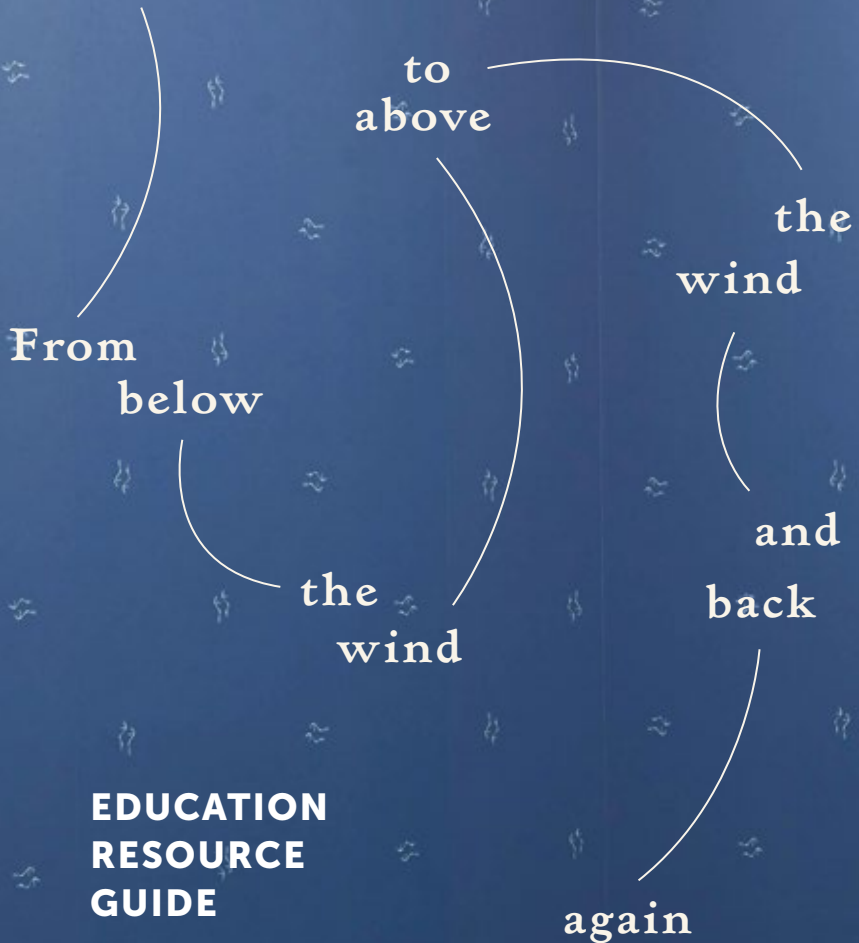


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NTU CENTRE FOR
CONTEMPORARY
ART SINGAPORE

ARUS BALIK

Exhibition
22 March –
23 June 2019



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EDUCATION
RESOURCE
GUIDE

A

About NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore

A leading international art institution, NTU CCA Singapore is a platform, host, and partner creating and driven by dynamic thinking in its three-fold constellation: Exhibitions; Residencies Programme; Research and Academic Education. A national research centre for contemporary art of Nanyang Technological University, the Centre focuses on *Spaces of the Curatorial*. It brings forth innovative and experimental forms of emergent artistic and curatorial practices that intersect the present and histories of contemporary art embedded in social-political spheres with other fields of knowledge.

CLIMATES. HABITATS. ENVIRONMENTS. is NTU CCA Singapore's overarching research topic which informs and connects the Centre's various activities over several years. Changes in the environment influence weather patterns and these climatic shifts impact habitats, and vice versa. Precarious conditions of habitats are forcing migration of humans and other species at a critical level. The consequences of human intervention are felt on a global scale, affecting geopolitical, social, and cultural systems. The Centre intends to discuss and understand these realities through art and culture in dialogue with other fields of knowledge.

Notes to Teachers & Educators

This Education Resource Guide is developed to supplement the Workshop for Teachers and Educators with a focus on the exhibitions at NTU CCA Singapore. It provides an opportunity for educators to learn how contemporary artists address issues and concerns of our times, as well as to explore new teaching strategies.

Here you will find resources specifically designed for teachers and students. The proposed activities are conceived to be used in a flexible manner: educators can select suitable activities and combine them to meet the needs of their students.

