



EMER GALING

Collecting
Singapore
Contemporary

Selections
from the DUO
Collection



The Private Museum is a non-profit private museum in Singapore founded by Singaporean philanthropist, art collector and real estate developer, Daniel Teo, together with his daughter Rachel Teo in 2010.

Fuelled by passionate patronage for the arts, the museum aims to establish an alternative platform to bridge different communities, private and public. It supports the exchange of ideas across cultures, educational initiatives, artistic and curatorial collaborations with practitioners of the arts as well as art collectors.

With a vision to promote art appreciation, the independent arts space engages local, regional and international audiences from all walks of life. The Private Museum is a registered Charity and Institution of a Public Character (IPC) since 2010 and 2015 respectively.

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11.01 TO 01.03 2020

PREFACE

In conjunction with Singapore Art Week 2020, we are pleased to present *Emerging: Collecting Singapore Contemporary – Selections from the DUO Collection*. As part of TPM's 10th anniversary celebrations, the museum revisits its foundation of bridging the private and the public; this exhibition is the first in a series of five featuring an array of private collections in Singapore.

As we enter into the 10th year mark since our establishment in 2010, we continue to strive towards presenting new exhibitions such as *Emerging*, in order to foster artistic curiosity in wider communities as well as to engage new ideas and dialogues through art.

The exhibition is the inaugural showcase of the DUO collection featuring 20 selected works from 16 Singapore-based artists collected in the past five years. These works reflect some of Singapore's emerging urgencies in recent years by responding to themes of identity, migration,

urbanisation, the environment, places and spaces. Through the lens of private collectors, we seek not only to stimulate new conversations on art but also to expand on their role in the art eco-system as imperative patrons of the arts.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Guest-of-Honour, Low Eng Teong, our supporting partners, the museum's patrons and staff, in making this exhibition a success and for celebrating this joyous occasion with us as we journey into yet another exciting year ahead.

Last but not least, our heartfelt gratitude to the DUO for sharing their collection with us, without which this exhibition would not have been possible.

Daniel & Rachel TEO
Founding Directors
The Private Museum, Singapore

FOREWORD

Singapore's arts and culture scene is more dynamic today than ever. On an average day, we have a choice of about 100 arts and cultural activities in Singapore. This is possible with the collective effort of the arts community and art patrons and supporters, who play a major role in building Singapore towards being a distinctive global city for the arts.

The Private Museum (TPM) Singapore is an example of an institution that takes on an important intermediary role for the broader art ecosystem. Guided by its vision to promote art appreciation, it provides a platform where the public is given access into the private realms of art collectors, offering a unique perspective into how visual arts is supported and appreciated. The contributions of private institutions such as TPM also make it possible for present and future generations to continue to be inspired by artworks in private collections.

This year, as part of Singapore Art Week 2020, TPM is featuring the exhibition 'Emerging: Collecting Singapore Contemporary – Selections from the DUO Collection'. This exhibition is part of The Private Museum's 10th anniversary celebrations that showcases selected works from the DUO, a pair of anonymous collectors who shifted the focus of their collection

towards Singaporean and Southeast Asian artists five years ago to support emerging practitioners. It is encouraging to note that the works of Singapore's emerging local artists, such as Young Artist Award recipients Kray Chen (2017) and Genevieve Chua (2012), are now in the collection of private collectors such as the DUO.

'Emerging: Collecting Singapore Contemporary' also marks the start of the series of TPM's 10th anniversary collector exhibitions in 2020, giving audiences an insight into the exclusive world of private collections. It will also give visitors an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the contemporary themes that are of interest to our emerging artists.

I look forward to TPM's continued efforts and support in building a vibrant arts sector for Singapore. On that note, my heartfelt congratulations to Mr Daniel Teo and Ms Rachel Teo, founders of The Private Museum and their dedicated staff on this 10th year anniversary milestone!

LOW Eng Teong
Deputy Chief Executive
Sector Development
National Arts Council, Singapore

COLLECTOR STATEMENT

The driving inspiration behind our collection stems from the belief in which art is a necessary dimension in the human experience—impacting society at large as well as affecting our everyday life.

Collecting art is more than the act of gathering beautiful things. It is to actively engage, respond and discover new ways of thinking and experiencing the ever-changing world we live in.

The exhibition, 'Emerging: Collecting Singapore Contemporary' reveals our contemplations and perceptions told through the exhibited artworks of contemporary artistic practices in Singapore.

The purpose of sharing our collection is to invite and encourage people from all walks of life to

appreciate and support the arts, not merely as consumers, but as active patrons of the arts.

The pleasure is ours in being part of The Private Museum's 10th anniversary celebrations and we would like to say a big thank you to everyone involved in the making of this exhibition.

Last but not least, our heartfelt congratulations to the founders, Mr Daniel Teo and Ms Rachel Teo, and the team at the museum on their important work in the past decade!

DUO Collection, Singapore

EMERGENT CONNECTIONS IN AN INTERLOCKED/ING ART ECOSYSTEM

By Andrea FAM

EMERGING: COLLECTING SINGAPORE CONTEMPORARY

What does it mean to consider something to be emerging? A quick Google search of the word led me down a rabbit hole of emerging markets and economic trends which while confounding and confusing with its oft-technical, sometimes highfalutin terms,² undoubtedly in turn affects the emerging, emergent and emerged of culture and politics.³ But if we were to try to isolate this enquiry and to consider the emerging in the arts, what could we mean? There are many things that emerge: trends and topics, artists and spaces for example. In the selection of works for the exhibition, ‘Emerging: Collecting

Singapore Contemporary – Selections from the DUO Collection’, we bear witness to all of these; there is a sliding scale of emerging artists (for who you speak with will very much determine where along the scale they locate an artist), whose works were acquired from a variety of emerging, emerged, or now closed galleries, and a list of developing themes in the forms of personal and collective history, global observations and concerns, and imagined narratives.

And what does *collecting Singapore contemporary* mean? Though not analogous to *collecting contemporary in Singapore*, the exhibition does attempt to dually speak to both the creation of works by Singaporean artists and the locale of Singapore as a site of artistic production and reception.

¹ Whilst the art ecosystem is not limited by geography, for the purposes of keeping this essay compact, the examples used within are based on the context of Singapore and its art scene.
² I recognise this seems rich coming from someone entrenched in an industry/vocation that seems crippled by a need to communicate in five-syllable words.

Taken as a whole, the exhibition title, conceptualised by The Private Museum (TPM) Singapore, tells of DUO Collection’s vision to support artists, collectives and spaces in and of Singapore. It does this through recognising the agency it has as a private collection that can create its history as told through contemporary art.

SELECTIONS FROM THE DUO COLLECTION

The works displayed seem disparate, contrasting in material and form. That their producers are a vast group of 16 individual artists could mislead one to think that the conceptual underpinnings of the works diverge but that would be missing a quality found in nearly all the offerings in the show. Disguised in muted hard lines, playful assemblages or topographical mappings enfolds the notion of escape - literal or metaphorical - through concealment and encoded camouflage, and speaks to a universal view of the world and globalised reflection of the self.

The study of urban architecture as proponents for alternative readings of our built surrounds is detectable in the diptych painting, *Between Neither This Nor That* by Kayleigh Goh and sculptures, *Only You Know* and *The Dark Space In Between* by Faris Nakamura. Quiet and controlled lines formed by paint on wood create tight corners and angles in both sets of works. These help to construct spaces that reflect on notions of the singular and solitary by attempting to examine the contiguous quality of incidental spaces. This consideration of openness, in-between-ness, emptiness or voids, can be seen as allegorical to the psychological experiences faced by so many

in this and no doubt the coming decades’ mentally saturated lives.

Conceptually linked to the presence of absence in Goh’s and Nakamura’s works is Kray Chen’s two-channel video, *Not Sure What to Eat for Dinner*. In it the artist is seen roaming endlessly along supermarket aisles, stopping to survey the seemingly limitless options displayed neatly on shelves or else is at times caught in grocery ‘crossroads’, uncertain which way to turn. The work, edited in such a way that the artist and the ‘supermarket’ seem to float in whiteness, speaks about the inundation of the offerings presented in this technologically cacophonous decade. Yet while suggesting the omnipresence of technology and the abundant choices it has to offer, this work could hint at the curiosities or anxieties of the options (or lack thereof) available.⁴

The theme of ‘trappings’ follow in Joshua Kane Gomes’ sculpture, *Gap Space*. Inspired by the design of a bear trap, Gomes caps the spikes of the trap’s jaw with teeth shaped after humans’. Relying on preconceived ideas around the sculpture’s elemental parts, the work creates an imagery of humans’ propensity to lay themselves open to their own vulnerabilities.

