for systematic arrangements of patterns, the process which these painters had gone through was also something noteworthy and deserving of thought. Drawing from a wide range of influences and research, the painters were inspired and encouraged to go about their own journeys of art making.

Individually, these paintings have a character that stands out from each other. With distinctive features that may otherwise be reminiscent of influences from Agnes Martin for example, or a familiar grid-like ensemble suggestive of the interplay of inspirations drawn from various sources, the visitors to this exhibition are presented with a plethora of visually enticing experiences portrayed on the canvas.

Certainly, a group exhibition like this shall be remembered for its uniqueness as a collection of paintings each with a different character and style. One can marvel at the delicacy of each piece when observed closely, as well as the commitment and process that comes along with it. The exhibition was definitely a memorable one, both to the participants as well as the visitors. Indeed, each painter had invariably taken a chance to step beyond the boundaries as an art creator, thereby presenting to the viewer a praiseworthy visual experience.

Other Art Talks, Lectures, Workshops

from August 2011 to April 2012 include:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Ang Soo Koon | - Singapore |
| Shinyoung Park | - Korea |
| Eric Chan | - Singapore |
| Mary Dinaburg | - USA/
Singapore |
| Charles Lim | - Singapore |
| Michael Lee | - Singapore |
| Wee Lilin | - Singapore |
| Russel Wong | - Singapore |
| Eriko Hirashima | - Singapore/
Japan |
| Michael Tan | - Singapore |
| Boo Sze Yang | - Singapore |
| Thomas Berghuis | - Australia |
| David Cohen | - USA |

Apr 17, 2012

BEFORE & AFTER:

Interview with Weixin Chong

I first met you when you were in Level 1 and it is such a delight for me to see you grow as an artist and a person. I have seen you struggle and resolve your works in the studio, as well as being an artist assistant to many of us in the college. After graduating with the McNally Award (for Fine Arts), you have also been a teaching assistant in Fine Arts.

Shall we play a game here - please finish the sentences for me (as a way for us to get to know you)?



by Adeline Kueh



My first day in LASALLE was ...

A blur. I was in information-overload-mode, taking in the new campus (I did Foundation in the Goodman one two years before coming back for my Degree), and the new crowds. I was timid, hungry for friendly faces and found them soon enough.

[In terms of inspiration], I have always looked to ...

The created reality. The deliberate, intricate details in both material and psychological reality will never fail to fascinate me. Feeling a strong sense of how fragile and strange it is to be alive makes me (over) intense and possibly psychotic. It is also the feeling that makes me make art (or try to).

I knew I (have always) wanted to be an artist when...

I used to write and draw about artists quite often throughout my early childhood. I probably said I wanted to be one around the age of four or five. However, that desire was quickly buried under an

avalanche of others. It still amuses me, how I've come back to this field, which I'd never thought would become part of 'official' life. Making and thinking about things have always been there.

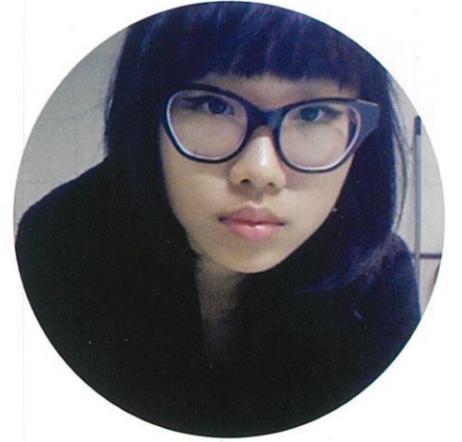
The switch from a student to the other side as a tutor/lecturer is...

Fascinating to get my head round. To be observing and analyzing/commenting on others' work and discussing feedback et cetera - part of it feels familiar, in that there's a kind of exchange. But it's so different to be having such exchanges from this point of view.

If I have to choose, the most memorable moment about (being in) LASALLE is...

I've so many memorable moments in LASALLE. But perhaps, it was the year after my visual studies foundation, standing in the McNally campus for the first time. I felt a sudden happiness to be back and an overwhelming fondness for LASALLE and 'LASALLE

people'. After taking a gap year to work and finally deciding to come back for degree studies, I guess I realized how much I'd missed being in art school.



Apr 5, 2012

DIN HUBBUB

A Restaurant of Sounds

by Rubin Hashim



The words din and hubbub both lead to definitions of a loud, confused noise and these were the two words specifically chosen and fused to author the title of the performance. The line-up of performers was a sure tease for those of us familiar with local happenings in sound and performance art. Amongst the collaborators, there was Bani Haykal who is simply brilliant at handling audible dynamics and is also known for his explorations into the development of the music culture in Singapore. There was also Angie Seah, a seasoned performer who has participated in performance art festivals across the globe in countries like Japan, Italy and Germany. The other performers comprised of Benedict Loong, Elizabeth Lim and Izzad Radzali, all of whom are graduating students from the Faculty of Fine Arts with a peaked interest in exploring the audible realm. This noisy lot was ultimately put together by Riduan Mohamad, a sculptor known for his works with sound sculptures and also as a member of OFFCUFF, a multi-disciplinary performance collective.

So there I was on performance night. Dim lights centered on the set, check. Members of the audience crowding around sporting expressions of disarray awaiting some sort of cultural enlightenment, check. Basket of Longans at the reception table to suggest minimal funding, check. It was perfect; every possible element of a sound art event was in attendance. I was reminded again that the emphasis of the exploration was in exhausting materials that were non-musical so I found myself scanning the set for anything of particular interest. I saw scraps of paper, sticks, chopped up wood, water cans, PVC pipes, glass bowls and even a skateboard that was hooked up to a mixer by some weird magic. These were but few of the things I saw being laid out around the performers.

It didn't take long for the crowd to settle and for the performers to ready themselves, sitting in a radial

When I was asked to write an article on Din Hubbub, I thought I was headed down to a new hangout for hungry hipsters craving a Mediterranean fix but my insatiable appetite was sadly let down. It was a performance project coordinated by Riduan Mohamad in an attempt at exploring improvisational sounds made with various materials with emphasis on non-musical objects.

pattern, backs facing each other. I got the feeling that the sitting arrangement was intentional, a way of telling the audience that this was no conventional symphony where everyone sat in a fan-like arrangement facing the conductor. No, these six performers were going to conduct themselves by listening to the progressions presented by one another. It was either that or I was possibly putting too much thought into reading trivialities.

