



# Shannon Lee Castleman

## Jugaads of Southeast Asia

Photo Series

2009

### The Work

“*Jugaad*” (जुगाद) is a Hindi word meaning “an improvised solution: inventiveness, ingenuity, cleverness.” In India *jugaad* also refers to motor vehicles that are made and mostly used in small villages as a means of low-cost transportation. Some *jugaad* owners have gone into business with their vehicles, transporting and selling goods from place to place. In this way they have been able to support their families for generations. Shannon Castleman’s *Jugaads* series highlights the intrinsic importance of mobile business within the traditional street culture of Southeast Asia. The series of photographs included in this exhibition portray existing businesses in Tanjung Pinang (Indonesia), Hanoi (Vietnam), and Bangkok (Thailand). Castleman’s photographs celebrate this special cultural heritage which is vanishing at a rapid pace.

### The Process

Since moving to Singapore in 2004, Castleman has been involved with several projects concerning the plight of mobile business owners in Asia. Using a large-format camera, long exposures and cinematic lighting techniques, she captures the minute details and the uniqueness of each of these vehicles. An important decision within these works is the exclusion of the human figure. This tactic is meant to further the example of these kinds of business as typical of the community and culture to which they belong. The absence of the mobile business owner calls attention to their existence by their very omission.

The production of a perfect stage to highlight details guide the viewer to see, not only the traditions and ingenuity of the owner, but the cultural identity of an entire group of people that share the same challenges, social values and responsibilities. In a sense, Castleman’s conscious engagement creates a theatrical feeling that influences reflection over more philosophical questions such as the loss of cultural diversity and the possible extinction of sustainable ways of transport and living.

## Artist Statement

“Necessity is the mother of invention and in Southeast Asia inventiveness combined with local traditions has created very interesting street peddlers and itinerant occupations. While technology has made daily life easier for most people it has also eradicated many jobs specific to the region. As societies become more corporatised and people become more mobile, the future looks bleak for the peripatetic entrepreneur.

My work explores the relationship between people and the urban environments in which they live. In this ongoing project my interest is in making artworks that document, in the hope of preserving, many of these vanishing characters that were once found on every corner in Singapore and are still quite prevalent in other parts of Southeast Asia.

With my photographs I aim to shine a spotlight on something ordinary to many with the hope that they will make the viewer look these carts/bikes with a new-found appreciation”.



Hanoi, Vietnam



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### Shannon Lee Castleman

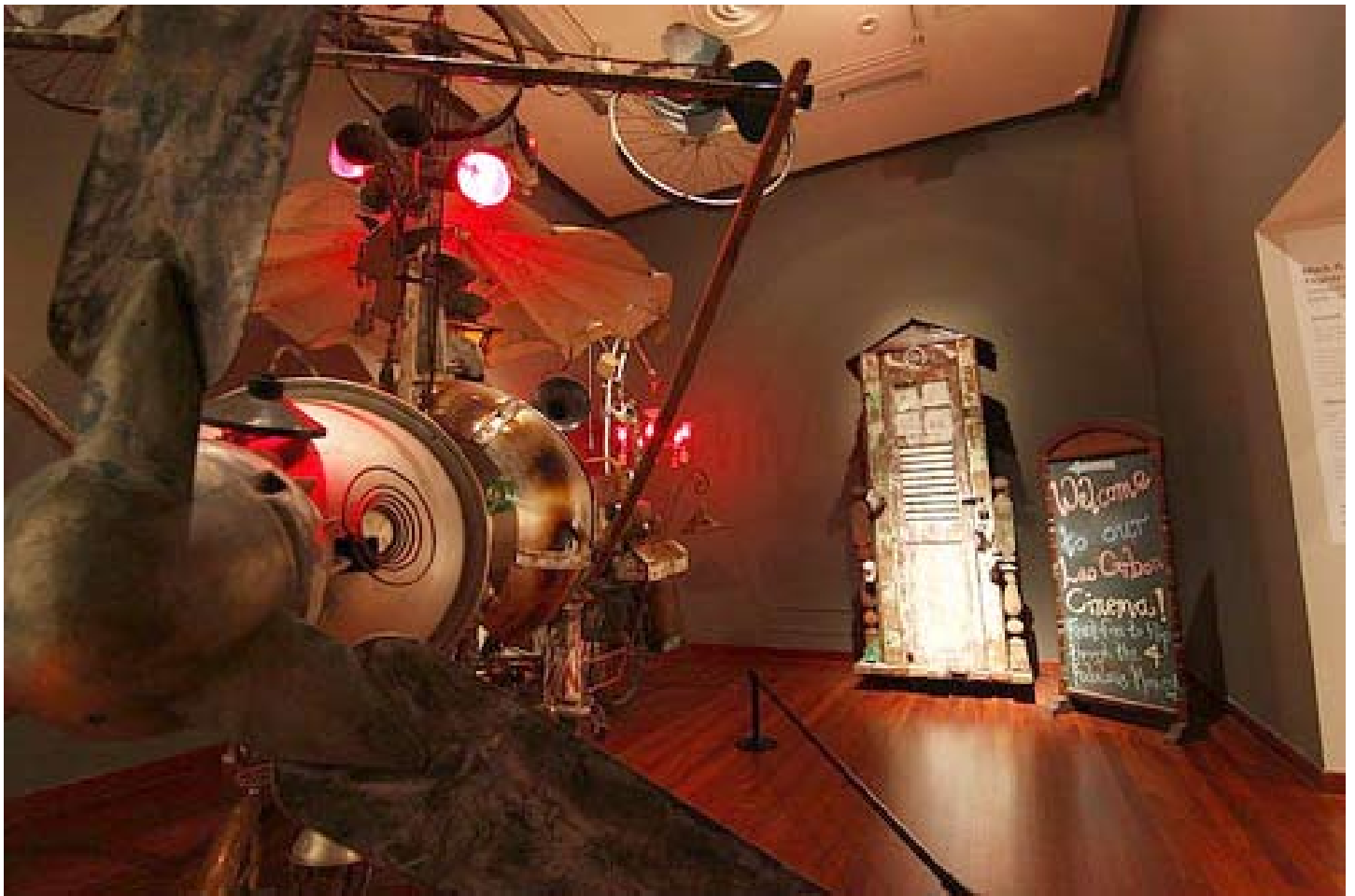
Born in 1970 in Fort Tomas, Kentucky, U.S.A, currently lives and works in Singapore.

Shannon Castleman graduated with a BFA in Photography from the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, in 1993. She spent eight years working as a freelance photographer, before returning to study at the San Francisco Art Institute, receiving her MFA in 2004. From 2004 to 2006 she taught photography at the Dar Al Hekma College, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Her work has been included in a number of exhibitions, both in her native United States and internationally. Castleman’s research also includes installation works that are best described as synchronised community video projects and have been created and exhibited in Singapore and Cuba. She is an Assistant Professor of Photography and Digital Imaging, at School of Art, Design and Media at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.



*Bangkok, Thailand*





# Mark R. Kaufmann

## The Fabulous Flights of Fancy Time Machine

Interactive photo installation

2008–2009

### The Work

*The Fabulous Flights of Fancy Time Machine* aims to transport passengers – through their personal imaginative vision – to a time before the advent of cinema. The installation is inspired by the history of fantasy transportation, based on concepts and engravings from the 19th century. This was when the progress of the Industrial Revolution unleashed a storm of creativity in the minds of inventors, scientists, designers and artists alike; ranging from ideas envisioning vehicles that were capable of becoming modes of transport by land, sea and air, to the surreal and whimsical, remaining dormant as a vision on paper, the drafting board or backyard workshop. The *Time Machine* acts as the ‘transporting vehicle’ into a world of visual images that are presented through devices that are similar to the mutascopes in the early days of cinema.

The background to this work came about from the artist’s research during the development of his installation entitled ‘Image-Time-Machine’ which was exhibited at the Jendela Gallery at the Esplanade in December 2005 as part of the ‘Pop Puri’ group show. The ‘Image Time Machine’ was a work inspired by a form of transport, the trishaw or *becak*, the 3-wheeled, leg-propelled, half bicycle-half carriage seen all around the streets of Southeast Asia. The artist’s research into this interesting vehicle, inspired him to dig into the archives in Singapore and Malaysia, and to interview the people who actually made these vehicles by hand, and also to purchase a few of these discarded or damaged vehicles for the ‘Image-Time-Machine’ installation. During his research, the artist came across a series of photos taken during the 1970s featuring a local man who modified his trishaw into a mini travelling movie-house. This interesting piece of ingenuity was based on a vanishing heritage now only seen in parts of India and in small, remote villages of Asia. A simple box is mounted atop the trishaw, and a projector capable of casting movie images on the interior of the box, allows people to peer inside to view the moving images via a ‘peep’ hole. For a small fee, kids and adults alike could interact with a three-dimensional movie-house, while engaging into the two-dimensional world found inside the box.

*The Fabulous Flights of Fancy Time Machine* aims to be a machine of illusory transport, capable of allowing the viewer/participant to interact with the transporter vehicle, as it delivers a range of specified images of futuristic transport, giving the viewer/participant a unique perspective and experience in “photography”.

### **The Process**

The structure of the Fabulous Flights of Fancy Time Machine is made from salvaged materials, recycles, all put together in an assemblage. A lot of time was spent searching for the right piece to fit into the work, and then fixing all the pieces together. Many of these pieces of salvaged material were from old demolished houses around Singapore – some of them dating from at least 50 to 60 years ago. So, the whole structure of the Time Machine is a representation of the bits and pieces of Singapore’s architectural and historical heritage.

The images in the mutascopic devices are stills from video and they provide a kind of animated visual when the viewer/participant turns the wheel. The viewer/participant is then transported into his or her own personal and individual visual experience, different from the usual communal cinematic, television or projected viewing that is the common mode of visual communication nowadays.

### **Artist Statement**

Mark has a compulsive penchant for nostalgia objects and materials. In the past few years, while based in Singapore, he has established himself as a ‘recycling artist’ who can make good of found objects and materials, creating a new lease of life and presenting them in a different light. He believes that every material has something to say, if arranged in a way that allows the material to reveal itself in its colour, form, texture and presence – thus allowing the material to begin a second journey of purpose through the language of art.

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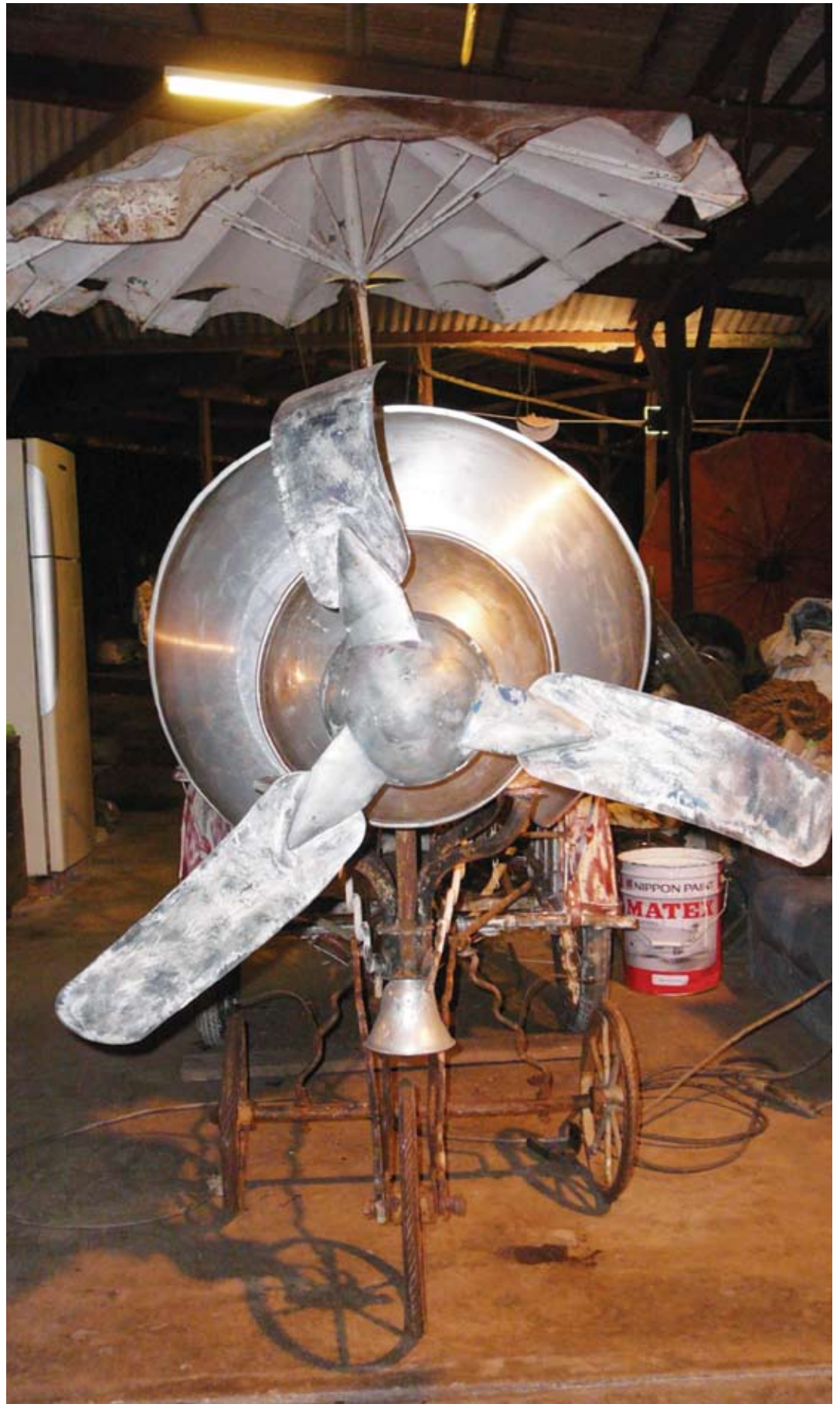
### **Mark R. Kaufmann**

