

KALEIDOSCOPE 亚洲 ASIA #3

KALEIDOSCOPE

亚洲 ASIA

VISUAL CULTURE NOW 当下视觉文化

CAO FEI 曹斐
Magical Digital
Landscape
魔法数字风景

夜店式思维
CLUB STATE OF MIND

The nostalgic
revolution of
CHEN WEI

陈怀维
怀旧革命

AND FEATURING

Lu Yang 陆扬
Trevor Yeung 杨沛铿
Chen Fei 陈飞
Tetsumi Kudo 工藤哲巳
Miao Ying 苗颖
Liu Shiyuan 刘诗园

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FUTURA 89+

Hans Ulrich Obrist & Simon Castets (with Katherine Dionysius)

interview LUCA LUM & MARCUS YEE



THE FUTURA 89+ SERIES FEATURES INTERVIEWS WITH ARTISTS, WRITERS, ACTIVISTS, ARCHITECTS, FILMMAKERS, SCIENTISTS AND ENTREPRENEURS WHO WERE BORN IN OR AFTER 1989.

You recently collaborated on *TheatreWorks (Re)search* (2015), a work presented as part of “Filter Bubble,” our 89plus exhibition at LUMA Westbau, Zürich. Was this the first time you directly collaborated with one another?

Luca: Yes, this was our first collaboration. We met in 2014 through a program called “Writing Lab,” where we each wrote short plays inspired by archival documentation of exhibitions at the NUS Museum. I later joined “Curating Lab,” a nine-month program organized by artist Heman Chong.

Columnists portraits by LA BOCCA

89plus is a long-term international, multi-platform research project co-founded and co-curated by Simon Castets and Hans Ulrich Obrist, investigating the generation of innovators born in or after 1989 through conferences, books, periodicals, residencies and exhibitions. 89plus.com / Instagram: @89plus

REGULARS

MY: Our friendship and subsequent collaboration grew from common artistic and literary approaches. As writers, Luca and I place ourselves in difficult positions: we treat language like putty, conduct pyrotechnics with narratives and allow concepts to multiply spuriously. Working with Luca on *TheatreWorks (Re)search* was important for me, as I was always deeply fascinated with the absurd but had been too self-conscious to experiment on my own.

Do you usually work collaboratively or individually? Which do you prefer?

MY: I rarely enjoy collaborating. It may be necessary for artists to consider issues of community and human relationships, but a praxis beyond theoretical interest is another labor of its own. For *TheatreWorks (Re)search*, we isolated ourselves and wandered through the unknown alone. The purpose of our collaboration was to build momentum, rather than finding agreement.

LL: My collaborative work and solitary work inform each other—I need to have both running at the same time. Vulnerability and intimacy are important

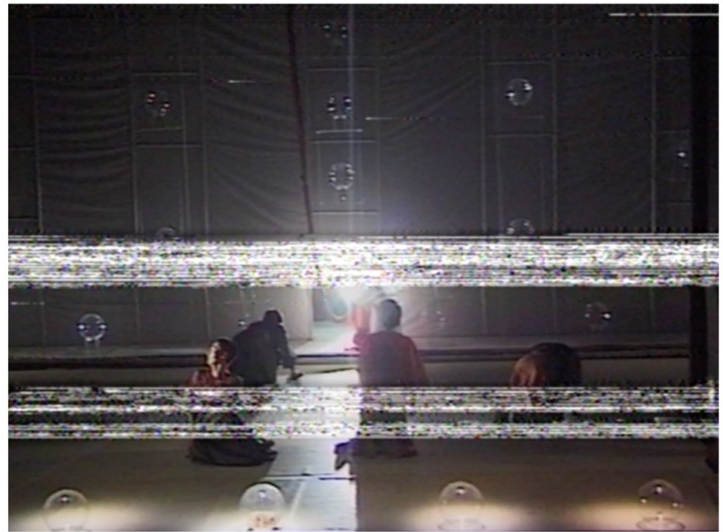
to me, and these are core to collaborating. But my collaborators and I also make use of the separation and tensions that inevitably emerge, and through them, reach for complexity and depth. Working collaboratively allows for different kinds of freedom, as you’re creating a new space for yourself that’s specific to the group dynamic. It gives you room to stretch, to open yourself up and become something else.

It also allows for a certain individual opacity. It’s a site where we can re-think authorship and power, especially vis-à-vis the perverse workings of the art market, and how creative industries are run. It raises questions. Collaboration is a site where we can re-think authorship and power, not just vis-à-vis the perverse workings of the art market or creative industries, but within our



capitalist societies. How do we account for others in the creation of a work? How do we credit and implicate lateral support structures (wives, muses, assistants, administrators) that make a work possible? How do we relate to those whose depictions are historically implicated in acts of oppression and violence?