Continuing to draw on human’s propensity, but this time in our preoccupation with ascribing meaning and value to objects, is the diptych *Death and Taxes* by Ben Loong. Comprised of 354 plaster tiles, the paintings are at once a welcome of chance and a construction of precision. The work is produced in an organic manner, where the flow of the plaster in each cast and its textural outcome is left to fate yet its mass has been calculated to occupy 354 tiles in relation to the combination of the energies

³ I believe that within and around the term ‘emerge’ are philosophical propositions which may serve to deepen the conversation should one so desire. 1. What is emerging? There is that which is emerging, and the process in which it breaks surface - material or otherwise. 2. What emerges? Is the ‘emerges’ that critical moment when the thing stops its active, its ‘ing’? 3. Does what has emerged signal the finite position of the thing - a full stop, something already in the past - something ‘ed’?
⁴ Author’s own analysis.

assigned to the numbers 3, 5 and 4. The work explores the symbolism we attribute to the divine and mystical as in the instance of numerology, as well as materialism—as both our preoccupation with material objects, and matter—and its importance in society.

The divine and spiritual is the subject of Danielle Tay's *Uncertain Discoveries* series from which the collage painting, *Unconventional Choices* derived from. Bound within Tay's method of production is an openness to exceptions to the rule as in her approach to compositions of paper motifs and cut outs. This act of allowing the process to steer her flow of production necessitated an ability to be adaptive which is a theme carried in her painted paper collage, *Unconventional Choices*. Investigating uncertainties within our natural world and entertaining speculations about its future, the work features a mother bird that builds a nest for its baby in the branches of potted plants. An odd choice for a wild bird, the artist imagines a future where nature and man are forced to co-exist in greater intensity.

The compositional makeup of the works by Goh and Loong (cement and plaster respectively) and the theme of Tay's overbuilt city, link tangentially to the concept of works by Melissa Tan from her exhibition 'Back to where we've never been'. In the series Tan explores the material composition of Singapore in relation to its continuous urban development and redevelopment. The titles of the works in 'Back to where we've never been' adopt the NATO phonetic alphabet system; *Charlie and Whiskey I* is titled after the Central-West mapping of Singapore. In adopting the NATO phonetic alphabet system as a naming device, Tan inserts a manner of coding into her work and in doing so creates a mirror unto the encoded

and palimpsestic structure of Singapore's acronymic nature, and its incessant yearn for construction, reconstruction and renovation.

Coding continues in Genevieve Chua's triptych, *Moth #9, #10, #11*. In it, Chua presents a study of the effect of the Luna moth's physiological adaptations. The Luna moth's tails are auditory deflectors that produces echoes which intercept predatory echolocations thus foiling their attacks. Working in painting, the triptych presents translated abstract recordings of the sonar frequencies of the beats of the moth's wings.

Kuat Zhi Hooi's practice is one that encodes text, specifically mandarin characters, into sculptural objects. In *Table From A Stranger Place*, he has branded a quintessentially Malaysian- and Singaporean-Chinese style dining table with the Hokkien and Mandarin characters for *home*. As a jumble of strokes, the characters' meanings get lost within the veins that spread across the patterning on the tabletop, and as this happens, the meaning of *home* and *togetherness* as symbolised in the dining table in Asian households, becomes camouflaged.

A group of works that appear to coalesce together are those of Kanchana Gupta, Masuri Mazlan, Khairullah Rahim, Jodi Tan, Ian Tee. United by their colourful palettes, occasionally whimsical arrangements, and material compositions they stand as a company that beckons to be observed. But within their vibrant folds, stitches, grooves and compressions are stories as retold through personal encounters, and reimagined narratives. Beyond their superficial appeal lies desires for comfort and protection as in the case of Masuri's

sculpture, *Reach*, Tee's abstract quilt, *FIRE BLANKET 6*, and Gupta's sculptures, *Work in Progress #120* and *Compressed Slab 006*. They also speak about concealment for protection and survival, as embodied in Khairullah's two assemblages, *Rosy Cheeks* and *The Still Praying Mantis*. While Jodi Tan's, *Tree (1)*, is a 3-dimensional sculpture that reconfigures the spatial and perspective qualities of a 2-dimensional still life image into a shape-shifting puzzle.

Fyeroool Dharma's *Portrait No. 7 (Si Pengasas or The Migrant)*, and Luke Heng's, *Composition No. 11* compositionally lie on extreme ends but what the two works do have in common is the theme of deconstruction as a means to receiving both the appearance and concept of the works.

Fyeroool's *Portrait No. 7 (Si Pengasas or The Migrant)*, is from his Moyang series (Moyang being Jawi for ancestor) which are abstractions from 19th century photographs and portrait paintings in the context of Singapore's history. The portraits have been cropped or obscured, often suggestively removing or concealing the most significant part of a portrait - the face. Left behind are signifiers—such as the subject's hands and the documents these hands had written or signed—that suggests alternative entry points in which to consider Singapore's history.

Heng's, *Composition No. 11*, is a study in the conceptualisation and physical manifestation of the act of painting. In it he reconfigures the painting's elemental component—its frame—and allows us to linger in the 'emptiness' that it demarcates while simultaneously highlighting the frame itself as a surface for mark-making.

The criss crossing of connections and rearranging of links between the above mentioned works—individual and grouped—is natural in the creation of alternative readings or the widening of existing discussions and narratives, and is one of the primary methods of exhibition-making, not least in museums.

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS – THEIR MORPHING AND INTERLOCKING ROLES

Can being held within a single collection constitute enough of a unifying factor; should there be a unifying factor and should it matter? How do collections—private or publicly funded—function in our society today and what is the agency of artists, and private and public collections and institutions?

The invitation to produce a piece of writing for TPM on the DUO Collection's inaugural presentation—the first of TPM's five 10th year anniversary shows—was an opportunity for me to (re)think the differences in the ways private and public collections are changing. In the last five years alone—the years since my joining the Singapore Art Museum (SAM), the institution's collection strategy for acquiring works for the National Collection (NC) has been edited/ tweaked at least three times. This should not come as a surprise; our mission is to be a museum for contemporary art of and around Singapore and Southeast Asia, and our collecting approach should strive to remain versatile as countries the world over face continuous change, not least those in the Southeast Asian region. Within

this scaffold is the museum’s attempt to diligently and responsibly reflect the history of the region and the themes and trends that have impacted the lives and affected the trajectories of artists.⁵

While SAM is mandated to acquire works a certain way (given it is a publicly funded institution), private collectors are not. In the exhibition written about within these paragraphs we observe a collection that answers simply to a subconscious. The DUO Collection is not one that forces a prescribed theme (even if it appears that many of the works resonate with each other), instead the works are connected by an emotional and intellectual engagement and an aesthetic preference. Explained differently: without carving out a fixed framework in which to acquire works, the collection grows in ways that broadly reflect the changes associated with our time, changes that reflect differently depending on the lens in which they are seen.

TPM opened with the ‘aim to be an alternative platform to bridge the gap between the private and the public’⁶ and ‘was established with the objective of providing a space for art collectors to showcase their collections in a curated display as well as an alternative platform for artists to push boundaries in the expressions of various art forms.’⁷ Their presence has an important role in creating opportunities for contemporary art collectors to present their perspectives on themes and topics that are pertinent to them, gives privately collected artists a means to understand the collection their work(s) are a part of, and lends new narratives to the conversations around contemporary art in and of Singapore, the region and the world, which creates necessary

counterpoints to the narratives that emit from national institutions such as SAM.⁸

With globalisation firmly rooted as the *modus operandi*, thus affecting economies, cultures and politics, the roles of artists, galleries, collectors and institutions so too have entered into stages of expansion and integration. This essay does not wish to oversimplify the collecting processes of private or public collections. It instead hopes to start a deeper conversation on how collections continue to form, develop, shape, reshape and impact—not least because we as individuals and communities as well as our environments never stop changing—and art never stops reflecting these changes.



