




# On the cusp

AN ART EXHIBITION  
PRESENTED BY NTU MUSEUM

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The background features a black field with a large, sweeping white curve that starts from the bottom left and arcs towards the top right. A second, thinner white curve follows a similar path but is positioned higher and further to the right. The area between these curves is filled with a dark olive green color. The text is centered in the lower half of the page, set against the black background.

The phrase “being on the cusp” describes a turning point, signalling the threshold between different states of being. It evokes anticipation of things to come or an embrace of the indeterminate. In astronomy, the cusp refers to the points where the moon’s illuminated and unlit surfaces meet, forming the crescent. This light, borrowed from the sun, lends itself to a poetics of becoming: the moon’s shifting form as shaped by the dialogue between celestial bodies. This exhibition responds to the cusp as a metaphor for transition. What happens when distinct realms—past and present, virtual and physical, earthly and spiritual—converge? How do they converse with each other and what is exchanged at points of transition and contact? Through distinct artistic approaches, Boedi Widjaja, Torlarp Larpjaroensook and Tromarama explore how these exchanges shape our sense of self and relationship with the world.

Using memory as a conceptual frame, *On the cusp* delves into the complexities and nuances of finding identity and belonging in an ever-changing world. The act of remembering is intrinsic to human existence. Memory reveals much of who we are and what shapes our being. It is personal and shared, intimate yet communal. Embedded in body, language, place and shared experience, it is not a static repository of the past but a living force carried within us. It resides in the practices we inherit, the stories passed down through generations and relationships we form with the spaces we inhabit. Memory travels through interaction and events, constantly undergoing transmission, communication and negotiation. The artists delve into memories and experiences that are passed through familial lines, social relationships and culture. The works allow new or hidden stories emerge, in themselves becoming discursive spaces that resist erasure.

Language, as both concept and medium, constitutes a central thematic thread of the exhibition. Beyond its role in transmitting knowledge and information, language functions as a site in which histories, cultural memory and intergenerational narratives are sedimented. It bears the imprints of individual, familial and collective identity. It is both connective and exclusionary: capable of forging unity and continuity, while simultaneously delineating boundaries and reinforcing divides. The artists engage a range of linguistic systems from oral and written language, computational code and algorithmic structures to genetic code, to examine how meaning is produced and mediated. What are the possibilities and limits of these modes of communication? Language becomes a vehicle that is constantly responding to those who use it, evolving through circumstance and intent.

The works create spaces to listen and attend to the fissures, slippages and moments that emerge when seeking to communicate across different thresholds and contexts. With the grounds of Nanyang Technological University as the setting, the exhibition unfolds across three sites with distinctive characters and histories: the lawn at the Chinese Heritage Centre, the Nanyang Lake Pavilion and the INDEX: Stories in Motion media screen. Over time, these spaces have absorbed imprints of human activity: bearing witness to historical events and stories that unfold around them. Memory takes on a spatial dimension, attesting to the tangible and intangible connections between us and the environments that we exist in. The works engage in close dialogue with these spaces, layering new memories to the sites they inhabit, prompting the psychological and conceptual contours of these spaces to shift and evolve. They bring together a medley of voices, ancestral, communal and cultural, that weave through spaces of heritage, learning and gathering in the university. Through this, bonds are rekindled and stories are given agency to surface and speak.

This publication serves as a companion that provides critical context by tracing conceptual threads in the exhibition. Conversations with the artists offer insight into their practices and works. The publication is intended to accompany the reader through the exhibition. *On the cusp* is a journey in storytelling: it acknowledges the human yearning to connect with narratives larger than us and reflects on how the bonds we forge, with one another and the world, are intertwined with what and how we choose to remember.





Boedi Widjaja, 东邪西毒 *I Want to Infect You with History*, 2025, installation view.

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东邪西毒

*I Want to Infect You with History*

📍 Nanyang Lake Pavilion



# Boedi Widjaja

In the titular moving-image work in his installation 东邪西毒 *I Want to Infect You with History*, Boedi Widjaja reflects, “When I wrote this four-line poem, I was not crafting words, but following the body’s memories that had moved with me between worlds.” Having migrated to Singapore as a child following ethnic tensions in Solo, Indonesia, Boedi’s lived experience of displacement has shaped his engagement with diasporic experience and estranged origins. His practice asks what becomes of histories erased through dispossession. How can marginalised narratives reclaim agency?

Boedi sees language and genetic code as carriers of history and memory, the keys to understanding personal and collective pasts and identity. Molecular code is a medium that articulates the instability and mutability of the diasporic condition. These concerns manifest in two bodies of work presented at the Nanyang Lake Pavilion: 东邪西毒 *I Want to Infect You with History* and *Islands of Remembering and Forgetting*. Boedi continues his sustained, generative collaboration with Dr Eric Yap, Clinician Scientist and Associate Professor in Human and Microbial Genetics at the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine and Principal Investigator at the Institute for Digital Molecular Analytics and Science. With molecular code as a starting point, the installation presents explorations that manifest in poetry, sculpture, performance and photography.

Through multiple strategies of transmission and translation, hidden narratives embedded within the body surface and take form. Boedi’s work probes diasporic memory and the volatility of identity and belonging. His poem “*Rivers and Lakes / Tanah dan Air / Land and Water / Sungai Sejarah*”, written in English and Bahasa Indonesia, was encoded and

Boedi Widjaja, Detail of 东邪西毒 *I Want to Infect You with History*, 2025.



synthesised into DNA using a cipher shaped by his multilingual cultural inheritance. In the three-channel moving-image installation, the poem mediates a speculative dialogue between the artist and a human cell. The exchange advances the installation's central proposition: history is like a virus. It inhabits bodies and seeps across geographical borders.

Boedi Widjaja, 东邪西毒  
*I Want to Infect You with History*,  
2025, installation view.

The installation unfolds in dialogue with its surroundings. Nearby landmarks—the Chinese Heritage Centre, Yunnan Garden and the Nantah Arch—survived from the era of the erstwhile Nanyang University, or Nantah as it is affectionately known. Established in 1956 through support from the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, Nantah was the first and only Chinese-language university outside China.

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin Lee, "Nantah: Between Community and Nation," *Singapore, The Unexpected Nation*, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2008, p. 443.

It became a symbolic bastion for the community: “an icon, a keeper of the identity of the Chinese, and a promise of Chinese cultural efflorescence.”<sup>1</sup> Nantah offered a sense of grounding, an anchor of identity and familiarity in the new environment they found themselves in. Boedi’s installation responds to this charged historical landscape, situating his work within a site shaped by migration, memory and diasporic aspirations.

Space hosts life. It carries layers of history that accumulate over time, as well as the many relationships that circulate around these spaces. Embracing the Pavilion’s porous architecture, Boedi reimagines it as a living cell that metabolises memory, language and genetic code. The balcony interstices are activated with works that engage in dialogue with the surroundings. In petri dishes are DNA-encoded poetry sitting alongside soil and lake water from Yunnan Garden. Exposed to fluctuating environmental conditions, the work mutates over time, foregrounding memory as unstable and susceptible to change.

Boedi positions his personal history of displacement against broader national and geopolitical narratives. In *东邪西毒 I Want to Infect You with History*, he recounts postwar episodes in which Chinese Indonesians were forced to choose a nationality and the optimism of postcolonial solidarity at the 1955 Bandung Conference. These moments reveal how macro forces, including political alignments and ideological shifts, can impact the individual. History is porous, a fluid membrane through which personal and collective memory circulate and converge.

