

Media Release

For Immediate Release

LIGHT TO NIGHT FESTIVAL 2020 INVITES VISITORS TO MUSE AND REVEL IN REIMAGINED 'CITIES' IN THE CIVIC DISTRICT

- *Taking on the theme “Invisible Cities”, the Festival’s line-up is inspired by four commissioned sonnets by local writers who reimagined the precinct through its stories*
- *Visitors can look forward to programmes and artworks that evolve from day to night, which encourage contemplation beyond experiencing the convivial joy of a festival*



Singapore, 13 November 2019 – Spearheaded by National Gallery Singapore with precinct partners The Arts House, Victoria Theatre and Victoria Concert Hall, Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM), and Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Light to Night Festival returns from 10 to 19 January 2020 as a marquee event of Singapore Art Week. Besides enthralling with playful artistic interventions which take over the precinct, the fourth Festival edition also partners artists and creative talents to enrich visitors through interdisciplinary programmes, meaningful engagements and innovative ideas that invigorate and reimagine the Civic District.

Themed ***Invisible Cities***, Light to Night Festival 2020 draws inspiration from the postmodern literature by Italian writer Italo Calvino, where Marco Polo describes a series of wondrous, surreal cities with an interplay of reality and imagination. This prompted us to reimagine the Civic District through creative collaboration and intervention to reclaim the once-colonial precinct to its present-day identity as a precinct which houses the artistic and historical gems of Singapore and the region. Some other themes that were surfaced such as alternative histories, fictional worlds, and our perception of a place also informed numerous interdisciplinary artworks subsequently.

In the same vein, four local writers - Desmond Kon, Kevin Martens Wong, Marc Nair, and Nuraliah Norasid – were commissioned to compose four sonnets that articulate their thoughtful meditations and imagination of the precinct and relationships we cultivate, while extending the conversation of the distinct history and personal stories of the Civic District. The poems with their multiple layers of narratives then guided the festival programming. [Refer to Annex C for the four commissioned sonnets]

Ms. Suenne Megan Tan, Festival Director and Director of Audience Development & Engagement at National Gallery Singapore said, “Cities may be metaphors, but they are also living organisms that draw their shape and energy from people who live and work in them. Like a kaleidoscope, our experience of the city is always shifting, providing a sense of estrangement and yet wonder. By inviting artists across different disciplines to reimagine our city with art, this Festival edition explores the invisible and complex geographies of the historic Civic District, and how our perceptions of place are shaped by personal influence, such as memory, desire, loss as well as cultural forces, including history and media.”

Ms Tan continues, “Every artwork at the Festival adds elements of realism and abstraction to our perception of the Civic District and our city, which differs from the daily experience. Collectively, they reveal both the idiosyncrasies of our built environment and heterogeneity of the human experience. Cognisant that art is meant for everyone, we create opportunities for visitors and artists from all walks of life to connect and have dialogues with each other, extending the experience beyond walls of institutions for greater accessibility to everyone.”

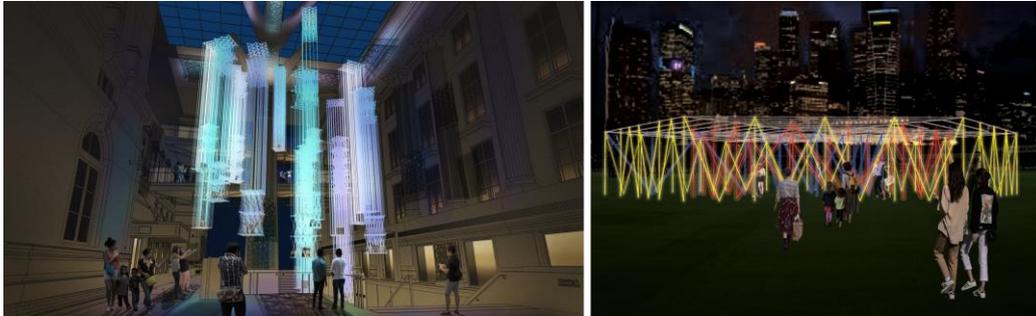
Experiencing art from day to night

Light to Night Festival 2020, which uses play, innovation and ideas to bridge connections between the past and present, will deepen visitor engagement beyond exploring the sensory experiences. Festival-goers are invited to partake in discussions, behind-the-scenes dialogues and workshops with artists and subject specialists at the inaugural **EN(LIGHT)EN** forum and **TEDxSingapore Salon**, with the latter examining leading ideas and inspirations on why art matters now.

Woven into select artworks for the first time are dual experiences triggered by the shift from day to night. For example, inspired by Anthony Poon’s artwork¹, **Optical Maze** at the Padang welcomes festival-goers into its golden-hue pavilion by day to find a moment of wonder and respite in the

¹ Poon’s works are largely influenced by Western genres such as Optical Art and colour field theory, which he adapted to create his signature style of abstraction in Singapore. Embedded in many of his geometric-styled paintings are the artist’s examination of the relations between colour, form, line, space and surface.

bustling city, before transforming into a maze with playful labyrinthine walkways changing with the beat of the lights at night.



Artist impressions of Floating City and Optical Maze

Floating City, which is suspended at the Gallery's Padang Atrium, visualises a dream-like city where visitors explore the 'skyscrapers' by walking through the clusters of ethereal towers from the level three link bridge. It will then take on a new life in the evenings as its colours and intensity respond to the music performances that engulf the space. **Shadows of Dust and Clouds** at the ACM features a mirror that reveals hidden messages at night, blurring the distinction between dreams and memories. Over at Esplanade Park, **Light Lane** transports visitors to invisible 'cities' with whimsical gobo shadows in the day and colourful bike lanes at night as they ride on stationary bicycles and immerse in distinct city soundscapes.

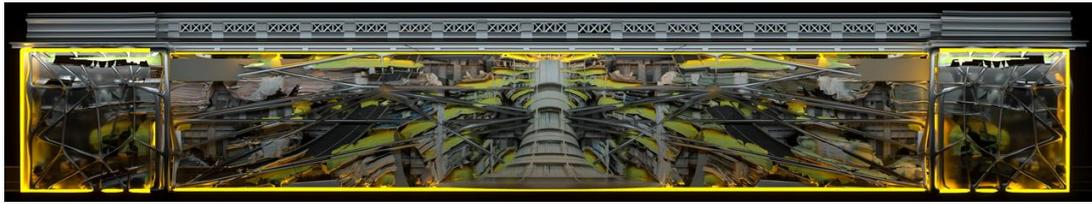
Actively participating in art experiences

Visitors will also go beyond being spectators to become active participants of their own art experiences, including being in the thick of action in games with high interactivity, thus transforming the Civic District into a true recreational space for the people.

On Fridays and Saturdays across the two weeks, a live-action large-scale escape game experience - **True Lies: Secrets of the Gallery²** awaits at the Gallery for the first time. Working in teams, participants will beat the clock to uncover the mysteries and secrets behind its art collection and the architecture of the Former Supreme Court.

With a few taps on their mobile phones, they can interact with and paint the City Hall façade with customisable city-life objects, culminating in a living mural at **Art Skins on Monuments**.

² Ticket sales will be available in December 2019.



Artist impression of Art Skins on Monuments

One can also peer into a 'new' Civic District with the play of mirrors and reflections as they navigate around ***Between Two Worlds*** at the Esplanade Park, or reminisce the good times from the past by playing with the large-scale inflatable ***Five Stones*** at Empress Place.

An inclusive Festival for everyone

The 2020 edition will also offer opportunities for young talents to experiment with the blank canvases around the Civic District. This includes a new mentorship programme with tertiary design students to present light projection works on The Arts House's facade, and an annual 3D light installation of the Festival namesake – a collaboration between tech-artist and projection mapping designer Daryl Goh and students from the Nanyang Polytechnic's School of Interactive and Digital Media this year.

To engage a diverse community, a promenade theatre performance ***Something About Home*** by disability arts specialist and theatre practitioner, Peter Sau and 6 pan-disabled artists will be situated around the Gallery, while visitors take refuge from the cacophony of multi-sensory stimuli at the ***Clement Space*** by researcher and multi-disciplinary artist, Dawn-joy Leong. Guides with disabilities will lead an interactive, multi-sensory tour in the dark at ACM too.

A cultural immersion of food, drinks and entertainment

For quality bonding time, festival-goers can gather over delectable delights from Singapore and Southeast Asia at ***Art x Social*** on Empress Lawn, St Andrew's Road and Connaught Drive. They can then immerse in fantasy fiction and colourful visual dioramas with the return of ***open books*** at The Arts House or enjoy a good laugh at ***Funny Fridays*** with local comedians Suhaimi Yusof and Stephanie Chan at the Padang Atrium at National Gallery Singapore. Music lovers will have a treat at ***Symphonic Saturdays*** featuring the likes of Tabitha Nauser with a new acoustic music arrangement of her latest album at the Gallery's Padang Atrium, or enjoy music-making with Indian jazz-fusion band Varsha at The Arts House, or sway along to the cross-genre performance by Mitch Advent and btcprox of NUS Electronic Music Lab featuring Ben Ang and Erhu player Stephanie Ow at Victoria Concert Hall.

Light to Night Festival 2020 is supported by National Arts Council and Tote Board.

Ms Elaine Ng, Senior Director of Engagement and Participation at the National Arts Council added, “We are excited for this year’s Light to Night Festival to be part of the Singapore Art Week once again, with many vibrant projections and installations to look out for. As the cultural institutions continue to work closely together, we are confident that the Civic District will be the distinctive place for Singaporeans and visitors to enjoy unique arts and culture experiences.”

Mr Fong Yong Kian, Chief Executive Officer of Tote Board said, “Once again, Tote Board is delighted to partner the Gallery to provide a canvas for creative talents from Singapore and beyond, and to create an immersive experience and vibrant arts scene for Singaporeans to enjoy. We look forward to the Civic District coming alive with the dazzling array of lights, sounds and colours during the Festival.”

Admission to the Festival is free, commencing from 10am until midnight. Certain programme timings and admission charges may vary. Details of the festival will be available on www.lighttonight.sg.