Before bringing your class to NTU CCA Singapore, it is recommended that you visit the exhibition, consult the Exhibition Guide and the Education Resource Guide, and decide which aspects of the exhibition are most relevant to your students. Customised guided tours for student groups led by NTU CCA Singapore curators are also available upon request.

Kelly Reedy, Independent Educator, Art Therapist, and Artist

Magdalena Magiera, Curator, Outreach and Education

Ilya Katrinnada Binte Zubaidi, Curatorial Assistant, Outreach and Education

Amelia Loh Zhi Qi, Young Professional Trainee, Outreach and Education

About the Education Programmes

The education programmes promote contemporary art as a form of creative learning through exhibition tours, talks, and workshops developed by the Centre's education team. These accessible and inclusive learning experiences connect students and teachers with contemporary art and artists to encourage new ways of looking, thinking, and creating.

Crucial to our programmes is the approach "bring your own story," which encourages students to connect the exhibitions with their personal experiences, generating new meanings through playful strategies, peer collaborations, and group discussions.

Who would benefit from working with/consulting the Education Resource Guide?

The Education Resource Guide is conceived for teachers and educators working in secondary, tertiary, and university educational settings. It can also be a useful resource for general exhibition visitors as a tool to understand and enjoy contemporary art. Following the guided questions and activities, visitors are encouraged to enter the world of the artist(s) and reflect on what they experience in the gallery space.

How can the Education Resource Guide be used by educators and general visitors?

These educational activities can be used for pre-gallery, in-gallery, or post-gallery lessons. Teachers can choose which activities are valuable for their educational objectives, and are free to add on other related materials of their own. General visitors can also decide which ideas and content inspire them to further learn from and enhance their exhibition experience.

What is the goal of the Education Resource Guide?

We want to encourage people to discover and trust their own responses to contemporary art. We think contemporary art can be meaningful and relevant for everyone, but we also acknowledge that sometimes an exhibition can be perceived as intimidating and confusing. Hence, the resources we produce are conceptualised to build confidence in individual thinking to creatively engage with contemporary art.

Using a Gallery as a Site of Research: A Fieldtrip to NTU CCA Singapore

ARUS BALIK



Themes:

IDENTITY,
HISTORY,
GEOPOLITICS.

Cross-disciplinary subjects:

history,
social studies,
geography,
literature.

A Brief Introduction

Taking inspiration from the novel *Arus Balik* (1995) by Indonesian author Pramoedya Ananta Toer, this exhibition will examine how the turning of historical tides form our personal and collective identities. The work of six artists, Ade Darmawan, ila, Zac Langdon-Pole, Shubigi Rao, Lucy Raven, and Melati Suryodarmo will guide and challenge us on a journey, probing how social, geopolitical, economic, and cultural transitions influence our concept of who we are, where we come from, and where we are going.

Each artist's work contemplates the theme of identity from a different perspective. **Ade Darmawan** (b. 1974, Indonesia) investigates past histories through his installations of found objects taken from our everyday world, opening up new perspectives regarding both their owners and society. The search for lineage permeates the performance art of **ila** (b. 1985, Singapore), who uses collected stories, body, light, and sound to reflect on lost and changing identities. Multi-disciplinary artist **Zac Langdon-Pole's** (b. 1988, New Zealand/Germany) projects trace the movement of objects from one geographic location to another over time, contemplating concepts of migration and cross-cultural understanding. **Shubigi Rao** (b. 1975, India/Singapore) deconstructs the idea of identity through knowledge found in books, either collected or destroyed, and through their stories, told or untold. Multi-disciplinary artist **Lucy Raven** (b. 1977, United States) tracks the production of objects across international borders, documenting how they interconnect all who come in contact with them. **Melati Suryodarmo** (b. 1969, Indonesia) is a performance artist who uses the fluidity of the body and movement to negotiate a spectrum of boundaries concerning identity, as related to psychological, social, political, and cultural histories.

This exhibition stems from an invitation by the NTU CCA Singapore to the renowned curator Philippe Pirotte, the Rector of Frankfurt's Städelschule, and Director of Portikus, who is this academic year's Visiting Professor at NTU's School of Art, Design and Media, in the newly established MA Museum Studies and Curatorial Practices.