Agency is a central tenet of Boedi's body of work. He turns to the body as a site of transmission. In the moving-image work, Boedi navigates Yunnan Garden and the Chinese Heritage Centre, releasing embodied memory into sites rich in historical significance. Through this performative gesture, he becomes a vector enabling the circulation of diasporic narratives across time and space. A balcony is transformed into a zone reminiscent of a laboratory containment chamber. Inside this charged space, the audience can pull the trigger of a spray bottle of DNA solution, initiating a voluntary "self-infection with history." In this moment of transmission, history infiltrates through bodily contact.

Across Boedi's work, memory serves as a fulcrum that allows a gradual and steady reclamation of voice and space. History is carried in and through bodies and inscribed into place. This installation invites all to be part of this unending dissemination and writing of history. Agency is reframed as collective and embodied. Moving from absence to presence, history reclaims agency as it replicates across the Pavilion site, surviving through transmission and the shared act of carrying one another's stories. Like a virus, history moves between us, through spaces and across worlds.



Boedi Widjaja, Still from *东邪西毒 / I Want to Infect You with History*, 2025.  
Image courtesy of the artist and performer. Cinematography by Harry Chew.





On these and following pages:  
Boedi Widjaja, 东邪西毒 / *Want to Infect You with History*, 2025, installation views.

## In Conversation with Boedi Widjaja

*Your works draw on your personal experience with forced displacement at a young age. You have been committed to surfacing the different facets and complexities of diasporic experience. 东邪西毒 I Want to Infect You with History issues a powerful provocation, one that acknowledges that memories can be unsettling or stem from personal or collective trauma. Could you elaborate on the notion of history as a form of infection?*



The body is the shortest route to history. In 2019, an article on epigenetics reframed my understanding of inheritance: trauma can be carried across generations at a biomolecular level, beyond lived experience or narrative memory. Memory becomes embodied through genealogy, entering the body ahead of language, without consent. This marked the beginning of my engagement with DNA as artistic material.

My inquiry into diasporic memory is bound to exploring its deep historical structures. If history shapes how we remember, is it then present in the body? Together with stories and archives, I begin to see the body as a biological carrier of history that is transmissible through inheritance and contagion. Looking at how the past persists, mutates and resurfaces in the world, I realise we are hosts and vectors of history, operating through memory, culture and language. Like viruses, history spreads by adapting to new hosts and environments. It survives regime changes, border realignments and ideological shifts. Across Cold War geographies and East–West fault lines, history is never abstract. It is a structural force that silently imprints itself into bodies, producing long afterlives that endure beyond the collapse of political frameworks.

*Your sensitivity to architecture, space and the sedimented layers of memory of place is evident in your practice. In this installation, you engage with Yunnan Garden and the Chinese Heritage Centre, sites that carry complex memories and histories. You have referred to your work in the Nanyang Lake Pavilion as a “form of biological architecture” where body and space coalesce. Could you elaborate on how you engaged with these spaces and how they informed your explorations around diaspora and remembering?*



Since space is lived, embodied history naturally lingers in it like an invisible virus. If history infects, the reverse is also true: we can infect history through space. Here, the usual direction of power begins to shift. Diasporic subjects are more than passive recipients of geopolitical forces. A virus survives by adapting. Diasporic memory does the same. It is a mutable condition and not a fixed wound; capable of recombination, generating new forms and imagining futures that recode the past.

This project initiated my engagement with the Chinese Heritage Centre, Yunnan Garden and the Nanyang Lake Pavilion, sites shaped by entangled histories and lived resonances that are central to my practice, their spatial features making these embodied histories legible. The Centre, originally the administration building of Nanyang University in 1955, has shifted from a postwar institutional aspiration to a site of diasporic memory and research. Its modern concrete structure, capped by a traditional Chinese-style roof, performs a hybrid architectural language shaped by migration and political inheritance. The Garden also carries a charged name. In 1916, the Singapore tycoon and supporter of China's republican revolution Lim Nee Soon named the land to commemorate Yunnan's resistance to Yuan Shikai's dynastic ambition. Across the South Seas, political movements travelled with people. Diasporic crossings embedded their legacies in the soil. The Garden's design mirrors the Centre's hybridity: classical Chinese asymmetry organised through Western axial logic, a rare synthesis of landscape traditions.





The Pavilion operates in a different register. Built in 2019 as part of the Garden's rejuvenation and intended for a restaurant, the COVID outbreak left the building functionally unfulfilled. Its unusual form reads less as a static structure than as a self-contained system: a circular titanium roof, an almost column-free interior, a reflective water body and an arc of sheltered peripheral balconies mediating water and interior. Drawing on the physical logic of life described in Erwin Schrödinger's *What Is Life?*, I read the Pavilion as a spatial organisation that mirrors a living cell: the ceiling light as a nucleus, the glass enclosure as a permeable membrane and the surrounding water as extracellular fluid.

On this and the following page: Boedi Widjaja, *Islands of Remembering and Forgetting*, 2026, installation views.

The traces and circulation of embodied histories in these sites informed two new multimodal works for this project: 东邪西毒 / *I Want to Infect You with History* and *Islands of Remembering and Forgetting* which occupy the indoor spaces and spill into the balcony interstices. For the first work, I filmed a three-channel performative work in sites dense with historical and personal resonance. In Indonesia, my childhood house lies in ruins; in Singapore, primary sites included the Centre and the Garden. I moved along the Garden's main axis and threaded through the Centre, spraying a DNA-encoded poem mist into the air, becoming a human vector through which memory circulates and persists in spaces. The work debuted in Shanghai in November 2024.

For *On the cusp*, presenting the work at the Pavilion, within the Garden and in sight of the Centre, situates the work within the spatial and historical frameworks that give it resonance. *Islands of Remembering and Forgetting* extends this logic: a 4-line poem encoded in synthetic DNA, exposed to soil and lake water from the Garden, rests in petri dishes where environmental conditions and fluctuating temperatures allow it to recombine, mutate and dissolve. The work enacts remembering and forgetting as inseparable flux, materialising how these sites carry and transmit embodied histories.



***Your long-standing collaboration with geneticist Dr Eric Yap has taken shape across multiple projects, demonstrating a tight dialogue between art and biology. How has this partnership evolved over time? Could you share how it manifested in this latest installation?***

My engagement with DNA arises from my interest in embodied memory and how the past persists in the body. DNA fascinates me as a primordial, genealogical medium through which memory accumulates, mutates and survives beyond individual experience. At the time, I had neither a background in biology nor access to scientific networks.

A serendipitous introduction to Dr Eric Yap for an unrelated matter became the surprising beginning of a sustained collaboration. Our first project, *Path. 10, A Tree Talks, A Tree Walks* 梧桐语 · 菩提径 (2019), involved encoding words into DNA and planting it in soil. The ease and openness of that exchange gave me the confidence to extend the work into the trilogy *A Tree +++*, which included transposing DNA code into a musical score. This expansion reflects our dialogues. Science is not illustrated by art but could be a catalyst and method for the latter. At the time, Dr Yap shared how geneticists sonify DNA sequences to sense anomalies and ruptures in expected patterns, well before the current wave of AI tools. This insight opened a pathway for me to think across time, sound and biological code as a compound system.

Our collaboration has deepened through multiple projects, alongside my own steep learning curve in molecular biology. I undertook a residency with Dr Yap's team at IDMxS, attending lectures and working in the lab with Dr Yap and his colleagues. His presence has been formative: rigorously scientific yet imaginatively generative, proposing novel bioscientific applications while patiently translating complex processes for someone outside the field.