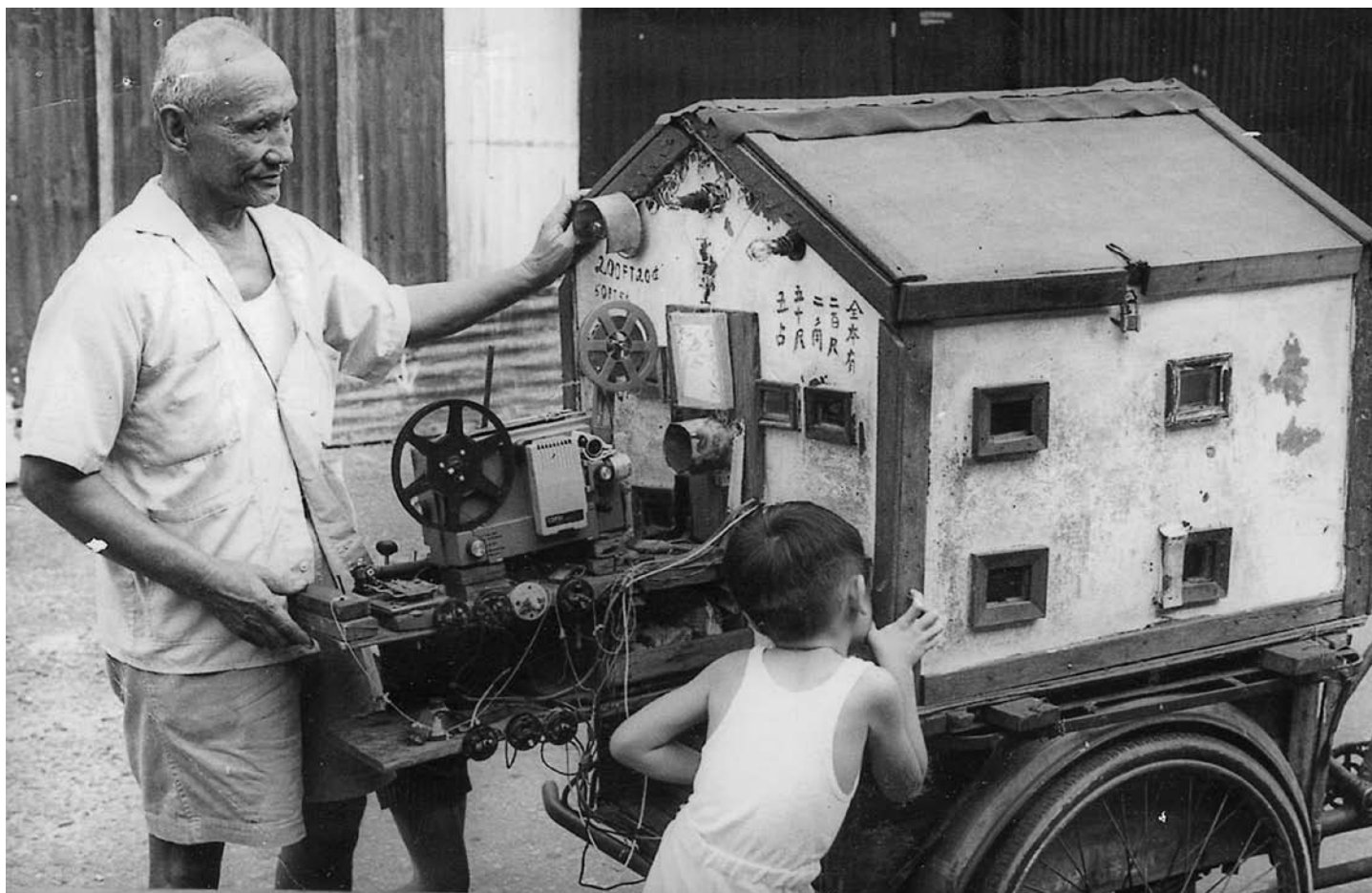
Born in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, currently lives and works in Singapore

Mark R Kaufmann is a Singapore Permanent Resident, originating from Canada. Mark enrolled at Lasalle College of the Arts in 2002 and became Brother McNally’s protégé, as he was interested in Brother McNally’s forte, which was sculpture. It was through Brother McNally’s encouragement and nurturing that Mark decided to commit wholeheartedly to his artistic practice. Mark’s most recent works include: *Image-Time-Machine*, which was featured in the group exhibition *Pop Puri Singapura*, held at the Esplanade, Singapore from November 2005 – January 2006. He also participated in the ‘Kuo Chuan Lifestyles’ group show, held in conjunction with Little Red Dot, Singapore, which featured a wide variety of artists based on one street in Singapore. Mark was invited to be a guest artist in the ‘Sense & Sensibility’ pottery exhibition, held at The Arts House, Singapore in October 2006. In February 2007, Mark’s Botak Boneheads transport series of 3-dimensional whimsical work was featured in the Raffles City Mall, Singapore, Eco Luxe show, which featured art made with recycled or eco-related themes.









*Cinema on wheels*  
A miniature movie house on a tricycle in 'The New Media', 1974  
*The Straits Times*



# Chua Chye Teck

## April 2008, Tokyo

Photo Series

2008-2009

### The Work

At first glance, this series of 12 colour prints on textured paper containing a declination of 12 tones of pink mimics a pantone chart. In this minimalistic artwork Chua Chye Teck explores memory as a medium of transport in time and space. Depicted in an abstract way, his colourful memory of a trip to Tokyo in April 2008 is progressively erased. Each tonal change leads to a shift in perception, creating an awareness of a fading memory. In this particular project the artist explains his concept thus: "...the colour of the cherry blossom in Tokyo is the image I have in my memories, I hope these photos help to create for the viewer the experience of transport of time without an icon".

### The Process

A single square of canvas was painted and repainted in exacting ratios of red and white before being photographed and then printed on archival art paper. Painted 30 times, the square was shot with a digital camera in the same way a product shoot is conducted. Only 12 pictures were finally selected to offer a regular progression of tones wanted by the artist. In this particular work, painting is used as a tool of photography and serves to mislead the viewer on the exact nature of the work: are these paintings or photographs?

### Artist Statement

Chye Teck has been exploring the themes of time, space and memory by tracing the transformation of housing, habitation, and the evolution of urbanism in Singapore and its resulting impact on city dwellers. He likes to capture life from within the soul of his subjects, and explains that he has not "found a good enough reason to work with the human figure".

### **Chua Chye Teck**

Born in 1974, Singapore, where he currently lives and works.

In 1996 Chua Chye Teck graduated with a Diploma in Fine Arts from LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts, Singapore. In 2000 he obtained his Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT, Singapore Campus). Between 1998 and 2001, he participated in international exhibitions showcasing works in a variety of media – sculpture, photography, installation, painting and drawing. These exhibitions include those held in the Malaysia National Art Gallery (1998), the *Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh* 1999, and the *Open 2000*, the *3rd International Exhibition of Sculptures and Installations* in Italy (2000). In 2002, he was selected to represent Singapore in *Asian Comments*, a 24-hour photography event organized by the Asia-Europe Foundation in Copenhagen, Denmark. In 2005, he received a Certificate of Distinction in Photography for the 24th instalment of the UOB Painting of the Year Competition and participated in the Singapore Art Awards held at the NAFA Art Galleries. He was commissioned in 2006 by the International Photographers and Researchers Network (IPRN) to undergo a 3-month residency in the United Kingdom where he explored the social consequences of urban policies and presented his views on architectural differences between the UK and Singapore. His interest in urban icons and consumer culture has been developed into new projects on social behaviour exhibited in museums and art galleries in Singapore. In 2009 he was awarded a one-year residency at the prestigious Kunstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin.





# SPACE

Exposures



*What really happens when you sleep in a train (Seoul)*

# Dominic Khoo

## Emotions in Transportation

Photo Series

2008-2009

### The Work

Dominic does not like his photographs to be looked at and admired once but rather, each visit to the photograph should bring a new element to the eye. There is always something different that one might not have noticed before. To start this photo series, he asks viewers 'What's wrong with this picture?', and to look at what could have been a typical scene – but of course is not. Dominic improves his work with narration. Each photograph, taken either in China, Korea, or even France, tells a story that anyone can easily imagine and continue, a story about emotions and transportation in daily life.

### The Process

"I've always felt that there is an incredible range of emotions especially when I am roaming around the train stations, waiting by the road, watching cars and buses go by, quietly aiming my long lenses at people on bicycles, and also when they're just hovering around these places having a fight or a deep passionate kiss. This 'voyeuristic' series of photographs is shot completely without the subjects knowing; such was my distance from them and hence the ability to capture true emotion. These photographs have not been digitally manipulated."

### Artist Statement

A firm believer of purist values, whether it be in how certain things are made, or how a photograph should be shot, none of Dominic's work – ever since he started shooting – has been digitally manipulated. The works on display are no exception. He believes in waiting, no matter how long, for the right moment to appear in life. But whilst we anticipate that moment, it sometimes comes like a thief in the night. Dominic's camera is an extension of himself, and his is always ready to capture whatever surprises life throws at him.



**Dominic Khoo,**

Born in 1968, Singapore, where he currently lives and works.

Dominic achieved his Masters Photographer's Association (UK) accreditation under two categories of avant-garde portrait and journalism. It is the first time a professional photographer has qualified under two categories simultaneously, and Dominic brought this one step further by winning runner-up awards for Photographer of the Year in both categories. Dominic's photographs won both first and second prize in the MPA Press / PR Photographer of the Year competition held in November 2007. Named as one of the rising stars of Asian photography, Dominic took control of his first SLR a week before he left for an annual watch convention in Basel and Geneva. Since then, his photographs have appeared in regional and American magazines. He has shot portraits of several top models and celebrities, including Chopard owner Caroline Scheufele. The 2007 Breast Cancer Foundation calendar featured the solo works of Dominic, and Nikon showcased a series of his photographs in conjunction with the launch of their new pro-series flagship camera on 20 November that year, as well as in and on the cover of an issue of *Focus* magazine. Dominic was nominated by the National Heritage Board for the Innovative Fundraiser Award at the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Awards started in 2004 by President S.R. Nathan.



*Looking for her Seoul mate.*



*What a bald man thinks of on a Sunday.  
(Shenzhen, China)*



*Will he live to see the future.  
(Seoul)*



*What he is going home to.  
(Seoul)*



*Self Portrait and Portraits*



*What's wrong with this picture*



# Chun Kai Qun

## Carmageddon

Interactive photo installation

2008-2009

### The Work

Carmageddon is a miniature diorama of a construction site created by Chun Kai Qun. A damaged signboard informs us that this is an abandoned project to construct a shopping complex. The site is now transformed into an unsupervised stunt-driving course where there are death-defying jumps and plenty of explosions. Kai Qun's concept lies in the idea of play and wildness within an urban landscape. It is expressing a form of escapism perhaps derived from his experiences in Singapore where the only way to escape from city life is to travel. His images are inspired by the idea of having groups of people such as artists occupying under-utilised areas and turning them into a place of energy and free expression.

As for the photographic aspect of the work, Kai Qun took stereo-photographs of the diorama. He rediscovered his childhood toy, a viewer that shows 3D pictures. Now equipped with an understanding of the working principles of the toy, he takes us on a journey that progresses from fun in play to deliberate manipulation.

### The Process

"I rediscovered the 3D-viewer toy called a stereoscope. It works by using two identical images, placing one on the left and the other slightly to the right. When the two images are put together, our brain perceives depth and perspective. In this case the 3D-viewer helps achieve this with lenses that ease or trick your eyes into seeing two images as one. I am always trying to allow the process of the work to be seen clearly, as such I have decided to present both the diorama model and the stereo-photographs together. It is also interesting to note that images in conventional photographs are flat, but over here they are almost sculptural, having depth and perspective."

