

Annex 2 – Biographies of artists

Deng Qichang 邓齐畅

Born in 1992 in Shantou, China, Deng Qichang lives and works in Singapore. He graduated from NAFA majoring in Chinese Ink Painting in 2013.

Dreamland Series No. 59 and 60 are the outcome of Deng's recent experimentations in Chinese ink and watercolour. Departing from traditional blue-and-green landscape sceneries, Deng's vivid colour scheme of blue and orange hues are achieved by mixing Chinese ink and watercolour paints, using wet-in-wet and overlapping techniques to bring out a variety of tones. The contrast between rock formations and urban city life is striking. While the rock structures in his earlier works appear sombre in appearance, here they have become delineated and crystallised in form. A skyline appears between the parting craggy mass. Rooftops nestled among jagged edges are softened by the glow of a sunset. These two seemingly incongruent habitats, become fused into a world of reality and fantasy, tradition and modernity.

Deng continues to introduce new mediums into his creations, adopting an unconventional approach. In the future, he hopes to embark on the next frontier of art-making – digital painting – to delve further into his Chinese ink practice as an artist in the digital age.

Ho Chung Kwang 何崇光

Ho was born in Malaysia in 2000. He has participated in exhibitions in Singapore and Malaysia, and is currently enrolled as a student in the Diploma in Fine Art programme at NAFA.

The Leong San Tong Khoo Kongsi (邱公司) or Khoo Kongsi for short, is the most famous Chinese clan association in Penang, Malaysia, renowned for their majestic clanhouse and its traditional Chinese architecture. One of the most magnificent and impressive temples ever built in Southeast Asia, the best artisans and craftsmen had covered nearly every inch of the temple with detailed stone and wood carvings, gilded gold leaf, painted murals, stucco sculpture, porcelain shard work attests to the wisdom and aesthetics of traditional Chinese architectural craftsmanship.

Ho believes that the all-encompassing ornamentation in Khoo Kongsi can be appreciated through the minds of craftsmen and artists.

邱柱 depicts the ornamentations on the columns, beams and rafters found in Khoo Kongsi. The nonpareil artisanship exemplifies the clan's eminence and legacy in Penang. Ho admits that his skills are far from creating marvellous work such as this. He can only strive to improve his skills to the likes of the Khoo Kongsi's craftsmen, to create works of great mastery.

Ho Seok Kee 何淑芝

Ho Seok Kee graduated from NAFA in 2016 with a Diploma in Fine Art and received her BA (Hons) in Fine Art from Loughborough University, UK/Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore in 2018. In the same year, she was recipient of the Best Graduate Award from NAFA, winner of Killiney Art Prize Top Achiever Award (Degree) and Silver Award (Established category) for the 37th UOB Painting of the Year Competition.

Ho's current explorations in Chinese ink revolve around Xie He's principles of Chinese painting: spirit resonance, correspondence to the object, suitability to type, division and planning, and transmission by copying. Adopting contemporary sensibilities in her work, Ho illustrates these concepts using rice grains and clouds that challenge the conventions of painterly styles in Chinese ink. Rice as a staple in resonates closely in Asian culture. By integrating minimalistic visuals and the use of only white Chinese ink on rice paper to create a white-on-white effect, Ho embraces Western aesthetics and Chinese ink philosophies to navigate traditional practices in contemporary terms.

Hong Sek Chern 洪雪珍

Born in 1967 in Singapore, Hong graduated with a Diploma in Fine Art from NAFA in 1995 and an MA in Fine Art from Goldsmiths College, University of London in 1998. She has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions both locally and overseas. Most notably, she was a recipient of the Young Artist Award from the National Arts Council in 2000 and represented Singapore at the 25th Sao Paulo Biennale in 2002. Hong is known for her urban landscapes in Chinese ink and reinventions of the medium, moving beyond flat surfaces into 2D and 3D realms.