You describe *TheatreWorks (Re)search* as a “tentacular, amorphous mass of online content that confronts the Internet user, outside of one’s expectation of slick, user-friendly web interfaces.” Can you talk a little about the work’s origins?



Collaboration is a site to re-think authorship and power, especially vis-à-vis the perverse workings of the art market

MY/LL: To begin with, we were never archivists. We were presented with this historical archive and tasked to use it as a material, like paint or plaster. At the same time, neither Heman nor TheatreWorks provided any brief or direction. Given this freedom, and our unruly trove of materials, our main struggle was between the impulse to organize and collapse of information.

We chose the latter, the project being a resistance towards pre-packaged, designed and digestible historical tours. Our embrace of collapse and absurdity became the work’s breakthrough, opening up the project to address modes of historicity and the expectations of gathering information through the Internet.

The work offers alternative modes of approaching an online archive, where the expectations of convenience, reliability and accessibility of knowledge in the Information Age come under examination. Do you think such expectations are advantageous or detrimental?

All images: *TheatreWorks (Re)search*
Courtesy of the artists

MY: The lure of convenient information, and the complacency that comes along with it, are issues that *TheatreWorks (Re)search* addresses, but our point was never to present an argument diametrically opposed to or supporting the Information Age. While the project is clearly a critical counterpoint to palatable histories and information, it could only take its form through the Internet.

LL: The project of knowledge relies on ease of access—precisely how and why certain systems and applications monopolize the market—but that ease makes them seem friendly, obscuring power structures and hierarchies.

Even these frictionless zones of convenience, reliability and accessibility have their jagged edges. The way the Internet is experienced is tied to material conditions that can be uneven and incompatible across geographies. But that doesn’t mean we should stop questioning these “smooth systems” through our uses and abuses of them. In terms of *TheatreWorks (Re)Search*, this is why we resorted to a pastiche of seemingly random moments and objects from TheatreWorks’ archive.

The information is rearranged in a way that’s almost nonsensical. What do you hope people will gain from this information?

LL: An experience of frustration intermingled with pleasure. Perhaps a sense of the complexity of Singapore’s theatrical arts, something beyond stock images.

MY: We gave up on packaging informational goody bags for the audiences to ruminate upon. Instead, we left the

processes by which we approached historicity, globalization and the history of Singaporean theatre entirely bare. These are unmediated reactions to our encounter with an unfamiliar archive. The work is meant to be challenging, often moving into the absurd and impenetrable, so the reader's frustration is unsurprising. Our interest is how this frustration might lead to other forms of reading, other possibilities of discovering information.

In addition to your art practices, you have both worked on various curatorial projects and written criticism, poetry and fiction. Do you identify primarily as artists? Or are the lines more blurred?

LL: These terms are convenient shorthand. I prefer to wear them lightly.

MY: I don't think much about identifying myself with such specific labels. It wouldn't contribute much to my practice.

Luca, you studied English Literature at university. How did you become involved in art?

LL: It's the result of a slow accumulation. When I started my degree in literature, I had turned down acceptances to RISD and Goldsmiths. Being housed in an art school seemed far too insular. I decided to pursue a degree in my other love, literature, while doing projects on the side. Beyond the absence of a studio environment and praxis-based coursework, my degree wasn't a huge leap to thinking about and making art. I studied non-Western literature and visual culture, and wrote my thesis on photography; I was learning about what

might motivate a visual practice, by learning what was adjacent to and outside of it. It also deeply informed my interest in the boundaries between the visual and textual, and how they shadow or pressure each other. My background means I don't approach art as a closed, rarefied field but one with leakages and bleeds across other fields, into life.

Marcus, you also write fiction. How has that informed your art practice?

MY: I see fiction as a means of tapping into other worlds, especially the affectual. It's a personal reaction to an art world that heavily values theoretical capital, often at the expense of intuition and affect. At the moment, my pet project is to write pieces that overlap between the (seemingly) disparate fields of fiction and theory.

Luca, can you tell us about the gesture you performed for 2015 event, "Waiting at a Stopped Clock"?

Marcus Yee (b. 1996) is an artist and writer based in Singapore. Luca Lum (b. 1991) explores writing, publication, photography, pranks, curation, performance, collaboration and critique.

We're interested in what flows undisturbed through the system, and what causes it to fall apart.