“The military also uses such devices in their maps, it gives them more clarity and they are able to visualise terrains much better than on paper. The building of the diorama is planned in a way that shows plenty of perspective and depth. I have built a large landscape with many activities and scenes going on. You will be able to see a crash scene and perhaps other activities in the background. It is highly detailed and probably can stand on its own as an artwork. I guess the idea of make-believe for this work is important and I am presenting it as realistically as possible.”

### **Artist Statement**

Kai Qun’s theme revolves around childhood, play, growing up and living in a nation where people are bred as part of a workforce, like cogs in a machine. Kai Qun enjoys working with miniatures and photography because he is able to create make-believe situations, like planning explosive scenes without actually using explosives. He is also keen to expand an aesthetic consciousness based on joy and tries to engage people in something fun. At the same time, he brings out a message about what he feels about life in Singapore. Kai Qun’s concerns lie in the idea of play and wildness within an urban landscape like Singapore where the only way to escape from city-life is to travel. His images are inspired by the idea of having groups of people such as artists occupying under-utilised areas and turning them into places of energy and free expression. In the case of this diorama, an insane group of stunt-drivers have overtaken an abandoned building project, transforming it into a crash-driving course. He draws inspiration from computer games such as Grand Theft Auto and from other sources such as Google, Youtube and DIY-hobby guides.

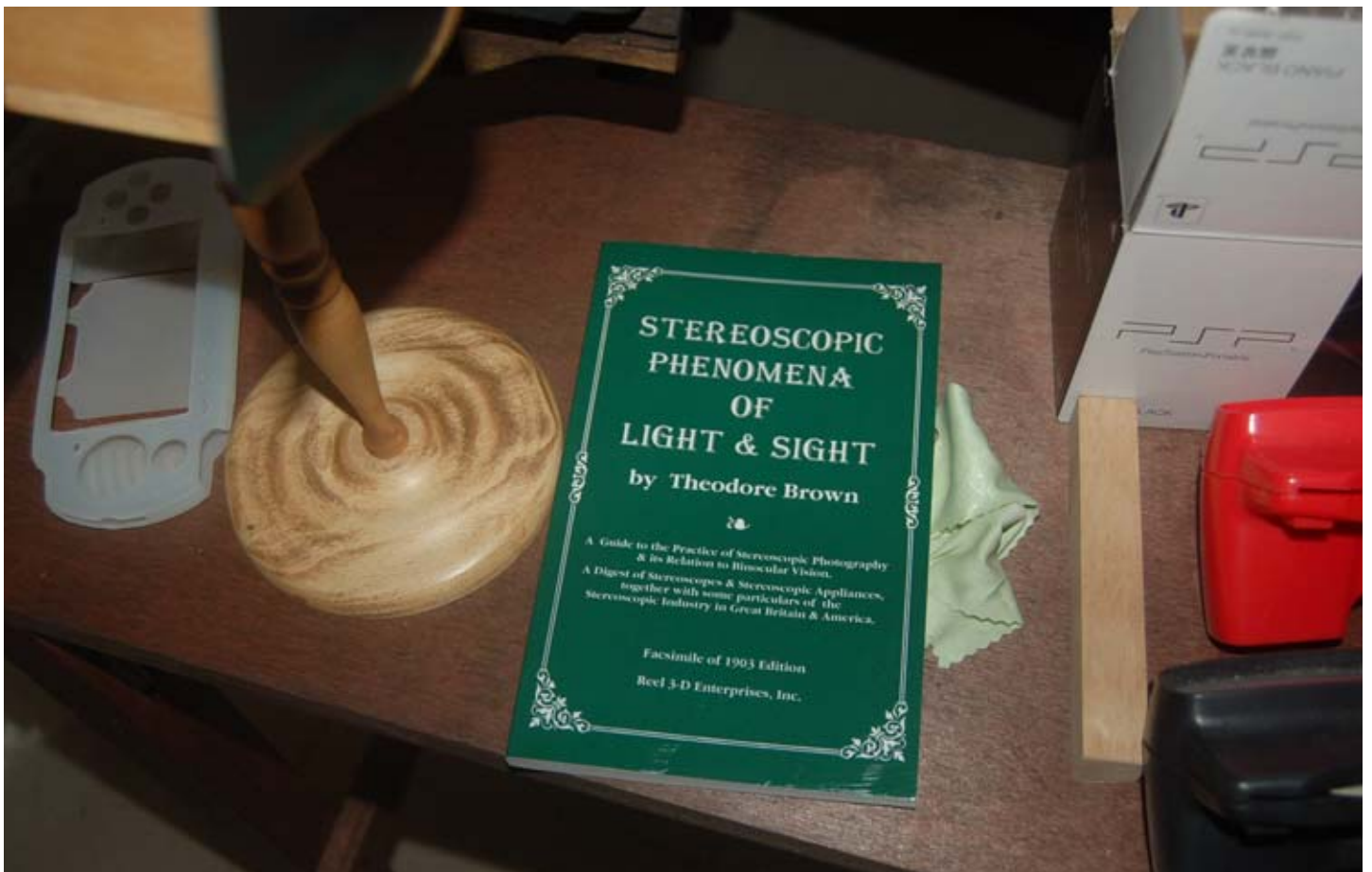


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### **Chun Kai Qun**

Born in 1981 in Singapore, where he currently lives and works.

Chun Kai Qun graduated with a Diploma in Fine Arts from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore in 2007. He is the proud recipient of the 2007 Merit Award, 3rd CDL Sculpture Award and the 2005 to 2007 Georgette Chen Arts Scholarship, from the National Arts Council in Singapore. He participated in the Venice Biennale in Italy in 2007. Kai Qun has had a number of individual as well as group art exhibitions in Singapore.





# Gilles Massot

## The Space Within the Space Within the Space

Photo installation

2008-2009

### The Work

Taking the Nine Emperor Gods Taoist festival as its initial topic, the installation *The Space Within the Space Within the Space* investigates the performative and social dimensions of the religious practice while reconstructing the different spaces structuring its unfolding.

The Nine Emperor Gods Festival has become over the years one of the major festivals of the Chinese community in Southeast Asia. A festival of mysterious origin, it is the subject of diverse conflicting legends concerning the nature of these deities. While these legends form the backbone of folk beliefs surrounding the festival, it is also generally accepted from a historical point of view that the cult of the Nine Emperor Gods is linked to the constellation of *Bei Dou*, the Chinese name for the Big Dipper. The observation and reverence of this constellation in ancient China is said to go back as far as the 30th century BCE – the Nine Emperor Gods representing the constellation's seven visible stars and two adjacent invisible ones.

A defining aspect of the festival is the essential role of transportation marking the different phases of the festival that generally spreads over nine days. On the night of the first day, the cortege of participants go to 'invite' the deities on the shore of a body of water (sea or river). The deities are symbolised by a yellow clay bowl in which large incense sticks would be kept burning for the duration of the event. This bowl is then placed in a palanquin, in turn placed onto a truck to be taken to the temple or temporary site of the celebration.

Throughout the following nine days, visits take place between the dozen or so temples of the Nine Emperor Gods temples in Singapore. This is a social interaction of both humans and deities that takes the form of colourful processions of decorated trucks travelling along the roads and highways of the city-state. On the last day of the ceremony, the deities are 'sent off', that is taken back to the shore where the whole event started, and the bowls are left to drift away in the night.



The installation is made up of two bodies of work interacting with one another to re-enact the 'inside' and 'outside' of the event. Gilles Massot's photographs, printed on polycarbonate, look at it from the 'inside' and focus on the performative aspect. They were taken during the three main moments of the festival celebrated by the Leong Nam Temple in October 2008, namely the 'inviting', the day spent visiting other temples and the 'sending off'. The photographs by his four LASALLE students, printed on paper, look at the 'outside', that is, the space forming the backdrop of the event, the physical space of Singapore and the roads travelled on.

The yellow clay bowl at the centre of the installation, the type of which is actually used in the celebration, symbolises the palanquin. The four suspended prints surrounding it represent the truck used to transport the palanquin and the participants during the event. Surrounding this centrepiece are four panoramas taken in different locations on the island according to the four directions, East, South, West and North. Each of the four walls of the room is in turn associated with one of these directions, as well as one of the defining moments of the festival. Lastly, the projected image of the Big Dipper emerging from the bowl evokes the mystical and stellar dimensions from which everything originates.

### **The Process**

"One of the highlights of the ceremony of the Nine Emperor Gods is the day spent visiting similar temples around Singapore. In 2008, having grown friendlier with Eng Seng, an active member of the Leong Nam Temple, and having followed the ritual vegetarian fast, I could join the team of the first palanquin on their truck and truly follow the event as an insider. By the end of the 10 days, I had collected thousands of photographs, without being quite sure of what would happen to them. Interestingly enough, less than two months later came a call for proposals from SAM. It asked for photographic works relating to the theme of transportation according to four sub-categories. One of them was "space". The idea of an installation based on the Russian dolls principle in which my photographs would re-enact the different spaces of the ceremony just documented quickly took shape.

Subsequent discussions with the curator led me to consider the possibility of collaboration with my students by giving them the task of setting-up the 'stage' on which the 'performance' took place. Road signs are a clear graphic evocation of the space allocated to transportation in the cityscape. One of the briefs for the semester being "text as images", their schoolwork could find with this project an interesting professional development. Their number too fitted perfectly the idea of having them to work on space and directions. With four of them, each one could be in charge of one of the four cardinal directions. Poch was working on some panorama format for his own work and this idea was further developed by Nel who thought of a display that would materialise the 360 degree view. I eventually turned the idea inside-out, the containing panoramas becoming contained landmarks."

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### **Gilles Massot**

Born in 1955 in Aix en Provence, France, currently lives and works in Singapore.

Gilles Massot came to live in Singapore in 1981 after studying architecture and photography. In 1985, he chose the path of travel photographer and writer. Since then, his work has been extensively published, and his approach to the art of travelling has resulted in many fine art exhibitions in France and throughout Asia. Gilles' work covers a wide range of styles, techniques and forms of expression, ranging from visual, to writing, to performing arts, to education. He recently published his second book, *Retro Specks Future Pixs: The Book*, that summarises his 30 years of research on the theme of time, space and their relation to photography and painting. He currently lectures photography at LASALLE Faculty of Fine Arts and Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.



**Lim Wang Jie (Wayne)**

Born 1989, Singapore

Wayne was introduced to the world of fine-art photography during his first year with the Fine Arts Faculty in LASALLE. Through this course, he feels that he has learnt to see ‘things’ in a different way and hopes this will lead him to meaningfully capture his surrounding while pursuing his strong interest in urban landscape photography.



**Lim Yeow Sen (Nel)**

Born 1988, Singapore

Easy going yet highly focused on his work, Nel is a self-taught lens-man, with a passion for learning that led him to join LASALLE. He is particularly interested in thematic series of works developed from a conceptual perspective, an approach that he likes to shape into self-produced artist books.



**Moricio Pochaulo (Poch)**

Born 1987, Philippines

Poch has been living in Singapore for about eight years and has been practicing photography for five years before joining LASALLE in 2008. He loves particularly black and white photography and intends to focus on this aspect for the medium, at least for the time being.



**Esther Sutanto**

Born 1989, Indonesia

Esther feels that this project, conducted in conjunction with her first year in the fine art photography course at LASALLE, has encouraged her to develop a rigorous practice in photography. A great opportunity to conceptualise, analyse and evaluate ideas. Her upcoming projects will focus on mosaic collages of portraits, landscape or still life images, a technique she loves to absorb herself in.







# Xavier Comas (Xavi Comas)

## Pasajero - Tokyo Transit

Video installation

2008-2009

### The Work

*'Pasajero'* is a Spanish word for 'passenger', but it also means 'fleeting' or 'ephemeral'. This double meaning is embodied in the journey through Tokyo by a Spanish traveller, *pasajero*, who is the beholder of a transient daily life marked by chance encounters.

Tokyo has the world's largest rail system, 2,300 km of railway, 136 lines and more than 1,000 stations flooded daily with a huge stream of about 20 million passengers. The Spanish photographer Xavier Comas spent weeks roaming this complex transit space, moving randomly between lines and trains, armed with his camera.

*Pasajero* proposes a visual journey that opens up an intimate window into a fascinating underlying reality concealed in silence. The project emphasises blank spaces, ephemeral experiences of life and its melancholic sense of beauty. Supplied in short sequences, the sounds of the Tokyo railway enhance the visual experience.

"During my last night in Tokyo I showed these photos to a melancholic Japanese taking drunken refuge in my hostel. Staring at me he related, in a bitter tone – you and I *Ichigo Ichie* – an expression he explained, that was quoted by a 16th-century tea master and means "one meeting, one time". Every meeting with someone, whether a stranger, or a friend we see often, should be treasured because it will never recur again. The photos taken in these trains are instances in the lives of others, suspended moments trapped in the unstoppable fluidity of time. We all are *pasajeros*, travellers of life, a life which fleeting nature causes us to feel sorrow, however, there is depth and beauty to be found in this impermanence, when at last we recognise it."