Pre-gallery Visit Activities:

1. Discuss the definitions and concepts expressed in the vocabulary list below prior to the gallery visit.

- Archipelago –
- Colonialism –
- History –
- Identity –
- Lineage –
- Memory –
- Migrate –
- Metaphor –
- Perception –
- Tide –
- Usurp –

2. Choose 5 words from above that you best identify with.

3. Use them to write a short free verse poem or rap related to your life in the box provided.

4. Read, rap, or perform the poem for your friends.

5. How would you visually depict these ideas? Draw an image in the box provided.

Verse

Visual

About the Exhibition

ARUS BALIK –

From below the wind to above the wind and back again

They say history repeats itself. The Indonesian writer and social critic Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1925-2006) believed that the tumultuous political and social changes that took place in 20th century Indonesia were only a repetition of historical events going back to the 16th century when the maritime Javanese kingdoms were being usurped by traders coming from the Middle East, India, and Portugal. These arrivals prompted a turning of the tide and made way for the Islamisation, as well as the European colonial period in the archipelago. In short, Pramoedya was pointing out that the contemporary difficulties plaguing Indonesia were not only caused by past colonial rulers, but in part were connected to what he called “kampung civilisation.” Prevalent throughout Java over the centuries, he described it as a provincial attitude where people do not look beyond the familiar borders of their own neighborhood or comfort zone, in turn allowing outside events or people to overtake them.

Because of his unique, revolutionary views, Pramoedya spent many years in prison for being on the wrong side of political power. First the Dutch colonials imprisoned him from 1947 to 1949 for being a freedom fighter. Later, Suharto, Indonesia’s second President, exiled him to Buru prison camp from 1965 to 1979, followed by house arrest until 1992. Many of his historical novels were first written in his own head, as he was not always allowed writing materials in prison. He would recite them aloud to fellow prisoners, who would memorise different parts of each story. He eventually put the words on paper, creating a series of novels called the “Buru Quartet.” Although his books were banned from being printed or sold in Indonesia until 1999, they received critical acclaim in other parts of the world.

Each artists’ works in this exhibition reflect upon the metaphor of “the turning tide” as related to history and changing identities. The ebb and flow of cultures meeting, mixing, or clashing, both influences and forms personal and collective perceptions of identity. Think about your own concept of identity as you visit the gallery.

About the Artists

Ade Darmawan (b. 1974, Indonesia)

Having grown up witnessing widespread corruption, feudalism, and exploitation during Suharto’s presidency in Indonesia, Ade Darmawan uses art as a response to political issues, particularly in relation to history. He is interested in presenting alternative perspectives of historical events that are often excluded from official accounts of history. Much of Darmawan’s works comprise everyday items. To him, these objects tell stories of their owners, and reveal characteristics about their societies. Through careful selection and placement of the objects, Darmawan creates narratives that invite viewers to ponder about the socio-political landscapes surrounding these objects and arrive at new ways of understanding history.

Ade Darmawan, Sunda Strait, Indonesia, 2018, documentation.
Courtesy the artist.





ila, *bekas*, 2019, video still. Courtesy the artist.



Zac Langdon-Pole, *Paradise Blueprint*, 2017, wallpaper based on a cyanotype photograph of the removed legs of a bird of paradise, detail. Courtesy the artist.

ila (b. 1985, Singapore)

ila is a visual performance artist whose works revolve around the theme of identities. An identity refers to a person's distinct characteristics that make them a unique individual. One's identity is usually largely influenced by one's family lineage. ila is especially interested in exploring how identities can be temporary and constantly changing, as a result of not fully knowing one's origins. This interest stems from her personal experiences of finding missing pieces in her own ancestral line. Her works often involve creating narratives based on stories she collects from individuals, and telling these narratives through performances that integrate light, sound, and bodily movement.

Zac Langdon-Pole (b. 1988, Aotearoa, New Zealand/Germany)

Zac Langdon-Pole's practice is a unique combination of art, history, and anthropology (the study of how people understand the world around them). In particular, his multi-disciplinary works focus on colonisation and globalisation, both of which have led to migration and inter-cultural interaction. Langdon-Pole often works with objects that have either travelled across locations with their owners or survived successive generations. To him, these objects are the residue of human migration—they represent relationships between places, people, and periods. Through uncovering the ways in which different cultures, generations, and eras are connected, Langdon-Pole hopes to encourage viewers to reflect on their identities and positions in this world.

Shubigi Rao (b. 1975, India/Singapore)

Shubigi Rao is an artist and writer whose works cover a diverse range of subjects, including but not limited to archaeology, libraries, archival systems, histories, and ecologies. Her multimedia installations are often immersive and tongue-in-cheek, making use of puns and wordplay. With a dose of humour, her works invite viewers to reflect on the topic. In 2014, Rao embarked on a decade-long film, book, and visual art project. *Pulp: A Short Biography of the Banished Book* is dedicated to the history of book destruction. She travels across the world, visiting public and private collections of books, as well as libraries and archives. She uncovers, collects, and documents stories of books that have been at risk of being destroyed.

