

School of Art, Design and Media

Graduate Student Conference in Visual Culture 2015

29th April 2015, 9.30am to 4.00pm at Centre for Contemporary Art

	Programme
9.00 am	Registration & Morning Tea
9.30 am	Opening Address By A/Prof Michael Walsh, Assoc Chair (Research)
	Visual Culture
9.35 am	<i>Narrating the Destruction of Landscape in Chinese Contemporary Photography</i> Liu Yajing (School of Art, Design and Media, NTU)
	<i>Governmentality as Advertised: The Visual Culture of School Banner Advertisement</i> Andrew J. Pereira (National Institute of Education)
	<i>Between Veil and Painting</i> Homa Shojaie (Lasalle College of the Arts)
	Question & Answer
11.00 am	Break
	Visual Music & Animation
11.15 am	<i>Flourishing in Physical Space: A New Perspective on Visual Music</i> Catherine Yang Jing (School of Art, Design and Media, NTU)
	<i>Ink Light Music Action: Visual Music through Calligraphy-painting and Persian Poetry</i> Mohammad Javad Khajav (School of Art, Design and Media, NTU)
	<i>Animated Installations: Astonishment and Wonder in the Quest for an Expanded Cinematic Experience</i> Christine Veras De Souza (School of Art, Design and Media, NTU)
	Question & Answer
12.40 pm	Lunch
	Arts & Education
1.30 pm	<i>Towards a Social and Semiotic Approach in Teaching the Arts</i> Esther Joosa (National Institute of Education)
	<i>Young Children's Responses to Artworks: The Eye, the Mind and the Body</i> Jacqueline Chung (National Institute of Education)
	Question & Answer
	Art History
2.30 pm	<i>Early Photographic Portraiture of Rulers in Asia: A Shifting Representation of Power</i>

	Stéphanie Xatart (Lasalle College of the Arts)
	<i>Remembering our Presidents: A Visual-Cultural Exploration</i> Edmund Lim (National Institute of Education)
	<i>Re-thinking the American War: Vu Dan Tan's RienCarNation</i> Iola Lenzi (School of Art, Design and Media, NTU)
	Question & Answer
3.55 pm	Closing Remarks By T.K.Sabapathy
4. 00 pm	End of Conference

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Graduate Conference in Visual Culture 2015

Liu Yajing

School of Art, design and Media

Narrating the Destruction of Landscape in Chinese Contemporary Photography

This presentation will discuss the significant photographers, whose works are dealing with the destruction of landscape in China, including Zhang Dali, Mu Chen & Shao Yinong, and Liu Yajing.

Since the 1990s, China has undergone arresting changes and transformations in the contemporary landscape. Villages, houses or streets have been demolished in order to make way for the new urbanization. For instance, according to the government investigation, seaweed houses, which the most typical of folkloric dwellings in China, more than eighty percent of seaweed houses have disappeared over the last two decades. Such a situation not only affected the emotions and memories of people who witnessed these changes or experienced the demolition, but also converted into a part of memories in the society. Hence, the situation of demolition and construction of landscape has become a context for photographers to explore the perception of landscape and memory in photography.

Faced with the above conditions of landscape in China, this paper will mainly question how Chinese photographers are facing with the destruction of landscape. Despite photographers' focus on the destruction of landscape, they might not have been aware of their role in memory representation. Due to the limited theoretical research on Chinese photography, this paper contributes to paying attention to photographers and projects that involve the research of destruct landscapes in China. Based upon the findings of my ongoing research, this paper will utilize textual analysis of selected photographic projects that involves the cultural construct of landscape, the connection with individual memory and cultural memory, and the perspective of photographers.

Liu Yajing is a PhD student at the School of Art, Design and Media, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. She received her MA degree at London College of Communication, UK. Her research interests are in the areas of landscape photography, memory, and photographic techniques, in particular the destruction of landscape in China. Her photographs have been published in several magazines and have been screened in solo and group exhibitions in UK and China. Her selected exhibitions and awards include: London Brick Lane Gallery; Pingyao International Photography Festival; the Finalist in the Eleventh National Photographic Art Exhibition; the shortlisted winner in the video category of Nikkor Photo Contest 2013-2014; Humanity Photo Performance Awards in the Humanity Photo Award 2013; First Prize in Cultural and Natural Heritage Photography Competition, etc.