### The Process

"I spent weeks roaming Tokyo's rail network, from very early mornings until after midnight. I travel without destination and prefer getting lost in that enormous labyrinth of passages, escalators, platforms, jumping onto trains, changing coaches and lines by chance, guided by the compass of my intuition. Travelling randomly, free of space or time patterns, allows me complete immersion and increased sense of awareness: feeling the atmosphere of suspended thoughts in the silence, perceiving the space and passengers around me. During one of my random trips I met by chance a Japanese classical dancer who tells me about *Ma*, an important concept of space in Japanese arts. *Ma* may be translated as

'interval' or 'emptiness in space and time'. It is a very subtle concept that, beyond the mere physical space, implies a sensorial experience of absence as substance. The blank between lines of a *Haiku* poem; the flow of *Shodo* strokes; or the pause between musical notes. But *Ma* also permeates daily life in Japan and it helps me to better understand my experiences in Tokyo's rail network. The suspended time during a train journey. The silence in the carriages. The passengers' body language. Their wordless dialogues. The averting gazes. My subtle interaction with them. All them are an integrated part of this interval, an empty space full of meaning."

### **Artist Statement**

Xavi Comas' interest in photography started as an integrated part of his graphic work during his professional career as designer and illustrator. The image-making process pushed him towards a deep exploration into visual imagery by dissecting images into slices of visual skeleton, symbolism, conceptual load, colour language and so on. His interest lies in visual storytelling using a spontaneous photographic approach that establishes an intimate relationship with his subjects.



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### **Xavier Comas (Xavi Comas)**

Born in 1970 in Barcelona, Spain. Currently lives and works in Bangkok, Thailand.

Xavier Comas studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Barcelona University, graduating in 1995. He has also taught in Master and Doctorate programs of visual communication in Bilbao and Barcelona Universities. Xavier developed his career as designer, photographer and illustrator focusing on book cover art for years. His work has appeared on many covers published internationally. Xavier embarked on an adventurous solo journey to the Asia-Pacific in 2002 which was the catalyst of his passion for travel and life immersion. His project *Pasajero* has been exhibited in Bangkok and Hong Kong in 2008 and 2009.





# ACTION

## Exposures



**Francis Nij - Constructing  
Construction # 1**  
Plywood Surface  
2001

**Artwork**

Constructed by the artist, this is a sculpture of concrete, steel, and wood. The structure is a large, abstract, and somewhat chaotic form, resembling a construction site or a bridge under construction. It is made of concrete, steel, and wood, and is set against a background of a construction site.

In the year 2001, Francis Nij created a sculpture titled "Constructing Construction # 1". The sculpture is made of concrete, steel, and wood, and is set against a background of a construction site. The sculpture is a large, abstract, and somewhat chaotic form, resembling a construction site or a bridge under construction.

**About the Artist**

Francis Nij is a Dutch artist who works in various media, including sculpture, painting, and photography. He is known for his abstract and often chaotic works, which often explore themes of construction and architecture. He has exhibited his work in various galleries and museums around the world.

Francis Nij is a Dutch artist who works in various media, including sculpture, painting, and photography. He is known for his abstract and often chaotic works, which often explore themes of construction and architecture. He has exhibited his work in various galleries and museums around the world.

# Francis Ng

## Constructing Construction #1

Photo series

2001

### The Work

Changes in spaces interest Francis Ng greatly. With powerful perspectives this photo of a highway under construction captures spaces in transition, shifting between the traditional (typical Singapore two-story buildings or shop-houses) to modern architecture (mega-highways) and its process of construction and deconstruction in the middle of a hectic life scene at full speed (represented by the passengers of a bus in movement). The big space of the grey road positioned against the overcast grey sky, so typical of Singapore local weather, helps to accentuate the subject and generates a special mood.

### The Process

This multifaceted artist has been developing investigation in “concepts dealing with space, time and place, and the self/body”. He uses different media (installations, photography and sculpture) to bring into focus unexpected subjects and surprising compositions that lead our attention through a mysterious and symbolic narrative.

*Constructing Construction #1* is not a candid shot. It is a result of Francis’ careful observation of the constant urban change around the busy roads between his home and his work. It was after many such walks, when the bridge was halfway built, that he realised it was a form of divider or in his own words “a point of transition between one side and another of my own community”. The potential beauty in the group of the main elements of the composition and the overwhelming dimensions of the highway were studied for one week under different moments of the daylight and atmospheric conditions. The great sense of depth and perspective were obtained by the deliberate choice of a very low viewpoint, almost touching the ground. The illusion of “spacious quality”, the water on the wet asphalt, the overcast sky and even the colour of the bus were chance events encountered before the artist finished his work.

## Artist Statement

Francis Ng's works are based on intimation and metaphor. His photography could be regarded as representative or symbolic of the impermanence, rapid environmental change, and the self-negotiation with time and space. He explains, "the history of presence in space seems to go unnoticed in the constantly changing system of rapid modernisation. By exploring the permanent tension between the new and the old, and between construction and conservation, I hope my work becomes more than a mere mirror of society, engaging a wider community in a dialogue about today's urbanised living".

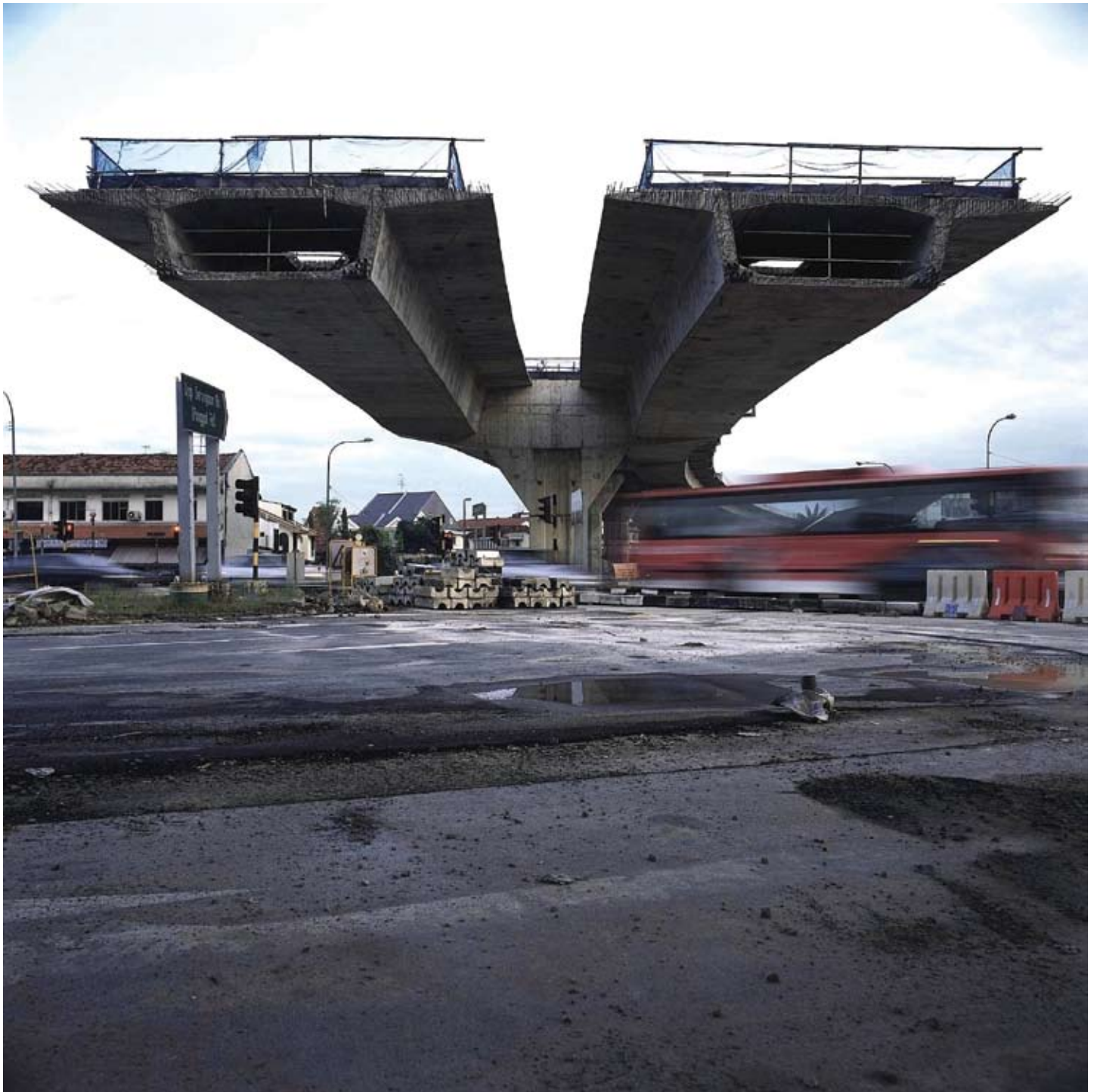


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### Francis Ng

Born in Singapore, 1975, where he currently lives and works.

Francis Ng graduated with a BFA (2001) and a MFA (2005) from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, Australia. In 2006 he obtained a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He is the winner of both the Juror's Choice and the Grand Prize in the 2001/2002 Philip Morris Group Companies ASEAN Art Awards. In 2003 he was one of the artists chosen to represent Singapore at the Venice Biennale. In 2004 he was the recipient of the 1st Prize in the 23rd UOB Painting of the Year Competition (Photography Category). In the same year, he participated in the 5th Gwangju Biennale in Korea. The National Art Council of Singapore honoured him in 2006 with the Young Artist Award and in 2007 the Hong Kong Institute of Professional Photographers distinguished him as the Bronze Winner of Asia Photo Awards. In 2007 his works were featured in the ZKM Museum in Karlsruhe, Germany. Currently he continues to show his works at a number of international platforms and complements his artistic activities with consultative and curatorial services, and as part-time lecturer at the School of Art, Design and Media, in Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.





# Samantha Tio (Mintio)

## Conveyance

Photo installation

2008-2009

### The Work

*Conveyance* is a photographic study of the traffic patterns of four cities: Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Singapore. Rendered in a science-fiction-like quality by multiple exposures, the images are created entirely within the camera, without any digital processing. The camera, with its mechanical precisions, becomes a cartographer that plots out routes of vehicles that goes past the lens. These routes are represented visually as golden threads intersecting dynamically within the frame. This work demonstrates how the constant movement of vehicles breaks the geometric and grid-like structure of the urban backdrop and translates it into abstraction.

### The Process

The installation presents a series of six polycarbonate prints suspended in space. The viewer is allowed to walk around into the space, participating in the visual experience of the installation. The series is shot with a large format camera, on 4x5 film transparencies. Each print consists of four photographs taken on the same negative, after a rotation of 90°. The exposure time varies from 20 to 60 minutes for each shot, which allows the track of the lights and movements to be “recorded” on the negative. Shooting at night then becomes an important element as it enhances the tracking of the headlights or backlights of the vehicles on a dark background. The scale of the prints, their high resolution and the transparency effects of the polycarbonates allow the viewer to appreciate the pattern-like quality of the images, with their stunning detail and strong visual identity.

### Artist Statement

For Mintio, every image is a way of sharing the outcome of the combination of time, discipline, perception and a personal intimacy with her subjects. Craft with concet comes hand-in-hand in the personalisation of her work. Each decision taken along the image-creating process, from pre-visualising, to hanging the final print becomes a way of communicating a personal feeling. Alongside this, waiting sometimes for days to shoot the right moment and taking long walks to find the right places become a large part of her shooting process. For this series Mintio wanted to push photography beyond into the realm of sculpture and installation, experimenting with printing on alternative media.

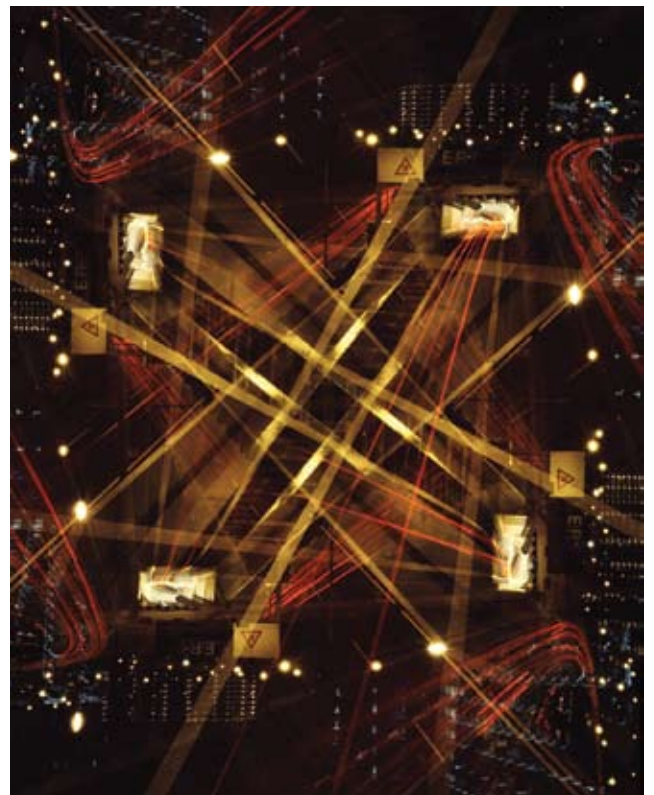
**Samantha Tio (Mintio)**

Born in 1986, Singapore, where she currently lives and works.

