

***Art Histories Across Borders***  
**LASALLE | University of the Arts**  
**Singapore-University of Bristol**  
**Postgraduate Research**  
**Symposium**



Cheong Soo Pieng, *Untitled*, 1961. Mixed Media on Paper. Private Collection with a Bristol connection.

**6 June 2024**  
**University of Bristol, ARTS COMPLEX G.H01**  
**12.00pm-6.00pm**

## **Convenors:**

**Jeffrey Say, Programme Leader, MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE | University of the Arts, Singapore**

**And**

**Zehra Jumabhoy, Lecturer, History of Art, University of Bristol**

This Postgraduate Research Forum, co-organised by LASALLE College of the Arts Singapore (LASALLE), University of the Arts Singapore, and the University of Bristol (UoB), will feature presentations from students enrolled in MAs and PhDs in the History of Art department at the University of Bristol and recent graduates from the MA Asian Art Histories programme at LASALLE | University of the Arts Singapore.

At the end of each session, UoB and LASALLE faculty will act as respondents, providing commentary and feedback to the presenters.

PROGRAMME	
12.00pm - 1.00 pm	<b>Lunch in Exhibition Space</b>
1.00pm - 1.10pm	<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>
<p><b>Welcome:</b> Dr Peter Dent (Head of Subject, History of Art, UoB)</p> <p><b>Introductions to the event:</b></p> <p>Jeffrey Say (Programme Leader, MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE   University of the Arts Singapore)</p> <p>Dr Zehra Jumabhoy (Lecturer, History of Art (HART), UoB)</p>	
1.10pm - 2.00pm	<b>Session 1: Hybridity and Identity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Amrita Sher-Gil in Hungary: ‘My Name Now is “Dr. Egon Viktorné”</i></b> Valéria Fülöp-Pochon (PhD Candidate, HART, UoB)</li> <li>• <b><i>Countering Stereotypes of the Nyonya in Popular Culture: Photographs of Peranakan Women from the 1850s to the 1950s</i></b> Theresa Tan (MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE   University of the Arts Singapore)</li> </ul> <p><b>Q &amp; A with Moderator:</b> Dr Elizabeth Robles (Lecturer, HART, UoB)</p>	
2.00pm – 2.50pm	<b>Session 2: Pushing Boundaries</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Challenging the Canon: Re-evaluating the Significance of Women Wax Modellers (1660-1837) to the History of European Sculpture</i></b> Sophie Johnson (PhD Candidate, HART, UoB)</li> <li>• <b><i>Reading Trauma in Vandy Rattana’s Trilogy of Films Through the Lens of Psychoanalysis, Theravada Buddhism and Animism</i></b> Dorit Ginat (MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE   University of the Arts Singapore)</li> </ul> <p><b>Q &amp; A with Moderators:</b> Peter Dent &amp; Zehra Jumabhoy (HART, UoB)</p>	
BREAK (10 MINUTES)	
3.00pm - 3.30pm	<b>Session 3: (Re)Visualising Power</b>

- ***(Re)Learning and (Re)presenting a History of Java - The Art of Timoteus Anggawan Kusno and Jompet Kuswidananto***

Vanessa Yeo (MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE | University of the Arts Singapore)

**Q & A with Moderator:** Jeffrey Say (Programme Leader, MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE | University of the Arts Singapore)

3.30pm - 4.20pm

## Session 2: All The World's A Stage

- ***The Non-Performative Works of Tang Da Wu***

Joanne Ngeow (MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE | University of the Arts Singapore)

- ***Excavating the Archives: The Process of Curating History on the Stage***

Flora Guildford and Rachel Campbell  
(MA Students, HART, UoB)