Andrew J. Pereira

National Institute of Education

Governmentality as Advertised: The Visual Culture of School Banner Advertisement

In this presentation, I investigate the visual culture of school banner advertisements in Singapore. A ubiquitous sight around school perimeter fences, these banners beckon scholarly attention. Also, these banners are juxtaposed with accompanying social and family welfare advertising banners. Some schools have even erected custom built structures to display their advertising banners. To investigate the visual culture of school advertising banners, I conducted a geosemiotic linguistic landscape analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2003; Blommaert & Maly, 2014) on a particular locale consisting of 16 schools. From the perspective of Michel Foucault's (2008) notion of governmentality, that of the shaping of conduct and governance 'from a distance', I consider the underlying socio-political intent of these advertisement with particular regard to school marketisation under the regime of neoliberal economics. A scholarly contribution is made through the novel combination of governmentality concepts with Scollon & Scollon's (2003) notion of geosemiotics for a hybrid analytical framework of governmental geosemiotics to investigate aspects of visual and cultural representation. The findings speak of a possible mismatch between the rhetorically state envisioned student identity for the so-called knowledge based economy and the represented governmental subject of the student. Also, the analytical framework provides a means to gain insight into the governmental influence within school banner advertisements beyond the marketisation rhetoric of competitive achievement and excellence.

Andrew Pereira is currently a PhD student. His experience includes includes teaching English language, Literature, General Paper, and Project Work in secondary schools and junior colleges in Singapore. His research interests lie in discourse studies, social semiotics, multimodality, feminist studies, curriculum theory, and globalisation studies.

Homa Shojaie

Lasalle College of the Arts

Between Veil and Painting

What to paint? What is inspiration? What is perception? What is a veil? What is a portrait of unknown? How does one go beyond what one knows to approach the unknowable? What is an unknowable image? What is an image of unknowable?

I am investigating these subjects through paintings that deal with two different aspects:

Painting as an object: materiality of surface and paint, questions of frame, margin, and edge, methods of stretching, bringing the staples to the foreground, deconstructing the process of painting and resynthesizing it.

The pictorial is informed by research into the idea of veil: Veil is a separator that conceals what is on the other side. In my research I found the veil of the temple to be the symbolic veil that separated humans from god. Its painterly description of being woven with blue, purple and crimson threads became the starting point of a series of paintings. Body of Christ is mentioned as the true veil, upon crucifixion, it causes the veil of the temple to become torn. This signifies that there is no separation between humans and god and a direct access is possible. In the paintings that followed this concept was introduced by addition of the color "flesh tint" to the previous 3 colors. The biblical references are used as artistic inspirations to produce an image and not from a religious studies point of view.

What is "inspiration"? Where does image come from?

My research is primarily looking at how Agnes Martin talks about "inspiration" in her writings. She describes inspiration as a directive to action. Method: trying to stay as faithful to the method as suggested by Agnes Martin: "my mind is empty, I only catch the inspiration."

The result is a series of paintings done since January of 2014. In these paintings I have tried to be faithful to the recognition of inspiration and following it as a call to action. I will be showing the paintings in chronological order discussing them through the intersection of "perspective of inspiration" and "process of painting".

Homa Shojaie was born in 1967 in Iran. She studied painting at Atelier Aydin Aghdashloo in Tehran (1981-1985) and architecture at The Cooper Union in New York (1986-1991). She has practiced architecture in New York, art in Chicago and Singapore and taught architecture at Pratt Institute, Illinois Institute of Technology and School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1995-2012). She was a resident at Bolt Residency in Chicago (2011-2012). She is currently a Master of Arts Fine Arts candidate at LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore. She has exhibited in United States, Iran, Turkey, and Singapore.