In 2005, Mintio went on to pursue a Bachelors in Fine Art in the School of Art, Design and Media in NTU, with photography as her major discipline. Even before her graduation, Mintio became active in the fine art circuit, producing and exhibiting works. One of her most notable series is *Concrete Euphoria*, documenting the booming metropolises of Asia. Mintio also won a scholarship to the UK to produce work in the Porosity Studio hosted by the British Council in 2009. With the love for films, Mintio has also worked with directors such as Loo Zihan and Elgin Ho producing stills for several of their films. Her background as a dancer has also brought about intense collaborations with dance artists. To date she has documented works for dance companies such as Joji Inc, Compagnie Pal Frenak, Daniel K, Van Arts Taiwan, Dance Synergy, Arts Fission, Frontier Danceland. She was the official photographer for M1 Fringe Festival and the World Dance Alliance in 2007 and Esplanade's Dance Festival in 2008.



*Conveyance Singapore (1)*



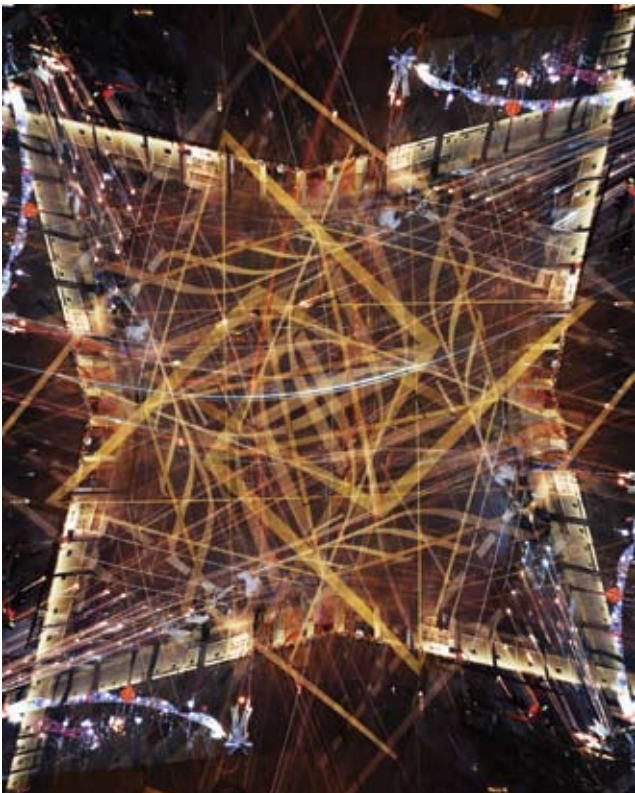
*Conveyance Singapore (2)*



*Conveyance Hongkong*



*Conveyance Bangkok*



*Conveyance Singapore (3)*



*Conveyance Kuala Lumpur*





## **Racing Forward**

Interactive photo installation

2008-2009

### **The Work**

In contrast with modes of transportation such as cars, airplanes and trains, a pedal-driven and human-powered bicycle is one of the most common vehicles used in daily transportation. Moreover, a bicycle is different from most other vehicles because it is environmentally friendly. Visitors are invited to ride the bicycle while looking at the pictures installed in a box, which is made to spin by the slow movement of the wheel.

The main purpose of this interactive photo installation is to make viewers more aware of the 'speed' of their lifestyle, in order that they 'slow' down, and spend time to care more about people around them, especially the less fortunate. This installation carries a message: we are all sharing one world; we are not just sharing the land, or sharing the air, but we are also sharing everything that happens on it and to it, including the responsibility of tackling social and environmental challenges.

### **The Process**

"I re-designed my old bicycle which I used to ride back and forth from home to school everyday into a new vehicle. I installed a seat instead of a saddle, less comfortable. There is a hexagonal box facing the seat. The photos are placed on the six faces of the box. To see all the photos, visitors have to pedal backwards in order to spin the box. If the visitor pedals slowly, the box spins slowly, thus allowing the photos to be seen more clearly. There is a brake in the middle of the back wheel to prevent visitors from pedalling forwards. All these things might seem to be abnormal or even weird to visitors, but if they take a little time to think deeply about them, they would figure out that this is actually all 'normal'. It is only that in this case, the mechanical principles of a bicycle are applied in a different way to let visitors think more about their movement. The bicycle remains stationary despite the pedalling, thus obliging the visitor to sit down, relax, and slowly look at the photos.

The spinning box contains 12 photos in total. They are arranged in two layers. For the lower layer, I intended to shoot photos related to the real life of poor people that we could see everywhere, everyday but people are too busy to really care or notice. The photos include those taken in Singapore and Vietnam. For the upper layer, I shot photos that are related to the dreams of these people, all of which derive from my short friendly talks and interviews with them.”

### **Artist Statement**

This interactive photo installation was inspired by Tung’s observation of the society in Vietnam and Singapore, and by voluntary jobs that he has done. The artwork discusses the extending distance between people that occurs during economic development. The photos are of poor and disadvantaged people who struggle to survive every single day. Yet they never give up their dreams. In addition, the interaction with the bicycle reminds us about our responsibility to improve society.

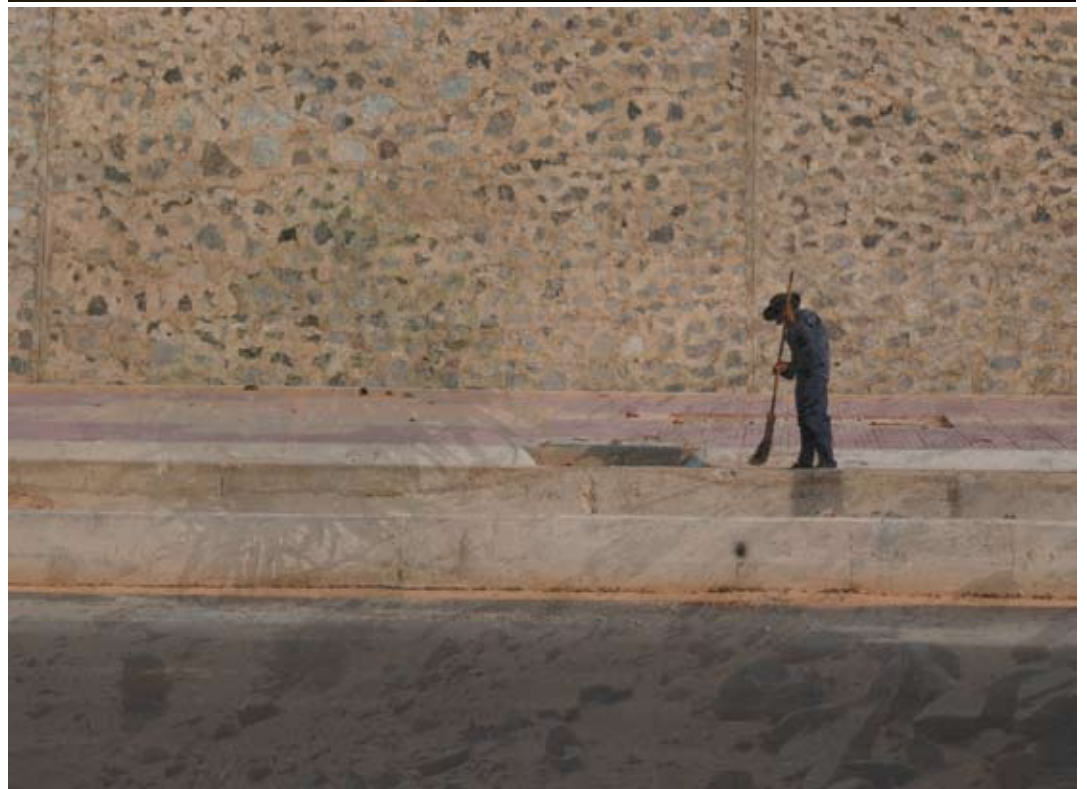


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### **Tung Mai**

Born in 1985, Saigon, Vietnam, where he currently lives and works.

Tung Mai is an artist living and working in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. He graduated from RMIT International University in 2008, in Ho Chi Minh City. Although he majors in Multimedia Design, he has done several artworks since studying at RMIT. Most of his artworks use photography as the main medium. Apart from this, he also experiments with applying multimedia to his works. In September 2008, he participated in the Singapore Biennale 2008 as a member of the ‘September Sweetness’ team.





Saigon

# Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba

## Breathing is Free 12,756.3

Video Installation

2008-2009

### The Work

*Breathing is Free 12,756.3* tracks the artist as he attempts to run the distance of 12,756.3 kilometres, the diameter of the earth. For this video installation, the artist has selected his memorial running video from six Asian cities: Ho Chi Minh City, Tokyo, Taipei, Taizhong, Luang Prabang and Singapore. Running involves a combination of a breathing pattern, physical capacity, and mental control. It becomes more difficult as the runner goes longer and further, eventually relying on his or her mental state to keep on moving. The recorded data of distance, location and speed are employed to discuss the hardship of ‘refugees’ and physical struggles. It is conceptual yet physical; a real struggle, not a performance.

“Running has been a part of many aspects of human existence. We have to run to hunt, to fight, to compete, to conquer, to condition, to escape, to survive, to move, to migrate. Inevitably, it is a given power of humanity, a force as invisible as potential energy in coal. We possess the vitality to initiate such marks of footsteps”. *Breathing is Free: 12,756.3* is the culmination of the artist’s memorial projects to date to challenge his own mind and physique to discuss layers of ideas through the action of repetitive foot strikes – running. It is a form of memorial, as so many refugees have had to and still continue to run away from their homes for a better life and sometimes just to survive. The artist’s running, his experience and struggle sets the backdrop for this long term project.

### The Process

The six videos are transformed into a frame-by-frame sequence in order to allow the viewers to experience the notion of movement and time as the artist struggles through his run. The abstraction of shapes, lines and texture vibrate in and out of the scenes as the video plays “reality”. The sequence blurs and sharpens, giving multiple dimensions to life, simultaneously flattening the artist, making him the subject of the place as well as the image. The artist is portrayed as mutating and migrating between the place and his physical self, leaving his trace as offerings. In slowing down the speed of the video, the combination of the movements of the artist running, the camera used for the recording and the surrounding environment (people walking, cars passing, buildings) gives one the impression, that in some of the sequences, the artist is running against a fixed photographic background. In this installation, the video is used for its photographic content: the still images capture the main sequences of the video, to be kept in our photographic “memory”.

## Artist Statement

Japanese-American-Vietnamese artist, Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, is well known in the international art scene for his striking video installations. This installation examines his abiding interest in globalisation and the balance between tradition and change as we forge our future. *Breathing is Free* is a virtual earth drawing, exhibited as an installation, illustrating the movement of populations around the world.



Laos

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### Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba

Born in 1968, Tokyo, Japan, he currently lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City.

Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba is considered to be one of the most exciting artists living and working in the Far East today. He was born in Japan, grew up in the USA and now lives in Ho Chi Minh City. From dragon dances to traditional rickshaws, Nguyen-Hatsushiba's work frequently references his Asian heritage. He explores themes of tradition, cultural identity and the fate of displaced communities. Jun has been residing and working in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam since 1997. He obtained this Masters in Fine Arts from Maryland Institute, College of Art in 1994. He had a number of solo exhibitions at the Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York; the Mizuma Art Gallery, Tokyo; Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma, Italy, and the UC Berkeley Art Museum, USA. Jun's works are also found in The Guggenheim Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, USA, Centre Georges Pompidou, France, T-B A21, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Austria, MUSAC, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Castilla y Leon, Spain, Fondazione per l'Arte Contemporanea Victor Pinchuk, Ukraine, Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, Japan, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, USA, Ohara Museum, Japan, Queensland Art Gallery, Australia, MIT List Visual Center, USA, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Holland, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan, Rubell Collection, Miami Asia Society, New York.

Laos



Saigon



Taichung



# FICTION

Exposures



# John Clang

## The White Book

Photo installation

In collaboration with Theseus Chan

2007-2009

### The Work

John Clang's art constantly involves multiple series that reflects his acute sensitivity to the environment around him. It is his mental diary whereby he can look back at his work and thoughts. For a period of time, John developed an interest in the idea of transporting people away from their environment. He also extracts things that are seemingly ordinary out of their usual context. This makes him look at his subjects and the world he lives in a different perspective.