Then it began, I was hearing a plethora of sounds like the heavy bellows of a glass bowl filled with water and the haunting screams of metal sheets echoing through the space like the ghost of a soprano opera singer. It was an interesting start, but I can't lie to myself to say it was exciting. I knew this wasn't a punk rock concert that was going to blast my ear drums to bits in the first five minutes but the performance took a slow start and I was growing a little restless but nonetheless, I decided to give it the time it deserved. But right about the time I could feel my consciousness detaching itself from the physical world, it started. The performance was beginning to change, there was more vigor in the exchange between performer and object and the collaborative dynamics were really beginning to take form. I was witnessing a furor of expression, almost like an avant-garde dance piece. Sheets of black plastic were being stretched around pillars, interrupting gazes from the audience. Scraps of paper were being waved around in rioting motions

like gestures of turmoil and uprising. Sticks and planks were being dragged and pushed across the floor with shamanistic rhythms. But as if the storm had brewed over, things went back to silence, slowly reintroducing the ambient start. The experience was intimidating yet enchanting somehow, like a roller-coaster ride. These rides that were taking me up and slamming me down were beginning to captivate the attention of my critique.

In an interview with the coordinator, Riduan Mohamad, I asked what this gathering of talents meant and how resolution for the collaboration was achieved. He said, "The show revolves around the notion of improvisation of sound together with the performer creating that moment. The act of exhausting the material's natural capabilities would make the performance". Reflecting back on the entire show with that quote in mind made me realise that experimentations with sound art can and is developing into larger content giving way to more intense research and understanding. It is no longer just about what is audible, it is now also about the performative act of producing and presenting those sounds. With all that said, I can honestly convince myself to be excited to see or perhaps even be involved in the future of sound and performance art in Singapore. And perhaps with some luck, the reception table would have more than just a basket of fruit.

Aug 12-25, 2011

A CARTOGRAPHIC DESIRE

Located at LASALLE College of the Arts, One McNally Street, Praxis Space, satellite coordinates 1.303012, 103.851753 or close there to

by Bradley Foisset



Many explorations in cartography consider not only how we see our world but how the makers of maps want us to see it. Maps bring order to chaos and provide us with safe passages into and out of the unknown.

Works of art can evoke the same responses as maps and, yield similar rewards. They can make similar demands to pause and consider and inhabit and seek. Maps hold infinite possibilities for artists. Some artists use the map to highlight the differences between individual experience and collective knowledge. Some artists are liberated to romanticize about the world and all of their desires. An artist can use the map to

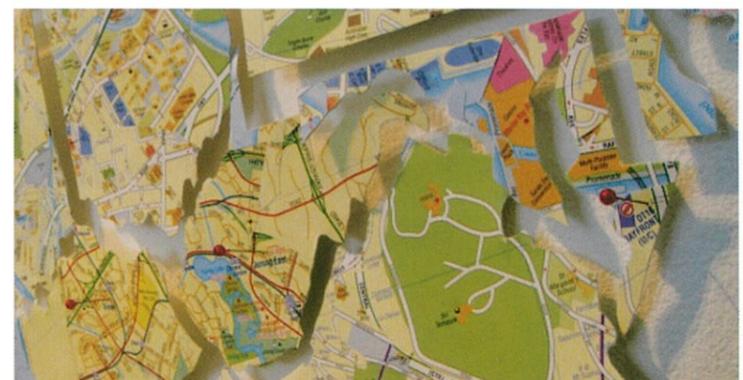
adapt similar technical cartographic uses to fit their concept. Politically imposed boundaries and notions of power, normally invisible concepts are made visible in maps.

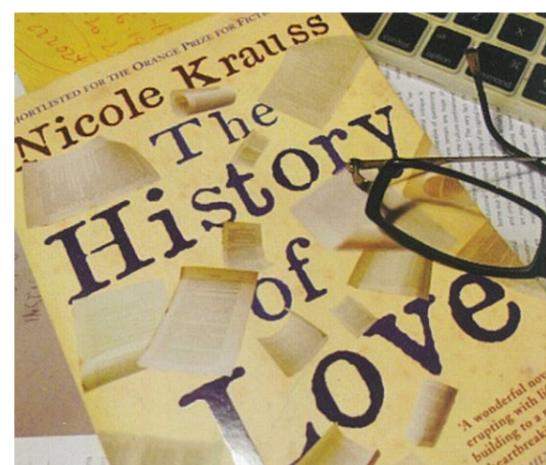
In "A CARTOGRAPHIC DESIRE", curated by Hazel Lim, LASALLE alumni and Level 2 and 3 Fine Art students come together in a discourse on maps. Their works examine the map as text, image and artifact, dissecting, burning, transposing, boxing, stitching, illuminating. And, mapping out memories, futuristic visions, myths, mental states, and spheres of influence. Their deliberations convey that maps do more than just belong in the world. The inherent strength and beauty of maps comfort us, evoking at times, a sense of belonging, place and time. As a stick makes a line through sand or, stones roll in grass, we can mark our place in the most primitive of ways. The satellite

now provides a god's eye view that holds equal artistic potential. Art and cartography have always intersected each other.

"A cartographic Desire" held in the Praxis Space exhibited how maps enhance our experience of belonging. The show crystallized for the viewer, how each artist locates him/herself individually and collectively in this world. I encourage you to look at the works and, afterwards, to make maps of your own lives and experiences. Together, we make order of chaos.

Participants: Zuraidah Zulkipie, Jessica Angeliq Gabrielli, Madina Bte Abdul Rashid, Bradley James Foisset, Karen Heng Shang Li Gonzales, Muhammad Imran Bin Mohd Tarjudin, Joshua Lui-Chan, Puspita Devi Hidayat, and Questal Tay.





Nicole Krauss'

THE HISTORY OF LOVE

A review by Dana Lam

"I knew that the way others had lost a leg or an arm, I'd lost whatever the thing is that makes people indelible." To make his point, he took a photograph of the cousin who had tried to take one of him "...as we watched the paper in the developing pan his face appeared. He laughed. And I laughed, too. It was I who'd taken the picture, and if it was proof of his existence, it was also proof of my own..." (82)

Not long after, he passed a drugstore with a photo booth. "From then on, every time I had spare money I'd go to the booth. In the beginning it was always the same. But I kept trying. Then one day I accidentally moved as the shutter clicked. A shadow appeared. The next time I saw the outline of my face, and a few weeks later my face itself. It was the opposite of disappearing." (82)

Photographs, at once the proof of existence and of loss, are a recurring motif in the book. In one chapter, the character Zvi Litvinoff, is described as having "the solemnity of an old photograph" by the girl whose devotion to him as his wife was "the only reason anyone knows anything of him at all." On Litvinoff's writing desk, "turned at an angle so that it faced the peeling wall" is a photograph of "a boy and a girl standing with their arms hanging stiffly by their sides, hands clasped, knees bare, stalled in place, while out the window, seen in the far corner of the frame, the afternoon was slowly getting away from them." (67) Elsewhere in the book stands another photograph of a boy and a girl in another silver frame at once a vindication and a denial. Loss as an inherent experience of displacement is a compelling and evocative force in Krauss' hand. Under its weight, her characters act out their need with breath taking imagination and variety.