Shubigi Rao, *Books rescued from the burning National and University Library, stored and unused in dilapidated stables for the last 26 years*. Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 2016. Courtesy the artist.



Lucy Raven (b. 1977, United States)

Lucy Raven's multidisciplinary practice spans across animation, film, still photography, installation, sound, and performative lecture. Through her works, she visualises the processes of how things come into being and how they evolve over time. Besides exploring the changes in state of a material object in *Kongkreto* (2018), Raven tracks the production of copper wire from a pit in Nevada to a smelter in Southern China in *China Town* (2009). *Curtain* (2014) traces the arduous but underappreciated task of converting 2D Hollywood films into 3D, carried out by outsourced, low-cost labour in Bombay, Beijing, and Vancouver, to name a few. By tracking these processes, Raven sheds light on the ways in which people living in different parts of the world are interconnected by a common object.

Lucy Raven, *3-3-19: Debris flow erosion, wet cement on dry cement and sand-L*, 2019, cement and sand on silk, 214 x 133 cm, detail. Courtesy the artist.



Melati Suryodarmo (b. 1969, Indonesia)

As a performance artist, Melati Suryodarmo's medium of choice is her body. With a deep interest in issues related to politics, society, and psychology, she spends at least six months researching on a topic before translating theoretical ideas into movement, actions, and gestures. Suryodarmo is well-known for her durational performances which can last for hours. In *I'm a Ghost in My Own House* (2012), she crushed and grinded charcoal briquettes for 12 hours—a testament to her experience of witnessing life's energy dissipate. Her performances are also often infused with intense emotions, humour, and absurdity. In 2012, she went viral on the Internet when a video of her work, *Exergie – Butter Dance* (2000) made its rounds online. In it, she danced on 20 blocks of butter while trying to keep her balance, getting up every time she fell. This piece was an exploration and physical representation of moments when one experiences a peak in emotions.



Melati Suryodarmo, *Dancing Under the Black Sky*, 2019, film still. Courtesy the artist.

Gallery Activities

Activity #1:

Turning Tides: Identities in Transit

(Required materials: notebook, pencil, camera or a smart phone.)

(* An important note: The activity sheets will not be graded, nor is there only one correct answer. They are to provide a platform for creative dialogue, debate, and continued research into the suggested topics.)

In Activity #1, explore the exhibition individually, spending time with each artwork. Use your booklet to note down any imagery or themes that you think may represent changing personal identity for the artist or in the artist's society. Answer the accompanying questions.

Ade Darmawan

Tuban, 2019

1. How could water from the Straits represent changing identities?

2. How are natural resources linked to national identity?

ila

the sons and daughters of hungry ghosts, 2019
bekas, 2019

1. Do you think knowing your family's detailed lineage is valuable? Explain your answer.

2. How does the artist metaphorically represent forgotten identity?

Shubigi Rao

Photographs from *Pulp: A Short Biography of the Banished Book*, 2016-18

1. The translation of *Arus Balik* from Bahasa Indonesia into English is "reversal of the tide." Why do you think Pramoedya chose that title for his first novel written while imprisoned on Buru Island?

2. Throughout history, certain books have been banned in their place of origin. What does that say about the power of words?

Zac Langdon-Pole

Paradise Blueprint, 2017

1. What does this work have to say about cultural misperceptions?

2. Is it important to understand people and cultures that live far away from your home region? Why?

Lucy Raven

Series of *Debris flow erosion, wet cement on sand*, 2019

1. Can the choice of specific materials represent identity? Explain your answer.

2. How does the artist's choice of materials correspond to the concept of change in identity?

Melati Suryodarmo

Dancing Under the Black Sky, 2019

1. This artist has researched the history connected to Reog, a performative dance tradition originating in East Java. What old cultural traditions are still being practiced today in Singapore?

2. By keeping past traditions alive, do we influence our current collective identity? Explain your answer.

Next break into small groups of 3 or 4 to answer the additional questions.