His new works includes a series named *Silhouette/Urban Intervention (Black Tape)*, where the artist black-taped objects thereby making them instant silhouettes in the urban landscape. Even without their visual identity, one is able to figure out what the taped objects are, due to the immense familiarity of the urban environment.

The *Time* series, involves recording a location, to show the passing of time in a montage style. There is a sense of the intimate intricacy of how time moves, and how people are actually closer to one another, travelling in the same space with others, albeit in different times.

An earlier series in the *White Book* involved the artist digitally transporting total strangers from New York city to Iceland and a motel room. Taking these people out of their normal surroundings demonstrates how we are all closely linked to our environment. The images in this series show the subtle awkwardness in the relationship between the subjects and their new environment; something John himself experienced when he first moved from Singapore to New York.

## The Process

“This installation acts as a ‘transporter’ for my work to be viewed on a one-to-one basis with the viewer. It allows them to ‘enter’ my mind to see my point of view in a very intimate manner. The booth takes the form of a Singapore phone booth, designed by the talented Theseus Chan. It also works well with the general concept of my work, putting urban objects out of the usual context. Upon entering the booth, the viewer is ‘transported’ to my visual world, and is free of any distraction. It heightens the viewing experience and may help viewers to have a better understanding of my work, through their own interpretation”.

## Artist Statement

Having always lived in an urban environment, John Clang is very intrigued by its constant subtle changes. He is acutely sensitive to the daily, mundane urban life around him and it urges him to relook at his surroundings with a new perspective. There is a constant dialogue between him and his environment.

“Conceptual photography allows me to represent urban reality as a vibrant and complicated relationship between architectural surfaces and human presences. In an effort to depict this relationship in its full complexity, I work serially, and approach each photographic project as a kind of filmstrip. This allows me to subtly register the constantly changing interactions between human beings and their environments. I was raised in the very modern and architecturally uniform city of Singapore, an experience that taught me to pay particular attention to the ways in which the environment, whether artificial or natural, both succeeds and fails to alienate and dehumanize people. In my photographs, I try to carefully record the moments when uniformity and regularity are broken, however banal the circumstances. But these photographs are not an attempt to preserve nostalgic moments of everyday life. Instead, they document a present that is always in motion, a motion that both literally and metaphorically calls into question the possibility of direct representation. Thus, time is important to me, though not as a reflection of what happened in the past. Rather, I attempt to imbue urban surfaces with an evolving sense of personal and shared history.



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### John Clang

Born in Singapore, 1973, he has been living in NYC since 1999.

John Clang moved to the US in 1999 to pursue a career in conceptual photography. His first New York solo show was at the Diane von Furstenberg Studio in 2001 and he was included in the “Emerging Artist Series” by Kodak and PDN. His Paris solo show in 2003 was an installation at the Paris boutique, Colette, and at the Bank Gallery, Los Angeles. He also exhibited at the Jendela Gallery at the Esplanade in Singapore.



*STOP*



*Phonebooth*



# Rich Streitmatter-Tran

## The Jungle Books – The Territory of the Real Fake

Photo installation

2009

### The Work

The first photograph is taken on the banks of a river, where a monster-sized Giant Mekong Catfish lies on the bank with several curious onlookers, with some people trying to pin down the monstrosity with ropes, just like in *Gulliver's Travels*. The fish is big (and listed as a critically endangered species), hence the name Giant Mekong Catfish. In the image, it looks to be the size of a whale. The fact/fiction at the core of this composited photograph addresses the ecological issues facing the Mekong River and its sustainability. The fiction draws inspiration from recent research that the artist came upon about “whale worship” in Vietnam.

The second photograph shows a canal. Similar to the first photo, there is a spectacle and observers. Here, a satellite has fallen from the sky and has landed in one of Ho Chi Minh City's many canals. Curious onlookers gaze at the strange alien object, half submerged in the canal. Last year, Vietnam launched its first national satellite into space, another move marking Vietnam's accelerated modernisation and assertion that it is a ‘global player’. The rapid rise in the use of communication technologies brings with it the challenges of censorship and information control.

### The Process

The two pictures are taken using a super wide-angle lens. “After we composited the models of the giant catfish and satellites into the images, I modified the images to a tilt-shift. This has the effect of making the real parts of the image less distinguishable from the fake. The boundaries separating fact and fiction, reality and rumour, is blurred by the apparent misalignments in content and form: intimate scale model photographs printed in a giant format; an in-focus centre with obscured frames.

While the series speaks of the fluidity between fact and fiction, the photographs are fictional, being composed using 3-dimensional models. Making no attempt to be convincing, the artifices are to be celebrated.”

## Artist Statement

This series of photographs are a part of an ongoing series of works called *The Jungle Book*. Borrowing its name from Rudyard Kipling's famous collection of stories, this long-term project establishes a conceptual framework for artworks that speak of life in the Mekong sub-region. As works ranging from photography and installation to performance and video are created and exhibited, they will ultimately be organised and linked – just like the stories within *The Jungle Book*. Each work will draw inspiration and information from diverse sources, such as early colonial travelogues and literature, anthropological studies, natural science research, popular culture, local news, indigenous beliefs, mythologies and even politics.



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### Rich Streitmatter-Tran

Born in 1972, Bien Hoa, Vietnam, currently lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City.

R. Streitmatter-Tran is an artist living and working in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. He received his degree in the Studio for Interrelated Media (SIM) at the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston. His solo and collaborative work has been exhibited in several cities in the United States, Europe and Asia including the Singapore Biennale of 2008 and 2006, the Singapore Art Museum, 52nd Venice Biennale (2007), 2005 Pocheon Asian Art Festival, the Gwangju Biennale 2004, the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin, Ke Center for Contemporary Art in Shanghai, the Asiatopia Performance Art Festival 2005/2008 in Bangkok, ArtTech Media 06 in Barcelona and Thermocline of Art: New Asian Waves at ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany (2007). He is an arts correspondent for the Madrid-based arts magazine *Art.Es* and Ho Chi Minh City editor for *Contemporary* magazine. He was awarded the 2005 Martell Contemporary Asian Art Research Grant in 2005 from the Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong for his year-long research project, *Mediating the Mekong*. He was Teaching Fellow at Harvard University (2000-2004), and he conducted media arts research at the MIT Media Lab (2000). He was Visiting Lecturer at the Ho Chi Minh Fine Arts University in 2003 and currently serves as Lecturer at RMIT Vietnam and Academic Advisor to MoCA China. In 2009, he served as Co-Curator for a Mekong-based platform for the Asia Pacific Triennale (APT6) at the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane, Australia.







# Ko Aung

## Human

Photo installation

2008-2009

### The Work

Ko Aung's series *Human* features both a male and a female as primary subjects in a deliberately contrasted black-and-white photo series. He uses metaphoric representations to illustrate some of the main concerns that everyone has to face in everyday life: a clock as a symbol of time, a guitar for entertainment, a cup of coffee for food, an umbrella for protection or survival, a lamp for life and hope, and a scale for justice. Reinforced by the use of black-and-white photography, his work can be seen as Manichean, displaying his self-conflict with human nature and daily life, filled with all the choices, either minor or major, good or bad.

Like pieces on a chess board, viewers are guided by the artist as they experience his work. In some respects, this series can be seen as a type of Yin and Yang: male and female; black and white. In Yin and Yang we see the representation of all the opposite principles one finds in the universe. They are bound together as part of a whole. Yin and Yang are not completely black and white, and they should not be seen as necessarily just representations of good and evil. Most decisions in life that seem completely opposite necessarily contain elements of each other. Another interpretation of this work can be seen as a Manichean view in which there is a distinction between Good and Evil. Good is seen as the soul or spiritual nature of people and Evil is related to the material world.

Ko Aung uses the folding screen as a kind of mirror that forces the viewer to see him or herself in this decision-making process. One can see oneself from two perspectives and look at one's own nature and reflect upon it.

### The Process

In this series, Ko Aung uses male and female models as his primary subjects. Both models carry the symbols of everyday life choices, where those that are positive are represented by the white colour, and those that are negative are black. The six photos stand on a massive folding screen surrounding the viewer. The chessboard floor, as well as the question marks placed on the folding screen, emphasises the importance and complexity of our daily decision-making process.

## **Artist Statement**

Ko Aung's uses photography as the main medium for his art practice. Photography is a way for him to express his thoughts on human nature. Using metaphoric representations, his work shows his conflicts with human nature and daily life, and reflects the different aspects of his personality.

His research on photography is rather conceptual. The artist aims to explore the intimate relationship between the image and the viewer. Primarily they are visual works of the artist's own soul. In his work, he intends for you to see through extremes and make a decision, just as we deal with the conflicts in decision-making in everyday life.

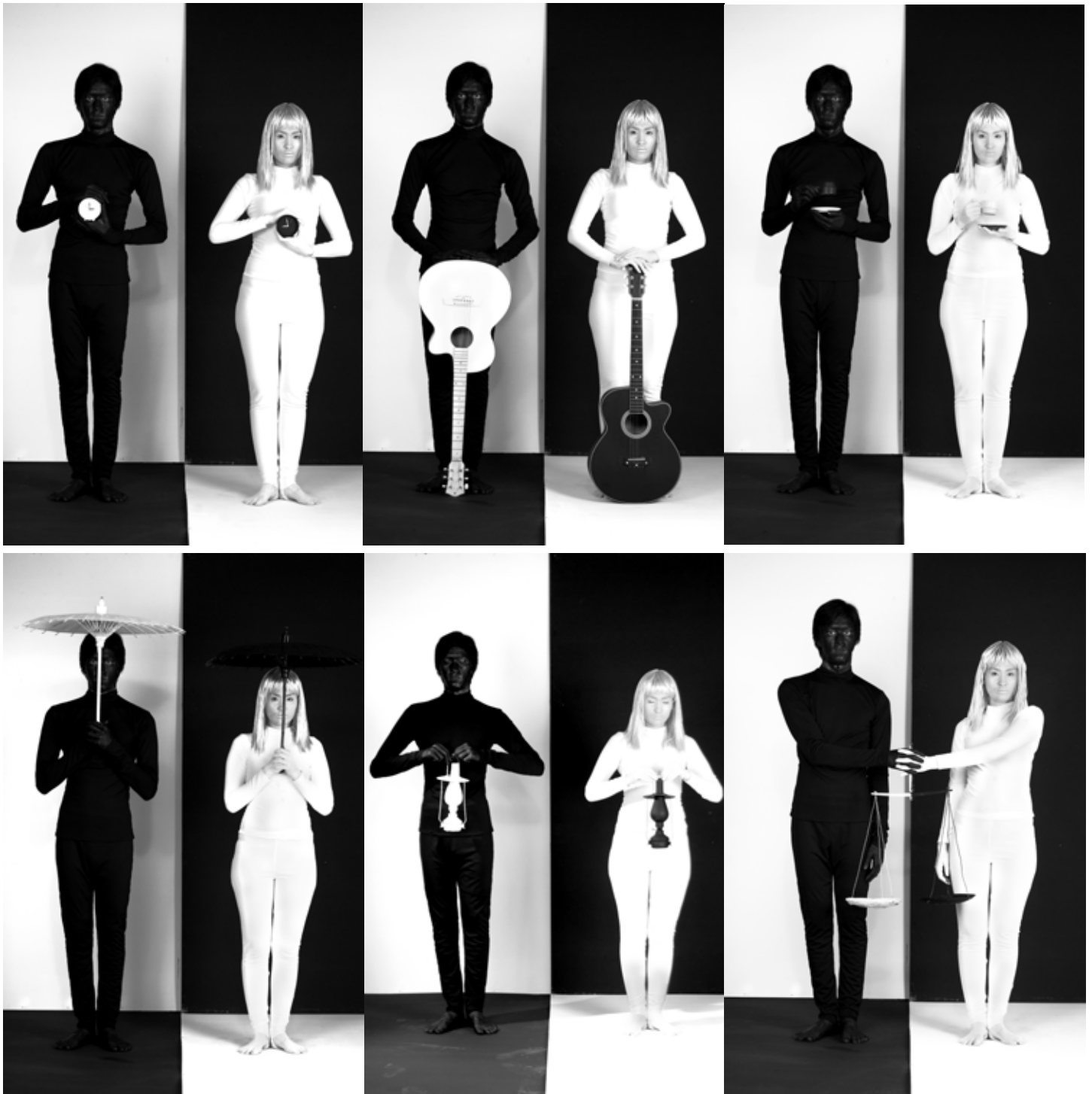
"It was in 1993, when I stepped into the field of photography. My interests have been focused on travelling, portrait and documentary photography. All my life I have been more and more fascinated by taking the photos of people, male and female through portrait photography. In addition to this I have worked as a professional photographer. The reason I entered into the field of conceptual photography has been to express my inner mind's conflict with other photographers who are focused on mainstream themes, such as lighting and composition techniques. I am fascinated with photographs, which let free thought go to an audience and move them. This is what really keeps me inspired to create further steps in this field. As the work indicates, my photo project reflects human minds. Primarily they are visual works of my own soul. In my work, I'd like you to see through the two extremes. There can be no focal point without such ends. I intend to express a vacuum with no differences or similarities between the opposites. Doubt – difficulty in accepting reality – and inability to foresee the consequences of my own acts in my mind can best be represented in this art work series of mine."