Fifty-seven years after he gave up writing, Gursky is tapping out his life, line by line on a make of typewriter identical with one belonging to his famous writer son. He has spent much of his life watching this son who does not know he exists. The make of typewriter, he noticed in a photograph accompanying an interview

with the son in a newspaper that he cut and kept. "Once upon a time there was a boy" "who lived in a house across the field from a girl who no longer exists." "Once upon a time there was a boy" "who loved a girl," "and her laughter was a question he wanted to spend his whole life answering."

Unknown to Gursky, Alma Singer, the 14-year-old girl named after the heroine in the book he wrote in long hand half a century before is writing a three-volume notebook on How to Survive in the Wild at the same time she begins the search for the original Alma.

Krauss' story telling is an inventive, intricate weave and strings the reader along until the plot unravels in the last couple of chapters with the brilliance of the best who-dun-it tradition. For the writer and artist among her readers, the rewards are to be found in every turn of the page. Complex ideas, and references in art history and literary troves come together in a rich tapestry of philosophical excursions and social commentary without ever losing touch with humanity.

In The Age of String, chapter 14 of the book within the book is just one of my many favourites:

"There was a time when it wasn't uncommon to use a piece of string to guide words that otherwise might falter on the way to their destinations. Shy people carried a little bundle of string in their pockets, but people considered loudmouths had no less need for it ...The physical distance between two people using a string was often small; sometimes the smaller the distance, the greater the need for the string. The practice of attaching cups to the ends of the string came much later...When the world grew bigger, and there wasn't enough string to keep the things people wanted to say from disappearing into the vastness, the telephone was invented. Sometimes no length of string is long enough to say the thing that needs to be said. In such cases all the string can do, in whatever its form, is conduct a person's silence." (111)

Franz Kafka and Louis Borges are among literary luminaries who get a mention. So do Giacometti and Wittgenstein, the later in the quote: "When the eye sees something beautiful, the hand wants to draw it." At one point early in the narrative, Gursky's quest for verification takes him to an art class where he strips for a life-drawing session. We are told in subsequent pages of a repeat call, this time to sit naked on a stool in the middle of the room and, whenever he felt ready, to dip himself in paint and roll around on the floor. To which, our hero declined.

In the rapid unravelling of the plot in the last few pages, Gursky's original book, written in Yiddish, survives the vagaries of life to turn up in his mailbox nearly completely translated into English. In the intervening years, a Spanish copy was published in Chile and picked up by a young man who gave it to the woman he loved who was not yet able to read Spanish, who later named their daughter after every girl in the book.

Once upon a time there was a boy who loved a girl. When they were ten, he asked her to marry him. When she was sixteen, he gave her an English dictionary and together they learned the words - for her ankle, her elbow, her ear. When they were seventeen, they made love for the first time, on a bed of straw in a shed. Later - when things happened that they could never have imagined - she wrote him a letter that said: When will you learn that there isn't a word for everything? (11) Words for Everything, eventually, is what Gursky gives as the title to the book on his life, his last.

Every time I have returned to The History of Love, I have felt compelled to post passages everywhere - on friends' Facebook, in emails and post-its because there are words for everything.

Dana Lam is a writer who has trained in the visual arts, and lectures part time at LASALLE College of the Arts.

Oct 22, 2011

Envisioning Desire: MA FINE ARTS SYMPOSIUM



by Wong Hong Weng/Gina Jocson

In the opening address to the symposium which was held on 22 October 2011, Wolfgang Muench (Acting Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts) picked a quote to forewarn about the treachery of chasing after one's desire:

*What's desired can never be obtained.
Desire cannot be fulfilled.*

Yet it is exactly the premise of this symposium to go after that elusive pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, so to speak, the idealism to lay bare the processes by which artists and students alike "chart, map and translate something personal into a work" of art as surmised in the synopsis.

And showing the students the way are three acclaimed "next generation" artists - Michael Lee, Charles Lim and Wee Li Lin - who may have beaten their own tracks to the promised land of desire. Their areas of interest and the forms into which their ideas and desires are shaped are as varied as how these artists came to be out of experiences lived in our postmodern urban life.

Initially trained in communication studies with exposure to video production and model-making, Michael Lee's interest lies in "representations of the built environment, especially the contexts and implications of its lost elements." His observations are variedly transformed into "objects, diagrams, situations, curations and essays." The psyche of his works shifts between truth and absurdity, "history and fiction", "solemnity and humour". Unlike Lee, who traipses through past or imaginary architectural landscape of the Singapore city by making paper models, Charles Lim literally tramples through the rugged physical terrain of this island state. His works are often "visual travelogues" cutting across boundaries of land, water and sea. It is no doubt that this spirit of adventure comes from his early experience

in competitive sailing. When maneuvering in open waters, geopolitical boundaries and cultural differences among countries and people are but imaginary and vacuous markers. The meanings of Lim's work often transcend the physicality of their forms, each offering an experience but no absolution. While Lee and Lim have more or less freeplay with their imagination and desires, Wee Li Lin has to contend with structural and institutional constraints which come with her moving from producing independent short films to state-funded, commercially-released feature films. Prior to this move, she produced 10 short films when in her twenties. In her own words, these films deals with displaced, middle-class, English-speaking characters who were afraid of their own voices, and in the course of the films, searched for their voices by living vicariously either through some alter-egos or in a fantasy world which they had created for themselves.

What then can the students make of these three artists' variants of desires and the forms through which they are realized? The conundrum continues, as Dr Ian Woo, programme leader of the MA Fine Arts programme observed, in their quest for answers in their works. In Wee's feature films, there is a demand for absolution at the end of the story as often called for in a commercially-released film for the general public. For Lee, his architectural models are almost clinical and viewers are free to make up their minds about them. Lim's visual travelogues often lead an audience to a precipice and from there, leap off into a psychical abyss. The audience is made to fill in the void.