Boedi Widjaja, *Path. 10, A Tree Talks, A Tree Walks*  
梧桐语·菩提径, 2019,  
installation view.  
Image courtesy of  
Temenggong Artists-in-  
Residence. Photograph  
by Jimmy.

This latest project benefitted from the multi-year support of the National Arts Council Creation Grant. This enabled sustained experimentation with complex artistic outcomes: DNA nanosculptures as genetic forms of memory, self-assembling DNA sequences that molecularly bind and unbind, and misted DNA released into space as a reflection on proximity, the possibilities around an invisible materiality and the exchange of fluid histories. The grant provided the time and resources to develop these forms rigorously, allowing the project to operate at the intersection of biology and art, where their respective materials, processes and methods converge and unfold.

# INFECT

*The transmission of history through the body and human contact is central to this installation. Performance as a medium is manifested in different ways, through gesture, handwriting and the spoken word. As part of the installation, viewers are invited to choose whether to mist themselves with history. What prompted you to introduce this element of agency? How has your engagement with the medium of performance expanded in this project?*

Live Art has been a foundational mode of thinking and working in my practice from the outset. In my first Live Art project, *Path. 1, The White City* (2012), visitors were invited to co-produce the work by hurling graphite-coated balls to mark the gallery's white walls, generating a relational aesthetic through collective movement, sound and residue as I drew their portraits. The latest project in the series, *Path. 16, 东邪西毒 I Want to Infect You with History* (2025), took form as a



Boedi Widjaja, Performance still from *Path. 16, 东邪西毒 I Want to Infect You with History*, 2025. Image courtesy of ShanghART Gallery and the artist. Photograph by Rongli.

performance-lecture that further developed into this installation. Across these works, Live Art is approached as a condition of personal and collective agencies rather than as a performative spectacle. Liveness unfolding in real time, activated through audience participation, results in situations that have to be entered rather than performances that are passively observed. This orientation shaped my engagement with performance even as its modalities shifted during the COVID lockdown. With gatherings restricted, I turned to performance for the camera in *Path. 12, River Origins 浪淘沙* (2020), physically interacting with cosmic ray muons through a custom tracking device. Liveness persisted in mediated form. The imperceptible passage of muons through the body, translated into light and sound by the tracker, reveals hidden dimensions and materialities beyond human perception.

As the idea of history as contagion took shape, I began asking how this proposition might be physically sensed. An invitation to develop a performance-lecture provided a critical hinge: a format in which theory, biography, history, language and gesture could cohere. The script *Path. 16, 东邪西毒 I Want to Infect You with History* became the material backbone of this installation, unfolding through spoken word, handwriting and filmed performance in English, Bahasa Indonesia and Chinese.



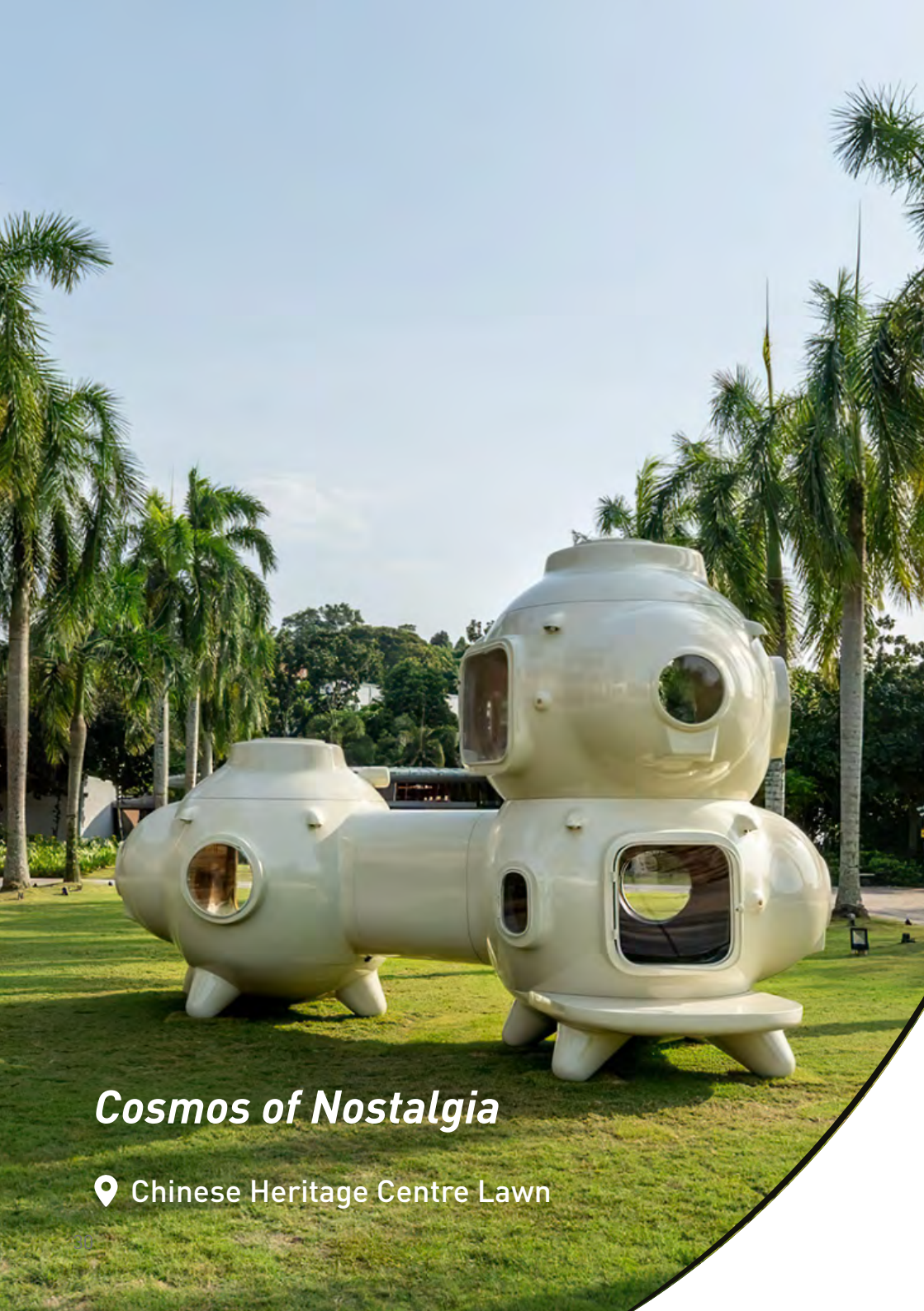
Boedi Widjaja, 东邪西毒  
*I Want to Infect You  
with History*, 2025,  
installation view.

History is negotiated through bodies. By inviting audiences to “self-infect” with synthetic DNA encoding my 4-line poem, the installation makes explicit the project’s central provocation: history enters the body first. The gesture collapses the distance between viewer and participant, past and present bodies, and foregrounds the history that we carry, knowingly or otherwise. If history is viral without an antidote, the pressing question becomes how to host it without reproducing its violences and whether it is possible for it to mutate toward alternative futures. The invitation to mist oneself extends my long-standing concern with agency: performance exceeds the artist’s body to include the viewer’s, turning transmission into a shared ethical act.





On these and following pages:  
Torlarp Larparoensook, *Cosmos of Nostalgia*, 2025, details and installation views.