**Q & A with Moderator:** Dr Ann Matchette (Senior Lecturer, HART, UoB)

## Round Up Q & A

4.30pm - 5.30pm

## Theatre Visit and Closing Remarks

**Theatre visit with** Dr Sophie Kelly (Lecturer, HART, UoB)

**Closing remarks from** Jeffrey Say and Zehra Jumabhoy

## DRINKS RECEPTION

## Abstracts and Biodatas

---

### ***Amrita Sher-Gil in Hungary: 'My Name Now is "Dr. Egon Viktorné"'***

Valéria Fülöp-Pochon (PhD Candidate, History of Art, University of Bristol)

**Abstract:** Indian-Hungarian artist Amrita Sher-Gil (1913-41) wrote to her parents in November 1938: 'My address from now on is Budapest, Hungary, though I am not at present there, having followed my husband like a good Indian wife where he is stationed. I like this place, it is called Kiskunhalas, and there are windmills here – I love windmills. I am going to paint a picture of a village church, in the background a marketplace with little figures in black, the sky grey and the church tower white...' While Sher-Gil has been recognized as a pioneer artist in Indian modernism, this paper will explore her lesser-known works, such as *The Merry Cemetery* (1939), *Hungarian Peasant* (1938) and *Potato Peeler* (1938), in the context of her Hungarian heritage, which, thus far, received little attention. Focusing on the series of paintings she created during 1938-39 in Hungary, I will examine local influences in these works, from folk tales and peasant culture to Hungarian modernist trends. Mapping out the broader cultural framework for this significant but overlooked period in her oeuvre, my paper will unfold how she lived through and produced work during these tumultuous years when fascism was on the rise and official Hungarian culture focused on strengthening national identity through folk culture.

**Biodata:** Valéria Fulop-Pochon completed her MA in 2016 and has been a History of Art PhD candidate at the University of Bristol since 2018 (part-time). Her doctoral thesis investigates the artistic productions of Hungarian-born modernist women artists between c.1930 and c.1960 in the context of exile, emigration and state-support.

---

### ***Countering Stereotypes of the Nyonya in Popular Culture: Photographs of Peranakan Women from the 1850s to the 1950s.***

Theresa Tan (MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE | University of the Arts Singapore)

**Abstract:** Juxtaposing the fictional life of the protagonist of the multi-award-winning play *Emily of Emerald Hill* with historical photographs and records of the Nyonya, this presentation looks at the social history and identities of the Nyonya beyond her domestic space. Applying semiotic theory, it deconstructs signifiers of meaning towards reading identity projections in photographs taken in the Straits Settlements between 1844 and 1942, and concludes that, contrary to popular culture's imagination of the stereotypical Nyonya, historical photographs enact such a varied range of identities, that it calls for greater attention and examination not only in academic disciplines, but also through artistic and cultural productions.

**Biodata:** Theresa Tan is a leader in change management practice with almost 30 years of experience working in technology companies like Dell Computers and Cap Gemini. Theresa's research interest is in modern and contemporary Peranakan art and how artists respond to economic, social, and political environments in history beyond the Nyonya material culture. Theresa Tan is a member of the UK's Association for Art History. She holds a BSc (Computer and Information Sciences) from the National University of Singapore and an MA in Asian Art Histories (Distinction) from Goldsmiths, University of London



---

### ***Excavating the Archives: The Process of Curating History on the Stage***

Flora Guildford and Rachel Campbell (MA students, HART, UoB)

**Abstract:** Curated by MA History of Art students, *Dressing the Drama: History on Stage* (2024) is an exhibition that showcases a range of designs, photographs, ephemera, and costumes from the University of Bristol Theatre Collection. Relying on the expansive archives of the collection, *Dressing the Drama* invites its viewers to imagine what lies beyond the performance; to investigate how costume designs can break down the boundaries between reality and history. In this talk, Rachel and Flora will explore some of the issues they have grappled with as they worked on the collaborative exhibition. They will discuss how the Theatre Collection functioned as a resource for the show's main themes.