There is no 'right' to any of these artists' methods, only what they make of their artistry. Likewise, there is no one way for a student to find his or her voice in the art-making process.

The eight students who presented their work were v artist Donna Ong, Ng Yong Heng, Carolyn Law, Baktiar Zainol, Ayano Hattori, Nah Yong En, Madhura Nayak, and Moe Htet The. The cohort presented an overview of their works since their Bachelor of Arts days until October 2011, teasing out the symposium's theme of "Envisioning Desire" (with Lawrence Chin as the moderator). And while each artist elaborated on varying interpretations of desire, what emerged as a common thread among most of them was that the personal was the starting point for their artistic exploration and journey.

Indeed, the intimate backstory was the apparent fountainhead of creative ideas: emotional trauma and death; childhood setback; a lifelong illness; a fear of being stalked; a debilitating phobia; loneliness in a foreign country; family memories; dissatisfaction and unhappiness with life's direction. Even for a few that seemed to have philosophy, neuroscience, critical theory, and/or religious iconography as their motivation, their journey in their art practices still derived from the personal.

The private and personal manifested in the works in a multiplicity of ways. Figurative drawing and painting were employed to convey human emotions rather than just a narrative. Material and medium were also constantly manipulated and investigated in the search for answers. Paper, paint, textile, Chinese ink, PVC glue, photographs, found objects, teacups, old Chinese paintings, poetic texts, film images, pictures of the Virgin Mary, linseed oil, graphite, and even board games

were experimented with, over and over again. Video documentaries of performance art, animation with original music, as well as sculptural origami became another vehicle for personal expression. Inspiration came from diverse sources such as dreams, mass media images, adult networking websites, local food, ambient prattle, even divine chance and accident.

In describing their research and experimentation, they uttered phrases such as "cold approach," "work about work," "factory-line production," "making for the sake of making," and "limiting." The students recounted that when they re-aligned process and focus with the personal—making it more than just the material, form or concept—they started to enjoy making their work again. When even little details in the work, such as "cracks" in the mixed media, symbols in the painting, or archetypes in the installation related to the emotions and preoccupations—past or present—in their lives, the work became more intuitive, more meaningful, and visually pleasing to them.

In this sense, the single most important lesson imparted by this symposium was that an artist's work always possessed elements of the autobiographical and personal desires. The challenge was to overcome manipulation or experimentation "fatigue," as it were, which would come about when the intimacy was removed. Some of the students sought clarification and support from critical theories such as post-colonial theory and feminist theory; one even consulted the dictionary for guidance. But in the end, it was the personal that mattered to them, not the critical theoretical underpinnings.

The writers are final-semester students in the MA Asian Art Histories programme.

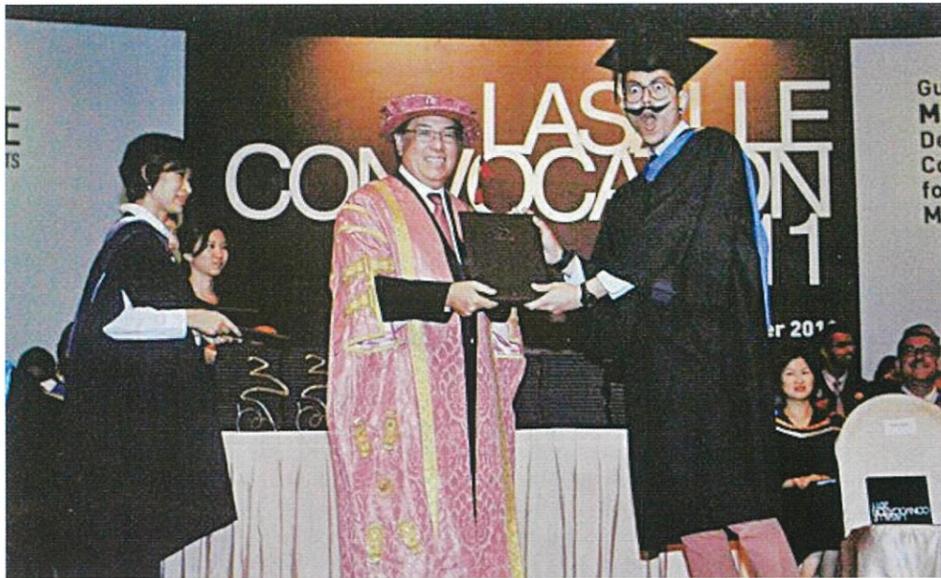
THOUGHTS ARE THINGS

21st September, 2011

by Adeline Kueh

The first line of *Earth, Wind and Fire's* 1978 song goes, "Do you remember the 21st night of September?"

21st September is a good date. I shall try to trace some magical moments on this day over the 21 years of my life. Perhaps the universe does conspire to bring things together in the name of Love or something close to that.



Thoughts are things. Really. The lyrics of some songs I like (September in this case) may have made me materialise things in an indirect, unconscious way.

21 years ago on 21st September, my best friend at the time and I thought we would try being in a relationship. There were many things to consider, including how to overcome the racism I never knew was in my parents. Because of that decision, along the way, I came to Singapore with Tim, my Singaporean partner. Having had inspiring lecturers, we had fire in our bellies and we wanted to teach.

Fast forward to 2011.

Some weeks ago, I saw the strangely assembled yet raw ping pong table in the basement outside of our Fine Arts studio.

And soon enough, the basement became even more alive, at least with the rhythmic sound of the ball in a rally here and there. I thought, "Wow, cool". After a critique session, I tried my hand at it too and found the table 6 inches too short on each side of the net. At an opening that evening, I boldly asked President Alastair Pearce (who was the proverbial flaneur in the studios) if he or the management would consider sponsoring a table. Shouldn't cost more than \$400, I said to him. We could only try, no? I thought of Francis Alys' *When Faith Moves Mountains* piece. Why not? So we planted a seed and I started asking for quotes by posting on our Facebook group. Boy, was the thread popular! More than some discussions about artists, theories, I was told. In any case, because of the excitement around this table, I was prepared to sponsor a table somehow. Another backup plan was hatched by Filip for a donation drive for it.



"Just remember, the same as a spectacular Vogue magazine, remember that no matter how close you follow the jumps: Continued on page whatever. No matter how careful you are, there's going to be the sense you missed something, the collapsed feeling under your skin that you didn't experience it all. There's that fallen heart feeling that you rushed right through the moments where you should've been paying attention. Well, get used to that feeling. That's how your whole life will feel some day. This is all practice. None of this matters. We're just warming up."

— Chuck Palahniuk

And we got busy with Tropical Lab and shelved the ping pong table idea for a while.