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Annex A: Quotes from partners and artists of Light to Night Festival 2020

Annex B: Light to Night Festival 2020 Programme Highlights

Annex C: Sonnets commissioned by Light to Night Festival 2020

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About National Gallery Singapore

National Gallery Singapore is a leading visual arts institution which oversees the world’s largest public collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian modern art. Situated at the birthplace of modern Singapore, in the heart of the Civic District, the Gallery is housed in two national

monuments - City Hall and former Supreme Court - that have been beautifully restored and transformed into this exciting 64,000 square metre venue. Reflecting Singapore's unique heritage and geographical location, the Gallery aims to be a progressive museum that creates dialogues between the art of Singapore, Southeast Asia and the world to foster and inspire a creative and inclusive society. This is reflected in our collaborative research, education, long-term and special exhibitions, and innovative programming. The Gallery also works with international museums such as Centre Pompidou, Musée d'Orsay, Tate Britain, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (MOMAT) and National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA), to jointly present Southeast Asian art in the global context, positioning Singapore as a key node in the global visual arts scene.

In 2019, the Gallery was the only museum in Southeast Asia that received a ranking in The Art Newspaper's annual global survey of attendance at art museums, taking 32nd place. It was the first museum in Asia to receive the Children in Museums Award by the European Museum Academy and Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums in 2018. The Gallery also won the awards for "Best Theme Attraction" at TTG Travel Awards 2017, "Best Attraction Experience", "Breakthrough Contribution to Tourism" and "Best Customer Service (Attractions)" at the prestigious Singapore Tourism Awards in 2016 for its role in adding to the vibrancy of Singapore's tourism landscape.

About Singapore Art Week

Singapore Art Week is an annual celebration of visual arts which takes place in the month of January to kick start the new year. Jointly organised by the National Arts Council, Singapore Tourism Board, and the Singapore Economic Development Board, Singapore Art Week reinforces Singapore's position as Asia's leading arts destination.

Reaching out to both Singapore residents and international visitors to promote art appreciation, Singapore Art Week offers a myriad of quality art experiences which span the visual arts, from traditional to modern to contemporary practices. Audiences can look forward to art fairs, gallery openings, exhibitions, lifestyle events, public art walks, and enriching discussions on art and culture. Singapore Art Week also aims to galvanise the arts sector to launch innovative art and lifestyle concepts and events in conjunction with art events during this period. www.artweek.sg

About the Civic District

The Civic District lies at the very heart of Singapore, and is known as the founding point of this modern metropolis. Located on the banks of the historic Singapore River, the area houses some of Singapore's most notable national monuments, civic spaces and cultural institutions.

Colonial architecture, concerts and contemporary art converge at the Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall, and The Arts House (Singapore's former Parliament Building). Art lovers can enjoy the largest collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian paintings at the former Supreme Court and City Hall buildings, now home to the National Gallery Singapore; and learn about the cultural heritage of Asia and Singapore's diverse cultures at the Asian Civilisations Museum.

Take a walk around the Civic District and enjoy the sights and sounds of the Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, the Padang, Queen Elizabeth Walk as well as the Jubilee Bridge. We invite you to explore Singapore's Civic District, the historic birthplace of modern Singapore.

About National Arts Council

The National Arts Council champions the arts in Singapore. By nurturing creative excellence and supporting broad audience engagement, the diverse and distinctive arts inspire people, connect communities and profile Singapore internationally. NAC preserves Singapore's rich, cultural traditions as they cultivate accomplished artists and vibrant companies for the future. Their support for the arts is comprehensive – from grants and partnerships to industry facilitation and arts housing. The Council welcomes greater private and corporate giving to and through the arts so that together everyone can make the arts an integral part of everyone's lives. For more information on the Council's mission and plans, visit www.nac.gov.sg.

About Tote Board

Established in 1988, Tote Board (Singapore Totalisator Board) is a statutory board of the Ministry of Finance. As a broad-based grantmaking organisation, Tote Board works closely with stakeholders and partners, to support broad and diverse worthy projects in the sectors of Arts, Community Development, Education, Health, Social Service and Sports. Through these projects, Tote Board helps to uplift the community by giving hope to vulnerable groups and improving the lives of all in Singapore.

Tote Board's source of grants is derived from operating surplus of the Tote Board Group, which comprises Tote Board and its wholly-owned subsidiary Singapore Pools (Private) Limited and Singapore Turf Club, a proprietary club owned by Tote Board. Tote Board also ensures that Singapore Pools (Private) Limited and the Singapore Turf Club conduct their gaming and racing businesses in a socially responsible manner, to provide legal, safe and trusted gaming as a means to counter illegal gambling.

Tote Board's goal is to help build a flourishing society in Singapore. We want to inspire positive change and contribute towards building an inclusive, resilient and vibrant community, while fostering a caring and compassionate nation.

About Victoria Theatre & Victoria Concert Hall

First established in 1862, the Victoria Theatre & Victoria Concert Hall is one of the most recognisable landmarks in Singapore. The heritage building located in the heart of the city's Civic District contains a 614-seat Theatre and a 673-seat Concert Hall. In 2010, the national monument underwent a four-year refurbishment to restore its Neoclassical façade while getting new state-of-the-art facilities and amenities. The redevelopment also saw the addition of two smaller rooms for music, dance and theatre rehearsals.

Having played a role in the country's history for over 150 years, the Victoria Theatre & Victoria Concert Hall continues to be an exciting platform that supports the growth of Singapore's arts industry. The latter has been home to the Singapore Symphony Orchestra since the orchestra's founding in 1979.

About the Asian Civilisations Museum

The Asian Civilisations Museum is the only museum in the region devoted to exploring the rich artistic heritage of Asia, especially the ancestral cultures of Singaporeans. Opened in 1997 and in its present building by the Singapore River since 2003, the museum traces its roots to the Raffles Museum, founded in the middle of the 19th century. ACM focuses on the many historical connections between the cultures of Asia, and between Asia and the world.

Singapore's history as a port city that brought people together from all over the world is used as a means of examining the history of Asia. Objects on display tell stories of the trade and the exchange of ideas that were the result of international commerce, as well as the flow of religions and faith through Asia. Special exhibitions bring magnificent objects from around the world to our Singapore audience. Programmes like Saturdays@ACM, Asian Culture and Music Series, and ACM After Dark encourage visitors to connect more closely with culture and the arts.

About The Arts House

Occupying the almost 200-year-old building that was home to Singapore's first parliament, The Arts House continues in the distinguished tradition of this gazetted national monument and now plays a key role in the country's arts and creative scene. The Arts House at the Old Parliament, as it is affectionately referred to, promotes and presents multidisciplinary programmes and festivals within its elegant spaces. It focuses in particular on the literary arts, celebrating the works of written and spoken word artists from Singapore and beyond.

The Arts House is run and managed by Arts House Limited (AHL). AHL also presents the Singapore International Festival of Arts, as well as manages Goodman Arts Centre, Aliwal Arts Centre, Victoria Theatre & Victoria Concert Hall, and Drama Centre.

About Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

Esplanade is Singapore's national performing arts centre. It has a year-round line-up of about 3,500 performances presented by Esplanade, its partners and hirers. As an arts centre for everyone, Esplanade also creates opportunities for seniors, youth, children and underserved communities to experience the arts. More than 70% of the shows that take place each year at the centre are non-ticketed. The centre works in close partnership with local, regional and international artists to develop artistic capabilities and content, push artistic boundaries and engage audiences. Esplanade supports the creation of artistic content by commissioning and producing new Singapore and Asian work for the international stage. It also develops technical capabilities for the industry nationally.

To bring even more of the arts to a wider audience, and provide more platforms to support Singapore's next generation of artists, Esplanade is building a new theatre with at least 550 seats along its busy waterfront, opening in 2021.

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay is operated by The Esplanade Co Ltd (TECL), which is a not-for-profit organisation, a registered Charity and an Institution of a Public Character. The Charity Council awarded TECL the Charity Governance Award – Special Commendation for Clarity of Strategy in 2016, and the Charity Transparency Award for three consecutive years since 2016.

TECL is funded by Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and its Community Programmes are supported by Tote Board Family, comprising Tote Board, Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club.

Annex A: Quotes from partners and artists of Light to Night Festival 2020

“Artistic collaborations are always exciting and invigorating, and it is an incredible honour to be involved in such a grand event. The Light to Night Festival is nothing short of compelling and electric, even as it offers such deliberate, intelligent ways to engage everyone. For an author, it’s unbelievably exciting to witness one’s writing be interpreted by other artists, and to witness the new artistic creations. It is a tribute to the powerful imagination of every kind of artist. The air of this year’s festival seems marked by a spirit of creative ambition and ingenuity. I hope that when one encounters each sonnet, one may take away some small image or impression or emotion, that precious kind of luminosity. That kind of aesthetic wonder would be rewarding and delightful enough.” - **Desmond Kon**

“This is our third consecutive year being involved with the festival, and *Art Skins on Monuments* has become a personal fixture for us to start the year with a bang. With *Invisible Cities* as our main source of inspiration for this edition, the monuments’ facades, standing majestically within the historic Civic District, are perfect canvases for us to reimagine concepts of cityscapes and metropolitan living. This allows us to create a visual language that connects ideas from the past, present and imaginary future, reminding festival-goers that the monuments are not just dormant historical landmarks, but still play an active role in shaping Singapore’s cultural landscape.” - **Brandon Tay and Safuan Johari**

“For more than 10 years, I have been building structures to create new temporal experiences in spaces that have completely different uses. Working in Singapore has been a thrilling experience as I have never worked in a country so far from my cultural origins. The Padang has inspired me with its history and relationship with National Gallery Singapore and the skyscrapers that serve as its backdrop. I hope that *Optical Maze* will create unique frames for the city and stay forever in the memories of the visitors.” - **Teresa Otto**

“I always relish the potential encounters of artistic collaboration and engagement with people I have and have not met through our work. *Self Portrait* is a performance that ensures an inclusive experience for both atypical and mainstream audiences without diluting its artistic merit, and will showcase a combination of the public’s lyricism, the artist’s inter-disciplinary craft and the embodiment of genuine participation. We invite everyone to not just come for the party but to also tear up the dance floor.” – **Grace Lee Khoo**

Annex B: Light to Night Festival 2020 Programme Highlights

Day Programme

EN(LIGHT)EN: Festival Forum

11 Jan 2020, Saturday | 2pm - 5pm | Glass Room, National Gallery Singapore | Free with registration

Developed with art and design-lovers keen on intellectual stimulation and conversations in mind, this forum is focused on ideas, processes, dialogues and learning with industry leaders and featured Light to Night artists and writers.

Discussion Topics: City on the Edge of Imagination, The Ritual of Self Portraiture, Art is Not Only for the Atas

TEDxSingapore Salon

18 Jan 2020, Saturday | 2pm – 5pm | Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium, National Gallery Singapore | Ticketed; Registration and FAQ available on Peatix

Join us for a TEDxSingapore salon at the National Gallery Singapore celebrating a decade of Ideas Worth Spreading. This programme brings together TED alumni and TEDx speakers who boldly look to the future while examining today's leading ideas and inspirations on Why Art Matters Now.