#### **Biodatas:**

Flora Guildford completed her BA in Liberal Arts at the University of Bristol, and continues her studies here with a MA in History of Art. Alongside curating an exhibition with the University's Theatre Collection, she is researching East German feminist art for her individual study: *'How does the work of Gabriele Stötzer's work explore the female body and their experience in the GDR?'*

Rachel Campbell has a BA in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of South Carolina, and is currently completing her MA in History of Art at the University of Bristol. She has a background in museum work, co-curating exhibitions for the Royal West of England Academy and the University of Bristol Theatre Collection. Her area of study focuses on the African diaspora and medieval visual culture.

---

### ***The Non-Performative Works of Tang Da Wu***

Joanne Ngeow (MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE | University of the Arts Singapore)

**Abstract:** The term "performance art" has, over the decades, been plagued by much ambiguity as to what constitutes the practice of performance art. Performance art is often associated with modern dance and sometimes even with theatre, including street theatre a common practice in South East Asia. The practice of performance art relies heavily on the execution of physical movements and bodily gestures performed by actors in front of a live audience. The audience is often co-opted into the work through their responses to the aesthetic, sensory, and context of the performance itself. We will explore in this presentation Singaporean artist Tang Da Wu's contributions towards performance art in Singapore as well as the importance of audience reception in performance art.

**Biodata:** Joanne Ngeow is an Associate Professor at the Nanyang Technological University's Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine. She is also a Senior Consultant in the Division of Medical Oncology at the National Cancer Centre Singapore. As a child growing up in Singapore, she studied biology, chemistry, physics, and literature but was not allowed the option of studying history or art. In 2018, Joanne embarked on her MA in Asian Art Histories at LASALLE as she hoped to help

bridge the art scholarship gap in Asia. Her MA thesis was on Singapore's pioneer performance artist Tang Da Wu.

---

***Charles R. Knight: Dinosaurs and Visual Culture***

Vicky Coules (PhD Candidate, HART, UoB)

**Abstract:** Images of dinosaurs are everywhere - film, art, video games, marketing, and toys. My research examines how they emerged from collections of fossils in museum drawers to icons of visual culture and why this happened in America in the early decades of the 20th century. Dinosaurs occupy a space halfway between imaginary and extant animals, so an element of speculation is required to represent them, yet their popularity makes them ambassadors for science - and the relationship between the art and science is often controversial among scientists. To explore the implications of this, I present examples of paintings by the artist Charles R. Knight (1874-1953), for decades the most important palaeoartist in the field; I examine his relationship with the museums who commissioned him and the scientists; how his work was used to take science and natural history to the general public and how his work influenced subsequent art and film.

**Biodata:** Vicky Coules is a mature PhD researcher in the departments of History of Art and the Palaeobiology Research Group in the University of Bristol. She has a background in both science and the arts and a strong interest in the relationship between science and visual culture.

---

***(Re)Learning and (Re)Presenting a History of Java: The Art of Timoteus Anggawan Kusno and Jompot Kuswidananto***

Vanessa Yeo (MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE | University of the Arts Singapore)

**Abstract:** This presentation will look at how artists (re)learn and (re)represent colonial history by approaching "history as a figure of thought" (Nora Taylor & Karin Zitzewitz, 2018), examining the multidisciplinary research-based practices of Jogja artists Timoteus Anggawan Kusno and Jompot Kuswidananto. The research includes artist interviews and an analysis of the various narrative devices used, including film, music, poetry, and dance.

**Biodata:** Vanessa Yeo is a freelance art curator and writer with a keen interest in current Southeast Asian sculptural practices and intersections with political ecology. She holds an MA in Asian Art History from Goldsmiths University of London.

---

***Challenging the Canon: Re-evaluating the Significance of Women Wax Modellers (1660-1837) to the History of European Sculpture***

Sophie Johnson (PhD Candidate, HART, UoB)

**Abstract:** The eighteenth century marked a significant shift in the history of women sculptors, predating their acceptance into art schools. In particular, the softer nature of wax modelling was recommended as a 'refined entertainment' for young women.