Catherine Yang Jing

School of Art, Design and Media

Flourishing in Physical Space: A New Perspective on Visual Music

Among a variety of art forms, a genre that focusing particularly on the unity of sound and visual is visual music. Alexander Wallace Rimington (2004) claimed that just like sound, color is capable of expressing artistic emotions¹. Subsequent visual music studies not only lend support to Rimington's argument, but went further to show that not only color, but many other visual attributes (e.g., shape, brightness, motion, path and etc.) are also capable of doing so. For example, Gyorgy Kepes (1944) linked musical melody with visual path by claiming that the function of the kinetic linear path in plastic organization may be compared with the function of melody in musical composition. Along the history of visual music, numerous pioneering artworks have been created in 2D or virtual 3D forms. However, in comparison, there has been limited attention on utilizing three-dimensional physical space as part of the visual music performance.

Extending previous visual music studies, the current research proposes that the physical space can be regarded as an object, instead of a container, for visual music installations, and therefore lead to a new genre of visual music, which can be understood as "spatial visual music". The author used a series of experimental projects to explore the feasibility of combining physical space with visual music. The current paper describes two visual scores which were developed in an attempt of exploring the methods in which the physical space can be associated with music, and whether the combination between physical space and visual music is beneficial for an enhanced audio-visual experience.

Catherine Jing Yang is a PhD candidate at the School of Art, Design and Media at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Her current study focuses on exploring the possible combination of physical space and visual music, and the interplays between image and sound in three-dimensional physical space. Her research interests include interactive architectural installation, visual music performance, Chinese visual narrative, history of visual music, aesthetics of visual music, visual music and interactivity, and digital culture.

¹ Alexander Wallace Rimington wrote in his article *A New Art: Colour-Music*: "That colour, like sound, is capable of expressing artistic emotion there can, I think, be no question..." (2004, p. 47)

Mohammad Javad Khajav
School of Art, Design and Media

Ink Light Music Action: Visual Music through Calligraphy-painting and Persian Poetry

M. Javad Khajavi is an artist, scholar and an animation devotee – who loves *Spirited Away*, *Bambi* and *The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia* at the same time. He received his BSc in Civil engineering, before he began to pursue his age-old love for animation and new media art. Ranked the third top in the national university entrance examination (among more than ten thousand candidates), he was admitted for a Master of Arts in Animation at Tarbiat Modares University in Tehran. He has presented several papers at international conferences, including the 23rd and the 25th Society for Animation Studies (SAS) annual conference, at the Indiana University in Athens and at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, respectively. His paper 'Decoding the Real: a social semiotic analysis of reality in animated documentary' was published in the Online SAS Animation Journal. He also made a number of animations that were screened in international festivals around the world. Javad is currently a PhD candidate at the School of Art, Design and Media, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, doing a practice-based research on the use of Islamic calligraphy and Neo-calligraphy in Animation and

M. Javad Khajavi is an artist, scholar and an animation devotee – who loves *Spirited Away*, *Bambi* and *The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia* at the same time. He received his BSc in Civil Engineering, before he pursue his age-old love for animation and new media art. Ranked the third top in the national university entrance examination (among more than ten thousand candidates), he was admitted for a Master of Arts in Animation at Tarbiat Modares University in Tehran. He had presented several papers at international conferences, including the 23rd and the 25th Society for Animation Studies (SAS) annual conference, at the Indiana University in Indiana and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, respectively. His paper 'Decoding the Real: a social semiotic analysis of reality in animated documentary' is published in the Online SAS Animation Journal. He also made a number of animations that were screened in international festivals around the world. Javad is currently a PhD candidate at the School of Art, Design and Media, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, doing research on the use of Islamic calligraphy and Neo-calligraphy in Animation and Time-based art.

Christine Veras De Souza
School of Art, Design and Media

Animated Installations: Astonishment and Wonder in the Quest for an Expanded Cinematic Experience

Throughout history, pioneers in science and art have pushed ahead the boundaries of cinema and animation producing different kinds of experiences related to audiovisual imagery. In my thesis, physical and digital multimedia strategies will be analysed to connect contemporary art installations that use animation, referred to here as 'animated installations', to pre-cinema optical devices. In this paper, more than understanding the functioning of the illusion of movement, the focus will be on the feelings of astonishment and wonderment that arise in each individual proving that they remain a fundamental experience transcending time, as they continue to be experienced by viewers today when interacting with not only the pre-cinematic devices but also with contemporary art installations that use animation to regain physicality. This discussion will lead to the understanding that, in contemporary times, with advances in digital technology it is possible for animation to expand its potential and explore a kind of experience that was already stimulated by optical devices, and that many contemporary animated installations recreate. Through physical interaction with these artworks, a sensorial and intellectual experience can be enhanced by technology, in order to reclaim the public's ability to enjoy and be astonished by an artwork, and for that artwork to transform each individual that in consequence will transform their environment, from the local to a global perspective. The intention is to reflect upon these artworks and to provide a deeper understanding of how astonishment and wonderment are stimulated in the audience, bringing animation to the public as a heightened physical experience.