Painting (with Blush Red) is Hong's ideation of what Chinese ink painting can be when one is not constrained by traditional conventions. Abstract, modern ink renderings on rice paper are mounted on a strip of plastic "Airsaver" which are long, air filled plastic cushions used in packaging. Unlike the traditional ink medium which tends to be flat, this "painting" can be displayed rolled up like a sculpture. Various configurations are possible and different interpretations can be made depending on the positioning of the object.

Huang Xueqiong 黄雪琼

Huang Xueqiong was born in 1970 in Guangzhou, China. She is currently enrolled in the Diploma in Fine Art Programme at NAFA.

In this work, Huang made use of a flat goat hair brush to create broad strokes of ink to depict bricks while the mouse trap is rendered in finer detail with thinner brush work. The mice within the trap are represented by small dark dabs of ink to suggest the "prisoners". The mouse on top of the brick wall looks down helplessly at his friends, knowing the fate that awaits them. Although the mouse is a small creature, it is fully capable of feeling emotions. Huang wishes to portray a sense of helplessness that one may encounter in certain situations as personified through the mice.

Lee Ju-Lyn 李裕铃

Lee Ju-Lyn was born in Singapore in 1982. She graduated from NAFA with a Diploma in Fine Art, in 2018 and was a recipient of a Woon Brother Art Prize (Commendation) for her graduation work. She was also valedictorian of her graduating class of 2018.

This is not 传统, and neither is it 当代 is a mixed-media assemblage comprising four smaller works: *This is not 明白, This is not 东西, This is not 艺术, This is not 好玩*. Respectively, the Chinese phrases may translate to mean, "understanding", "thing" or "east-west", "art", and "fun". Here, ideas and techniques from Magritte and Foucault are combined with Chinese characters to play with reflections on the boundaries and definition of art, and issues faced when translating.

The work questions the relationship between tradition and contemporaneity in art with its title, which means, “This is not traditional, and neither is it contemporary”. The mix of language here is to highlight the fallacy of the common assumption about Chinese ink works that tradition is necessarily Chinese and contemporary is necessarily Western.

The works are individually mounted on stretched canvas with a layer of wax. The Chinese saying, “瞎子点灯—（不）浪费蜡” translated as “it is (not) a waste for the blind to light a lantern”. For a blind person to carry a lantern seems like a waste of wax, but arguably not a waste because the light would allow others to see the blind person. To Lee, wax is an analogy for resources, effort, and time, and blindness, to one’s bias and prejudices. The work deliberates on the perceived dichotomy between tradition and contemporaneity, if indeed these concerns and prejudices are valid and fair.

Sometimes I feel I got to... is an abstract work that combines Chinese calligraphic brushstrokes with the techniques of de Kooning and Picasso. It conveys not only a fusion of East and Western references, but Southeast Asian influences as well, for it borrows from Nanyang artist, Chen Wen Hsi's explorations on the juxtaposition of these artistic references in Chinese ink painting.

Oh Chai Hoo 胡财和

Born in 1960, Oh Chai Hoo graduated from NAFA in 1982. As an ink artist he has experimented boldly with different mediums, both in 2D and 3D forms, from small seal carvings to large scale sculptures and paintings. Oh’s works are stark yet subtle, spiritual yet grounded in earthly abstractions. Inspired by the philosophy and beauty of zen gardens, he created *Tropical Zen Garden*, a large scale Chinese ink on rice paper installation spanning up to 60 meters long covering the length of the Esplanade tunnel in 2014. Drawing inspiration from natural forms, Oh meditates often on the meaning of life, his mastery of the brush is well-admired as he continues to push boundaries of the art form’s rich heritage, producing works that are powerful fusions of Eastern and Western traditions.

Jasmine Peng 庞佳敏

Jasmine Peng was born in Guangzhou, China in 1995. She is currently a 2nd year student at NAFA’s Diploma in Fine Art programme, training in Western and Chinese ink painting. Peng holds varied interests and studied fashion design prior to joining the NAFA Fine Art programme. She held in her first group exhibition, *Tale of 3 Cities* in 2018, an outcome of the cultural immersion programme to Beijing China organised by NAFA.