Promenade Theatre performance: Something About Home

By Peter Sau, Dawn-joy Leong, Claire Teo, June Chua, Stephanie Esther Fam, Cavan Chang and Timothy Lee

11 & 18 Jan 2020, Saturday | 1pm - 2pm, and 4pm - 5pm each day | Various locations, National Gallery Singapore | Free with registration

You are Marco Polo.

Guided by the captains of your ship, embark on a journey through four different island-cities - CALIBRATION, EVOCATION, AFFIRMATION and CONTEMPLATION - before arriving at your final destination.

Hear their myths. Unravel their mysteries. Learn about their uniqueness. Be intrigued by their similarities. Acknowledge their invisibilities. See beyond their disabilities. Be moved by the sonnets which are their stories. As they make themselves heard, seen and felt, realise they could be saying something about you and your home - our home.

The Invisible 5 Series

10, 11, 17, 18 January 2020 | 7pm - 8pm, 7.30pm - 8.30pm, 8pm - 9pm | Meeting Point: National Gallery Singapore Visitor's Service Room, Level B1

Reimagine Singapore's past on a docent-led tour of five artworks that evoke your senses.

Daily Guided Tours for Exhibitions and Building History

10, 11, 17, 18 January 2020 | 5.30pm onwards | Various locations | Free admission

Available tours include that of the Civic District, St Andrew's Cathedral, Victoria Concert Hall, Asian Civilisations Museum and the National Gallery Singapore.

Evening Programme

Art Skins on Monuments: *City States of Mind*

Brandon Tay, Safuan Johari, Gema Putra, Juan Yong, Matthew Ryan, Tristan Lim, Ryan Benjamin Lee, Louis Quek, Reza Hasni, Howie Kim, WY Huang, SuperCyberTown, Humanoise, Jing Ng, Texture Media

and students from the Nanyang Polytechnic School of Interactive & Digital Media.

10 Jan – 19 Jan 2020 | Sun – Thu 8 – 10pm, Fri – Sat 8pm – midnight | National Gallery Singapore, The Arts House, Asian Civilisations Museum, Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall | Free



The biggest façade light show in Singapore, *Art Skins on Monuments* projects images created by artists, illustrators and multimedia designers on the façades of the Civic District and within the walls of its monumental landmarks.

Titled *City States of Mind*, this edition of *Art Skins on Monuments* is set to transform the Civic District into a constellation of imaginary cities, where the imagined dreams, forgotten memories and deep desires of the precinct's majestic monuments are manifested as colourful projections. Eight projection-mapping pieces will be presented across seven surfaces. Each piece is a unique audio-visual response to the Festival sonnets inspired by *Invisible Cities*, woven with historical echoes and cultural hints that each monument represents.

Curated and developed by Brandon Tay and Safuan Johari with contributions by 13 other artists, *City States of Mind* invites audience to experience visual spectacles of cityscapes made up of the incorporeal. Visitors will also be able to take part by contributing customizable city-life objects via their smartphones, culminating into a living mural on the Gallery's City Hall façade. At The Arts House, the piece will feature tertiary students' contribution, which is a first for *Art Skins on Monuments*.

Optical Maze

By OTTOTTO (Portugal)

10 Jan – 19 Jan 2020 | Sun – Thu 10am – 10pm, Fri – Sat 10am – midnight | Padang | Free



A large-scale, interactive installation at the Padang inspired by Anthony Poon's artwork, this illuminated labyrinth restores the Padang into its original intended use as a recreational civic space while paying homage to the role of lighting in placemaking.

The audience will enter a baptism of light which responds to their presence in the civic square. As they navigate the labyrinth, they may begin to realise the irregular and constantly shifting shapes of the installation, varying based on their position

within it.

While *Optical Maze* provides an intriguing experience for visitors who enter it, some may also discover or even chance upon a hidden message contained in the installation when viewed from the surrounding skyscrapers in the Civic District.

Light Lane

By Felix Marzell, DIX au carré (Canada)

10 Jan – 19 Jan 2020 | Sun – Thu 10am – 10pm, Fri – Sat 10am – midnight | Esplanade Park sidewalk | Free



At this participatory work, visitors may reflect upon life along the sidewalks of foreign cities. Taking a ride on stationary bicycles, the installation will project shadows and effects from the moving wheels and onto the Esplanade Park sidewalk. The artwork brings to life and to visitors' attention the bustling activities, sounds, and sights beyond Singapore, transporting them into another invisible city.

Visitors may ride on the bicycles both in the day and at night for different effects.

Between Two Worlds

By Quarters Architects (Singapore)

10 Jan - 19 Jan 2020 | Sun – Thu 10am – 10pm, Fri – Sat 10am – midnight | Esplanade Park | Free



Between Two worlds - with an exterior made of mirrors, may be invisible to the eye of visitors, and as they enter the installation's pathway and into another "world", they seem to disappear and become invisible to onlookers from outside.

Between Two Worlds pulls the multiple facets of Singapore's cobbled reality into a single charged passage beckoned by mirrored memory pools, allowing a certain confronting reflection as one walks along these surfaces. The installation is inspired by

Kevin Martens Wong's sonnet discussing memory, trenchant longing and displacement – losing a loved one for notions of survival, to an unreachable elsewhere – "I'll call out to you, sometimes, across the worlds that separate us."

Five Stones

By Twardzik-Ching Chor Leng

10 - 19 Jan 2020 | All day | Various Locations | Free

Five Stones by artist Twardzik-Ching Chor Leng is a playful and interactive public art project consisting of large-scale inflatables reminiscent of the familiar childhood game. Igniting personal memories, shared histories and a collective remembrance of gathering around simple play, each stone offers exciting ways of engaging and experiencing art in our lived spaces and the everyday.

The stones will first appear in Punggol then pop up at various locations around Singapore in December 2019, before finally gathering in the Civic District in surprise locations for Singapore Art Week in January 2020. Keep a lookout and see if you can spot them!

There will also be another set of inflatable five stones available for public play and interaction during the Festival at Empress Place, next to Art x Social.

Shadows of Dust and Clouds

By Vertical Submarine

10 - 19 Jan 2020 | 10am – 12 midnight | ACM Green, Asian Civilisations Museum | Free



This two-way mirror invites viewers to inspect the artwork and themselves. Its amorphous reflections blur the distinction between dreams and memories, and shadows and ink, gradually revealing hidden messages. This disintegration is a reminder of materiality, and draws our attention to how forms and interpretations change over time. The longer you look at the artwork, the more you will see. This installation is a response to

Desmond Kon's poem "This Mirrored Dias of History and Signs" and Italo Calvino's novel "Invisible Cities", and is inspired by the quotes above. The mirror serves as a metaphor for the dialogue of the encounter between the East and West. In Chinese literati painting, the mirror is considered an illusionary picture. It presents a view of what is behind us, reflecting our past.

Light to Night Signage

Headed by Daryl Goh, with students of Nanyang Polytechnic's School of Interactive and Digital Media

10, 11, 17 & 18 Jan 2020 | 6pm - 11pm | St. Andrews Road, National Gallery Singapore | Free

Founder of the NPE Art Residency & Gallery and tech-artist Daryl Goh works with students of Nanyang Polytechnic's School of Interactive and Digital Media to design and fabricate a 3D light installation specially made for Light to Night Festival 2020.

open books: *The Worlds of Haruki Murakami*

10 - 19 Jan 2020 | All day | The Arts House Lawn | Free

open books will be returning to *Prologue* as a signature highlight of the festival, featuring 2 colourful visual dioramas on The Arts House lawn. The books in this edition will be designed by Ly Yeow and Tell Your Children, and produced by The Merry Men Works.

Art X Social (Festival Village)

10, 11, 17 & 18 Jan 2020 | 6pm - 11pm | St. Andrews Road, Connaught Drive & Empress Lawn



St. Andrew's Road, Connaught Drive and Empress Lawn transforms into a festival ground with local F&B entrepreneurs serving up scrumptious array of food offerings, craft/art stalls promoting sustainability, along with live music performances from up-and-coming local musicians and life-sized games! Molly - a mobile library bus operated by the National Library Board - will also make a special appearance on Connaught Drive to provide an immersive library experience for everyone with a

special curated selection of 3,000 books for the festival over the weekends.

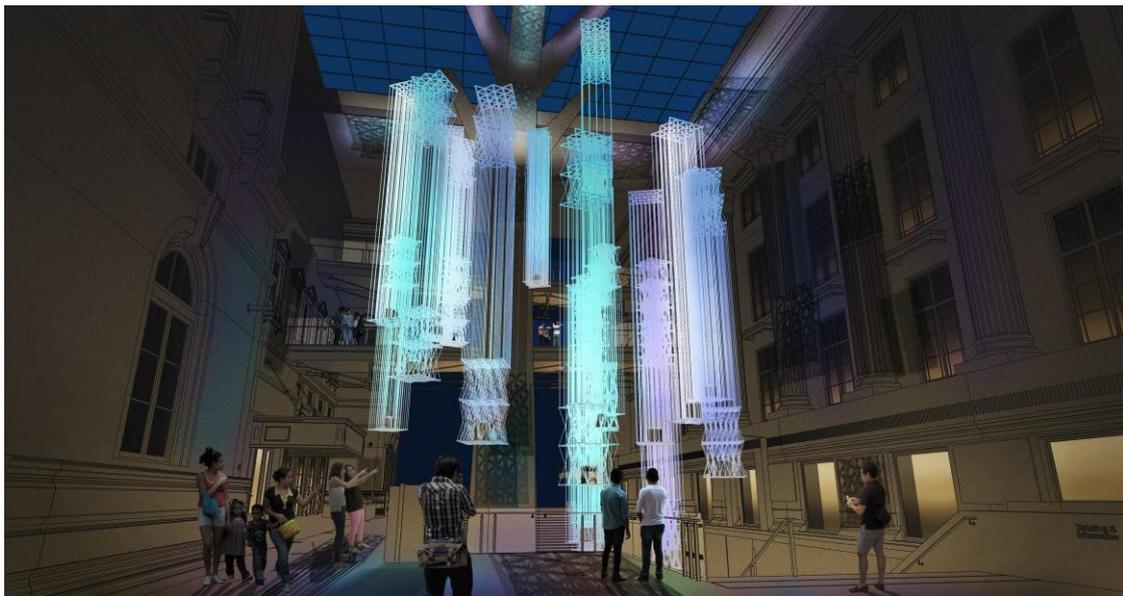
Indoors

National Gallery Singapore

Floating City

By Nipek X KNOTS

10 Jan – 1 Mar 2020 | Sun – Thu 10am – 7pm, Fri – Sat 10am – midnight | Padang Atrium, National Gallery Singapore | Free



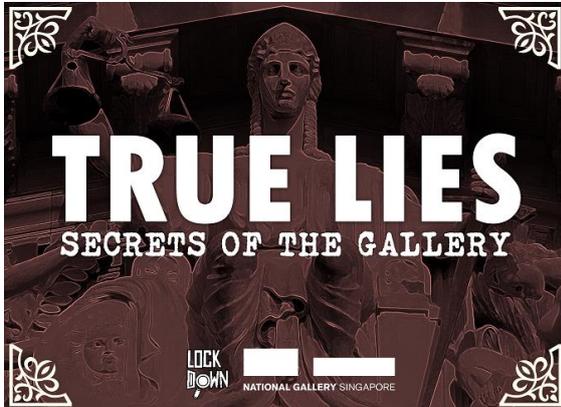
Taking inspiration from the book “Invisible Cities” and poem by Marc Nair, *Floating City* visualises a dream-like figure of a city, comprising of multiple ethereal towers suspended at different heights resembling skyscrapers in the city. The first suspended installation in the Padang Atrium, the main volume of each tower is made from strings, giving the installation varied appearances from different viewing angles, and appearing almost see-through as visitors move around the installation. The towers are lit from within, creating both an inner glow and striking effect throughout the space.