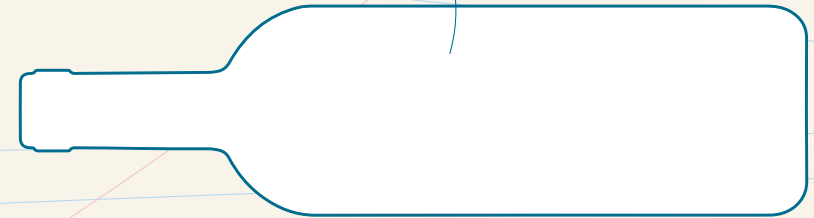
1. Share and discuss within your group your findings related to the theme of identity and the questions posed.

2. Which artwork resonates the best with your concept of identity?

Activity #2:

Turning Tides: Message in a Bottle

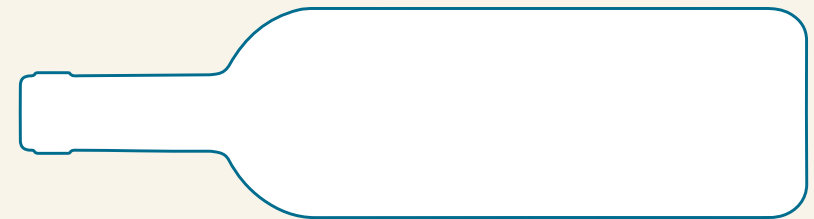
With the turning tides of history, our personal and collective identities are continuously in transit, like a bottle floating on the ocean currents. Many famous quotes warn of the dangers of not learning from the past, such as “Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it,” said by Winston Churchill in 1948. Are the artworks in the exhibition giving us any cautionary advice? Choose three artworks and write down the message you think they are sending in the bottles provided.



Title of the artwork:



Title of the artwork:



Title of the artwork:

Activity #3:

Art Studio Work: Identities in Transit

(Required materials: Old books, *National Geographic* magazines, newspapers, white and coloured paper, coloured pencils, watercolours, acrylic paints, felt-tipped pens, string, scissors, penknives, brushes, and other mixed media materials.)

Choose an old book, magazine, or newspaper. Describe its “identity” or what it is about in a few sentences in the box provided. How could you personalise and transform its identity through making an altered book? Use any of the materials provided to change the object you choose. You may even use performance or video. When you are finished, ask a friend to describe its new identity in the box below.

Original Identity

Transformed Identity

Post-visit Ideas!

Each teacher must decide how to best continue using the enriching and thought-provoking gallery visits to enhance their students’ cross-disciplinary learning experience. The following are a few ideas that could be developed by the students in post-visit lessons or projects.

- Students could research into the history of colonialism and empires in the region, listing the negative and positive impacts as related to life today.
- Students could create a detailed family tree with the help of elders in their families.
- Students could write a story about a personal or collective experience describing how they or others were changed or transformed.
- Participate in the Bicentennial year by researching and creating a classroom exhibition showing the changing fortunes of Singapore over its long documented history from the 13th century to the present.

* Pre-gallery Visit Activities:

Archipelago – a large body of water with many islands

Colonialism – the policy or practice of a wealthy or powerful nation’s maintaining or extending its control over other countries, especially in establishing settlements or exploiting resources

History – a chronological record of events, as of the life or development of people or an institution, often including an explanation of or commentary on those events

Identity – the awareness that an individual or group has of being a distinct, persisting entity

Lineage – direct descent from a particular ancestor; ancestry

Memory – a particular recollection of an event, person, etc

Migrate – to move from one country or region and settle in another

Metaphor – one thing conceived as representing another; a symbol

Perception – an interpretation or impression; an opinion or belief

Tide – something that increases, decreases, or fluctuates like the waters of the tide

Usurp – to seize and hold (the power or rights of another, for example) by force or without legal authority

Suggested definitions taken from <http://freedictionary.com>

Education Programmes

Saturday, 23 March 2019 | 10.00am – 12.30pm

Friday, 26 April 2019 | 3.00 – 5.30pm

Workshop for Teachers and Educators:

Turning Tides: Identities in Transit

by artist and educator **Kelly Reedy**
(United States/Singapore)

Registration required via Peatix:
23 March 2019:
[turningtides-23march2019.peatix.com](https://peatix.com/event/turningtides-23march2019)
26 April 2019:
[turningtides-26april2019.peatix.com](https://peatix.com/event/turningtides-26april2019)

The concept of identity, both personal and collective, will be investigated through visiting *Arus Balik – From below the wind to above the wind and back again*. The artists, **Ade Darmawan** (Indonesia), **ila** (Singapore), **Zac Langdon-Pole** (New Zealand/Germany), **Shubigi Rao** (India/Singapore), **Lucy Raven** (United States), and **Melati Suryodarmo** (Indonesia) contemplate the changing social, geopolitical, religious, and cultural tides that have transformed this region. Their artworks echo the ideas found in the historical novel of Indonesian author Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Join us for a workshop to explore the exhibition and find your own place of belonging.