The term *flâneurs* is defined as “a man who saunters around observing society.” In this installation work, Peng adopts the viewpoint of a humble snail. Small and slow, they are city dwellers and silent observers of the city. Though the world seems to shrink day by day, and time appears to flow faster with technological advancements, the snail remains unaware of these rapid developments in our environment. Similar to a chromatography test, the artist uses strips of rice paper dipped in ink to imitate the slow and leisurely pace of the snail. The marbled strips of paper represent buildings shrouded in white mist, an effect created by paper marbling with Chinese ink. Wandering along the granite road, the snail is easily overlooked and sometimes crushed underfoot by oblivious passers-by. In this trivial observation, we are reminded of our mortality and our tenuous existence in an infinite universe.

Quek Kiat Sing 郭捷忻

Born in Singapore in 1972, Quek Kiat Sing has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions both locally and abroad, including Japan, China, Vietnam, Thailand, India, UK and USA. In 2001, 2004 and 2005, she was a recipient of the Highly Commended Award, UOB Painting of the Year Competition. She was also twice awarded the Dr Tan Tsze Chor Art Award, Singapore in 2004 and 2007.

Along the Corridor – Our Neighbour and Us is a reinvention of the concept of traditional landscape painting, fusing Chinese aesthetics with Western composition. Though classical Chinese landscapes typically comprise of mountains and rivers, Quek chooses to reinterpret this ideal within a familiar urban setting. She portrays the intimate space of a public housing estate using contrasting tones of black and orange. The wide-angled perspective captures both her parent's and neighbour's flats, as well as the stairway leading up to the corridor. The plants lining the walkway, the slippers and the incense burners are personal items that are unique to each dwelling space. Though this is a common sight to behold in any high-rise accommodation in Singapore, the scene is endearing and evokes the warm comfort of home. To the artist, this is the everyday modern landscape that we occupy and cherish.

Ernest Seah Chien Soon 余建顺

Born in Singapore, Seah is currently a 3rd year student pursuing a Diploma in Fine Art at NAFA, majoring in Chinese ink painting. He has represented Singapore at The Berlin Light Festival 2017, won top awards in the Flambeau d'Or Panathlon International Art Competition 2017 and first prize at the PCU Drawing Contest 2017 in Antwerp, Belgium. He has held exhibitions in Los Angeles, Antwerp, Hong Kong and Singapore. He is also actively involved working on community projects with the underprivileged and marginalised through art workshops and talks.

Monsters is the artist's interpretation of the scenic Central Business District skyline. Beneath its spectacular and gleaming surface, lies the avarice and cupidity of the commercial world. The sharp lines of the skyscrapers and maws of the bridge arches represent negative energies that ensnare their victims in a vicious and stressful lifestyle.

Midnight Showers is a welcome respite from the harsh urban jungle. The beauty of dark clouds flood the seductive red evening skies, as the sky tears form a comforting blanket over humanity. The cool air and patter of raindrops breaks the rhythm of the mundane night. In life, a dark rainy day can also be a comforting time of much needed release and reflection.

Terence Tan Chee Wah 陈智华

Born in Singapore in 1969, Terence Tan graduated with a Diploma in Fine Art from NAFA in 1990 and a BA (Design) with a major in Multimedia from Curtin University of Technology in 1997. He went on to pursue a MA in Electronic Arts from Middlesex University in 2004. As a contemporary Chinese ink painter, Tan has exhibited in Singapore and abroad, including China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Philippines, Australia and United Kingdom.