⁵ At the time this essay was being composed, SAM was preparing to announce (sometime in January 2020) an adjusted vision and mission and with that an adjusted acquiring strategy to reflect this change.

⁶ “About Us - Introduction.” The Private Museum Singapore. Accessed December 12, 2019. <http://theprivatemuseum.org/index.php/about-us/>

⁷“Philanthropy - About”. The Private Museum Singapore. Accessed December 12, 2019. <http://theprivatemuseum.org/index.php/philanthropy/>

⁸SAM does not expound to being the official narrative on matters pertaining to the arts and the public holds a responsibility to keep all public institutions held accountable by being critically engaged with their offerings (exhibitions, programmes, etc.).

Andrea FAM is an Assistant Curator at the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) where she oversees the Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam portfolios. She holds a B.A. (Hons) degree in Criticism, Communication and Curation in Art and Design from Central Saint Martins, London, UK. She co-curated the Singapore Biennale 2019, ‘Every Step in the Right Direction’, as well as the Singapore Biennale 2016, ‘An Atlas of Mirrors’. At SAM she has curated and co-curated several exhibitions, namely, the President’s Young Talents 2018, ‘Imaginarium: Over the Ocean, Under the Sea’, and ‘Odyssey: Navigating Nameless Seas’. Her research interests include global socio-politics and investigations into the role of humour and play in society.

EMERGING: Collecting Singapore Contemporary

Kray CHEN
Genevieve CHUA
Fyerool DARMA
Kayleigh GOH
Joshua Kane GOMES
Kanchana GUPTA
Luke HENG
KUAT Zhi Hooi
Ben LOONG
Masuri MAZLAN
Faris NAKAMURA
Khairullah RAHIM
Jodi TAN
Melissa TAN
Danielle TAY
Ian TEE

EMERGING

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In conjunction with Singapore Art Week 2020, The Private Museum (TPM) Singapore is pleased to present *Emerging: Collecting Singapore Contemporary – Selections from the DUO Collection*. As part of TPM's 10th anniversary celebrations, the museum revisits its foundation of bridging the private and the public; this exhibition is the first in a series of five featuring an array of private collections in Singapore.

The DUO, whose collectors prefer to remain anonymous, started building their collection five years ago with a focus to support emerging artists in Singapore and Southeast Asia, though they have been collecting widely for more than a decade.

Emerging is the inaugural showcase of selected works collected in the past 5 years featuring 16 Singapore-based artists. These works reflect some of Singapore's emerging urgencies in recent years by responding to themes of identity, migration, urbanisation, the environment, places and spaces. The exhibition seeks not only to stimulate emerging conversations on Singapore contemporary art through the lens of private collectors but also to expand on their role in the art eco-system as imperative patrons of the arts.

ORGANISED BY
The Private Museum

COLLECTION BY
DUO Collection

PART OF
SAW SINGAPORE ART WEEK

SUPPORTED BY
Lotus THE ARTS COUNCIL



Kanchana GUPTA

Work in Progress #120

2017

Oil paint skins burnt and stripped off
tarpaulin with islets

166 x 196 cm

The blue tarpaulin that is ubiquitous in slums and shanties of the city of Mumbai in India as well as at construction sites in Singapore is the key reference point in this project. This seemingly commonplace object, which is so omnipresent that no one notices it, is a signifier of one of the most important social phenomenon of 20th century—migration. Both Mumbai slums and construction sites in Singapore share the common subject of transient migrant workers and the blue tarpaulin connects them in a way that those in Singapore use it for their day-to-day work, while those in Mumbai use it as a material to create temporary homes for themselves. While construction workers in Singapore exist on the periphery of the society and are required to go back to their home country after a prescribed period, those in Mumbai constitute the fringe as slum dwellers. However, the symbolic imagery of blue tarpaulin is

not restricted to urban environments such as Mumbai and Singapore only as it's often associated with the housing for refugee population across the globe. Its presence is about temporariness, movement and concealment.

Oil paint, repetitively layered over weeks on the tarpaulin surface, is transformed into skins over time and then pulled down by fire and gravity. Delicate and temporary skins of oil paint, created through this process, are then arranged to create installations in space. The material created in this way is also a reminder of the act of disconnection and detachment as they embody the history and relationship between the surface and the removed piece, very similar to the act of migration. These skins are temporary in nature, similar to the existence of migrant workers and their usage of temporary materials to survive.



Kanchana GUPTA

Compressed Slab 006

2019

Compressed oil paint skins burnt and
stripped off tarpauline surfaces

10 x 100 x 10 cm

The *Compressed@* series responds to the various urban environments that the artist inhabits through a combination of studio and industrial processes to express the complexity of 'compression'. These works offer a visceral and studied response to the complexity of various forms of compression, physical, emotional or time—associated with urban milieus and existence. Created through a combination of studio and industrial processes; they function as metaphors of the felt urban 'compression' and as material manifestations of subliminal experiences and reflections.

In her practice, the idea of compression is used, not only to fit a material into a pre-determined mould/space but also to transform it to acquire a different shape, form and eventually a different identity. This notion of compression is embedded not only in the process of making my works but also in the works themselves.

Oil paint applied on quotidian urban materials like tarpaulin and jute and then burnt and peeled off to create paint strips, is the key material in these works. Layered, affixed, ripped, torn, peeled and burnt, large volumes of strips are subjected to manual duress in the studio and subsequently in an industrial setting, where these are condensed into dense, solid blocks.

The process transmutes paint into sculptural forms, to reflect the process of labour, compression of time and conditions of production, synonymous with urban settings. Subsequently, sculptures are manually cut open to expose the level of compression, as if they are marks of the accumulated experiences. The materials themselves and the industrial processes they are put through, are a testimonial to use and disuse, ends and means, presence and absence.



Fyerool DARMA

After Portrait No. 7 (Si Pengasas or The Migrant)