## ***Cosmos of Nostalgia***

 Chinese Heritage Centre Lawn



# Torlarp Larpjaroensook

A man gazes skyward, inspired by dreams of ascending to the heavens, an otherworldly realm embodying hope, mystery and boundless knowledge. Chinese legend recounts the tale of Wan Hu, a Ming Dynasty court official who embarked on a mission to reach the Moon by fastening himself to a bamboo chair strapped with gunpowder-filled fireworks. Upon launching, the rudimentary rocket-chair exploded mid-air with its passenger vanishing forever. Despite the tragic outcome, this story of an aspiring astronaut's indomitable spirit endures, inspiring popular culture and space travellers alike.<sup>1</sup> Wan Hu has become an archetypal astronaut, a metaphor for humanity's space ambitions spurred by our longing to comprehend and engage with universal realities.

Space travel has been a recurring theme in Torlarp Larpjaroensook's practice. He recalls childhood memories of his grandmother, who journeyed from war-torn China to Ayutthaya, Thailand. During the Mid-Autumn Festival, she would offer incense and prayers to the Moon as an act of faith and connection with tradition. Running parallel to this was the space race between the United States and the former Soviet Union in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Torlarp's practice, 'space travel' carries an added layer of meaning. It does not just gesture toward outer space but also the idea of bridging different dimensions: past and present, the earthly and the spiritual, fiction and lived reality. Space has a psychological dimension, a realm that exists beyond the tangible. Torlarp's practice demonstrates a keen attunement to the ways in which voices speak across time and space.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1970, the International Astronomical Union named a lunar impact crater on the Moon's far side "Wan-Hoo" in recognition of his legacy as a pioneering figure in space exploration.



*Cosmos of Nostalgia* expands on Torlarp Larjaroensook's worldbuilding impulse and his longstanding interest in the power of myth and memory. Resting on a sprawling lawn between the Chinese Heritage Centre and Yunnan Garden, sites steeped in history, the work combines cultural tradition, history and speculative fiction. Conceived as a time capsule from the future, it is both sculptural environment and architectural intervention. *Cosmos of Nostalgia* brings multiple dimensions into conversation: the artist's multicultural imagery and the layered histories of its surroundings. Torlarp describes his work as work where "viewers will feel as though they are entering an inner world of the past, one filled with fantasy, dreamlike visions and stories that connect the outer universe and inner imagination."



Torlarp's works give form to this intrinsic desire for connection. Earlier works, such as *Spiritual Spaceship* (2018) and *Spiritual Station* (2023), explored migration, technological progress and the enduring value of belief and memory. The spaceship is not just a vessel for space exploration; it is a medium that carries stories and bridges past and present. By incorporating found objects and everyday materials into his installations, Torlarp harnesses the memories and experiences embedded in these objects for his storytelling endeavours. While rooted in specific cultural references, his works resonate on a more universal register, speaking across cultures, generations and geographical borders.



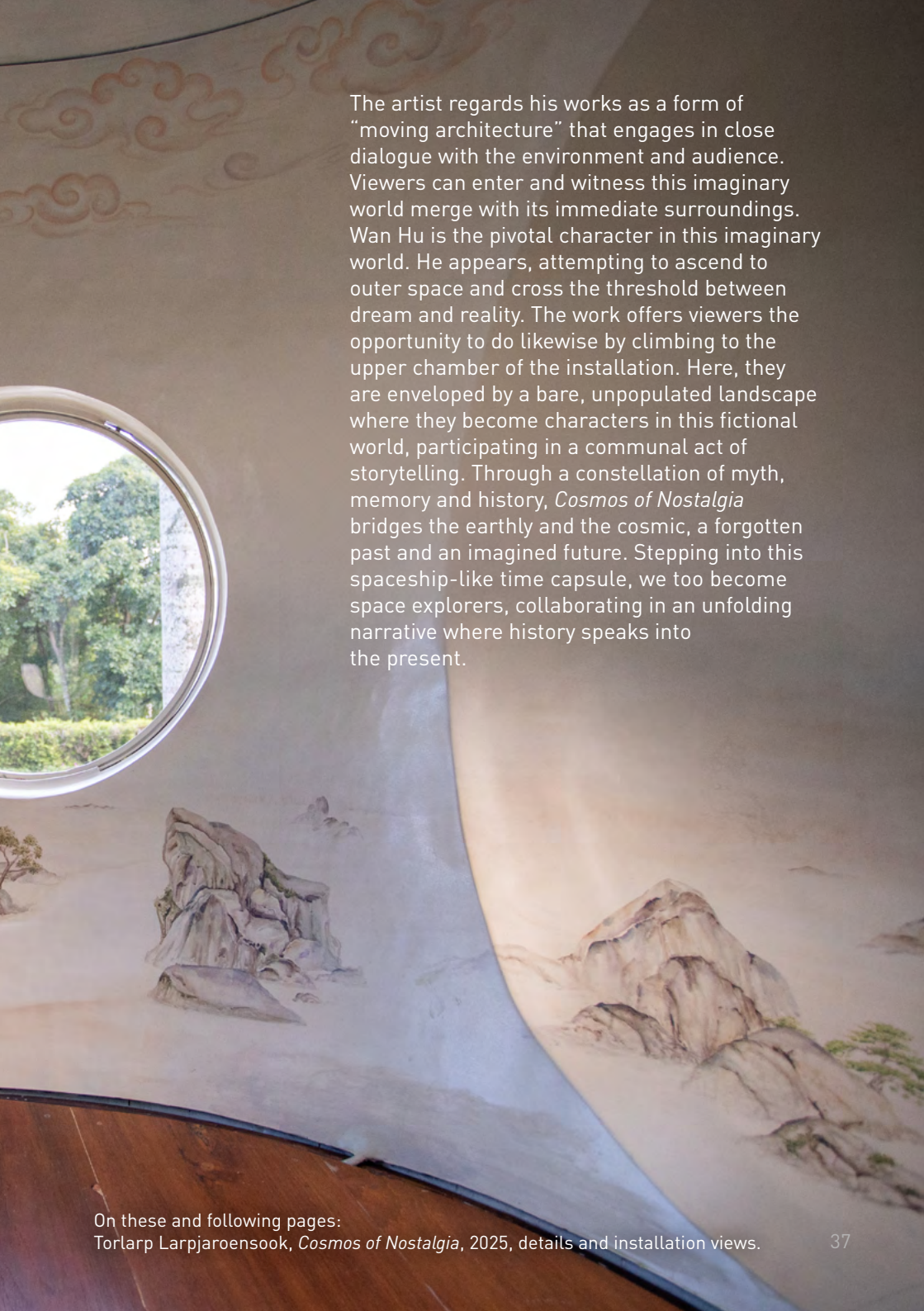
Torlarp Larjaroensook, *Spiritual Spaceship*, 2018, installation view. Image courtesy of Gallery Seescape, Chiang Mai, Thailand.



Torlarp Larpjaroensook,  
*Spiritual Station*, 2023,  
installation view. Image  
courtesy of Gallery  
Seescape, Chiang Mai,  
Thailand.

*Cosmos of Nostalgia* further expands his visual vocabulary. The installation's interior features intricate paintings that draw on imagery, ideologies and myths from Thai and Chinese cultures. Visual motifs inspired by 20<sup>th</sup>-century Thai science fiction, early science encyclopaedias, Chinese philosophy and mythology are interwoven into a hybrid lexicon. The visual style employed in the paintings is influenced by the traditional Chinese landscape shan shui (山水) painting tradition and murals found in Thai temples. This sweeping panorama of rivers, mountains and skies pays tribute to Taoist philosophy and the grandeur of nature. Literature is a vital source of inspiration. Poetry, inspired by the philosophical musings of classical Chinese poets such as Tang Dynasty poet Li He (李賀), introduces a quieter, contemplative dimension to the installation. These sources of knowledge and imagination from the past are given renewed life in his fictional world.