Tan's works are inspired by the urbanisation of the environment and the relationship between man and nature. His *Drifting Clouds Studies* are a continuation of his Huangshan landscapes exhibited at

NAFA in 2017. Depicting the mountainous terrain enveloped in mist, one is transported to the elevation of drifting clouds and lofty peaks, where the limitations of the self are met with the vast expanse of nature. The result is emotive, enigmatic and encourages self-reflection amid the wonders of nature. Constantly evolving, Tan's use of interfacing fabric as a canvas and his restrained use of monochromatic colour is compelling and innovative.

Tay Chee Toh 郑志道

Born in 1950 in Selangor, Malaysia, Tay was educated at NAFA from 1958-1960. The artist received the prestigious Cultural Medallion in 1985 and won the 4th UOB Painting of the Year competition in the same year. Tay together with 6 fellow artists co-founded Modern Art Society in 1964.

Well known for his diverse body of work in oil, acrylic, watercolour, Chinese ink, batik, printmaking and sculpture, Tay incorporates his own vocabulary of symbols such as discs, and circular motifs appropriating from tribal influences, that consistently reappear in his later abstractions. He further expanded the iconography to include seashells, rolling waves, and cloud like forms, producing modernized compositions that weave organic forms and intricate renderings. *Red Wave* and *Green River* draws upon the beauty of the brushstroke and gestural expressions of ink painting, favouring the subtle and expressive qualities of Chinese ink on rice paper, Tay's colourful and vivid narratives interpret the beauty of nature, its spirit and in form.

Magdalene Tuh Cheng Ning 涂婧宁

Magdalene Tuh was born in Singapore in 1998. She is a 3rd year student pursuing a Diploma in Fine Art at NAFA, majoring in Chinese ink painting and was named finalist for Angelico Art Award 2018.

Mountain. Man. Sea is a metaphor for the faceless sea of people encountered in daily commute to school or work.

In combining the elements of Western composition and Chinese ink techniques, using wet and dry brushstrokes to paint the human figures, Tuh's multitude of men climbing on top of one another is likened to the repetitive act of the artist practicing her strokes. In this case, the men represent a particular stroke she is practicing. Each man is painted in a different position, similar to the outcome of her strokes, but there can be no replica of the other. From one perspective, Man is nearing the end of his battle and reaching the pinnacle. Feeling victorious, he continues to climb higher. From another perspective, Man is far from reaching his goal. "We are all busy, but what are we working towards? Who are we working for?", questions Tuh, in her search and exploration of the white space between reality and dreams.

Oscar Xie Yihong 谢亦鸿

Born in Singapore in 1999, Oscar Xie Yihong is a 3rd year student majoring in Chinese ink painting at the Diploma in Fine Art programme at NAFA.

Xie finds beauty in the improvisational nature of his practice and the realness of unplanned marks on paper. His recent explorations in abstraction are influenced by Suprematism, an art movement founded by Russian painter and sculptor Kazimir Malevich in the early 1900s.

The poem was penned by the artist as a reflection on his artwork, *Some Dimension Not Far Away*.

In the distant, lies an un-flipped book
A scenery I never knew I saw 'til I look.
In between skies, painterly dyes, water dries, all mark survives.
Cometh closer and be enticed,
For the mystery will dwell in thy mind.
Closed eye towards a different plane
Were ones that died the same.

Daniel Yeo Ming Zhong 杨茗中

Born in Singapore in 1986, Yeo is a 3rd year student in the Diploma in Fine Art Programme at NAFA, majoring in Chinese ink painting.

菜饭 or economic rice is said to be the meal of lower and middle class Singaporeans. Every neighbourhood coffeshop or shopping mall food court will surely house a stall that sells economic rice. In this painting, Yeo portrays a humble meal costing less than 6 dollars that most Singaporeans can afford to buy for lunch or dinner. For a low price, customers can select from a range of dishes to be accompanied by a portion of white rice. The meal is packed in a styrofoam box with a plastic spoon and a styrofoam cup is filled with hot tea or coffee. The beverage is put through a plastic sleeve for easy handling on the go. Yeo feels that there is no other meal that can accurately represent the working class of Singapore.