2016

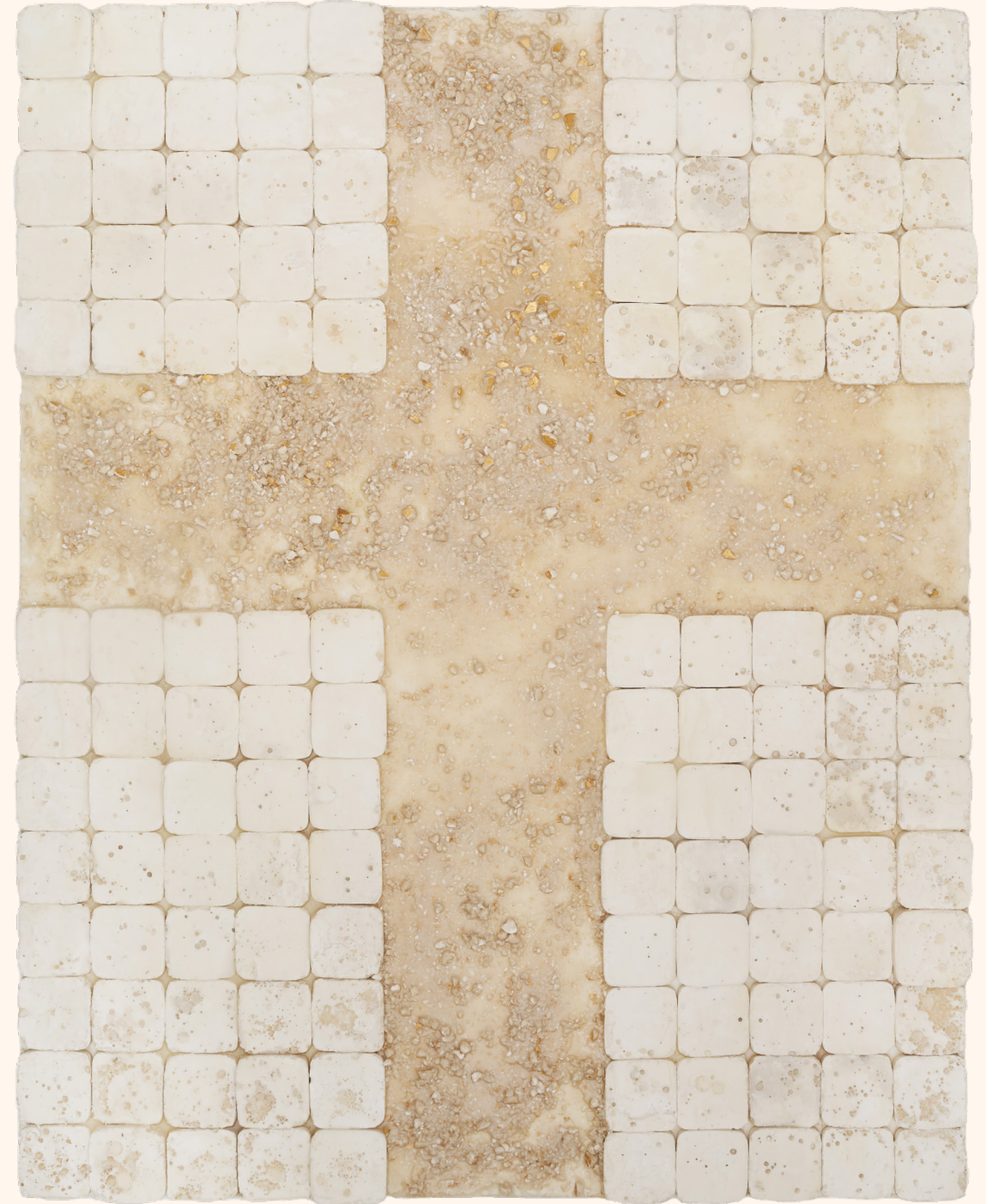
Acrylic and charcoal on canvas and wood

100 x 90 cm

Moyang was a series of works conceived between 2015–2018 by Fyerool Darma. It explored the modes of reproducing images through portraiture. In the artist's words, these works act as markers and enquiries into the individuals who were possibly connected through the language and responsible for the conflicts of the time.

In this work, the artist questions the relevance and the position of the painted subject in the context of Singapore's history. What is seen within the frame are signifiers of the painted hands and land he wrote of (History of Java) and plundered (Java).





Ben LOONG
Death and Taxes
2018
Resinated gypsum plaster and gold leaf on wood
150 x 130 cm; 153 x 122 cm

Made from 354 unique plaster casts, the plaster tiles are treated as individual drawings, with the flow of each pour and the consistency of the plaster mix dictating each surface.

The composition explores symbols and the investment of symbolic meaning to things.

The number 354 is a combination of energies of the numbers 3, 5 and 4.

The number 3 signifies optimism, enthusiasm, happiness, growth, progress, courage, adventure, communication, freedom, and self-expression.

The number 5 signifies major life changes, making important life decisions and choices, learning through experience, adventure, resourcefulness, and adaptability.

The number 4 symbolizes focus, hard work, practicality, stability, honesty, and organisation.

As a combination of these energies, the number 354 symbolises making important life decisions and choices in order to manifest desires into reality.

KUAT Zhi Hooi

Table From A Stranger Place

2019

Found object (tabletop)

122 cm in diameter

Table From A Stranger Place abstractly conveys the idea of home through visual imagery. The two words, “厝” and “家”, meaning home in Hokkien and Mandarin respectively, are inscribed as a jumble of character strokes on the surface of the table as a branding of the object. Although the words are similar in meaning, this act of making the semantic physical, and breaking the characters of each word, result in a loss of meaning for both words; they are at once familiar and unrecognisable. This nostalgic feeling evokes a remembrance of the feeling of “home” after not returning for

a long time. The object, a dinner table, is a significant symbol of togetherness in Chinese culture. It is where families and friends come together to share a meal and is an object of great cultural importance. The formica table top is made personal through this inscription and the sentiment of the words becomes one with this intimate object in a show of linguistic and cultural amalgam.

Inscribed “厝” and “家” on a green marble formica table.



Joshua Kane GOMES

Gap Space

2019

Steel, fiberglass, resin, stool top, decorative chains

133 x 122 x 24 cm

Gap Space refers to a break in continuity that is both temporal and spatial in nature, of seasons spent with those once held dear, who have moved on or away, leaving behind guarded pools in our psyche. Self-made shackles: expectation and comparison swim freely in these depths, baring their fangs at newcomers and helping hands.

The blend of a magnified bear trap and human teeth creates a surreal but visceral visual to the dangers posed in these leftover places, while evoking the familiar but almost bittersweet comfort of self-sabotage.





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Ian TEE
FIRE BLANKET 6
2018
Fibre-glass fire blanket, bleach, old clothes, bed
sheet, deconstructed backpack, reflective strips
and safety straps
185 x 185 cm

The *FIRE BLANKET* series expresses a desire for comfort and protection that is rooted in our intimate relationship with textiles. Its title refers to the woven fibre-glass blankets used to extinguish fires. Here, it is used to support a patchwork quilt made from fragments of unwanted clothes, scrap fabric and industrial safety materials (such as reflective strips, nylon webbing and waterproof canvas). This is a gesture of recharging

and strengthening an object often deemed to be soft and feminine, while recognising the values of care and love embedded in the act of sewing.

The work juxtaposes the tender practice of quilting with the compositions of hard-edged geometric abstraction. Tension is also sustained between the familiarity of patchwork blankets and the undertones of emergency that line its construction.



Khairullah RAHIM

Rosy Cheeks

2017

Manila rope, nylon rope, concrete fragments, cricket ball, screw, stainless steel chain, industrial tape, twine
75 x 50 x 15 cm

Exhibited first as part of OHI Open House (2017), *Rosy Cheeks* was one of six works from the *Ghost Stories* series situated in the corner stairwell of Holland Road Shopping Centre. The work extends from the artist's interest in the multiple lives of public spaces and its potential to accommodate numerous narratives, some of which are veiled in plain sight.

This series of assemblages and sculptural installations brings together specific materials and objects that are associative of public spaces, reflecting on personal accounts gathered from cruising sites, often found in communal venues like heartland swimming complexes, carparks and jogging trails.

Found objects and materials intuitively braided together: a nylon rope snug closely to its coarser counterpart, the bright spot of a hose and nozzle peeking out innocently, coupled with the pleated drain cover curved gently on the side—present new textural affinities that echo an earlier instance of emotional kismet. The chance gathering of rope, concrete, steel and plastic hint at material past lives and a provenance of intimacy, where these loose fragments once served a function within public spaces and how these spaces in turn also hosted intimate exchanges.



Khairullah Rahim

The Still Praying Mantis

2017

Cotton rope, coat hook, masonry fragments,
reflective road signs, stainless steel chain, pvc hose,
cable tie, metal pipe, sauna towel, festive balls
90 x 60 x 22 cm

Conceived during the artist's residency at Taipei Artist Village (2017), *The Still Praying Mantis* saw the continuation of the artist's exploration of cruising sites, and how specific communities transform public places, instilling them with new meanings and function, histories, and symbolic significance. The formation of the sculptural assemblage took its cue from Taiwan's first gay-themed novel *Crystal Boys* (1983) written by author Pai Hsien-yung.

The novel focuses on the main character's struggle between himself, his family, and a society where homosexuality is taboo. 228 Peace Memorial Park, a popular gay cruising area and hangout for gay men in Taipei serves as the primary setting for this novel. Keen observations and interactions with cruisers form a crucial

component in Khairullah's process where he mixes fact and fiction to retell stories situated within the spaces of this thriving activity. Similar to cruising, he employs the act of searching into his artistic process as he sets out to gather urban fragments from these sites, which are subsequently incorporated as materials and found objects into his works. These fragments obtained carry metaphorical meanings that go deeper than the surface appearance of its original particular landscape. The intermingling of materials presents new affinities that hint at another language, one premised on touch and texture, to consider stray acts of intimacy often obscured from the public eye much like in everyday spaces, where alternatives lie hidden in plain sight.





Masuri MAZLAN

Reach

2019

Stopping compound, cheesecloth, polyurethane, fibreglass, polyvinyl acetate adhesive and acid free chrome spray paint on plywood panel

16 x 120 x 14 cm

The Foil series (Unwavering, Horizon, and Reach) exemplifies Masuri's embrace of working with different formal and emotive registers. The sculptural triptych formed part of his recent solo exhibition titled "SOFTSTRONG" at Coda Culture. Hanging both vertically and horizontally with each more than one metre long, the works are adorned on the surface with atomised metallic bronze, silver, and gold hues. Reminiscent of foil wrapped chocolates, the triptych is built on a base of industrial materials. Grounded in the idea of the ephemeral nature of memory, and of a utopia just out of reach, Masuri's recent practice pulls facets of his early life to the spotlight.