The artist regards his works as a form of “moving architecture” that engages in close dialogue with the environment and audience. Viewers can enter and witness this imaginary world merge with its immediate surroundings. Wan Hu is the pivotal character in this imaginary world. He appears, attempting to ascend to outer space and cross the threshold between dream and reality. The work offers viewers the opportunity to do likewise by climbing to the upper chamber of the installation. Here, they are enveloped by a bare, unpopulated landscape where they become characters in this fictional world, participating in a communal act of storytelling. Through a constellation of myth, memory and history, *Cosmos of Nostalgia* bridges the earthly and the cosmic, a forgotten past and an imagined future. Stepping into this spaceship-like time capsule, we too become space explorers, collaborating in an unfolding narrative where history speaks into the present.

## In Conversation with Torlarp Larpjaroensook

*Your Thai and Chinese heritage has been a source of inspiration for the ideas behind Cosmos of Nostalgia. How do your upbringing and experiences with diverse cultural influences shape your practice?*

I grew up in a family where Thai and Chinese cultural traditions are interwoven in our daily lives. My childhood home sat along a canal in Ayutthaya, the former capital of Thailand. This backdrop of ancient temple murals, seasonal festivals, and stories passed down through generations formed part of my visual memory. When I was a child, I remember reading science fiction novels that opened realms of imagination and dreams for me.

These experiences naturally blended into my artistic thinking. They continue to shape the way I perceive objects, artworks and the relationships between past and future. In *Cosmos of Nostalgia*, I constructed a space that embodies these personal memories and layers of cultural narratives.





*Your works often explore the spiritual dimension of mankind's fascination with outer space. What sparked your interest in this topic and how has it evolved throughout your practice?*

As a child, I first sensed our excitement about the space race, the sky and the universe through the television broadcasts I watched. I recall images of the Challenger spacecraft and news about Halley's Comet, which returns every 75 years. These moments sparked my curiosity about space and deepened my interest in Thai science fiction literature, specifically those from the 1940s to the 1970s.

There is a spiritual dimension that exists alongside these cultural beliefs and traditions. Humanity has long tried to explain the sky and the cosmos through two distinct frameworks: the Eastern world draws upon faith and spiritual understanding, while the Western world relies on science and technology. Both approaches seek answers to the same fundamental questions: Who are we? Where do we come from? How do we fit within this vast universe? My work evolved by merging these two ways of thinking. *Cosmos of Nostalgia* becomes a kind of time capsule—a vessel that connects past, present and future. It seeks to weave together cultures, beliefs, dreams, hopes and imagination.



***This work draws on several cultural references, visual materials and intergenerational stories. Could you share the visual language and iconography featured in this work?***

Within the installation, multiple layers of imagery and visual languages converge. There are scenes of mountains, rivers, clouds and mist that are strongly influenced by traditional Chinese landscape painting. The painting style is reminiscent of what is seen in Thai temple murals.

The figure of Wan Hu is central to the installation. He represents human ambition and the ingenuity of ancient knowledge. The moon behind Chang'e, the moon goddess in Chinese mythology, is inspired by the book cover illustration by Thai science fiction novelist Chantree Siribunrod. The painting in *Cosmos of Nostalgia* is also inspired by scientific illustrations found in encyclopaedias from the 1950s to 1960s. These symbols function as "objects of memory," elements through which I construct a world that blends imagination, cultural inheritance and personal history.



***Poetry in Thai and Mandarin features prominently in Cosmos of Nostalgia. Which writers influenced you and how does poetry function within the installation?***

The poetic dimension of this work draws inspiration from classical Chinese poets, especially those who contemplated nature and the cosmos through a lens that is simultaneously philosophical and emotional. One such influence is Li He (李賀), whose writings reflect a profound sensitivity toward the concept of the heavens.

In this installation, poetry creates an inner space. It acts as a “gentle mediator” between the painted landscapes and the imagined universe. It softens the threshold between the two realms, allowing viewers to enter not only through sight but through rhythm, language, emotion and introspection. Poetry functions as quiet murmurs within the artwork, guiding the viewer, prompting reflection and fostering a contemplative state of mind.





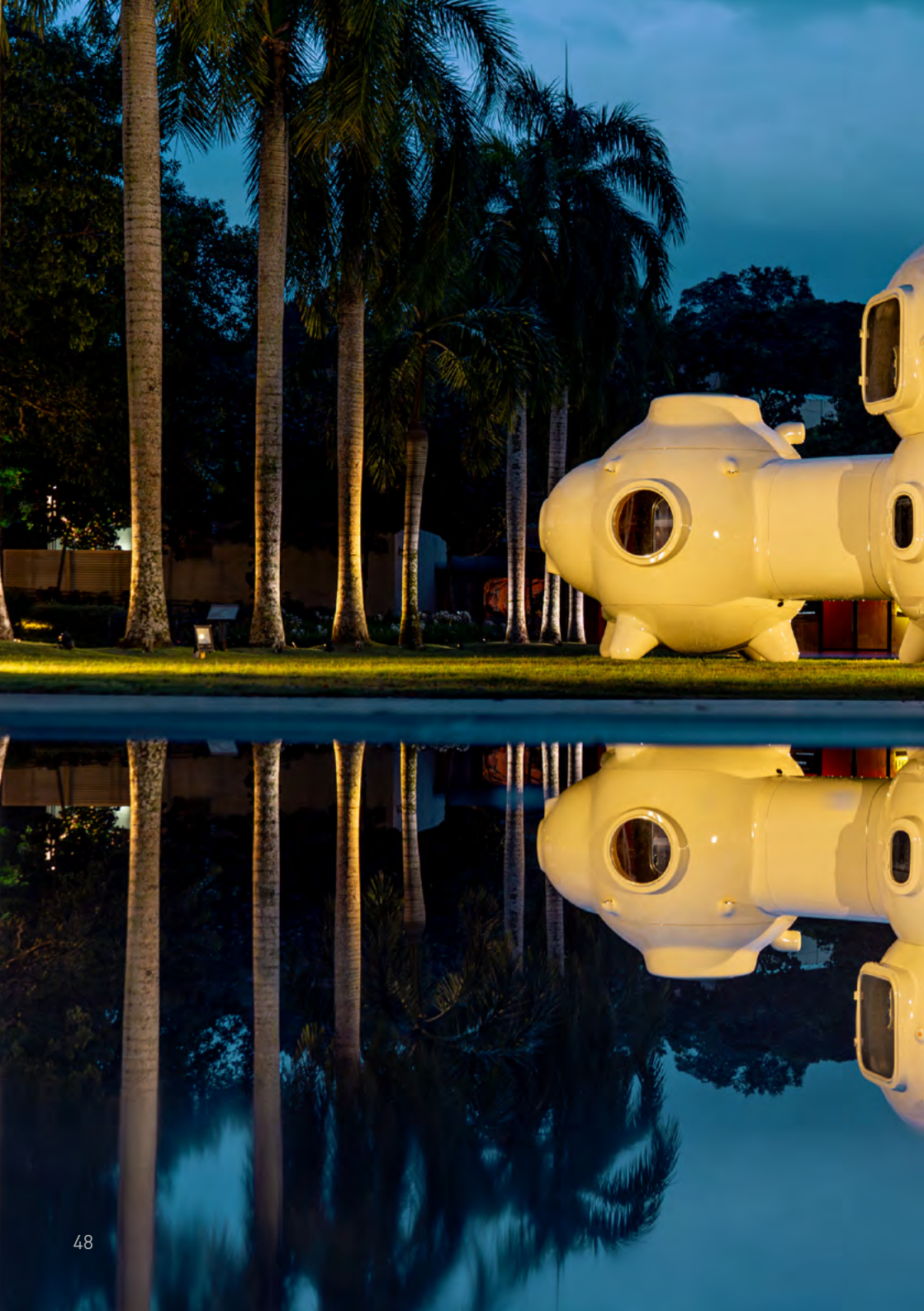
***Cosmos of Nostalgia is situated beside the Chinese Heritage Centre and Yunnan Garden, both of which contain deep histories. How did you envision your work conversing with its site?***