Also, 1 1/2 weeks prior to September 21st, I met Bridget, who suggested going to convocation "with a bang", among the graduating BA FA (Hons) group. She thought of donning moustaches seeing that our Emeritus Dean was famously known for his facial hair (and for his paintings). I thought, "a la Duchamp's *LHOOQ!*" and said it would be a nice homage and I would persuade the staff with this to surprise Milenko too. I offered to customise them, and sent some accompanying images of possibilities: Einstein, Nietzsche and Dali, of course. There were also 'Businessman, Porn Star', 'Gringo'... the list was amazingly incredible with the permutations. There was even a poster of "criminal types" as per Scotland Yard in the 30s or so.

Then 21st September 2011 came along. At the convocation ceremony, there were clandestine meetings with the staff and the BA students to select their favourite 'staches. Scissors, masking tape and extra felt were exchanged. Half an hour before the start of the ceremony, I told only one person from management (the President) but swore him to secrecy. When it was their turn for the stage, almost the entire group of 16 or so students had their moustaches - big and small, each unique and perversely beautiful and strange - on their young faces. On cue, the 6 FA staff who made it to the

convo pasted theirs on too. Milenko was shocked to see the moustache parade but went on trying to focus on not fumbling the names, he said. We had also asked the emcee to tap Milenko's shoulder at the end so he would turn around to see the staff. He was totally shocked and he "almost cried". What a riot. A quiet conceptual revolution and a moment of solidarity. Duchamp would have been proud.

And on the same day, the table arrived. There were cheers and disbelief when it was delivered, I was informed. Who knew!

21st September is magical? On this day, 21 years ago, love prevailed and somehow brought us back here. On this day in 2011, the students will remember it as the day they graduated, and sprouted their moustache to go into the real world. On this day, the ping pong table showed us in the basement that faith can indeed move mountains. Thoughts are things. More so that as artists, we can make our thoughts and dreams come alive when we believe in our actions and our processes. We are just warming up, as my earlier congratulatory post to all the graduating students echoed Palahniuk's quote. Be bold. Take a chance. We try and who knows?

Enough said. Milo and bed again before I go to school to kiss the table and give someone in management a hug!

Apr 12 - May 11, 2012

SEE NO EVIL



Here's a preamble from a conversation between Ian Woo and Jeremy Sharma in conjunction with his new paintings and mixed media works in *Apropos*, an exhibition at the ICA Gallery 1.

Ian Woo: The word 'exercises' bring to mind looking at your new paintings and mixed media surfaces made within the last two years. I use the word 'exercises' based on the serial nature of your works, where a beginning of an exploration with perception and surface is repeated and varied in a spontaneous manner, making several attempts at engaging with similarities and differences. I will start off with two questions. How do you start and what variations do you work towards when making a series of works? What leads you to end a series and start another?

Jeremy Sharma: I always start off with an idea, an ideal in my head, but the idea always shifts with the reality of making a painting. One process informs the other. For example the spectrum paintings started off from a color swatch on my computer which I attempted to recreate, not represent, but re-create in paint, with the analogy of paint; pixels are pixels, paint is paint. But I could never quite get what I really wanted, you never get what you want, close, and then something interesting happens, and that chance or accident informs much more in the reality of making a painting. Similarly that led to the greys, because the colours were getting too messed up and muddy, so I pushed it the other way, similar processes pushed to different extremes. A lot happens out of what I couldn't get originally. The wax-cast magazines came out of my fascination with the nude or figure, I just cannot paint one anymore - not that I can't - I can do it quite easily but I'm not interested in that, I'm not interested in 'see apple, paint apple'. I'm not interested in a blank canvas. I want to work off something that already exists in the world. I think a lot about the dialogue in creating a painting. The postcards were done with the remainder paint of the 'gaussians', hence the title 'parergon' because they exist outside what I set out to achieve, but ironically that became just as important. The 'gaussians' were really about extracting colour and data to create some sort of atmosphere through this mechanical striations, sort of like a 21st century Turner but more mathematical I guess. It didn't matter where they came from, the paintings became their own, but their titles are sort of entry points, traces if you will. I am opposed to the masterpiece, the heroic. I don't think of style in creating a work, I like concepts and philosophical ideas that deal with perception more. You know the filmmaker Robert Bresson, who made his actors repeat multiple takes of what they were doing until their performance is stripped to a purer language of cinema - that's how I see my paintings going, in terms of serialism, so the first painting starts off very enthusiastic and such, but repeating that in the 8th or 14th painting, something happens beyond me, that immediacy, and you only select what is best. It's frustrating, not to mention very expensive, but I am obsessive like that, it may look easy

but it was never so. And I think in terms of variations and not improvisations, so it's more classical in that sense, like in music, variations of a theme, or chord but the structure remains the same.

IW: You use the word purer language as well as the mechanical in relation to painting. So your example of Bresson pushing the actors to an extreme in rehearsals is to lose their sense of control, so as to unlearn and discover another sphere of consciousness, the indeterminate. It reminds me of John Cage's idea of indeterminacy where he is obsessed with ways to remove any form of the lyrical or beauty associated with body expression so as to reach another paradigm. It is interesting to note that much of your new paintings have little or no trace of the brush as a traditional hand rendering device. The brush marks if apparent always assumes a single sweep appearing from one edge of the surface to another. There is of course the brushless grey painting where they remind me of windows and blocked light filters. Is this reading of pure painting to highlight the phenomena of physical world?

JS: I would tread on careful ground to say purer (only in relation to Bresson) because the paradox and contradictions will loom over the paintings like a dark cloud, because it was never about purity if you know what I mean. The indeterminate and a different sphere of consciousness seem like apt descriptions because people will talk about surface, materiality and process but they are not ends in themselves for me. The indeterminacy is controlled and not given to entropy; I am not interested in losing control or the paint cracking up or spilling or sagging over or out of the frame or painting becomes more than painting. I like how the four sides govern the painting because I still see painting in terms of pictures, images. Only the postcards have a strong trace of the hand, or rather a knife, someone mentioned attack and that's it, I attacked the postcards there and then. The grey paintings, and the gaussians, especially the greys, because of the disappearance of the hand - you could even look at them through a photographic code hence them referencing (and these are comments I've gotten): x-rays, celluloid, film, the point just before a polaroid assumes an image (my favourite!), windows, mirrors and now blocked light filters. With the greys, it's even harder, you don't quite know what you are looking at. There are phenomena here, especially in terms of light, matter and gravity.