The Foil series is rooted in Masuri's childhood memories of accompanying his late grandmother to work. These experiences presented Masuri with an awareness of everyday materials and their serendipitous relationships, which varies from the new to the discarded. Eventually, Masuri developed an intense fascination with the way these objects were constructed.

"I tried to understand how these objects were made, it spurred me to create and make my own toys. Particularly, the process of transforming these materials into objects of play was freeing and exciting. As a little reward by my grandmother, I would be given one of

those brand-less chocolate biscuit sticks wrapped in colourful foil. These visual and tactile experiences have stuck with me over the years," Masuri explains.

The Foil series assumed a fresh resonance for Masuri after the death of his grandmother in 2018. In its delicate weaving of personal memories, and his longstanding practice of material manipulation, the works transform into sculptural paintings with their own footing. Central to the series is his conscious decision to conceal the laborious imbrication of different materials. Masuri states that, "When I am working on a particular work, the arduous performative techniques are totally omitted from the visual representation of the work. I feel that each layer evokes the palimpsest quality of time, and how things eventually manifested on the surface." He adds, "there is also an idea of the pervasiveness of memory, and how it builds upon a base. The repetitive actions are quietly therapeutic yet labour-intensive."

The transcendence of the works from everyday objects tied to distinct personal memories into objects of their own, suggests the ever-evolving nature of memory.

Written by Elaine Teo

Melissa TAN

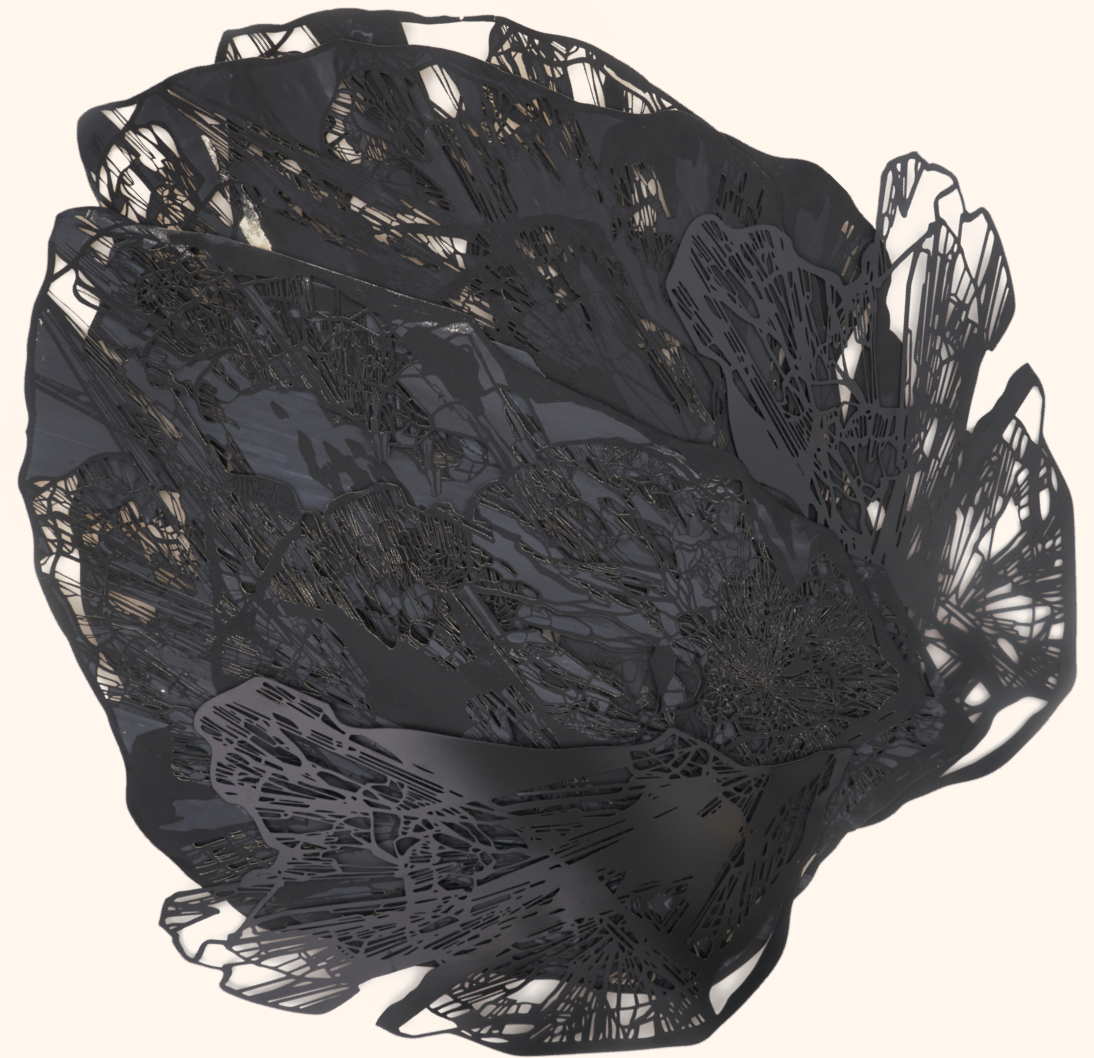
(29075) 1950 DA

2015

Acrylic on watercolour paper and
powder-coated steel

111 x 108 x 4 cm

The exhibition *Arc of Uncertainties* (2015) echoes the formation of lost asteroids in which the paper relief works are shaped after these minor planets. An asteroid is deemed lost when its predicted orbit within the solar system becomes untraceable owing to its large trajectory and extended voyage, rendering it impossible to predict its future location. By extension, it is also inevitable in our lives we experience loss despite measures taken to chart our destination. Intriguingly, even objects as large as planets are misplaced and eventually forgotten, then at times a 'newly discovered' object could be a rediscovery of a previously lost object.