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### **Ko Aung**

Born in 1973, Myanmar, he currently lives and work in Yangon.

Ko Aung is a well-known professional photographer from Myanmar. A self-taught artist, he has been working with photography since 1993 and has been exhibiting in several countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam.





# Nge Lay

## Me and Another Process

Photo series

2008-2009

### The Work

Nge Lay aims to capture a pragmatic essence of reality through photography. The series of five photos presents a variation on a theme by the artist and her photographic process. The aesthetic is based on the simple combination of a torchlight and two hands in the dark. In so doing, the artist tries to convey the artistic image created in her mind. To her, the use of an intense light source represents the subconscious human mind. In using some simple technical means, Nge Lay is able to create an abstract illusion that seeks to transport the viewer into the artist's mind, and further, to the source of her creation.

### The Process

The process is simple yet strong, using only two elements. A torchlight is used as a primary and unique source of luminosity against a dark background. Abstract at first, the image reveals progressively the human part of the composition. Whereas the hands tend to capture the light source so as to confine it in the darkness, the light reveals the reality of the hands – made up of veins and skin. We see the texture of the skin with the purity of the light source, against the contrasting darkness of the room. It is the human hand that gives the only colour in the photographs. The colour of skin and the blood that runs through the veins are the colour of life that from a distance seem to form an abstract image. This illusion fades and the reality becomes apparent, reflecting the Buddhist content of the photo series: light as a symbol of enlightenment, truth and hope. The position and gestures of the hands, which in Buddhism are referred to as *mudra*, convey very specific meanings. Statues of the Buddha around the world often depict the hands in various *mudra*. These *mudra* have been used in the past and are still used today in spiritual practice, to evoke inner states that lead to enlightenment. One can also draw parallels with other artists such as Georg de La Tour and his paintings of night scenes. They too are largely dependent on the use of a light source within the painting itself. Sometimes the source is a candle or torch, which is either partly or completely concealed by a hand. Many of these works have a religious or spiritual theme. Light for many artists is a source of inspiration and hope. For Nge Lay the source of this inspiration comes from her native country. In Myanmar, blackouts are a feature of everyday life and this inspired her to look at things differently. Not only has she found inspiration in the darkness, but she holds the way out of it in the palm of her hands.

## Artist Statement

Nge Lay's art expresses her experiences and inner senses as she often delves into her personal reflections. There were moments in her life when she was unsure of her direction until she incidentally discovered the art of photography. Her works are a reflection of her inner perception of the prevailing urban societies in Myanmar and also her personal memories. Nge Lay has been centring her works within individual-feminism, which relates closely to her life, manifesting itself in her experimentation with photography.

"I always created my art work based on my inner self and experience. I found so many ideas and concepts of my work that I could not find before. Part of my early career was spent as a jewellery designer but I still could not find myself. I asked the question "What do I want, what do I want to do?" It was clear at that moment that I have had so many experiences in my life as a woman, and that I was also interested in media arts. So, I chose photography. Photography can capture both real images and virtual images. It can also say so many things at the same time for viewers. I especially love experimental photography. So, my focus as an artist is on my experience, my inner self, cultural background, historical background and feminism."

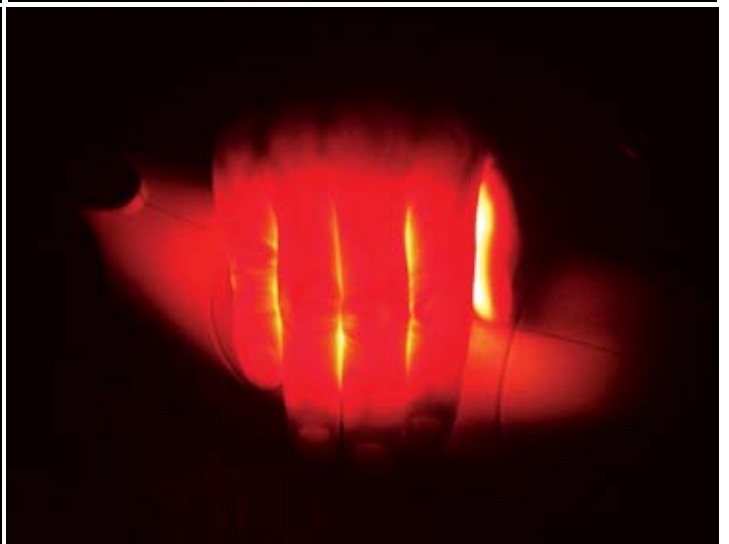
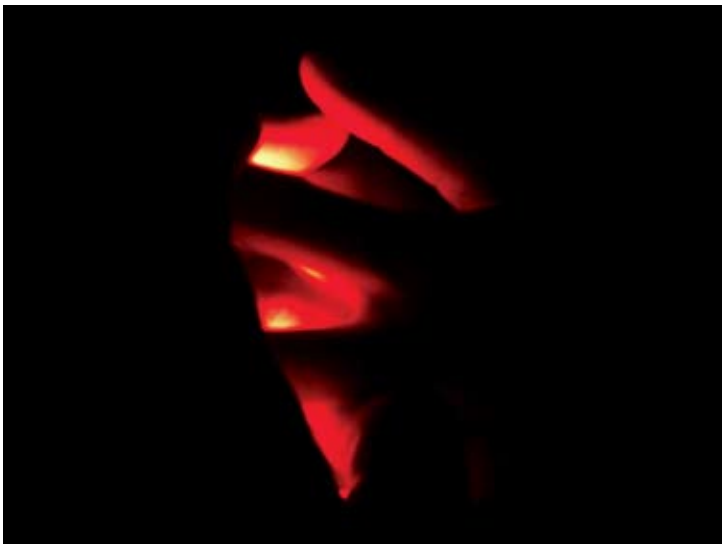


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### Nge Lay

Born in 1979, Pyin Oo Iwin, Myanmar, currently lives and works in Yangon.

Nge Lay graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Painting from the University of Culture in Yangon, Myanmar in 2003 and went on to do jewellery design in 2004. Her interest in photography emerged in 2007. She has had a number of exhibitions in Yangon at the Alliance Française de Yangon, the National Theatre and the Lokanat Art Gallery. Nge Lay participated in Magnetic Power, ASEAN-Korea Contemporary Photography and Media Art Project in 2009.







# SIMULACRA

**Performance**

Presentation by Gilles Massot and Rich Sreitmatter-Tran  
Opening night of TRANSPORTASIAN  
29 May 2009



*Gilles Massot, Rich Streitnatter-Tran*

From: gillesmassot <gillesmassot@gmail.com>  
Subject: Re: houhou  
Date: August 22, 2009 5:26:27 PM GMT+07:00  
To: Richard Streitmatter-Tran <rst@diacritic.org>

gillesmassot  
In Address Book

Well, I don't know if you use Mac mail as I do, but the idea came to me a couple of days ago that instead of having the text printed as a "normal" article, we could extract the email conversation as a pdf and have it printed as it is, with the beginning at the end at the end at the beginning and the different colours showing the stages of the exchange. Plus the fact that we are in different time zones, I just realised that there is an interesting difference between "real" time and "mail" time! Like I write thing "before" you while in fact I wrote them "after" you. That would had an extra bit of hoax to the whole thing...

We also need to choose the images. What would you think of following the sequence I mentioned just now to highlight how the ideas naturally followed one another. That would basically give the outline of the presentation.

On 22 Aug 2009, at 6:04 PM, Richard Streitmatter-Tran wrote:

So, rather than an essay about our collaboration, I hope that this continued collaboration reflecting on what we did and how it came about will give a more intimate view into the nature of artists exploring and working together. I feel that the issues raised in our investigation have a lot of life still in them. I'm sure Gilles agrees. I'm also hoping that Gilles and I will have opportunities to continue our discussion, whether through correspondence or concrete projects. So, as our submission, we offer our extended conversation here. Gilles, any last thoughts (we need a real closer!)

On Aug 22, 2009, at 4:54 PM, gillesmassot wrote:

right, no beginning no end, and things ending up to be the opposite of what we were thinking them to be in the beginning, only to suddenly reverse to precisely what they were meant to be... Since you mentioned just now the time frame on which we worked, I would like to highlight the time dimension of the presentation too as an interesting aspect. When Patricia gave me an outline of the hoax you were planning to develop I thought at that time that I could have it linked to some consideration on colonial ethnographic photography in the region. So at first the topic was kind of set in the pre-modern/modern period and we were meant to create fictitious researches about that. But then it turned out that we went back much further in time with your photographs of Angkor Wat and mine of Thai prehistoric paintings and jump from there into the here and now of today simulacrum, which in fact turn out to be maybe less of simulacrum then we thought them to be at first.

On 22 Aug 2009, at 5:13 PM, Richard Streitmatter-Tran wrote:

I suppose that I'm now finding it interesting how natural discussions about artificiality can be. Gilles and I developed our presentation/performance in only a few short days before. I suppose that some of the parallels inevitable, given the curator had asked us both to participate in the exhibition. I'm sure Patricia intuitively knew that Gilles and I might come up with some interesting observations. It's this loop that Gilles speaks about that made the experience so fulfilling. That ideas and images were so easily paired and that each of our installations could be folded into the discussion.

I had just finished an exhibition in Hong Kong about the parallels between Taoist thought and the quantum world. As I entered Gilles studio for the first time, I noted his collection of books on QED and Taoism. I knew right away, there would be much to discuss. To be honest, the final powerpoint presentation only came together a day before the delivery, over coffee in a small mall. We knew that we wanted to keep it short and tight, but the ideas continued to grow as our discussions continued. It was a matter of eliminating slides to keep within the time constraint.

For me, I originally intended to present a collection of lies, or fictions as research. A hoax of sorts, undermining the authority of the artist and researcher. But the unsettling (and fascinating) collaboration ended with a presentation of truths and realities, so unbelievable that they seemed like lies. The presentation performance about simulacra in Southeast Asia was in fact just that.

On Aug 22, 2009, at 3:55 PM, gillesmassot wrote:

hum... I see what you mean... the fiction that we were supposed to work on for the performance would be in fact this discussion we are supposed to have had to talk about it for the catalogue!

yes, another interesting aspect in the way the performance, or rather the conference, developed was how the topics from our respective bodies of work came to link with one another in a most natural way. For example, Rich's concern for the Mekong giant catfish perfectly echoed my photographs of Thai prehistoric paintings of catfish. Then my photograph of the prehistoric lady that could have been fiction but wasn't raised the question of the nature of the "fictitious image" which was the topic he had chosen to work on for this exhibition. And fiction, which was originally the angle we were supposed to develop in the presentation, turned out to have two very interesting concrete examples in our respective works in the form of Asian simulacrum. My work on Bintan and the Ganga-Mekong project had made me interested in the so-called "southern-most point of the Asian continent" in Sentosa where soil from the Riau archipelago in the southern hemisphere has been brought to Singapore to "create" a fictitious geographical landmark. Rich on his side had been working on a theme park of some sort around Ho Chi Min City where a small original waterfall had been transformed into a swimming pond (here you can develop a bit your own point). Interestingly enough his photographs of the people swimming in that pond with bright orange life jackets naturally connected with my photographs of the last phase of the 9

Emperor Gods festival that was the topic of my piece in the museum. When I photographed it last year, participants had been requested for the first time to use such jackets for the first time for their final procession into the sea! From his work to my work, the loop was complete!

came to

On 22 Aug 2009, at 3:13 PM, Richard Streitmatter-Tran wrote:

Gilles!

Sorry I'm so late. Let's exchange some quick emails on the following topics... And we can improvise a text. I pasted some text from your earlier email that I particularly liked and tried to expand as if the article is an extension of the presentation we gave. Sort of a post-presentation...

Rich

----

Curator Patricia Levasseur de la Motte suggests that artists Gilles Massot and Richard Streitmatter-Tran meet to discuss the possibility of a performance event for the opening night of the exhibition. The artists decided to instead present their research in the format of the standard artists presentation, with a twist.

Gilles: One important point in the way the performance developed is that while we originally intended to develop some form of fiction, we eventually found out that the real thing was actually much more interesting than any fiction we could try to create. And we chose to look at 'real' simulacrum instead of making up stories.

Last night a friend was telling me about some urban myths that he and his friends are working on planting into Singapore society. And listening to his story at some point I really asked myself what was the point of it. For the fun yes, but... I was talking about the current crisis as well with another friend working in the finance industry, in particular the way stock markets and properties are starting to boom again while there is little in the 'real' world to support that. He was telling me how at the moment the whole thing seem to be created out of thin air more than ever before. As if hyperreality was in fact truly the rule of the games nowadays.