IW: Let's move to the postcards, which to me assumes double readings of identities. One notices the historic image or in some instances, a found image. The way it is treated with paint on top makes the content of the image unimportant, subjected as a background, a backdrop to a matching coloured secretion of the

image, viewed like a suspended morphing captured in time. I also feel as if the identity of the postcard has been merged with substance of paint as a whole. Perhaps a mutation of elements, a game of parody, to cover up, yet the paint seems to pull the contents into itself (the paint). Confusing one's recognition of space, content and matter. I use the word negation before, but now I am thinking more of a possession of image. Is the match of paint to the surface colour of the contents in the card an instinctive process? What is the relation formed by?

JS: Double readings, failure of representation et cetera. I have to find something to the image to respond to, they all exist in the history of images, the vocabulary of portraits and landscapes like a history of representations that I work on. And also the idea of working on reproductions. When I was applying the paint or swiping them off, I wasn't really thinking of negation or iconoclasm or revealing or concealing. It's not peek-a-boo. Charles (Merewether) used a word dis/close which comes close. But dis/closure applies more to a reading of the work when its finished. I think its closer to something more primal, a smearing impulsion, why and how we mark surfaces or images. Colour and sensuality could heighten the desired effect. They weren't meant to be serious at first, something done in jest. They are in a way photo-based paintings and again they concern the image. I remember first seeing the overpainted photographs of Richter and thinking they were so wrong, painting on top of a photograph, almost like it's taboo or it's cheating. But I look at this whole uneasy relationship between painting and photography: painting imitating photography, photography imitating painting. I think we had enough of that already. I am very comfortable now with them being themselves and working together, they don't even have to comply and merge as one. They are both indexical to how they achieve a final identity. Painting is always seen as a laboured process whereas the photograph is instant, can I say I am reaching a median point here?

IW: You brought out an interesting perspective of how one can understand an artist's intentions before and after the completion of a work. In relation to your casualness implied with the application of paint on photo, there is almost desperation to block up the image with the act of painting, like an impulse to remove/shift its identity, to disengage its function in this world. I guess I would see that as a personal engagement, perhaps not necessarily related to the final outcome. I am not sure. I also find that your work does not deal with notions of representations but rather a return to formal ideas about absolutism in art making. I would consider that you are making images that have gone through several stages of filters. Complex filters that you hope can restore purity. Perhaps Donald Judd will be proud! But really, it is about painting in order to restore the essence of a picture object subjugating content to a point of flatness, in order that we return to the beginnings of the frame and surface image. You physically flatten all reference to representation to its purest form - that of surface, materiality and distortion, like the variations series of blues and yellows. In those works, I find that you give me the essence of landscape and weather by totally removing all content and imagery to a point of a blur, same with the nudes and seascapes. The blurring creates new content. If I were to use a reference to music it is like the use of distortion transforming the sound production of a clean signal of a guitar to that of a completely different presence. In reference to Richter's use of blurring, how would you see your use of this act as different? This especially interesting when we relook at the ideals of early minimalism and even abstract expressionism. Are you wiping our every day consumption of images so as to enable us to return to or revisit those ideas of utopian endgames?

JS: I understand what you are saying and what you are getting at. How do I put it? In a way it's not so much abstraction but what you are unable to represent by blocking, blurring and erasing. It is about form as it is the content, sort of ideological that way, indistinguishable. Like I said, it's not about purity or

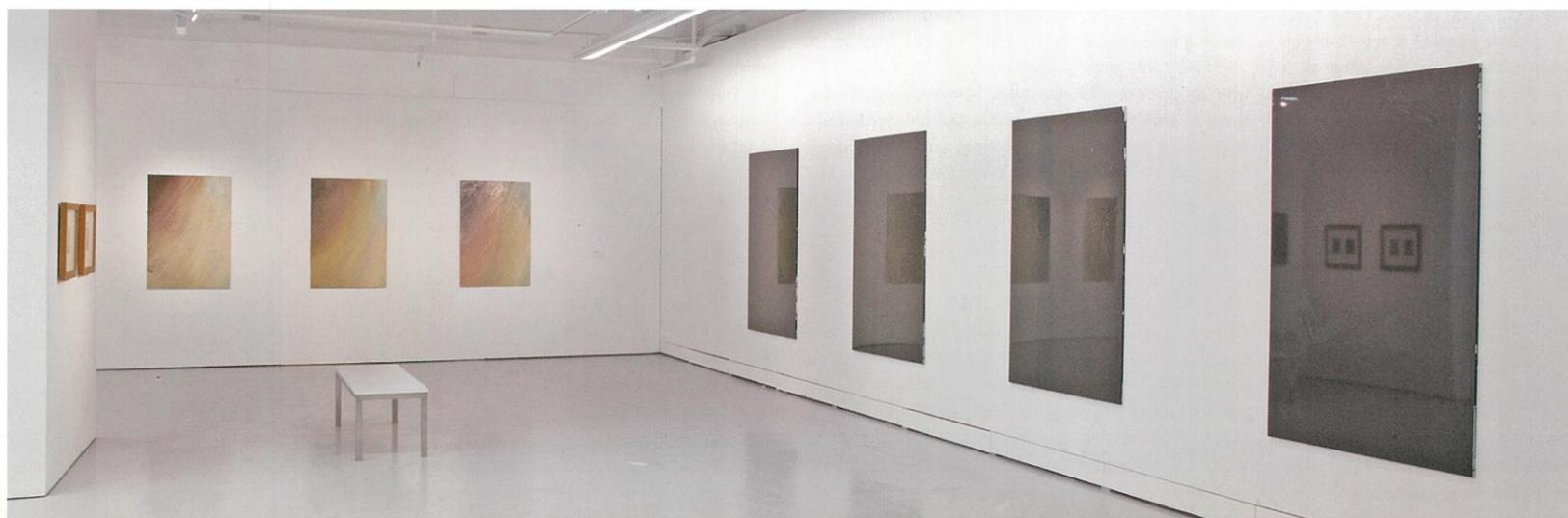
absolutism, I may have thought of that or given the impression of that before, or maybe you and I see them differently. And it's not as cold, perfect and industrial as in Donald Judd's brand of minimalism. I like the human endeavour and indeterminacy of creating the paintings, they are certainly imperfect and relational to time and environment and medium, so it's not quite absolute, almost - I like 'almost'. So we return to Cage again, it's funny because I don't listen to a lot of Cage, but he is a good example, and the analogy of the guitar signal is interesting and you're right there, if anything it's more sound than music, more signal than noise. The blurring is a strategy to achieve a desired state of flatness, you could call it a utopian endgame if you want. I know



Richter works on a canvas until he cannot go on, and I cannot compare with someone who has painted for almost 50 years, but the fundamental difference is I do not stay as long in the painting, I end the game a lot quicker, it cannot be overdone or too worked upon, it's a lot more mechanical than you think. People think there are so many layers in the 'gaussians' but in actual fact there is one, but the repetition of the gesture is key to the work. Signals, filters, transformation and repetition all point to contemporaneous experience. The works acknowledge computers and digitalisation, multiplicity, fragmentation and technology because I cannot see how they would exist without these experiences.