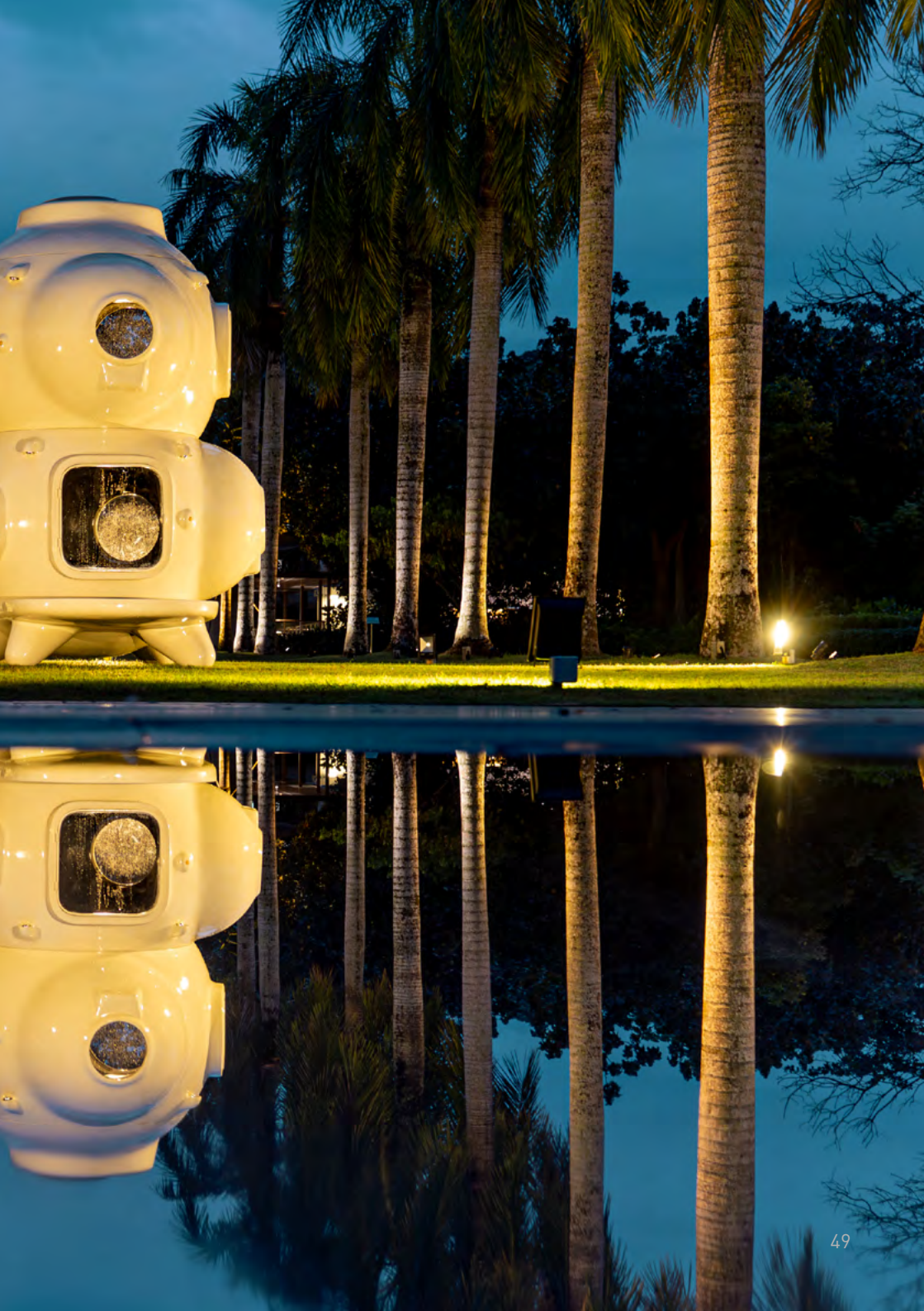
The installation is conceived as a time capsule from the future that returns to converse with the past. Viewers can enter the artwork to see the interior panorama filled with stories from past eras. They can simultaneously glance outward through the windows to perceive the landscape beyond. At this point, the two worlds overlap. This layering creates a multidimensional relationship with time by bridging imagination and lived reality.

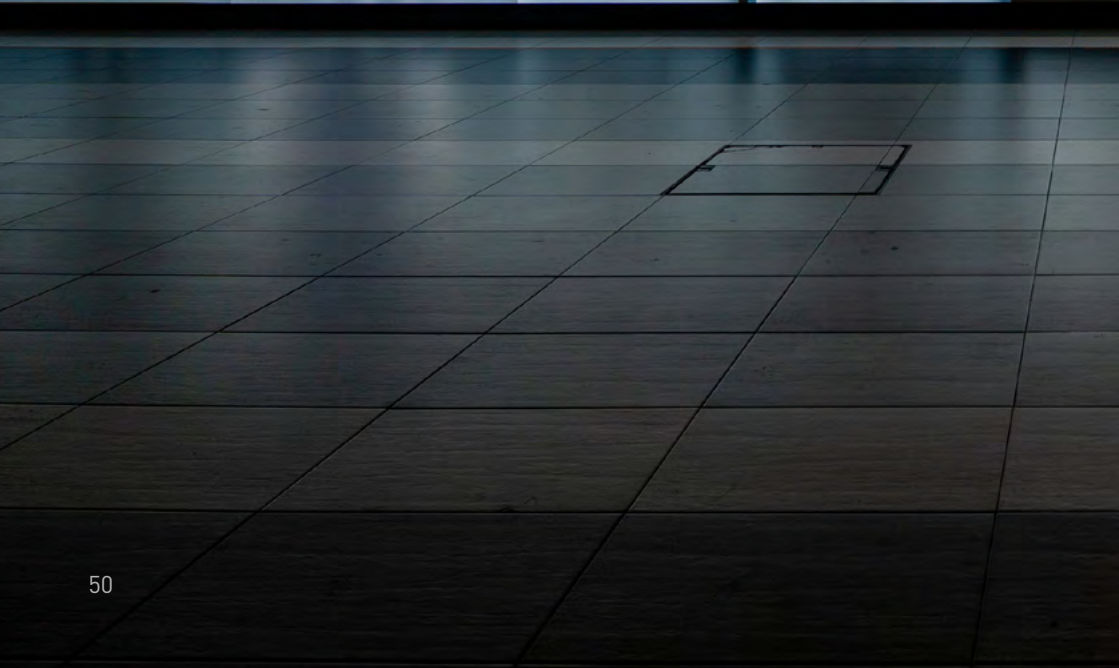
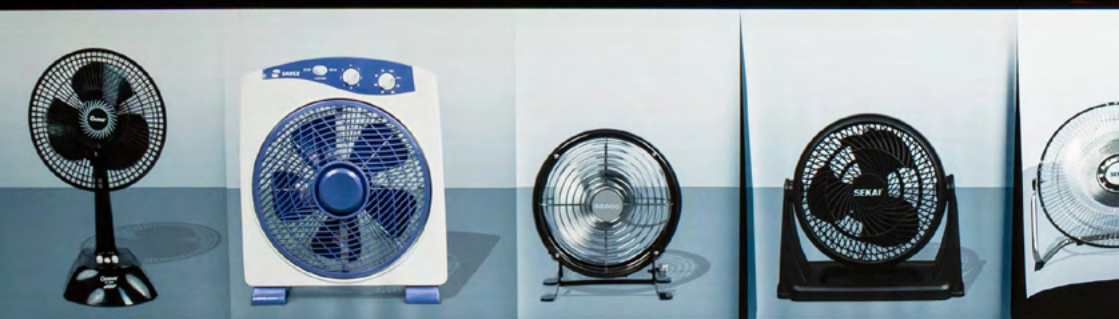
The work engages deeply with its historical surroundings. The Chinese Heritage Centre and Yunnan Garden are places connected to narratives of migration, cultural heritage and the lives of generations who built new identities. Through this dialogue between artwork and site, *Cosmos of Nostalgia* forms a resonant connection with its environment, allowing history, memory and imagination to coexist within a single space.