Kelly Reedy (United States/Singapore) has worked in Singapore for over 18 years as an artist and educator. She has exhibited her artworks internationally in Paris, Chicago, and Berlin, as well as locally at the Jendela Visual Arts Space, Esplanade, the Singapore Tyler Print Institute, and Alliance Française. Reedy has developed educational resources for the National Gallery Singapore and trained teachers at the National Institute of Education, specialising in visual arts education in museums and galleries.

Unless otherwise stated, all programmes are free. For updates please visit ntu.ccasingapore.org.

Saturday, 6 April 2019 | 3.00 – 5.30pm

Workshop: **Reclaiming Nusantara?**

by artists **ila**, **Norah Lea** and **Nurshafitri Ya'akob** (all Singapore)

Workshop fee: \$10
Registration required via Peatix:
[reclaimingnusantara.peatix.com](https://peatix.com/event/reclaimingnusantara)

Where is the Nusantara? Who is the Nusantara? What do we align ourselves with in the past and what futures will we create together?

This workshop, a follow-up to a workshop held last year, *Siapa Dia Wanita Nusantara (Who is the Nusantara Woman?)*, aims to create conversations around the idea of the “Nusantara,” an arguably dated and oftentimes unclear regional construct that has resurfaced every now and then with regards to recent waves of conversations around decolonisation of the Malay archipelago. Centering around themes of intersecting identities, belonging, and speculative histories, this workshop invites anyone who feel that they can benefit from, by sharing about their own stories and experiences, the explorations of their personal oral histories, through spoken word and a collective imagining of the past and future.

ila – Please refer to page 8

Norah Lea (Singapore) is a multidisciplinary artist whose works investigate the performative aspects of our identities. Her work is rooted in self-portraiture, exploring themes such as gender,

sexuality, and ethnicity through photography, film, performance, and spoken word.

Nurshafitri Ya'akob (Singapore) explores the nuanced psyche that individuals keep hidden in their subconscious. She expounds on the duality and sometimes hypocrisy of certain ideologies and theories that have been made palatable for the society.

Saturday, 1 June 2019 | 3.00 – 6.00pm

Workshop: **Visualising Sense of Place through Map-Making** by artist **Juria Toramae** (Thailand/Singapore)

Workshop fee: \$10
Registration required via Peatix:
[visualisingsenseofplace.peatix.com](https://peatix.com/event/visualisingsenseofplace)

Artist Juria Toramae will discuss map-making as an art form and will guide the participants through the basics of creating a map. The workshop will include conceptualising and drawing a map of one's own imagined Singapore.

Juria Toramae (Thailand/Singapore) is a visual artist based in Singapore. Having had an itinerant childhood, she is interested in place attachment and displacement. Her practice draws on historical and field research and reflects on human relationship with nature. Her work has been presented at the Singapore Art Museum at 8Q, the Singapore International Photography Festival, The Photo-book Exhibition for Athens Photo Festival (Greece), the Obscura Festival of Photography (Malaysia), the Chiang Mai University Art Center (Thailand), and The Substation (Singapore).

Sign up for NTU CCA Singapore's Guided School Tours

These guided tours provide opportunities for discussions on art, honing observation skills and interpretive thinking for both students and teachers.

The tours are led by NTU CCA Singapore's curators who will provide insights into the exhibition, and share their experience of working with the artists.

All tours are free of charge.

To arrange a day and time for the tours suited to your schedule,
email ntuccaeducation@ntu.edu.sg

Visitor Information

Exhibition Hours

Tuesday – Sunday, 12.00 – 7.00pm

Closed on Mondays

Open on Public Holidays

(except on Mondays)

Free admission to all programmes

ntu.ccasingapore.org

facebook.com/ntu.ccasingapore

Instagram: [@ntu_ccasingapore](https://www.instagram.com/ntu_ccasingapore)

Twitter: [@ntuccasingapore](https://twitter.com/ntuccasingapore)

Exhibitions

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Enquiries: ntuccaevents@ntu.edu.sg