IW: I was thinking about Judd and Twombly, how both cannot agree and are from different poles of aesthetic concerns. Yet, your work somehow reminds me of the characteristics that these two artists possess, the weight bearing more on Twombly's romance towards innocence. You mentioned 'almost', which brings to mind the example of an axis, where ideas between two opposites shifts and adjust themselves. Do you think that contemporary painting needs to find new experiences from reconnecting the network of genres within history painting? To reconnect would be to unplug some links or reestablish new connections. Your concerns for digital and technological aesthetics seems to also point to a way in which combinations of contemporary design and phenomena have found their way into the composite of new painting. However, is the composite mutant? Or is the engineered whole seamless? I guess this is an open question, which attempts to address our constant search for new imagery as painters involved in contemporary art practice.

JS: That's a good way to put it, Ian. Especially with Twombly, his work exists out of technology, right to the beginnings, like a certain kind of antiquity or even earlier to cave paintings. Innocence! Like a child learning to speak, write or draw again, utterances or so to speak. Opposites and shifts, ambivalence... I link it to a certain kind of doubt when you paint, that unknown that you dive into or letting a kind of phenomena take over, 'almost' connotes an in-between, like a precipice, or a kind of be-coming or other-ness. I am thinking how painting should be more relevant in contemporary practice, or at least how it is relevant for me to continue to paint. Aren't we all already some form of mutant, cyborg or really slow computers? Yet I think what I'm doing links to something more primal. If you knew, you wouldn't paint - you can only try.



MEET THE BOSS: PROFESSOR STEVE DIXON

Professor Steve Dixon joined us as the sixth president of the college on Feb 1, 2012. As an internationally renowned researcher in the use of media and computer technologies in the performing arts (complete with his groundbreaking book *Digital Performance* published by MIT Press in 2007), Steve has also contributed to leading journals on subjects including theatre studies, film theory, digital arts, robotics, Artificial Intelligence and pedagogy. In this interview, he tells us a little about his past, his vision and his hopes.

Adeline Kueh: Hi Steve. Your background in research clearly indicates your hybrid position as a practitioner - someone with multiple hats, multiple roles. Could you tell us about how you got into research and your plans for enhancing research culture at the College?

Steve Dixon: Well, I came out of a practice background working in various media: acting in theatre and film, then as a filmmaker and theatre director, and then in multimedia and interactive productions. When I got into education, I got the research bug. I suddenly became really interested in what is now termed in Europe 'practice-as-research', practice-based work that relates to research ideas and theories and I started to read more theory. Then I started to engage with publishing about my practice by putting the two things together. So I began to see research as absolutely inspirational and life changing. I think most people that get into it would feel the same. In both universities before LASALLE (Salford and Brunel universities respectively), I was instrumental in developing research in my area within the arts, and also working with others to support and expand the research going on in both of those universities. With this encouragement, what we found was people suddenly just throwing themselves into new ideas, creativity and practice. Research is sometimes seen as 'boring, the dry, dusty, difficult work' when actually it's incredibly creative and energising. So the first thing to say is that research is something that I think people already involved with here at LASALLE will embrace more and more.

In my own research, I have been interested in crossing media and the various boundaries. I was always interested in the early 20th century avant-garde, particularly the Surrealists and the Dadaists, in terms of them crossing disciplinary boundaries but also crossing boundaries of what constitutes art, and art's relationship to life. Also, ideas around Freud's 'uncanny', and the conjunction of contrary ideas, such as darkness and light - for example in the work of Duchamp - or the way the Surrealists merged comedy and humour with a wonderfully dark engagement with sexuality, madness and the subconscious. Within my practice-as-research works, I started to work in multimedia theatre combining giant-

screen film and digital projections with live actors; so working from the real to the completely unreal, making film part of a dual narrative. I'm very interested in the surrealism of Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) and his ideas of the theatre existing as a 'double' to real life - so my actors have a 'double' presence, simultaneously acting on both stage and screen - and also his concept of a theatre of cruelty. This notion isn't a simplistic one about shock or pain, but more about the actors going further into their own subconscious and animalistic sides whilst retaining ideas of irony and humour. My theatre particularly highlights the comedy of human existence, with lots of parody and insults (another favorite theme of the surrealists) amidst some quite disturbing and physical explorations of what underlies people's identities and motivations. This leads to what I hope is a quite rich and visceral type of performance work. I like playing with the liminal space and the threshold between what is screened and what is performed live, and what is (apparently) artificial and what is 'true'. I'm also experimenting with the space between 'high' and 'low' art.

AK: Could you elaborate on some of the structures that you're hoping to implement to enable more research from interested staff and how that would benefit students and alumni?

SD: I have to say what we're *hoping* to do because we need to ensure that certain things are agreed across the College and that the necessary funding is put into place first. We're really looking at different measures to encourage and stimulate the research culture and to enable staff here to have more time and support to do their research. It can't be done just in the evenings and weekends, so we need to be able to give more time to staff. So we're going to try to balance workloads for colleagues who are engaged actively in PhD studies and research projects with specific outcomes, and we'll try to give them at least a day a week clear of teaching. Also, we'll bring in a research leave scheme so that colleagues can apply for a semester, or even an entire year completely free of teaching - a sabbatical where they can work intensively on a project while still being paid a salary. We also want to have a very strong support and mentoring system so that when people are thinking about research projects, we're able to support them throughout the process. I am having discussions with Goldsmiths about them helping with this process and that is all looking very positive. We also have some excellent staff already here who can help to mentor, support, guide and encourage colleagues who are in the early stages of developing their research ideas and projects. I've said earlier how exciting research is, but I think many people may also find research to be a bit lonely at times, and challenging - though in a good way - so I think we all need mentors to help guide us through difficult times or over blocks and obstacles.

by Adeline Kueh



We're also developing a series of Research Development Workshops, ideas forums and brainstorm sessions. I think those sort of events are really interesting to do, and help raise curiosity and engagement with research, and to get people excited and energised. Such events also help foster research collaborations, where people with different perspectives start to look at the same issue and work on it together, combining their different viewpoints, creative energies and expertise.