Melissa TAN

Charlie and Whiskey I

2018

Arcylic on watercolour paper, compressed foam,
asphaltum lacquer and resin

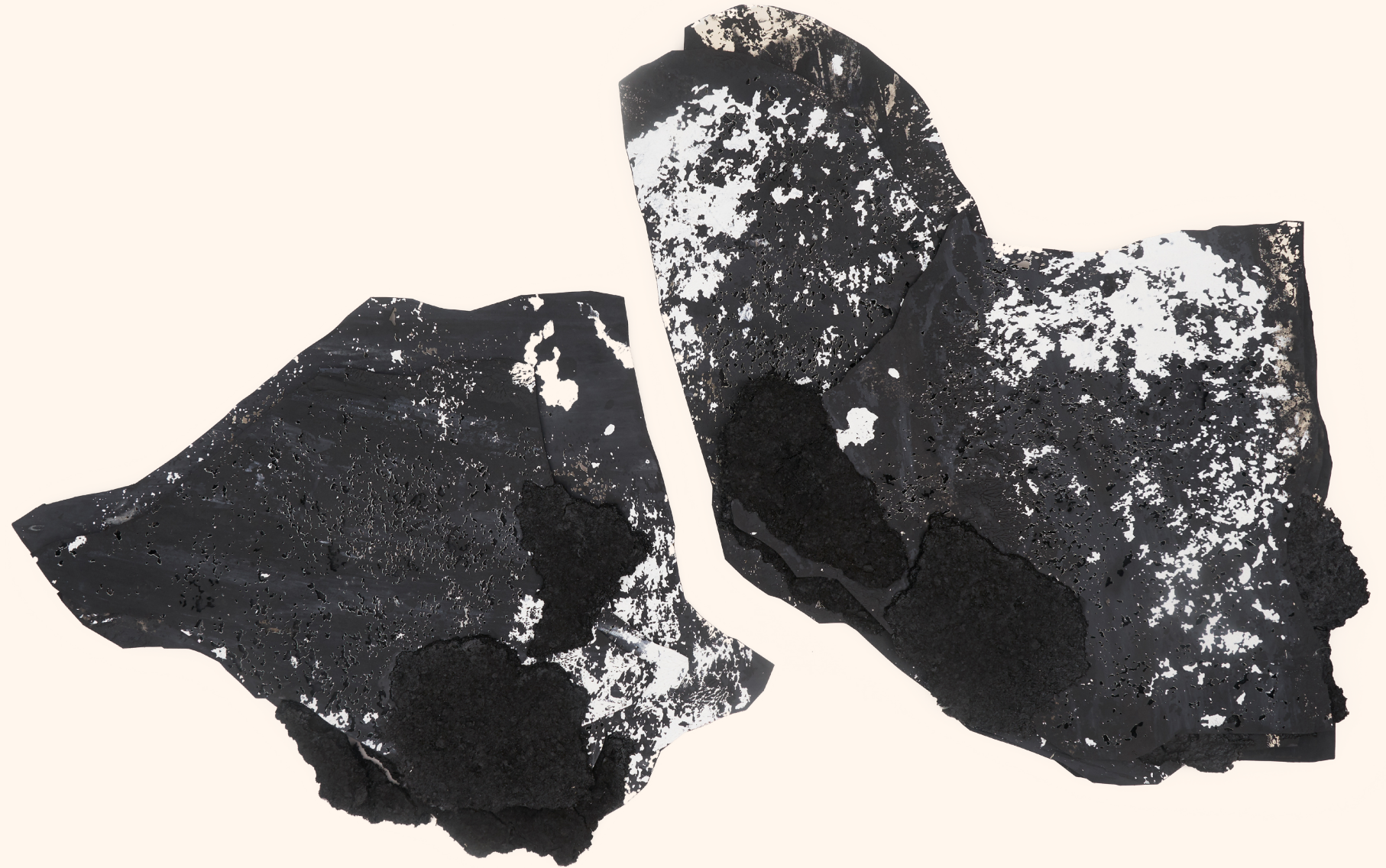
157 x 100 x 6.5 cm

The exhibition *Back to where we've never been* (2018) is a reflection of the urban landscape in Singapore. Roads, pathways, bridges and features we encounter during our daily commute undergo extensive reparation such that it constantly feels brand new. The constant upgrading of the island's infrastructure almost feels as if we are a self-regenerative city. It is only upon closer inspection can one see hints of a patchwork of cement on the sidewalk or the darker shade of tarmac on the road. With so much change occurring, it gives a strange sense that the same ground we tread on might have been grafted from another land we have never been to before, making the pathway familiar and yet not so.

Using the NATO phonetic alphabet system, *Charlie and Whiskey I* is titled after the Central-West area of the map of Singapore. This phonetic system

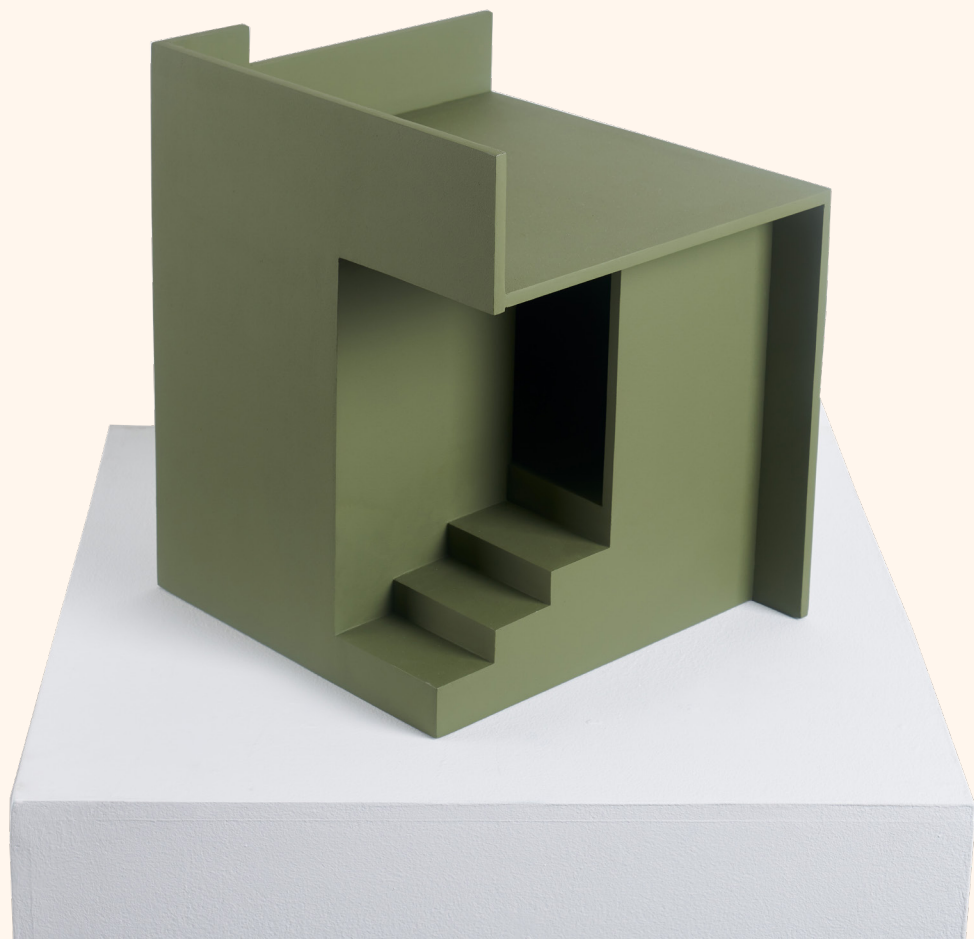
is used to pass information across clearly but for those who do not know the system, it sounds like a person's name or place. Being mysterious to all those who do not hold the key, the artist saw it as a language that disguises as well as clarifies, thus presenting a strange kind of ambiguity.

The form of the wall pieces is dictated by the boundaries that expressways form in the Singapore map. For *Charlie and Whiskey I*, the Bukit Timah Expressway lies in the void between the two diptychs. She is interested in these features of the urban landscape how pathways, roads and bridges are intended to bring people together and help us get from one location to the other efficiently. At the same time, they also demarcate, and are able to keep us apart.



Faris NAKAMURA
Only You Know
 2018
 Matt enamel on
 treated wood
 40 x 40 x 50 cm

To survive life, The Camouflaged Man blends in with his surrounding environment; and this is how he remains unseen. Various methods are used to achieve this; sometimes through the use of mimicry, while at other times, by occupying and utilising obscure, shadowy spaces to be away from the public's eye. Obscure, shadowy nook and crannies of buildings have become spaces that provide refuge for The Camouflaged Man. These are sanctuaries that would allow for the privacy and freedom for him to breathe and frolic with others like himself.

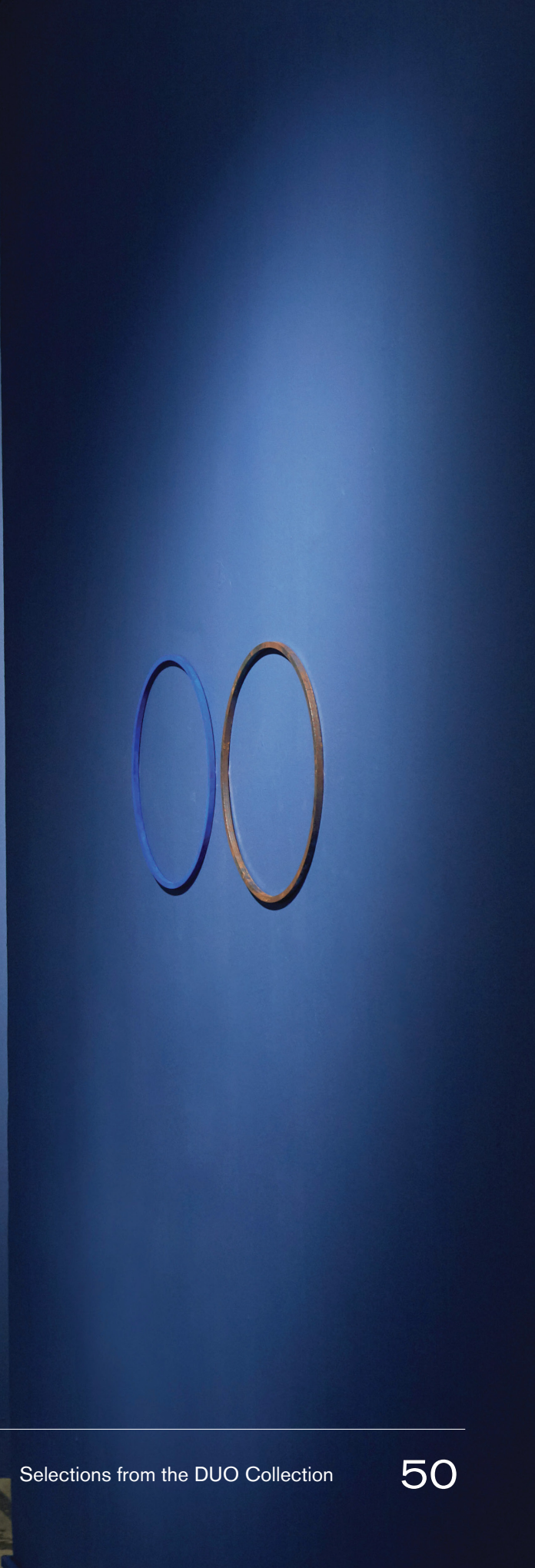


Faris NAKAMURA
The Dark Space In Between
 2019
 Enamel on treated wood
 70 x 70 x 12 cm