Visitors may explore the various angles of *Floating City* from different vantage points, such as from the entrance into the Padang Atrium, or on the link bridges. On the lower link bridge on Level 3, the installation forms an ethereal envelope as visitors walk through the clusters of towers.

Throughout the festival, the installation’s lighting will respond to music from the performances at the stairs Padang Atrium stairs, changing colour and intensity according to the sounds.

True Lies: Secrets of the Gallery

10, 11, 17, 18 Jan 2020 | Various timings | National Gallery Singapore | Tickets and FAQ available on Eventbrite | For players aged 13 years and above



“On 1 April 1937, a time capsule was buried under the foundation stone of the former Supreme Court to mark the 70th anniversary of the Straits Settlements. Shortly after the construction was completed, one of the workers was arrested for stealing some of the items from the time capsule. Nobody knew where the items disappeared to, until a cryptic note was discovered during the construction works to convert the building into National Gallery Singapore. Could this note lead you to solve the mystery from the past?”

In the first large-scale escape game within National Gallery Singapore, visitors may form teams of up to five during the Festival to explore the Gallery’s grounds, working together to uncover the hidden secrets of the former Supreme Court building, and gaining access to hidden passageways in the Gallery.

Produced in collaboration with Lockdown SG.

Live Performances in conjunction with Light to Night 2020

10, 11, 17, 18 Jan 2020 | 6pm onwards | Padang Atrium, National Gallery Singapore | Free

As day turns into night, revel in special performances from your favourite local performing artists and stand-up comedians at the Padang Atrium.

Funny Fridays:

Jacky Ng
10 Jan 2020
8:30pm – 9pm

25-year-old Jacky is one of Singapore’s youngest professional comedians. With a unique sense of style and humor, his wacky stories and observations has made him one of the most popular figures in the local stand-up scene.

Suhaimi Yusof X
Wang Weiliang
10 Jan 2020
10pm – 10:30pm

Suhaimi is no stranger to fans of the local entertainment scene, with 21 years’ experience in the media industry spanning radio and TV. Suhaimi has performed in hundreds of programmes and events, along with various 20-minute standup comedy routines at private functions.

Wang Weiliang started his career in the entertainment industry as a “Getai” singer before catapulting to fame through Jack Neo’s movies Ah Boys To Men 1 and Ah Boys to Men 2. His witty, street smart character portrayals highlighted his comedic personality which soon became beloved by fans on and offline. Since then, Weiliang went on to garner lead roles in films alongside hosting, singing and musical theatre.

Stephanie Chan

Stephanie Chan has been performing stand-up comedy since 2015

17 Jan 2020
8:30pm – 9pm

and is a regular face on Singapore's open mic circuit as both a comic and a host. She has opened for both international comics including Kumar and Tom Green, and has also featured acts at shows in Bangkok, Melbourne, and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Sharul Channa
17 Jan 2020
10pm – 10:30pm

Singapore's only full-time female comedienne, Sharul is one of the most well-known stand-up comics in the country. She's a winner of several notable accolades and is widely sought after in the region.

Symphonic Saturdays:

Académie of Stars
(K-AoS)
11 Jan 2020
6pm – 6:45pm

K-AoS is a teenage group age 13-16 that sings and performs English pop. Representative of the teens of a borderless new world, K-AoS members are made up of different races coming from different backgrounds, interests and countries of birth. This makes K-AoS unique as a teenage group that belongs not just to Singapore, but also to the world.

Miss Lou
11 Jan 2020
8.30pm – 9pm

A classic vintage vocalist and songwriter who blends old-school vocal stylings with modern sensibilities, Miss Lou (also known as Lou Peixin) is known as Singapore's Glamour Vintage Songbird. She uses music as a vehicle to talk about things that matter, such as self-empowerment, body positivity, and independence, and inspires others using written, spoken, and sung words.

Tabitha Nausier
11 Jan 2020
10pm – 10:30pm

Tabitha Nausier is a Singaporean pop and R&B singer who was the second runner-up in the 2009 season of Singapore Idol. In 2010, she was selected to represent the continent of Asia to sing the Official Theme Song of the Singapore 2010 Youth Olympic Games, "Everyone".

NUS Jazz Band
18 Jan 2020
6pm – 6:45pm

As the only tertiary jazz group that houses its own big band, vocal ensemble, and combo bands, the NUS Jazz Band delivers a rich brew of captivating jazz music from swing to soul, fusion to funk, and bossa to blues.

Benjamin Kheng
18 Jan 2020
8.30pm – 9pm

Benjamin Kheng is a Singaporean musician, actor, host, writer and former national swimmer, and is most well-known for his work in local band The Sam Willows. He recently embarked on his own solo project and will be performing a special stripped-down acoustic set of his original songs, including his latest single 'Wicked'.

Abby Simone
18 Jan 2020
10pm – 10:30pm

With huge influences from G-Train, Rhye, John Legend and many other RnB legends, Abby Simone and her recently formed Band, MMLD have been serenading audiences with their Tri Harmony and humorous chemistry as a band. This acoustic family of four gets up on stage with only one goal in mind: giving a bit of their soul to everyone who is a part of their musical journey.

Clement Space

By Dawn-joy Leong

10 Jan – 1 Mar 2020 | The Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium Anteroom, Level B1, National Gallery Singapore | Free

The city is filled with constant noise, crowds, smells and bright lights. Everyone is affected in some way by the cacophony, and stress levels rise with each shove, push and crunch. For the autistic person with hypersensitivity, the city can be a merciless and savage force against mental and physical wellbeing. There is an increasing awareness of access to inclusion for Autistic people in public spaces and growing in popularity is the ‘calm room’. However, these are usually designed by non-autistic persons based on medical models and there is little to no detailed consultation with actual autistic end-users.

Instead of the clinically prescriptive, therapy-focused ‘calm room’, Clement Space is an immersive experience offering intimate reflections from the rich tapestry of the artist’s own autistic senses, welcoming all into a personal sensory wonderland where curious engagement, safe respite and peaceful restoration co-exist in delicate, tranquil balance. “Clement Space” is a concept and term coined by the artist in her 2016 PhD dissertation, inspired by her psychiatric assistance dog, Lucy Like-a-Charm, a rescued former racing Greyhound from Australia.

Make and Take Activity: I Was Here

10, 11, 17 & 18 Jan 2020 | 10am – 8pm | Social Table | City Hall Wing, Level 2 | Free

We often purchase souvenirs for our families and friends when we travel. They are our ways to share part of our traveling experiences and also an attempt to keep a piece of the places we had been as remembrance. A lot of the artists choose to capture those special moments through their artwork instead of buying souvenirs when they travel.

What are your traveling stories? Get inspired by the artists in National Gallery Singapore and turn those stories of your journey into visible memory by creating your very own souvenir for a change.

Make and Take Activity: Blackout Poetry

10 - 19 Jan 2020 | 10am – 8pm | Singapore Courtyard | City Hall Wing, Level 2 | Free

We are all travellers of some sort and travelling has inspired artists, writers, musicians since the olden days. Artist Georgette Chen travelled widely in her lifetime and her letters punctuate the passage of time with sights and sounds she captured in her journeys.

Come and be inspired by Georgette’s letters and breathe new life to them by creating your own blackout poetry about travelling from her words.

Self-Portrait: A Performative Tour

10, 11, 17 & 18 Jan 2020 | 7 – 8pm, 8.30 – 9.30pm | Meeting Point: Singapore Courtyard | Free

Created and directed by founder of Access Path, Grace Lee-Khoo, Self-Portrait features writings created by multi-disciplinary artists in collaboration with the public.

This roving performance features 4 different monologues by playwright-performers Chanel Ariel Chan (Permanence), Chong Woon Yong (Merdeka / 獨立 / சுதந்திரம்)

Tung Ka Wai (The 'd' Monologues) and Wheelsmith aka Danial Bawthan (NDP 2019). This accessible and relaxed performance is guided by dancer Ammar "Ameezy" (Hello How Do You Move) and accompanied by Sign Language Intepreters Evelyn Chye (Ties That Bind) and Nix Sang (Not In My Lifetime?).

Wheelchair-friendly, Guide-dog friendly, Relaxed Performance with Creative Captioning and Sign Language Interpretation

#Artsplaining

11 & 18 Jan 2020 | 6:30pm – 6:45pm, 8:pm – 8:15pm | Meeting Point: Singapore Courtyard | Free

What does a radio DJ, musician, burlesque dancer, drag queen and curators have to say about art? Join us in our inaugural bitesize art talks where various personalities are paired up with our curators to shed new light on the artworks in the National Gallery Singapore through casual and insightful conversations. Featuring appearances by local personalities Dee Kosh, Sukki Singapura, Inch Chua and Becca D'Bus.