LL: The event was organized by the curatorial group Latent Spaces and held at a laundromat in Little India, an ethnic enclave where a lot of low-wage migrant laborers from the Indian subcontinent live. I was invited to participate in a performance called "Bring Your Own Laundry," where a group of artists and curators would wash items of their choice. I decided to wash printed pages from my personal Tumblr, an *e-flux* article ("Sexuality in a Non-Libidinal Economy," an edited version of a lecture delivered at the Historical Materialism Conference, SOAS) and a bra, alongside a plastic \$50 note supplied by another artist. The pages and article disintegrat-



ed almost completely, but a small residue was trapped in the bra lining, while the \$50 withstood the wash.

My Tumblr is a prosthetic erogenous zone where desire spills over and festers, sometimes spawning reblogs. It's an intensely private space which no one else visits, but which exists freely on the Internet. To articulate desire in words and images is an errant attempt at fixing them, as well as funneling them into a more accessible level of pleasure; to print those pages and bring it to a public event was simply another level of disclosure. The *e-flux* article was chosen not only for its content, but also because of the rapidity of *e-flux*'s machine, and the fact that it was shared by someone who'd been the subject of one of my Tumblr posts. I hadn't anticipated be-

ing paired up with the other artist with the money. It's interesting to me that our mixture produced a poetic result, demonstrating the resilience of currency in contrast to the deformations of articulated desire.

Luca, you're collaborating with Kenneth Tay at the NUS Museum in Singapore on a project called *Concrete Island*, which you've described as being about the "undercurrents and unconscious of Singapore as a place; its interior rumblings and indigestions." Can you talk a little about this?

LL: *Concrete Island* is a project spread across exhibitions, bus tours, a mobile cinema programme, and a reading program that I lead. The title is a meta-

phor referring to several things at once: J.G. Ballard's 1974 novel, the phenomena known as "urban heat islands," and a kind of fractal modularity assembled along a parametric architectural grid. We're interested in what flows undisturbed through this system, and what causes it to fall apart. What undermines or overloads the system? What are the bodies, objects and events that spill out?

Marcus, what is your take on these "undercurrents and interior rumblings" in Singapore?

MY: The most prominent complaint from artists is that Singapore is a cultural desert, bereft of inspiration and opportunity. I cannot disagree with

these complaints, especially when comparisons with other cultural capitals are made. Yet, it is the frustrations and contradictions that are deeply buried in the city's collective psyche that I am drawn towards.

Who are your heroes, your mentors?

Luca: I admire individuals who work at the limit of their fields and because of that defy easy categorisation. I love Clarice Lispector's fractured incandescence, Toni Morrison's grim poetry, Anne Carson's elegaic restraint and bathos, and the intensity of personal vision in artists like FKA twigs and Kate Bush. Conversations with my close friends inspire me because we can be honest and vulnerable with each other. Of course there are people who I learn from from a distance, but it's not the same thing.

MY: Heman has been a gracious mentor to us both. I look to Virginia Woolf as my literary hero—an unparalleled observer of the physical world. Artistic figures like Eva Hesse, Isa Genzken and Phyllida Barlow are equally crucial to my mode of working and perceiving the world.

Where does your catalogue raisonné begin? What do you consider your first mature piece?

MY: I try not to assume I've reached any stage of a market-driven notion of professionalism. It hinders me artistically to have an ideal image of an artist's oeuvre.

What will change everything?

LL: How we approach power—across cultures, societies, species, objects, gravity fields.

The future...

MY: ...belongs to no one.

LL: The future is the gravity field of a dying star. ☹

FUTURA 89+

DIASPORA

Ying Tan talks to Chinese- Canadian artist KEN LUM



EVERY CITY HAS A CHINATOWN—OR A PLACE WHERE COMMUNITIES BECOME MINORITIES. THE DIASPORA SERIES LOOKS AT THE WORLDWIDE DISPERSAL OF ASIAN POPULATIONS THROUGH THE EYES OF ARTISTS AND CREATORS.

Raised in Vancouver, you were a student of Jeff Wall and Ian Wallace while at Simon Fraser University. Along with your instructors, you would become associated with the so-called “Vancouver School” of the 1980s, a group characterized by its post-conceptual approach to photography. What is striking about you, however, is your dynamism and fervor for discussing not only themes within your artistic practice, but also your own socio-political relationships with your community, your country and, ultimately, with yourself. These are, in your own words, the “things that matter.” Coming from a Chinese immigrant family myself, I'm always interested in hearing others' stories of migration and displacement. Your mother immi-



**Cheeseburger.
Chicken chow mein.
Deluxe burger.
Beef and broccoli
on rice.
Hamburger with fries.
Bacon and eggs
over easy.**

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