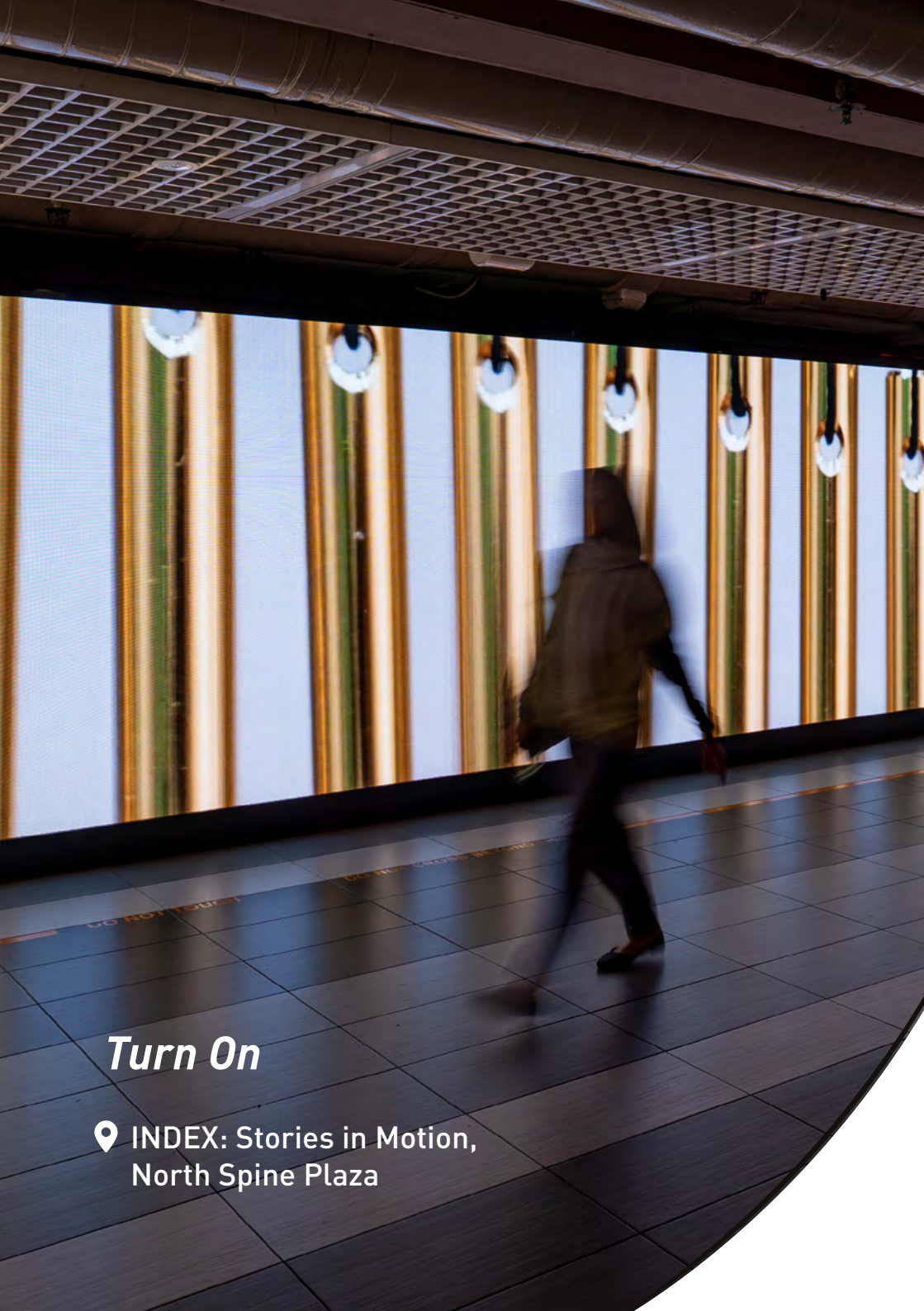








On these and following pages:  
Tromarama, *Turn On*, 2026, installation views.



## *Turn On*

📍 INDEX: Stories in Motion,  
North Spine Plaza



# Tromarama

Technology has permeated nearly every facet of present-day living, shaping the systems that keep cities moving and mediating how we relate to each other and the world around us. As digital infrastructures and the reach of social media expand, the distinctions between physical and virtual realities become increasingly unstable and blurred. This phenomenon unfolds on a global, macro level while impacting individuals in a deeply personal way. Tromarama parses these conditions of living in an information age in the moving image work *Turn On*.

Foregrounding familiar objects and scenes in daily life, the artists probe the porous threshold between our physical world and the digital realm. The electric fan is the anchor in this work that traces the entanglements between the self and technology. Commonly used in Southeast Asia to combat heat and humidity, this humble appliance has become a symbol of survival, comfort and efficiency. Presented in a choreographed loop, a motley crew of fans whirs to life, simulating airflow that seems to trigger a series of events. Images on the screen start to morph into billowing curtains, while familiar objects and everyday scenes are caught in motion, as if activated by the fans' invisible force.

Upon closer inspection, the apparent logic of cause and effect starts to unravel. The objects seem to take on a life of their own as expectations of behaviour informed by what is observed in physical reality are disrupted. As the fans hum and stir their surroundings into motion, the work unsettles habits of recognition while inviting reflection on technology's capacity to blur the lines between fact and fiction, the real and the virtual. By destabilising habits of recognition, *Turn On* explores the limits of memory and association. Is one reality more authentic than the other? In a hyper-connected

world, experiences are increasingly mediated through representations instead of direct physical encounters. Within this context, the artists position the screen as an active site where meaning and identity are continuously produced and negotiated.

In their practice, Tromarama examines the power wielded by technological systems, algorithms and programming codes in shaping social relations and daily life. Often operating invisibly, these systems offer the promise progress and efficiency while exerting growing influence over how knowledge is produced, circulated and valued. Artificial intelligence exemplifies this tension. As its reach into the everyday expands, questions about access, authorship, ethics and authenticity have also arisen. There is a growing divide between those who have access to these tools and those who do not. There is an algorithm-led colonisation of thought and knowledge and social media and technology seep into our lives.

Tromarama's body of work considers the politics behind this phenomenon. Earlier works such as *Intercourse* (2015), *Quandary* (2016) and *Transivity* (2016) explore the encroachment of the virtual world into physical reality. In these works, a sequence of events takes place, each guided by a specific logic that appears to defy normalised expectations. The concerns undergirding these works have since gained greater intensity and momentum. No longer just a neutral platform, the mediated screen has become a primary site through which information is circulated and through which memories and identities are formed.