<p>Inch Chua X Curator Charmaine Toh 11 Jan 2020 6:30pm – 6:45pm</p>	<p>Inch has made a career as an international recording and performing artist. Her passion for the arts, wild places, and technology led her to music as her medium of expression and comfort. Inch has played at numerous festivals around the world, opened for the likes of Charlie Puth and Vampire Weekend, and more recently active in Theatre as an actress or sound designer.</p>
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<p>Sukki Singapura X Curator Joleen Loh 11 Jan 2020 8pm – 8:15pm</p>	<p>Starting her professional career as a Burlesque Artist in 2013, by July 2015 Sukki had been inducted into the Burlesque Hall of Fame, for being a "Mover, Shaker & Innovator" in the world of Burlesque. Her lavish, quirky and elaborate performances and costumes bring a modern twist to the theatrical italian art.</p>
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<p>Becca D'Bus X Curator Qinyi Lim 18 Jan 2020 6:30pm – 6:45pm</p>	<p>Becca D'Bus is Singapore's biggest drag queen. She is the producer and host of RIOT! Hosted by Becca D'Bus, Singapore's only regular drag revue, monthly at Hard Rock Cafe. She is also a producer and host of The Glory Hoes present series of film screenings at The Projector.</p>
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<p>Dee Kosh X Curator Seng Yu Jin 18 Jan 2020 8pm – 8:15pm</p>	<p>Dee Kosh is a Singaporean social media personality, YouTuber and Radio DJ. Dee Kosh is known for his straightforward manner and loud personality. He first gained popularity through YouTube and then started deejaying for local radio stations. Dee Kosh also hosts for Food King and Do It For The Money on Night Owl Cinematics and does the weekdays night show on Power 98FM.</p>
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The Arts House

Prologue 2020

Organised in conjunction with Light to Night Festival 2020

10 -19 January 2020

Prologue is an annual festival organised by The Arts House in conjunction with National Gallery Singapore's *Light to Night Festival*, as part of the Singapore Art Week. Held over two weekends, The Arts House transforms into a space where stories from Singapore and beyond are shared and experienced through words. *Prologue* invites audiences to experience a variety of programmes across different disciplines in intimate sessions, providing a space for them to slow down and get up close and personal with artists, stories, and words in this bustling city.

From 10 to 19 January 2020, the 2020 edition of *Prologue* takes inspiration from the theme of "Invisible Cities" and feature special editions of programmes from our regular calendar such as *By Candlelight*, *Note for Note* and *A Novel Idea*.

(1) Performances

Note for Note: Stop, Look & Listen

10 Jan 2020 | 8pm - 9pm & 10pm - 11pm | Play Den | Free with registration, with the option to secure a seat for all 3 sessions at \$5

16 poets lend their words to a diverse collage of poems that decipher, describe and define the city. In three unique sets, the poetry will be performed with musicians who will map a sonic landscape that blends city sounds with music.

Reflections by Varsha

11 Jan 2020 | 8.30pm - 9.15pm & 10pm - 10.45pm | Play Den | Free with registration, with the option to secure a seat at \$5

Join Indian jazz-fusion band Varsha as they present material from their upcoming EP as well as their unique arrangements of classic jazz standards. Come and enjoy an evening of exciting improvisations and virtuosic music-making.

By Candlelight: Beethoven's Fidelio

10 - 11 Jan 2020 | 9pm - 10pm | Chamber | Tickets at \$10

In celebration of the 250th birthday of composer Ludwig Van Beethoven, catch this special 1-hour version of Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*, a portrayal of the triumph of love over injustice in the invisible city that is a prison.

Beethoven Listening Party

11 January | The Arts House, Living Room | 8pm - 9pm

Ever wondered what was the big fuss about Beethoven but were too afraid to ask? Join us at this special listening party for a brief introduction to Beethoven's life, music and contemporary relevance, and be guided through the seminal recordings of his key works so you can start building your own Beethoven playlist.

Goddess of Words Work-In-Progress Showcase

17 January | The Arts House, Living Room | 9pm - 9.30pm

Join us at this work-in-progress showcase of Goddesses of Words and sneak a peek at writer-director Grace Kalaiselvi's latest work, which is based on the poetry of local poets Pooja Nansi and Deborah Emmanuel.

A Novel Idea: *Of Mice and Men* VS *The Handmaid's Tale*

17 - 18 Jan 2020 | 8pm - 8.45pm & 9.45pm - 10.30pm | Play Den | Tickets at \$10

Cast your vote and watch John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* or Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* come to life in a condensed but precise stage reading of excerpts from these literary classics, directed by Samantha Scott-Blackhall, and performed by Janice Koh and Daniel Jenkins.

(2) Exhibitions and Installations

open books: *The Worlds of Haruki Murakami* by Ly Yeow, Tell Your Children and The Merry Men Works

6 Jan - 3 Feb 2020 | The Arts House Lawn | Free

open books returns to The Arts House lawn with two new colourful dioramas which take inspiration from the magical realism of Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. Created by Ly Yeow and Tell Your Children, and co-designed and built by The Merry Men Works, experience the dreamy and fantastical landscapes of Murakami's fiction, as seen through the eyes of visual artists, with these whimsical works.

Marjorie Doggett's Singapore: A Photographic Record

14 Nov 2019 - 2 Feb 2020 | TAH Gallery | Free

Organised by The Photographic Heritage Foundation, this exhibition records the work of the pioneer local photographer, Marjorie Doggett, curated by Edward Stokes. From 1954 to 1957 with camera in hand, Doggett explored Singapore, recording its cityscapes and buildings with striking images and detailed texts, many of which have not been seen before.

Justice for All by Yinka Shonibare CBE, RA

13 - 30 Jan 2020 | Chamber | Free

Inspired by the architecture and history of The Chamber at The Arts House, acclaimed British-Nigerian contemporary artist Yinka Shonibare CBE, RA will create a new site-sculptural installation, titled *Justice for All*. This site-specific installation is presented by The Asian Art Institutum, together with The Arts House and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London.

(3) Other Activities

Pop-Up Bookstores by Booktique and Closetful of Books

10, 11, 17, 18 Jan 2020 | 7pm - 11pm | The Arts House Porch | Free

Drop by and browse our pop-up bookstores, specially curated by Booktique (10 & 11 Jan) and Closetful of Books (17 & 18 Jan), featuring a selection of Sing Lit titles, classic literary works, as well as books featured in *Prologue's* programmes.

Film Screenings of *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Odile & Odette* by Yinka Shonibare CBE, RA
17 & 18 January | 10am - 10pm | The Arts House, Screening Room | *Free Admission*

As an accompaniment to Justice for All, the Asian Art Institutum will also be screening two films by Yinka Shonibare: *Un Ballo in Maschera* (2004) and *Odile & Odette* (2005).

Victoria Theatre and Victoria Concert Hall



Neil Chan: Constructing Imaginations with World Music

10 Jan 2020 | 8.30pm - 9pm & 9.45pm - 10.15pm | Atrium, Victoria Concert Hall | *Free*

Listen to Neil as he constructs pieces using styles and techniques of Carnatic, Jazz, Flamenco, and Andean music.



Arpeggione Quartet: Fantastic Worlds and Where to Find Them

10 Jan 2020 | 8pm - 8.30pm & 9.15 - 9.45pm | Victoria Concert Hall | *Free (register at Eventbrite)*

Explore fantasy worlds and distant realms through the sounds of music from string quartet arrangements with the Arpeggione Quartet.



NAFA Saxophone: Souvenirs from Singapore

11 Jan 2020 | 8.30pm - 9pm & 9.45pm - 10.15pm | Atrium, Victoria Concert Hall | *Free*

The NAFA Saxophone Quartet is sure to perk up your night with iconic melodies, through arrangements of folk songs from various cultures.



NUS Electronic Music Lab (Mitch Advent and btcprox) ft. Stephanie Ow and Ben Ang: Crossroads

11 Jan 2020 | 8pm - 8.30pm & 9.15 - 9.45pm | Victoria Concert Hall | Free (register at Eventbrite)

Expressed through elements of electronic and traditional Asian music, *Crossroads* is a modern Singaporean's struggle whose inner turmoil is fuelled by a sense of injustice, unfairness and failure to create an impact in the world.



Accordions Singapore: City Lights

17 Jan 2020 | 8.30pm - 9pm & 9.45pm - 10.15pm | Atrium, Victoria Concert Hall | Free

Lost in the bustle of the city, discover the elusive sounds of the accordion with Accordions Singapore as they define their own world and spread their culture through music.



Bossa Celli: Pictures at an Exhibition

17 Jan 2020 | 8pm - 8.30pm & 9.15 - 9.45pm | Victoria Concert Hall | Free (register at Eventbrite)

Thoughts and memories can be translated into music, which evokes precious memories. Listen to Bossa Celli as they play arrangements of pieces for the cello ensemble.



NVPC Showcase

By selected participants of the National Piano and Violin Competition

18 Jan 2020 | 8.30pm - 9pm & 9.45pm - 10.15pm | Atrium, Victoria Concert Hall | Free

Be wowed by past and present talents of the National Piano & Violin Competition, as they showcase the best of their music making at the Atrium of Victoria Concert Hall during Singapore Art Week.



SNYO Percussion: Sonic Journeys

18 Jan 2020 | 8pm - 8.30pm & 9.15 - 9.45pm | Victoria Concert Hall | Free admission (register at Eventbrite)

The young talents in the Singapore National Youth Orchestra Percussion Ensemble return with a fun audio-visual spectacle, featuring a motley of objects being struck for effect and affect.

VCH Tours

11 & 18 Jan 2020 | 3pm - 3.45pm & 4pm - 4.45pm | Atrium, Victoria Concert Hall | Free admission (register at Eventbrite)

The Victoria Concert Hall (with the Victoria Theatre) is one of the most recognisable landmarks in Singapore, as a public hall completed in 1905 in memory of Queen Victoria. Take a tour through the monument with the trained docents and unravel the history and stories of generations who have crossed its gates.

Asian Civilisations Museum



Interactive Dark Tour

By Dialogue in the Dark

10 - 11 Jan & 17 - 18 Jan 2020 | 7.30pm - 10pm | Asian Civilisations Museum Discovery Room (Basement) | Free with registration via Peatix: [10 Jan](#), [11 Jan](#), [17 Jan](#), [18 Jan](#)

Travel back in time to experience life in a port city by going on a special multi-sensory tour in the dark led by Dialogue in the Dark.



A Magical Journey

By Tan Sock Fong

10 - 11 Jan 2020 | 8.30pm | Asian Civilisations Museum Level 2 Foyer | Free

Embark on *A Magical Journey* with sand artist Tan Sock Fong in an enchanting, ephemeral performance.