Rich: I had been working on developing ideas for the Mekong subregion which overlapped perfectly with Gilles' own work, both in the Mekong and the Malay archipelago. After a few days of discussion, we were able to identify a few objectives that we wanted to achieve. We wanted to speak about constructed or artificial environments in the Mekong and Singapore, the use of those images in our regions with a specific prejudice toward photography, and more importantly was there a history of artifice all along?

(let's respond to these issues, or others you propose?)

CATFISH/EXTINCTION

TAKING FROM THE SOUTH TO BECOME THE SOUTH

THE PRESENTATION ITSELF AS SIMULACRA

Gilles: So it's a bit like there is no need to 'create' stories anymore. We just have to live them.

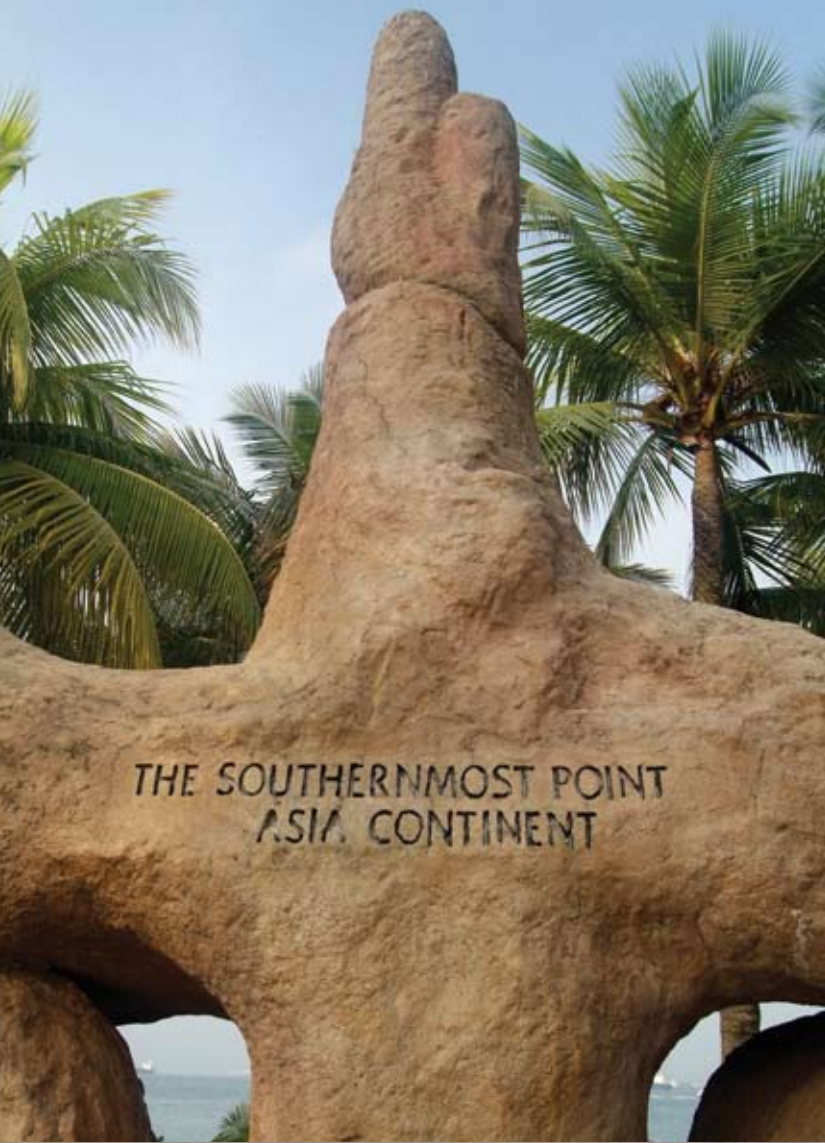
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On Aug 22, 2009, at 1:28 PM, gillesmassot wrote:

Hi rich,  
still no news... I am getting a little worried!!! well... kind of!

hope to hear from you soon.

gilles





# Biographies of Writers

## **Kevin Chua**

Kevin Chua is an assistant professor in 18th- and 19th-century European art at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, USA. He writes on the contemporary art of Asia.

**Rivka Syd Eisner** received her PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she also served for three years as Associate Editor for the journal *Cultural Studies*. Her dissertation, on Vietnamese women's history and memories of war, received the Gerald R. Miller Outstanding Dissertation Award for 2008 from the National Communication Association (USA). From 2008-2009 she worked as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of English Language and Literature at the National University of Singapore. She currently serves as Co-chair of the Emerging Scholars Committee for *Performance Studies international* and is a Visiting Scholar at Aarhus University, Denmark.

**Sue Hajdu** is a visual artist, freelance writer and occasional curator based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She holds a Master of Visual Arts in photo-media from Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney and is artistic director and co-founder of the artists' initiative & *a little blah blah (albb)*. Hajdu was a lecturer at RMIT International University Vietnam, HCM City campus, from 2005-2008, where she created and delivered courses in Photography and other multimedia fields.

**Paul Kohl** earned a BFA in Photography from the San Francisco Institute and a Master Degree from the Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana. He has received grants from the Digital Creative Center Research at Technological University in Singapore, the Kawasaki University in Japan, the Baltimore City Arts Council for Photography. He currently teaches photography at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. His research focuses on high-end inkjet printing and digital photography.

**Patricia Levasseur de la Motte** graduated in Art History and Museology from the Ecole du Louvre, Paris. She then worked as a Research Assistant at the National Museum of Asian Arts-Guimet, Paris. Currently an Assistant Curator for Photography and New Media at the Singapore Art Museum, she was the co-curator of the exhibition *Alain Fleischer: Time Exposure* for the Month of Photography in Singapore in 2008.

**Gilles Massot** is an artist, photographer and writer based in Singapore since 1981. His second book published in 2007, *Retro Specks Future Pix: the Book*, summarises his 30 years of research on the theme of time, space and their relation to photography and painting. His first book *Bintan, Phoenix of the Malay Archipelago* was published in 2003 and remains to this day the only comprehensive publication on Bintan and the Riau Archipelago. He is a lecturer in photography at Lasalle and photography history in ADM, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

**Jason Toh** is a curator with the National Museum of Singapore. He started his career at the museum as an Assistant Curator in 2004 and has been a Curator since 2007. He was responsible for the curation of the permanent galleries on Singapore's colonial history in the Singapore History Gallery and that of the family-themed Photography Gallery. Besides developing Singapore-themed temporary exhibitions and building the museum's photography collection, he has written articles and lectured on both Singapore history and photography in recent years and is the author of *Singapore Through 19th Century Photographs*, published by Editions Didier Millet. He read Western Art History and French at both Middlebury College in the USA and the University of Paris in France.

# List of Artists and their Works

## **Shannon Castleman (p. 64)**

*Jugaads of Southeast Asia*, 2009

Photo series, colour prints on archival art paper (series of 5 prints)

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

## **Mark R. Kaufmann (p. 68)**

*The Fabulous Flights of Fancy Time Machine*, 2008-2009

Interactive photo installation

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

## **Chua Chye Teck (p. 74)**

*April 2008, Tokyo*, 2008-2009

Photo series, colour print on archival art paper (series of 12 prints),

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

## **Dominic Khoo (p. 78)**

*Emotions in Transportation*, 2008-2009

Photo series, colour prints on archival paper (series of 7 prints)

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum and the artist

## **Chun Kai Qun (p. 82)**

*Carmageddon*, 2008-2009

Interactive photo installation

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

## **Gilles Massot (p. 86)**

In collaboration with **Lim Wang Jie, Lim Yeow Sen, Moricio Pochaulo,**

**Esther Sutanto**

*The Space Within the Space Within the Space*, 2008-2009

Photo installation

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

## **Xavi Comas (p. 92)**

*Pasajero/Passenger*, 2008-2009

Photo and sound Installation

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

## **Francis Ng (p. 96)**

*Constructing Construction #1*, 2001

Photo series, C-type print (series of 2 prints)

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum and the artist

## **Samantha Tio (Mintio) (p. 101)**

*Conveyance*, 2008-2009

Photo Installation

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

## **Tung Mai (p. 104)**

*Racing Forward*, 2008-2009

Interactive photo installation

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

## **Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba (p. 108)**

*Breathing is Free 12, 756.3*, 2008-2009

Video Installation

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

## **John Clang (p. 112)**

In collaboration with Theseus Chan

*The White Book*, 2007-2009

Interactive Photo installation

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

## **Rich Streitmatter-Tran (p. 116)**

*The Jungle Books – The Territory of the Real Fake*, 2009

Photo installation

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

## **Ko Aung (p. 120)**

*Human*, 2008-2009

Photo installation

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

## **Nge Lay (p. 124)**

*Me and Another Process*, 2008-2009

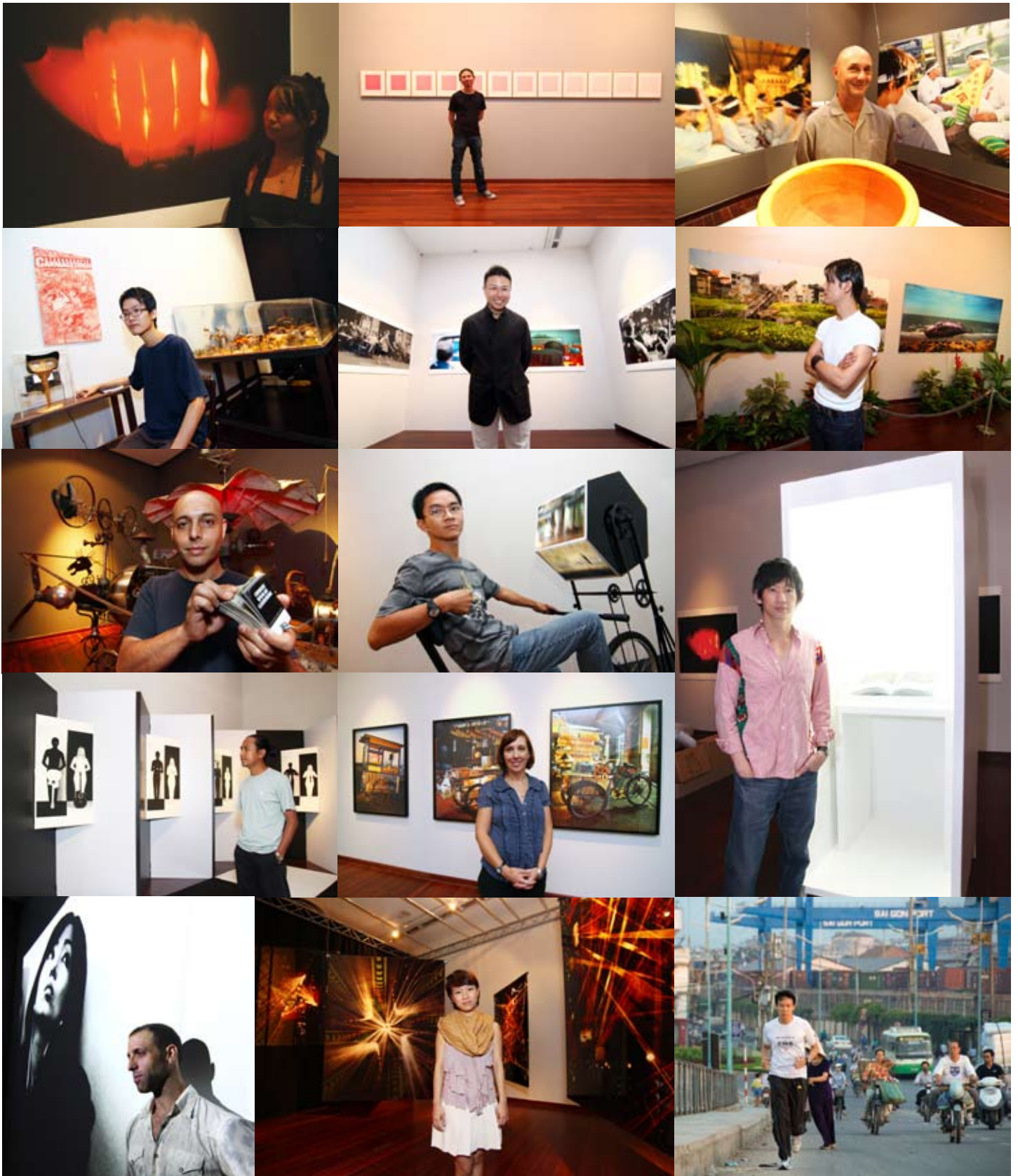
Photo series, colour prints on archival art paper (series of 5 prints)

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum



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From left to right, top to bottom: Nge Lay, Chua Chye Teck, Gilles Massot, Chun Kai Qun, Dominic Khoo, Rich Streitmatter-Tran, Mark R. Kaufmann, Tung Mai, John Clang, Ko Aung, Shannon Castleman, Xavi Comas, Samantha Tio, Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba

# Installation





# Exhibition Opening