The rake is the ratio of the slope in a flight of stairs. While approachable, and therein somewhat seemingly functional, there is an austere quality in the way they are presented. Where do these stairs go, and dare we be using them to get somewhere? Why does the rake taunt as much as it poses dutifully?

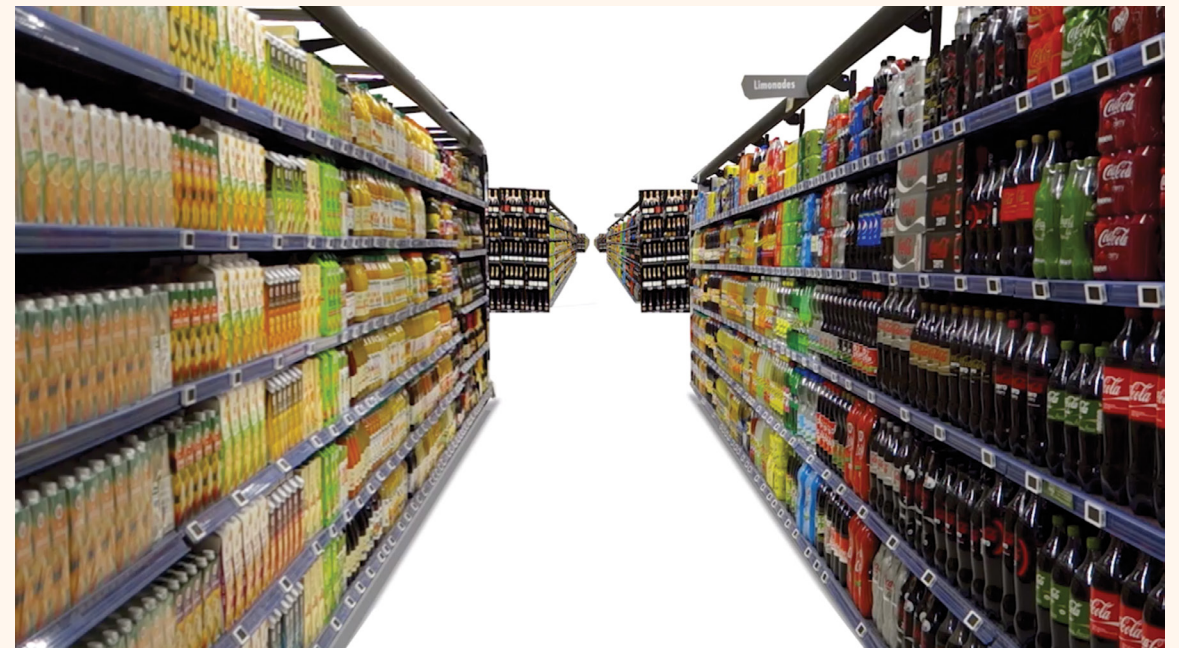
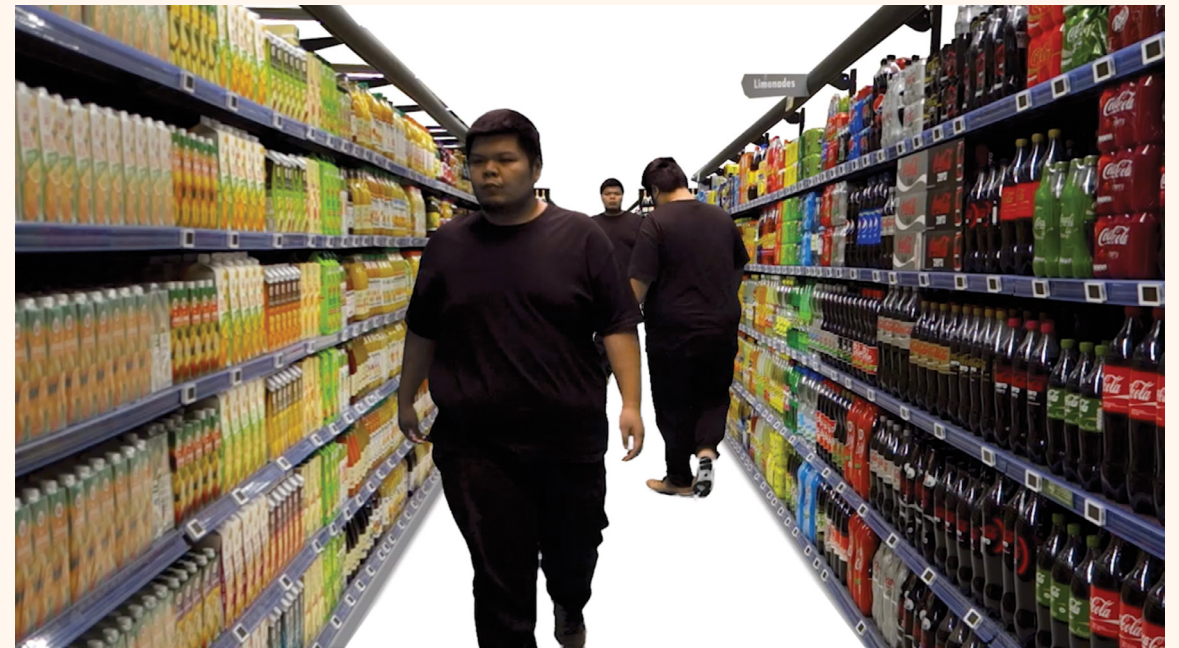
Experiences in facing difficulties while attempting to study on staircases offer an irony that the rake has to be utilised in order for a society to deem a flight of stairs appropriate. Therefore, is the notion of the rake indeed deciding the stairs' implementation?

Examining the role of the rake more evocatively, we can consider it to be the posture of a flight of stairs. Postures are human inflections: one slouches when they are tired, sits up upon excitement. The postures in the artist's rendering of stairs suggest an enticing quality of invitation. This invitation is ambiguous in its request, for it can seem to lull one to rest on the stoop of the stairs at one moment, seduce one to linger in the after-hours with a lover. The rake is a swoop in a moment, what happens thereafter makes the stairs accomplice to an instant rather than a mere prop on set.



Kray CHEN
Not Sure What To Eat For Dinner
2015
Two-channel video
Edition 1 of 3

Not Sure What to Eat for Dinner is the artist's solution to the conundrum of making choice in a world of options—with every option, he projects a virtual clone to fulfil it. Wandering in this infinite supermarket, the artist hesitates at every junctions and aisles, "Where does one go next? Turn left or right, or forward or backward?" This philosophical exercise invites viewers to immerse themselves spatially and mentally in this white-out world, watching as the clones populates the supermarket and stumble upon themselves—a metaphorical negotiation with one's indecision and powerlessness with choices.