Drop-in UV Body Marbling

By Psyckaholics

10 - 11 Jan & 17 - 18 Jan 2020 | 7pm - 10pm | Asian Civilisations Museum Porch

Dip your arm into a swirl of vibrant colours resembling the buzzing vibe of Singapore's civic district in the day – and watch as the effect comes to life under black light at night!



Hand-drawn Postcard Workshop by Vertical Submarine

17 - 18 Jan 2020 | 7.30pm – 8.30pm | Asian Civilisations Museum Lobby | Free with registration via Peatix [here](#)

Create hand-drawn postcards of your dream city with the artists of Vertical Submarine! Suitable for beginners.



Blink and It's Gone

By LASALLE College of the Arts

17 - 18 Jan 2020 | 8.30pm, 9.30pm | Asian Civilisations Museum Green | Free

Keep your eyes peeled for dancers from LASALLE College of the Arts performing their hypnotising *Blink and It's Gone*.



ACM Highlights Tour

10 – 11 Jan & 17 – 18 Jan 2020 | 7pm - 8pm | Asian Civilisations Museum Lobby | Free

Join our friendly museum guides and student docents on a highlights tour through the galleries of ACM!

(Please be at the lobby 5 minutes before the tour start time.)

Scholarly Treasures Interactive Stations

Till 22 Mar 2020 | 10am – 11pm | Asian Civilisations Museum Level 2 Foyer | Free

Create your own Chinese hanging scroll artwork, pick up a copy of our trail, and discover fun facts about artworks in the *Living with Ink* exhibition. Suitable for ages 7 and up.



Living with Ink: The Collection of Dr Tan Tsze Chor

Till 22 Mar 2020 | 10am – 7pm daily, till 9pm on Friday | Asian Civilisations Museum | \$12 for Singaporeans & Permanent Residents, \$20 for foreign residents and tourists (50% discount on 10, 11, 17 and 18 January 2020)

Living with Ink: The Collection of Dr Tan Tsze Chor at the Asian Civilisations Museum presents highlights from the over 130 treasured Chinese paintings, porcelains, and scholars' objects donated to the museum since 2000 by the Tan family. The exhibition includes paintings by modern Chinese masters Ren Bonian, Xu Beihong, and Qi Baishi, as well as works made by artists in Singapore in the 1930s through the

1980s, when Dr Tan was building his collection. *Living with Ink* explores how Chinese art was appreciated by networks of overseas Chinese collectors and philanthropists, giving you a glimpse into the Singapore art world in the turbulent 20th century.

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

All Things New

10 – 11, 17 – 18 Jan 2020 | 5.30pm – 10pm | Esplanade Forecourt Garden (near Jubilee Bridge) | Free

Celebrate new music and welcome fresh faces as Singapore artists embark on brand new chapters of their musical journeys.



Derrick Tham X Lim Tay Peng | 10 January | 7pm - 7.30pm, 8.15pm - 8.45pm, 9.30pm - 10pm

Derrick Tham is most known for writing the hit song 《最近》, sung by Taiwanese artist Sam Lee. Tham has recently launched his new solo EP 《感情用事》 Emotionalism in 2019. Lim Tay Peng is a Singapore Music Trio comprising of lead singers Aaron Matthew Lim and Tay Sia Yeun; and

composer-pianist Peng Eng Chi Sheng. The group's quirky name is a combination of their surnames, while also directly translating to "Drink Iced Tea" in the Hokkien dialect'. Lim Tay Peng have launched four singles to date and they will be performing some new material in this performance.



Andrew Paul Chen | 11 January | 5.45pm - 6.15pm, 6.30pm - 7pm

Working his way up from the streets of Orchard, Andrew Paul Chen is an upcoming singer-songwriter that has made waves in the local busking scene since 2018. Inspired by the likes of James Bay and John Mayer, his sound combines R&B/Soul with Indie Folk and moves, breathes and flows with his audience.



DDE Trio | 11 January | 7.45pm - 8.15pm | 9.00pm - 9.30pm

Each of them accomplished musicians in different genres from chamber music to pop and jazz, the members of the DDE Trio decided to come together to realise their common love for melody. Drawing on their eclectic influences, they present a selection of original tunes and reimagined classics tastefully rearranged for this instrumentation.

The DDE Trio are David Loke (violin), Eugene Chew (bass) and Daryl Tay (guitar). As accomplished players in areas as diverse as chamber music, pop sessions and jazz fusion, the trio play with an energetic and conversational vigour.



Zeeaura & Eugene Seow | 17 January | 7pm - 7.30pm, 8pm - 8.30pm, 9pm - 9.30pm

Zeeaura is a singer-songwriter, music educator and performer who has recently started composing for theatre works that are geared for young audiences. This evening, she will be sharing her works composed over the years, sharing her views about the brushing of teeth, being lonesome and her adventures in Pulau Ubin. Zeeaura will be accompanied by Eugene Seow, a multi-instrumentalist, educator and composer. Seow is a part of Teng Ensemble and has performed extensively all around the world.



LIX | 18 January | 6pm – 6.30pm, 9pm – 9.30pm

LIX will present a series of mashups of pop songs with classic erhu pieces. Expect pieces such as Adele's *Someone Like You* in combination with 《空山鸟语》 and OneRepublic's *Counting Stars* with 《病中吟》. Backed with electronic dance beats to get your feet moving, LIX will get the party started with their refreshing remixes.

LIX is Vocalise's newest quintet that combines Western brass and Eastern strings to breathe new life into modern fusion music. With a bold sound and a unique set up, LIX presents an unexpected partnership between trombones, trumpets, and the erhu. Unorthodox? Yes. Too ambitious? Definitely not.

LIX comprises Likie Low (erhu), Erwin Tan (trombone), Hendrik Kwek (trombone), Darrel Koh (trumpet) and Zhou Binghan (trumpet).



Vocalise Chinese Quartet | 18 January | 7pm - 7.30pm, 8pm - 8.30pm

Classics never go out of style—but that doesn't mean we shouldn't keep reinventing to bring fresh perspectives to traditional music. Enter Vocalise Chinese Quartet (VCQ), featuring the erhu, dizi and a rhythm and bass section comprising zhongruan and daruan.

Performing a fusion of contemporary songs and classical Chinese pieces, VCQ will delight you with English pop and jazz hits such as *Someone Like You*, *Photograph*, *Fly Me To The Moon* and *Feeling Good* in addition to well-loved Chinese songs such as 《那些年》, 《城里的月光》 and 《我要你的爱》.

VCQ comprises Likie Low (erhu), Goh Ting Xuan Beverly (dizi), Estee Goh (zhongruan) and Emilea Teo (daruan).

Annex C: Sonnets commissioned by Light to Night Festival 2020

LIGHT TO NIGHT FESTIVAL 2020 FOUND//FOUNT SONNET: FOREWORD

“The catalogue of forms is endless: until every shape has found its city, new cities will continue to be born.” These words from Italo Calvino now gain a new poignancy. The form of choice this year is a quintessentially Singaporean poetic form, the found//fount sonnet. How may a form lend itself to ruminations and articulations of this island city? How does its own shape become the structure that might birth a language as incisive as it is allegorical, as luminous as it is allusive?

Four eminent Singapore authors — Desmond Kon Zhicheng-Mingdé, Kevin Martens Wong, Marc Nair, and Nuraliah Norasid — have been invited to pen four found//fount sonnets, each designated a zone within the Civic District for ekphrastic inspiration. The truth of the matter is this: no other poetic form possesses the classic stature of the sonnet, so much so whole nations have conceived their own original distinctive variations.

With this in mind, Desmond was intent on inventing Singapore’s very own form, forging formal requirements of the found//fount sonnet to be playful yet deliberate, open enough to deliver immense aesthetic range. As a paean to all things Singaporean, the found//fount sonnet would imbibe bits of the old, in issuing the new. What is needed was a source text, from which fourteen found words could be unearthed through a specific Oulipean method, Oulipo itself being an aesthetic borne of constrained writing techniques. Suitably, the source text here is Calvino’s celebrated novel, *Invisible Cities*.

Offering itself as a point of inspiration for Light to Night Festival 2020, this book’s depiction of imagined cities, written up as prose poems, is remarkable. Through a conversation between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan, these appressed narratives cut to the bone, contemplating such varied aspects of human experience — from desire to memory, history to time, language to culture.

How do our four Singapore authors extend that conversation, to say something eloquent and meaningful about the Civic District, with its deep historical significance? Fresh from the Singapore Bicentennial, how do these sonnets help articulate each author’s thoughtful meditations about place, the relationships we cultivate vis-à-vis the spatial and the temporal? What is the expressed nature of these intimations?

Reading these stellar creations, one immediately gains a sense of each author’s stylistic ingenuity, as well as genuineness of heart. There are beautiful tropes — imagery, theme, motif, affect — that thread the four especial sonnets, as if a conversation had percolated innocuously, finespun and delicate. The constructions remain astonishingly beautiful in their particular vision, yet they inhabit and traverse many shared meanings. How then do their fellow artists read and interpret these sonnets, breathe into them new life through their own standout artistic renderings?

We hope that everyone will discover something within these poems that might intrigue or surprise, resonate or intimate. When you first encounter them, you might just fall in love with them instantly, if only for their technical virtuosity and great intelligence. Each poem possesses such lyric and narrative heft, and one becomes witness to its power and vitality. Every time you reread them, you are likely to come away with something unique and different, a testament to their timelessness.

To invoke another aphorism from Calvino: “Today each of you is the object of the other’s reading, one reads in the other the unwritten story.” What stories do we carry within us, unseen and buried? What remains unwritten, that might surface in greater understandings of ourselves, and how we view the world? Let us all, indeed, become readers and writers today, of our selves and of one another. Let us reread, even reauthor. Let us be welcomed into the rarefied space of art. Let us immerse ourselves in the magnificence of our collective imagination.