However, many women went beyond making wax fruit and flowers as a hobby and became professional artists; going beyond what was traditionally thought possible for women in the period. Women across Europe were making a living creating wax portrait miniatures, life-size effigies, and macabre anatomical models. However, wax sculpture rarely makes it into the established canon of fine art and the achievements of these women have been overlooked by modern historians. My research theorises that a more inclusive definition of sculpture which transcends material hierarchies will enable these important stories of female ingenuity and entrepreneurship to be recognised in the history of European sculpture.

**Biodata:** Sophie Johnson is a third-year PhD candidate whose research investigates eighteen-century women wax modellers in Europe. She has a professional background in the museum sector and her research is based on her time as an Assistant Curator of Sculpture at the V&A in London.

---

***Reading Trauma in Vandy Rattana's Trilogy of Films Through the Lens of Psychoanalysis, Theravada Buddhism and Animism.***

Dorit Ginat (MA Asian Art Histories, LASALLE | University of the Arts Singapore)

**Abstract:** Reading Cambodian artist Vandy Rattana's trilogy of films of the Cambodian genocide, this presentation will discuss how trauma manifests itself both through psychoanalysis as well as Theravada Buddhism and local animism, highlighting both the limitations of Western models and the invaluable role of local concepts in reading and understanding traumatic effects in Cambodian art.

**Biodata:** During her ten years in Singapore, Dorit was a docent at the Singapore Art Museum and Gillman Barracks arts cluster. Her MA in Asian Art Histories, with a focus on diaspora and trauma, was a natural development for her. Dorit is also a freelance art consultant. She is now involved in the London art scene, and is exploring how best to promote Southeast Asian art and artists. She also holds an MA in Political Science and a BA in History of the Middle East.



## Biodatas of Co-Convenors

**Jeffrey Say** is an art historian specialising in Singapore and Southeast Asian art history who has undertaken pioneering research and study of sculpture in pre- and post-war Singapore. In 2009, he designed the world's first MA focusing on Asian modern and contemporary art histories at LASALLE College of the Arts, University of the Arts Singapore for which he is the Programme Leader. A public advocate of the importance of art history to Singapore, Say is a frequent public speaker at museums, universities, and galleries and conducts short courses that remain hugely popular among various publics. He is the co-editor of *Histories, Practices, Interventions: A Reader in Singapore Contemporary Art* (Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, 2016. Reprinted World Scientific 2023) and *Intersections, Institutions, Innovations: A Reader in Singapore Modern Art* (World Scientific, 2023), which remain critical anthologies for researchers, curators and students on Singapore art to date. He is also the co-author of the *Exploring Southeast Asia With...* series of books (Penguin Random House, 2022).

---

**Dr Zehra Jumabhoy** is a Lecturer in the History of Art at the University of Bristol. She is an art historian, curator and writer specialising in modern and contemporary South Asian art and its diasporas. She was the Steven and Elena Heinz Scholar at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, where she completed her doctorate and lectured on undergraduate and postgraduate art history courses (2016-2020). She has been a visiting lecturer at various academic institutions in the UK and Asia, including teaching on MA programmes dedicated to Asian art at the Sotheby's Institute of Art, London, and LASALLE College of the Arts, University of the Arts Singapore. In 2018, she co-curated (with the late Tan Boon Hui) the landmark exhibition, *The Progressive Revolution: A Modern Art for a New India*, at New York's Asia Society Museum. In 2020, she curated a site-specific immersive installation by British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare, titled *Justice for All*, at the Arts House Museum in Singapore. She is the guest curator for the US traveling show *Raqib Shaw: Ballads of East and West*, which will be travelling to four major institutions between 2023-2025, including the Museum of Fine Arts Houston and The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens in LA. She co-curated, with Dr Elizabeth Robles, *Rasheed Araeen: Conscious Forms*, currently showing at the Royal West of England Academy Museum in Bristol.

## NOTES