*Turn On* is presented on the INDEX media screen in a central thoroughfare of the university campus, in proximity to spaces for learning, gathering and exchange. There is a subtle irony to the situation as the fans simulate airflow on screen in a space without air conditioning or fans to provide ventilation and reprieve. The work implicates viewers in the very conditions it examines. Rather than examining how faithfully the screen reflects reality, it questions the values assigned to what the screen delivers to us. Our relationship with technology is complex: we depend on it while also fearing being overly defined by or reliant on it. With incisive wit and humour, Tromarama's meta commentary explores these contradictions, creating multiple points of entry for reflection. In blurring the boundaries between the virtual and the physical, *Turn On* articulates strategies of affinity in shared experience, inviting us to contemplate the realities of living in a world increasingly experienced through screens and the systems that keep them in motion.

## In Conversation with Tromarama

*Our engagement with the world has become increasingly mediated by technology and internet culture. They control thought, disseminate knowledge and reconfigure social relationships. While they could improve lives, we have also grown dependent on them. What are your thoughts on this paradox? In your practice, how do you approach the ideas of power and influence associated with technology?*

We often feel that living today means constantly negotiating with invisible systems. Technology promises convenience and connection, but it also quietly shapes how we think, move and even feel. That paradox between empowerment and dependency is something we experience every day, not just observe from a distance.

In our practice, we see these technologies less as neutral instruments and more as actors with their own kinds of influence. We are interested in how they reorganise relationships: between people, between humans and objects, and between a person and their own time. Many of our works aim to slow down this automated flow, revealing the glitches, gaps or awkward negotiations behind the seamless interfaces.

Instead of resisting technology or embracing it blindly, we try to engage in dialogue with it. We treat it as something that both structures and destabilises our daily lives. For us, pointing to this messy negotiation is a way to make the power structures visible again, not to resolve the paradox but to live with it more consciously.





Tromarama, *Panoramix*, 2015, installation view at *Panoramix*, Kiang Malingue, Hong Kong, 2015. Image courtesy of the artist and Kiang Malingue. Photograph by Ruddy Hatumena.

*Turn On plays on the notion of cause and effect that has been explored in earlier works like Intercourse (2015). By extension, it also speaks about our entangled relationship with the digital realm and the constant feedback loop we expect from it. How has your engagement with this concept evolved in your practice?*



*Turn On* grows out of ideas we have been developing over time through works such as *Intercourse*, *Quandary* and *Panoramix*. Each of these projects explores how images, objects and systems shape our expectations of cause and effect and how digital mediation quietly alters the way we understand reality. Our interest in cause and effect began with *Intercourse*, where we explored how visual logic trains us to expect clear outcomes. If one action happens, another should follow. In *Quandary*, this logic becomes unstable: the two-channel sequence looks continuous but closer attention reveals doubt and uncertainty, echoing how digital media can convincingly mimic reality while quietly reshaping our sense of time and causality. *Panoramix* adds another layer by highlighting how we increasingly experience the world through mediated images rather than direct encounters.



Tromarama, *Intercourse*, 2015, installation view at *Panoramix*, Kiang Malingue, Hong Kong, 2015. Image courtesy of the artist and Kiang Malingue. Photograph by Ruddy Hatumena.





On these and following pages:  
Tromarama, *Turn On*, 2026, installation views.

In *Turn On*, the notion of cause and effect has become more tangled. The work appears simple, fans switching on, air moving, objects responding but the reactions do not fully make sense. The loop feels overly choreographed, turning a straightforward chain reaction into something uncertain. In this way, this work reflects our relationship with the digital realm today: constantly expecting immediate feedback, while being entangled in systems that respond to us, shape us and sometimes mislead us.

***Everyday objects feature regularly in your works, where the stories or associations embedded within are allowed to surface and speak. Can you share more about how you use these objects as subject matter in your practice? What led you to choose the electric fan as the central character in Turn On?***

Everyday objects have always been a big part of our work because they carry stories such as habits and memories that often say more about our lives than anything spectacular. We like using these objects as starting points. Once you recognise them, you start noticing the behaviours or assumptions attached to them.

In earlier works like *Intercourse* and *Quandary*, we used simple objects to test how easily our minds follow cause and effect. A sliding object, a falling object may appear logical at first, until the sequence breaks and you realise how much your perception has been shaped by visual cues. With *Panoramix*, the object becomes the screen itself, reminding us how digital images now mediate even the most familiar scenes.



Tromarama, Still from  
*Turn On*, 2026.



The electric fan in *Turn On* felt like the right “character” because it is so common in Southeast Asia. It is not just an appliance but almost a symbol of daily survival. It is domestic and tied to very physical sensations: heat, humidity and relief. In the work, the fan becomes a bridge between the physical and the digital. It sets objects into motion but not always in ways that make sense, disrupting how we expect cause and effect to behave. Choosing the fan was not just about the object itself but about what it represents: how technology quietly shapes our everyday reality, our reliance on it and how its “logic” does not always match the world we think we understand.

***The mediated screen is where site between reality and the simulation of reality, source and representation, play out. Could you elaborate on the strategies you employ in this work to investigate these ideas?***

In *Turn On*, the screen becomes a place where real life and its digital version mix. We use everyday objects, like an electric fan, because people already know how they normally work. When the fan causes movements that do not fully make sense, it creates a small gap between what looks real and what is constructed. The wind feels real and the curtain moves but the cause and effect do not completely match.

We also use repetition, timing and rhythm. The endless, synchronised movements feel automatic and a bit too perfect, like how digital systems remove messiness from real life. This looping action works like a feedback system. It seems normal at first, then slowly feels strange. Like in *Intercourse* and *Quandary*, the situations look natural but are not quite possible. At first, viewers believe what they see but then they realise the image pretends to be real instead of showing reality as it truly is. That moment of doubt creates space to question how truth, representation and mediation operate on the screen.









## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



**Boedi Widjaja** explores migration as a condition inscribed in the body, carried through memory, language, genealogy and diasporic imagination. His practice probes the primordial pulls of house, home and homeland—forces that shape migrant histories and imagine routes of return. Trained in architecture and design, he works across bio art, performance, experimental photography and architectural installations, interweaving scientific phenomena with poetic gesture. His works are exhibited internationally across Asia, Europe and the Americas. Boedi is represented by ShanghART Gallery.



The practice of **Torlarp Larpjaroensook** centres around forging relationships between art and the viewer. Incorporating ready-made objects into sculpture, installation and what he calls “moving architecture,” his works explore themes of identity, history and fact versus fiction. Harnessing the stories and messages embedded in objects, Torlarp’s works act as a bridge for viewers to connect with materials found in everyday life. Selected exhibitions of Torlarp’s work include ArtScience Museum, Singapore (2025); CHINI Gallery, Taipei, Taiwan (2023); Bangkok Art Biennale, Bangkok, Thailand (2018) and Koganecho Bazaar, Yokohama, Japan (2013).



**Tromarama** is an artist collective founded by Febie Babyrose, Herbert Hans and Ruddy Hatumena in 2006. They engage with the notion of hyperreality in the digital age, delving into the relationship between the virtual and physical world. Using video, installations computer programming and audience interaction, their projects explore how digital platforms influence social behaviours and perceptions towards the world around us. Recent exhibitions of their work have been held at SongEun Art and Cultural Foundation, Seoul, South Korea (2025); Kiang Malingue, Hong Kong (2023) and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia (2020).

# COLOPHON

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CURATOR

Lu Xiaohui

DESIGNER

FACTORY