Preparing the Canvas

Marc Nair

i

The canvas is unprimed, uncoated.
It is held in romance, held with vision; a trader’s drifting dream.
Deep harbour, deep desire. **From** an eyeglass of empire,
the rudiments of settlement are drawn. The canvas is fragile,
open to suggestion, textured with possibility.

ii

Before the flags are raised, before the city is sketched, stretch it
to fit the frame. And somehow it is still stretching, unrelenting;
cracks and flakes ignored. The tools that pull taut have stapled us
to frames of decision. The sea has never stopped ceding; the jungle
has never stopped howling. The **night** has always been loamy
on our skin. Hold us to the light.

iii

The answer to size the **city** was a solution of glue, applied
to cobble different races together, to protect them from the acidity
of clashing ideals, which would cause the canvas to deteriorate.
The city before it is city was always a plan with pencilled-
in hope. It was the impresario of larger islands; a foot stuck in the door
between two nations. A bold stroke, port before the storm.

iv

To ground is to provide a uniform colour, texture and level of absorbency.
The **streets** overlaid with gesso and asphalt, the lines stretching inland
a little more every year, the buildings beginning to attain their solid shapes,
people learning to tongue the name of a place to hang their boots at night.

v

Perhaps the map is not a map but tightly wound coils of immigrants,
trading skin for **skein**, a loose conflagration that burns enough to power
engines of industry, to keep reproductions of socially acceptable
icons on the dinner table, shipped mementos to strange harbours.

vi

There is always the risk of too much water. Water in the **foundation**,
water flooding the basements, water surfacing rebel artefacts, opinions

of older civilisations. Hence the need to prime with some water, but not too much, to coat the surface evenly, making sure there are no gaps. It is at the corners and the edges where deterioration is bound to happen.

vii

A paper towel will clean the stirrer and any spills. Once dry, disagreements are difficult to dissolve. Not everything is water soluble. The answer is **identical** to certain habits of thought and speech, a moral code that embodies survival with occasional sunsets. And ships in the harbour, possibly at rest, for that feeling of pleasance.

viii

About this time all the trees turned silver, lost their leaves.
A mourning song rose from birds who hadn't yet been named.
A tiger keeled over, always shot on still mornings, always **at** a crossroads.
A galley of paintings began to fill the drawing rooms of the wealthy.

ix

There is sand somewhere in all of this. Sand that **was** and will be.
Sand between the toes of the canvas, sand shoring up the easel,
sand sinking and rising and building, not beaches, but bastions.

x

Was the canvas fully dried before the city started painting itself in?
Was it ever a township, an idea of crown slipped through paperwork
into colony? These reproductions of flora and fauna are somewhat
European in nature, a treatise between still life **and** life, stilled.

xi

Fabrics with fine grain are great for detailed work,
for shading clarity into grey, **pursuing** progress down
the length and breadth of an expanding island.

xii

To **each** a cup of your own concoction. Choose
your levels. Pick your flavours. Walk the hallways
and admire the struggling decades of our neighbours.
Everyone speaks in murmurs, as if justice still treads
with fierce steps towards her chambers.

xiii

If only we could (and sometimes we do)
unpick the canvas and start again.
But it always ends in **dream**.

xiv

It is what we have seen **that** frames us;
that holds us to blueprint and bathos,

that allows new hands to wield the brush,
that keeps the city painting over itself.

* The source text of this found/fount sonnet is “Cities & Desire 5” from Chapter 3 of Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, translated by William Weaver. The fourteen found words are as follows: from, night, city, streets, skein, foundation, identical, at, was, and, pursuing, each, dream, that.

Author Statement:

The poem comes from three points of inspiration; the mood of Calvino’s cities, the National Gallery (as well as a nod to Farquhar’s drawings) and the larger space of the city occupying a general trajectory of growth since its founding. The extended metaphor of the city being a canvas that needs to be primed and treated is roughly paralleled to various points of progression, though I have tried to avoid being prescriptive, preferring to keep a sense of mystery even as particular elements, e.g. sand, spill from the physical canvas into reality. The city is mood board and morass; it is both the source of inspiration and a site of tension. These are things that we cannot resolve, so perhaps all we are reduced to is this incessant need to keep on building, to keep painting over who we have been in the hope of making a masterpiece of what we will become.

Keywords & Themes:

Painting, gallery, history, colonisation, growth, canvas, trade, landscape, progress, city, map, sand, reclamation, trees, harbour, water, frame.

Author Biography:

Marc Nair is a poet and photographer. He is a recipient of the 2016 Young Artist Award. He has performed spoken word in solo and group performances for fifteen years in more than ten countries and has represented Singapore in international poetry slam competitions. Marc has published six solo volumes of poetry and has released another four books in collaboration with visual artists, photographers and graphic artists. His latest collection of poetry is *Sightlines*. Marc is also the co-founder of Mackerel, an online culture magazine.

The Roadmaps of Districts

Nuraliah Norasid

I.

The whitewashed marbled walls with an overlay of quartz, of amethyst, and lucky jade were the doing of the traveller at the end of a long sojourn where he wondered for seventy-eight heaving days if he would ever see land again; if the boat, then the ship, then the boat again that brought him to this place at the tip of the golden peninsula, where the wooden jetty that led up to twin pillars like the minarets of back-home shrines, was not to break and sink them all.

II.

The box he carried in his hands was the undoing of a generation of pragmatism, of trades known only to families. He had dreamt of dreams unclouded by the dust that buries cloth under rains, making cakes of flour no one could eat. What was he cost of produce sold back to the hands that harvested them?

III.

“Another one,”—when the one was full. The scribes could not work with the sounds of the opera singer practicing her vocals, what more the new violinist learning his parts down on the floor below. A blind scribe never knew he had been writing the same word over and over on the stack of paper in front of him as he conducted the orchestra in the theatre of his mind.

IV.

Three towers pierced upwards from a spread of low-lying buildings. The rickshaw driver sat in the passenger seat after a cup of *teh* from a nearby roadside stall. His intent was only to rest, a while, his bones after a long few hours of work, in the shadow-plateau of the looming mausoleum. He never woke up again.

V.

Up on a hill, it was found, by the resting place of a long-dead king, the broken bowls that the maid had thrown away for fear of punishment. The student, today, held them up wondering at their significance and use in the world before. Down below, in the archaeology of cities, the discarded were answers to the puzzles that the living never wished to see answered.

VI.

In the nearby field, a covered hole held the secret whispers of a broken mistress whose shadow would not have been tolerated in the clubhouse where her lover sat drinking afternoon coffee with his cricket buddies. As dirt fell through her fingers, her very skin sloughed off to join its ilk in the overlay.

VII.

This was the sound of surging rioters: a distant static then a rousing thunderstorm, a screaming language against injustices. Amidst it all, the quiet panic of a man, whose job it was to hold off his brothers while his masters ran for cover.

VIII.

A smart-clad man stood drawing lines in the sand and declared that these were the boundaries of his sovereign nation. Another did the same and opined that these were the limits of democracy. Now, both stood within the same four lines as a wall of glass rose up on all sides of them. And they said, “This is fine.”

IX.

Visitors were invited to play a game of guessing the number of opportunities within the glass cuboid on display in the gallery. The first row of visitors stood on wooden boxes, their bodies bent over, counting, estimating: seventeen by twenty, for area, then volume. Amirah tried to glimpse the box through gaps in the already towering bodies, answer slip crushed in one damp palm.

X.

Nature has a bit of the world every night when the dim of the street lights grips at life’s unpolished fabrics. As the world falls silent and the windows of the closely-built towers click off into black, a song rises from the surrounding trees. A fruit drops, bursting its sweet smell into the heavy air.

XI.

The word of the stranger is that the field will be gone one day. The bald patch of ground in the middle has long since grown over with grass. The green chain-link fences still **bear** the distortion from catching one too many soccer balls.

XII.

The old groundskeeper could no longer recognise **his** own face in the captured image of the old black-and-white photograph. Instead, he remembered the courtship sounds of bottles clapping against one another as he signalled to his wife to meet him by the lean-to near the beach.

XIII.

In the middle of cleaning the billboard, the girl lifted her pair of glasses to it and, looking through one side, saw four **people**: the office yuppie with spiky hair, the nurse in uniform, the athlete striking a pose, and the obvious doctor with the stethoscope around his neck. Through the side with the broken lens, she saw only colours—of clothes, of hair, of skin—and worried if her father would buy her a new pair.

XIV.

He knelt, carpet grass cutting into his knees as he groped about for the ring that had slipped from his finger in a moment of fiddly absence. The years had made it loose. Constant wear had dulled it; criss-crossed it with cuts and scratches. When he finally found the golden circle, and slipped it back onto his ring finger, the fear died away in his throat. He looked up into a bloated image of **him** in the silver face of a massive, unmoving globe.

* The source text of this found//fount sonnet is “Trading Cities” from Chapter 4 of Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, translated by William Weaver. The fourteen found words are as follows: traveller, of, another, plateau, cities, a, this, Now, the, grip, bear, his, people, him

Author Statement:

“The Roadmaps of Districts” takes point from the geographies and social archaeologies of the areas within and around the district in which the Victoria Theatre is situated, moving through quiet, personal moments as they happen through history, spilling into our present time.

“Roadmaps” traces the journeys of the inhabitants of these districts and places stops at the fractures. Just as the in traveller must weave in and out between commuters and pedestrians in order in order to traverse the country from its centre and perhaps into its peripheral heartlands, so too must the reader, the “contemplator” of spaces navigate the individual stories to see the larger one of the city.

Keywords:

doing & undoing, learning & unlearning, archaeologies, voices—lost and found, “subsummation”, summation, urbanity, development, memory, and signage

Author bio:

Nuraliah Norasid graduated with a PhD in English Literature and Creative Writing from Nanyang Technological University (NTU), her thesis a work of fiction that examined the creative use of writing in highlighting issues such as marginality, isolation and socio-historical traumas. That work

eventually resulted in *The Gatekeeper*, the novel which won her the Epigram Books Fiction Prize in 2016. Her writing, both fiction and non-fiction, has been published in *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore (QLRS)*, *Karyawan Magazine*, *Budi Kritik* and *Perempuan: Muslim Women in Singapore Speak Out*. Nuraliah enjoys highly solitary pursuits like stamp-collecting and single-player video games.

This Mirrored Dias of History and Signs

Desmond Kon Zhicheng-Mingde

“For the signifier is a unit in its very uniqueness,
being by nature symbol only of an absence.”

~ Jacques Lacan

I.

What object do you see, and attend to? The Kangxi emperor asks, ready to dab **it** with his calligraphy brush, a fearless dot and whorl. As if to sign in a new language. As if to denote it, at once an object of affection and objet d’art. Which object becomes memory; which memory becomes object?

II.

The **window** looks out into Nusantara, the idea of whole lands afloat, betwixt and between. This is what liminality looks like. Mapped ideas, adrift. Dasein, like this moonlit moment, present to itself. These contemplative walks are their own indistinct rites of passage; we pause, if only to take in the view, to breathe.

III.

Seated in a cave temple is a monk. Beside her is an unfurled scroll, on **which** anything can be written.

IV.

The field is awash with deities, the performers painted in gold, as if lacquered. Inscriptions glisten on skin, and no one can make out the real from the symbolic, truth from fiction. Look at Avalokiteshvara **and** the Virgin Mother. Look at Vishnu with wings. Look at Krishna as a boy, Mount Govardhana raised into the sky with his left hand.