AK: ... in the spirit of experimentation, via collaboration?

SD: Yes, absolutely, collaborative experimentation is important and is a constant in the history of arts and art movements - think of the early 20th century avant-garde, from surrealism to Bauhaus, through to the spirit of the 1960s that spawned revolutionary ideas from Fluxus and happenings through to pop art and video performance. Art has remained exciting ever since, but since the 1980s it has perhaps been conceived from a more detached or knowing standpoint in light and influence of so-called 'postmodern' culture and ideas. Some of the more idealistic or 'innocent' instincts in art have become more cynical and self-conscious, but equally they may have become more acutely honed and arresting. At the same time, concepts and ideas that became undermined at the height of postmodern debates in the 1990s - authorship, history, narratives, meaning, truth - are beginning to re-emerge as important issues for the artist to engage with, or at least think about and reinterpret, again. I'm starting to think and write about ideas of 'authenticity' at the moment, a concept that's been ridiculed in the past but that I feel has now actually become increasingly important to art, life and culture. That said, our understanding of what is authentic has certainly changed irreparably since the onset of digital culture and globalisation. But authentic action and artistic expression remains important to moving forward and creating radical new art works and forms. I see that sense of a seriously committed and radical intention emerging strongly right now, not least in the work of staff here in LASALLE, and it's important in keeping alive a sense of the pioneering spirit of avant-garde experimentation which helps to continually advance and reinvigorate creative practices.

And what's important about the power of collaboration in all of this is its empowering agency, whereby people from different backgrounds and levels of experience teach and invigorate one another through dynamic dialogues. Sometimes there may be disagreements and clashes, but those tensions and arguments can actually be very creative and productive, of course.

AK: A number of staff and students, pitched ideas about artist run centres or co-ops as a way of sustaining themselves as practitioners. As the president of the college, would you say that there are avenues to enable this here?

SD: The simple answer is yes, we are encouraging this and providing a lot of proactive support and even some space, albeit limited. But it's absolutely part of the strategy of institution to encourage, promote and support our staff and our alumni. It's also very much part of my personal and professional ethos. We need to ensure that the college is not just about educating the students and then waving goodbye. We need to continue to work with them and encourage the creation of co-ops, micro companies, and Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs). Such activity is absolutely part and parcel of developing a career within the creative industries, and the visual arts. If we look at the creative industries in any country, the majority are micro companies and SMEs, and it's often one of the most vibrant areas in the economic system of a country, for example it's one of the only areas of economic growth right now in the UK.

AK: What advice would you like to give to the younger, emerging artists?

SD: Persevere, never give up. Work very, very hard. Don't expect people to suddenly discover you. Apply yourself and always keep being reflexive. Don't be too hard on yourself, but equally keep looking at yourself and asking: is that good enough? Can I do better? Try and keep positive, and don't be too critical that you're never happy with anything. Remember that the best artists are never completely satisfied with their work, but equally there's a point where they're happy enough to say 'yes, that is complete'. Trust your instinct and don't be afraid (within reason of course - don't kill yourself or end up in jail!). Don't be afraid of what your instincts tell you, and go with them. If you're working with instinct and perseverance, and then having that criticality to look back (and hopefully I think that's what LASALLE is about and equips students with) then be confident and determined and you *will* succeed.

AK: And if you could live your life over, where would you be?

SD: I'd be with the Dadaists and Surrealists in Paris in the 1920s, in an era of artistic revolution, ready-mades, automatic arts, vertiginous films and psychotic visuals; and with inspiring artistic heroes including Andre Breton, Marcel Duchamp and Antonin Artaud.

AK: Thank you very much, Steve. We look forward to seeing the transformations to come.



Sep 23 - Oct 30, 2011

I SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT A STOOL (Ian Woo: A Review 1995-2011)

by Bridget Tay



Have you ever felt that the one thing that you needed to bring to an exhibition was a stool?

That was exactly how I felt when I went for the much-awaited Ian Woo: A Review 1995- 2011 show.

As a self-declared devoted fan-girl of Ian's, I knew that a day of viewing my favorite painter/ mentor's review would not give his works the due justice. After all, it would be insulting to the artist himself, if his carefully curated works by Dr. Charles Merewether were not given the outmost attention and time.

I planned several trips to the gallery and reminded myself to borrow a stool somewhere, so I could immerse myself in the vibrant explosion that was Woo's world and be comfortable while at it.

Alas, I made several trips (not as many as I would have liked) but forgot the stool.

My foray into Woo's world though exciting, consisted of me standing awkwardly in front of the 46 works displayed, comprised of paintings and drawings on view

at the ICAS gallery chronicling Ian's 16-year journey into the realm of abstraction. This is to be an adventure made up of a cacophony of colours and shapes that Professor Pearce have so aptly described as "Woo's World" in his opening remarks.

In Woo's world, I found myself being presented with singular entities brought together by connecting and contrasting elements. Ian's paintings establish a united front that presents itself as an infinite plane where time moves in fashionable of disarray, weaving narratives separate from a linear function, with notions of the ephemeral appearing in sneaky glimpses and hummed/ mumbled notes.

Of the many works shown, the painting Lake Fluorescent Cake Surprise possess a sense of premonition that is very pronounced - it gives off a sense of continuity that presents itself as a body of marks, squiggles and strokes that look accidental yet purposeful in its approach of morphing into a form that seems familiar yet alien.

It is apt to describe Ian's works as a kind of dichotomy that can be seen as pure yet basking in the impurity of forms. His works appears as an amorphous entity residing in a plane of existential landscape of forms. A physical depiction left behind by the residue of the act of painting. The subtle fluctuation of suspension that inhabits Ian's works creates tension that is inert, unbounded by gravity which makes his forms orbit in reverberating movements.

Although it is evident that process dominates his works, the strokes of color and conveyed forms hover between observations of the representational, and retrocedes into abstraction. The duality of Ian's works could be described as painting's reflection in a mirror: open both to the notions of contemplation and suggestion. It speaks of shadows of objects that are unseen, the worlds colliding and merging. A poetic reverie in a universal scale that is dependent of one's view.

As I forcibly wrenched myself from the portal that is Woo's world, I realized that much time has passed. My stomach growled to remind me it was time to leave and my feet sore from standing. As I headed for the exit, the inner voice in me promised another trip and told me, "You should have brought a stool".