Kayleigh GOH

Between Neither This Nor That

2018

Acrylic paint and cement on wood

122 x 250 cm

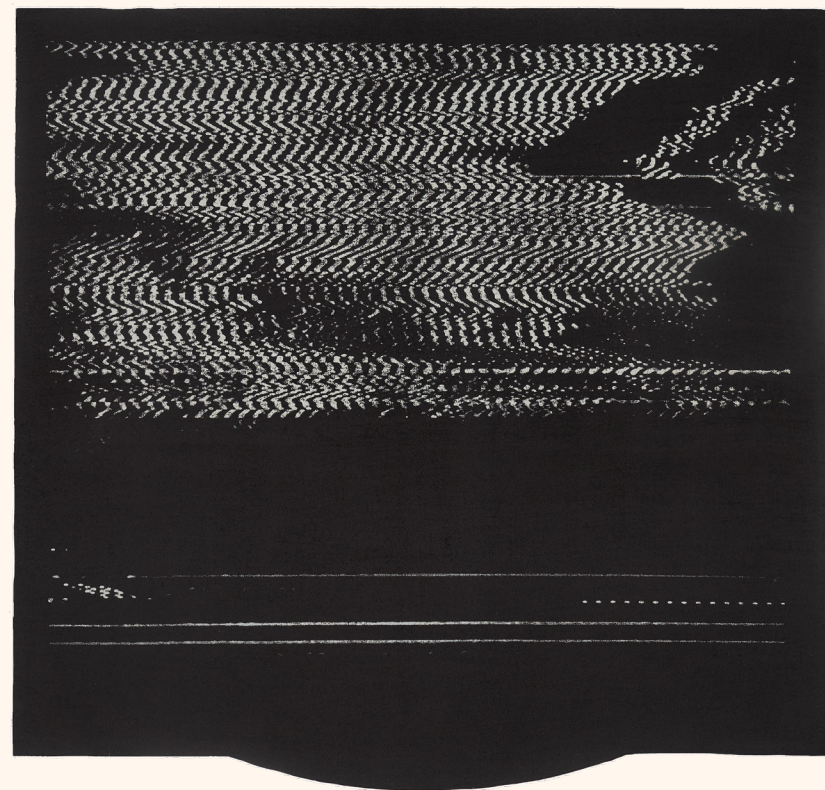
Between Neither This Nor That is a painting that explores the psychological state of “in between-ness”. It serves as a reminder of the importance in how we need to be ever firm and grounded, amidst the constantly fast changing world. And that it is possible to find stability in ambiguities.

Whilst the typical architectural experience requires its viewer to be entirely enveloped in its art, Goh's two-dimensional architectural transcriptions discount physicality from the experience. These illusory spaces cannot and will not have or hold any actual thing. As such, the planarity of Goh's works prioritises the

metaphysical; in the artist's own words, they act as portals for escape - escape from the cacophony of life, escape from the corporeal and into the mind.

The series' ultimate genesis was a yearning for pause, with and through the meditative process of creation. The works are cold but warm, austere and luxurious all at once, tension that results in illusions grounded in reality but impossible for the real world. Completion of a final work was intuited by a sense of stasis in both product and process.

Pretence is shed in favour of a listening ear, one the viewer will always find in Goh's work.



Genevieve CHUA

Moth #9, #10, #11

2015

Acrylic and screenprint with enamel on shaped canvases

74 x 75 cm; 73 x 67 cm; 67 x 70 cm; triptych



Luna moths have extremely evolved long tails to draw their predators' attention away from the more vulnerable regions of their body.

The tails of the luna moths are auditory deflectors. When pit against bats in a dark room, the luna moth's tails whirl behind them as they fly; and produce echoes that resemble the bat's sonar

pings. This intercepts bat echolocation in order to fumble their attacks.

The triptych was exhibited as part of Chua's solo show, *Moths* (2015) in Gallery EXIT, Hong Kong. The paintings feature sonar frequencies of moth wing beats over shaped canvases with moth wing-forms abstracted into a sonar transceiver.

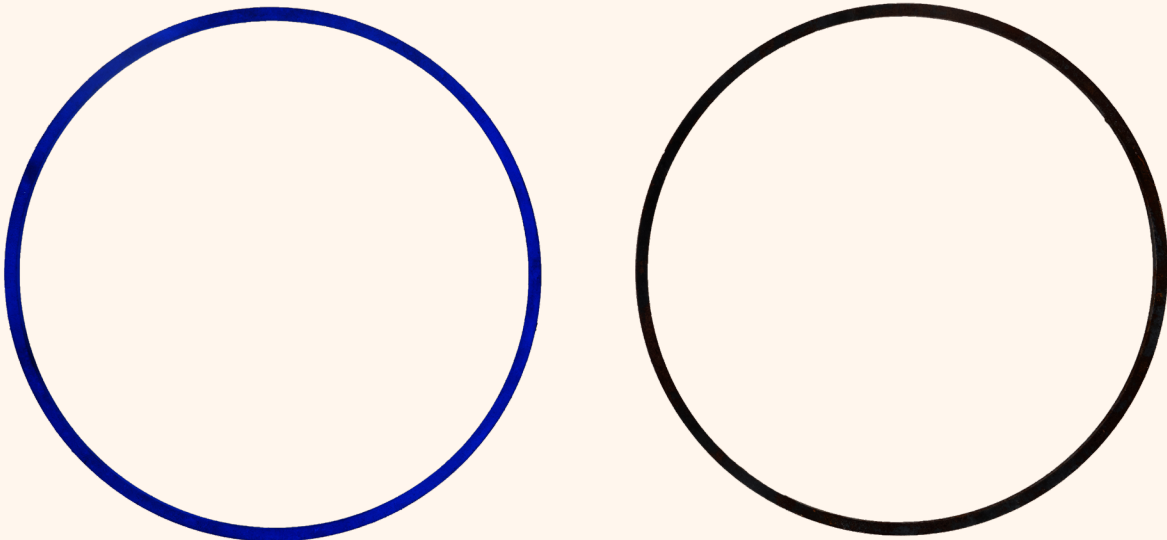
Luke HENG
Composition No. 11
2016
Colour pigment on mild steel
35 x 75 x 0.9 cm

This body of works were built upon the idea of taking apart an object, which in this situation is that of an oil painting and reconstructing it with its fundamental materials and language.

When looking at the *Composition* series, one notices a black rectangular frame hung on the wall. It might recall one to mind certain familiarities such as a window, a bathroom mirror, or a portrait painting. Then there are lines, running across the face of the frame. The lines appear slightly different. Different material? Different directions? Different distance? What are these lines resting

on? It appears that the lines are sitting on top of the metal frame, as there are visible shadows being cast onto the white wall underneath it. Does this mean that the lines and the frame are in two disparate spaces? It seems like the lines are not restricted by the constraints regulated by the frame, as they are so ever slightly protruding beyond the parameters and spotting contrasting colours. This leads to wonder, where is the surface? Has it shrunk, or did it disappear?

Written by Michelle Ho



Danielle Tay
Unconventional Choices
2017
Acrylic & gouache on paper
94 x 64 cm

Fascinated by the quirky and uncanny in nature, this artwork is part of a larger body of work titled *Uncertain Discoveries* which charts the artist's investigation and responses to grey areas within the natural world; the unexplainable. This method of exploration through art-making functions as a mode of recording transient occurrences, discoveries and surprises.

This work brings to life an experience which intrigued the artist; one that evoked ideas of adaption, evolution and stepping out of the norm. A mother

bird builds her nest in a residential area amongst potted plants, close to humans. Perhaps this is safer than being out there in the wild as this shaded area functions as a protective shield from predators and rough weather. This seems to be an unconventional choice for a wild bird which goes against what is known to be her nature and could also be an instinctive survival response to changes in her environment. It is unusual but perhaps will soon become much more common as nature, man and the city are forced to co-exist in greater intensity.



Jodi TAN

Tree (I)

2018

Arcylic on wood

150 x 110 x 170 cm

In furthering her experimentations with colour, shape and composition, the artist began to toy with the idea of developing her work from 2-dimensional concepts into 3-dimensional forms. Extracting shapes from 2D images and transferring them onto plywood of varying thicknesses, the shapes retain their flatness while suggesting a transformation into the 3-dimensional.

These semi-anonymous shapes become flat building blocks that intersect one another, growing upwards

and outwards, alike branches of a tree. The structure's composition hints towards a still life setting where objects amalgamate strategically atop surfaces, with focus on the relations between each of the shapes. The human-sized structure—with shapes blown up in an almost ridiculous manner—draws connection to a tree in how its volume relates to the viewer's body.





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