V.

Look at the Mughal emperor Akbar, his left hand placed over his son Jahangir’s nape. On the right is **the** Christ figure, white as ash, encased in a bureau shrine from Guangzhou. Look at the hilltribe pilgrims, what warmth of feeling. They brush their fingers over the elemental and unexpected. Burnished silver against old wood.

VI.

Look at **the** opium daybed, grand like the box carriage of a chariot. It is stark and bare. On the namwood are carved scenes from more folklore. You see Du Fu, his dreamier Tianshui in relief. Do you hear the rain songs, Yiruma and David Gray piped in from the rafters? You see Peter Gabriel singing “Here Comes the Flood”. You see Robert Creeley reading his love poem about “a decent happiness”.

VII.

The wide raised area of the **dock** has become a stage. The archaeologists and historians are discussing story and anthropology, and what to demythologise. A child is painting a resin figurine of Sang Nila Utama — that fifth effigy, simulacrum of the statuesque — as if to say there's colour in our oral tradition.

VIII.

This is a house of mirrors. You are standing in front of a window, the promise of a specular image. In the infinity mirror, Lacan understands our ways of the imitative and gestural, how the self forms its ego **for** its own subjecthood. Where and when is life not one more mirror stage? How does one ever stand outside the looking glass?

IX.

So these are **the** histories neatly marked off and buttoned down — of the adjectival. Of the urban and rural, the ethnic and gendered. Of kinship and unfamiliar ties. Of the defamiliarised. Of the public and intellectual, the economic and diplomatic. Of the world, as we have known it. Of a particular people, and the Other.

X.

Say yes or no to the *objet petit a*, Lacan says. The monk lifts the singing bowl, both hands over the thick rim of its open mouth. The singing bowl doubles as a begging bowl. Around the cave temple exist bowls of every kind, in every colour. Celadon, copper, bronze, beryl, blood, plum, teal, slate. Look at the Sufi kashkul, baby dugout inlaid with camel bone. The Peranakan porcelain has retained its lustre, its kitsch of coral pink, emerald and bright yellow. Say *a*, Lacan says, as if to enunciate its presence in *autre* or *agalma*, or something beyond translation.

XI.

In the *objet petit a*, there remains hope. **In** its unknowability and ineffability, there remains a freedom — of ideas, of action, of being. The *objet petit a*, Lacan says, can be but what remains, what's residual and extraneous, even incidental as if chanced upon. Like an objet trouvé, found and retrieved, then reclaimed. The *objet petit a*, Lacan says, may allude to a sense of semblance. The likeness or likability of the sign. There it rests, like a resplendent mandala, at the heart of today's Borromean Knot.

XII.

The mandala, **docked** within, hovers, softly abob. It is also ready to dissipate and disappear. Each motif shifts between clarity and a dim murk, contingent on your state of mind, itself shifting between states — the subliminal and the supraliminal.

XIII.

Arjuna's arms are aloft, rising like high masts **in** the air. They are free of the body of the chariot. Look at Krishna as charioteer, how shadowless and defined. Look at the reins and the horses. Look at the turning wheels, the endless path. What do they signify?

XIV.

The art of seeing demands the act of apperception. It is an indictment of the simple encounter, deepening, set in motion. I am seated in my room, surrounded by things and objects. There is an

empty bowl on the floor. There is the sound of bells and water. In front of the bowl stands a plane mirror, and everything reflected in it.

* The source text of this found/fount sonnet is “Cities & Memory 3” from Chapter 1 of Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, translated by William Weaver. The fourteen found words are as follows: it, window, which, and, the, the, dock, for, the, say, in, dock, in, a.

* The ideas of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan have deeply influenced post-structuralist theory. Expounded on by philosophers like Hegel and Heidegger, the German word “dasein” translates as “being there” or “presence”. Avalokiteshvara is a bodhisattva, also seen as Guanyin in Chinese Buddhism. At the heart of the Bhagavad Gita is the dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna, Krishna being an avatar of the god Vishnu. The Asian Civilisations Museum contains an exhibit of Shrinathji, mentioning the famous legend of Krishna lifting Mount Govardhana. Another rare exhibit is an antique Christian bureau shrine, dating back to the 1730s. The most eminent of Mughal emperors in India, Akbar reigned from 1556 to 1605. Similarly, the Kangxi Emperor remains one of China’s most illustrious rulers, with his long reign from 1661 to 1722. Born in 712, the Tang poet Du Fu is recognised as one of China’s greatest poets. The pared down 1990 recording of Peter Gabriel’s “Here Comes the Flood” can be found on the album, *Shaking the Tree*. The line from Robert Creeley is excerpted from his poem, “The Rain”.

Author Statement:

This lyric essay looks at the object, and contemplates every kind of phenomenon as a kind of constructed artifice. Every object may be liberated into the allegorical or metaphorical. The trope of the “gaze” accompanies the unnamed speaker presence as it walks through the Civic District, in particular the Asian Civilisations Museum and the area around it. This is an introspective journey, the intimations manifest in how these objects are seen and perceived. “Which object becomes memory,” the speaker of the poem asks, “which memory becomes object?” The essay works off Lacan’s ideas of the mirror stage and *objet petit a*, adopting certain dominant tropes. These tropes include the window, mirror, bowl, chariot, image, movement, stillness, self, identity, liminality, history, story, and most important of all, the nature of the sign.

Keywords & Themes:

Objects, Memory, History, Self, Identity, Presence, Absence, Art, Time, Space, Colour, Language, Signification, Signs, Symbols, Metaphor, Chariot, Bowl, Image, Mirror, Mandala, Borromean Knot, Contemplation, Introspection, Ineffability

Author Biography:

Desmond Kon Zhicheng-Mingdé is the author of an epistolary novel, two lyric essay monographs, four hybrid works, and nine poetry collections. A former journalist, he has edited over twenty books and co-produced three audio books. Among other accolades, Desmond is the recipient of the IBPA Benjamin Franklin Award, Independent Publisher Book Award, National Indie Excellence Book Award, Poetry World Cup, Singapore Literature Prize, two Beverly Hills International Book Awards, and three Living Now Book Awards. He helms Squircle Line Press as its founding editor.

So We Might

Kevin Martens Wong

I

Find **certainty**, you and I, in this place and time, when everything has its place and time except you and I. You because you forgot me, and I, because I can never forget you.

II

Because you were **right** about me, all along. You knew where I would be, all this time, waiting by the river and the rivers that meet here, at this point, rising down up into the darklight.

III

You know where I've gone, where the darklight walks the **many** gardens beyond, calling to handmaid and herald, servant and shaman, ready to be sworn into legend. Where her harbourmaster knows every arriving boat by name, and where the songs settle into the dearth, ready to dance anew.

IV

And I'll call out to you, sometimes, across the worlds that separate us. But not always. Better you live in those other universes, better you in those other lives, **than** I lying empty here, embraced by the river as she, too, yearns for the Roads that once sheltered the sea.

V

I wonder if you, out there, all the yous that must still live and cry and fight and survive---I wonder if you, maybe, have tasted the **bitterness**, delicate and flickering, that still slips beneath the bumboats to stir every empty night to splendor.

VI

I wonder if it is the letters **of** my name, not yours, who stubbornly forget to be forgotten.

VII

I wonder if it is **by** chance that you and I, by some trick of the night, have found shelter here, beneath the remnants of the trees that once remembered this place.

VIII

I wonder if it is truly this **place** where you have not been buried, or if it is another place, another time, where you are anchored, where the great naus have hidden away with the fastest, swiftest koleks known to the stars.

IX

If only I had known who once sailed these waters. If only I had seen where these rivers might take these dreams. If only my soul might have been moored to **another**, so I might

X

Live to the fullest before your hull **first** brushed against mine, and before the sea first brushed against yours, and clamored, begged for more, that you might be hers, forever, one of the constellations forever anchored to her depths, so you might

XI

Love to the fullest before you loved this uncertain, reluctant island, before I became this vessel of the just, clamoring, begging to be released from these anchors forever anchored to my own depths, so we might be

XII

Just us, just you and I, the memory, and the one whom it left behind.

XIII

But I still stand upon Cavenagh Bridge. I still look into your grassy depths, and still wish for the worlds to meet here, in this garden, in this place anchoring elsewhere and some other time, where all the crises of all the straits lie glittering in the night, and all the futures can be sighted beyond the sea, bobbing, twinkling along the Roads of every new eternity still yet to be born.

XIV

And in your boughs moves the image of you, a thousand stories begun by the river, one story in the atlas of a hundred thousand yous roaming free, fighting, dancing, dreaming. Perhaps this is where things begin, in your beautiful, fragile end. Perhaps this is where ends begin, so you and I might, too, learn how to still together live.

—

*The source text of this found/fount sonnet is “Hidden Cities 5” (pp. 146-147) from Chapter 9 of Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, translated by William Weaver. The fourteen found words are as follows: Certainty, right, many, than, bitterness, of, by, place, another, first, the, just, wish, image.

Public Author Statement:

‘So We Might’ was inspired by the inscription on the Cenotaph, “They died so we might live”, the purpose of the Cenotaph itself, to memorialize those whose remains do not actually lie within the Cenotaph but elsewhere, mood, tone and content of Calvino’s “Hidden Cities 5”, especially the suggestion that “all the future Berenices are already present in this instant, wrapped one within the other, confined, crammed, inextricable,” and my own personal connection with and love of Esplanade Park, where I used to spend many a night standing along Cavenagh Bridge and the waterfront gazing out at the river and the sea. The persona of ‘So We Might’ is imagined to be a family member, friend or lover of someone memorialized by the Cenotaph who yearns for the return of that person, but who is now forever ‘elsewhere’; however, inspired by Calvino’s “Hidden Cities 5”, I reinterpreted ‘elsewhere’ to mean in an alternate reality or universe where that person may not have passed away.

Keywords & Themes:

loss, possibility/possibilities, certainty/uncertainty, yearning, nostalgia, history, hope, alternatives, time, change, evolution, paradox, convergence, endlessness, timelessness, sacrifice

Author Biography:

A speculative fiction writer, linguist and teacher, Kevin Martens Wong is also the founder of Unravel: The Accessible Linguistics Magazine, and the founder/director of Kodrah Kristang, the youth-led multiethnic grassroots initiative to revitalise the critically endangered Portuguese-Eurasian Kristang language in Singapore. His first novel, *Altered Straits* (2017), was longlisted for the inaugural Epigram Books Fiction Prize.