Christine Veras has a B.A. in Animation and an M.F.A. in Visual Arts both from the School of Fine Arts at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Brazil. Currently she is a PhD candidate at Nanyang Technological University, School of Art, Design and Media in Singapore. Her PhD research in *Animated Installations: astonishment and the quest for an expanded cinematic experience* uses physical and digital multimedia strategies to connect animation, contemporary art installations and visual music to provide a unique experience for the public. To investigate theories and ideas connected to her research, Christine created a visual music piece, an interactive sound flipbook project and she has recently developed a Zoetrope *spin off*, all in search of a sensorial experience using animation.

Esther Joosa

National Institute of Education

Towards a social and semiotic approach in teaching the arts

Accountability for arts-based practice is perhaps one of the most widely discussed topics in art education today. This presentation is based on the author's Ph.D. study of individuals with a cognitive disability in a community art program in Singapore. The study addressed the motivation of the artist and the influences on his/her work. Based on Vygotsky's theoretical perspectives on the sign, this study investigates how individuals and groups construct their experiences and realities through the arts. A key tenet that informs Vygotsky's theory is that artworks are human signifying practices driven by emotions. Semiotic analysis identifies the growing awareness of the individual artist and recognizes the many ways in which these young individuals address their experiences. Attention to the sign illuminates how artworks are a gradually unfolding semiotic process that links participants' unique cultural symbol systems to emotions about their identity, and relates the influences of group life to the development of self. The study demonstrates how semiotic analysis can shed light on the complex relationship between emotions, the mediating role of the social environment, and the artwork. An evaluation of the findings identifies Vygotsky's cultural-historical notion of the *perezhivanie* – or the idea of the lived experience – as a primary resource for explaining the artistic engagement of the artist. Based on these findings, the presenter argues that theorizing the sign from a Vygotskian perspective makes semiotic analysis a powerful tool to understand the arts as a constructive rhetorical activity between the self and the world. The presenter further argues that the expressive power of the arts resides in the semiotic relations between emotions and their interpretive contexts.

Esther Joosa is the founder/director of Arts of the Earth Learning Hub, a small research based arts practice and consultancy. Previous appointments have included lecturer with the Early Childhood and Special Needs Education Academic Group at the National Institute of Education in Singapore. Her areas of research and teaching focus on the visual arts as signifying practices and emotions as the source of embodied learning, semiotics and the development of consciousness. As an arts educator cum researcher, she designs, delivers, and researches art programs with young children, parents and vulnerable communities. Her PhD work featured the artistic work of young individuals with Down Syndrome. Other projects included working with the arts with mothers and youth infected with HIV/AIDS in India. The results were recently featured in SIF's Diversecity exhibition in the National Museum. Her contributions to the arts were highlighted in the second publication of Singapore Insights from the Inside (2015).

Jacqueline Chung

National Institute of Education

Young Children's Responses to Artworks: The Eye, the Mind and the Body

This study investigates young children's responses to viewing adult artworks by famous artists. It examines young children's responses in terms of what they see, think and feel when they view artworks, and how these responses vary with artworks of different styles and content. The mixed-methods study, involving both quantitative and qualitative approaches, also considers how teacher facilitation using Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) influences children's responses to artworks. Qualitative data was obtained from the responses of 15 young children aged five to six years during five art viewing sessions facilitated by their class teacher within the preschool setting. Open-ended questionnaires were also administered to both the children's parents and the teacher to better understand the children's background, exposure, and involvement in art. The data from both the parent survey and the art-viewing sessions were analysed using descriptive statistics, while the children's responses and teacher's comments were analysed using Grounded Theory.

Findings revealed that children responded to artworks visually, cognitively and somatically in the ways they talked about what they saw, thought and felt. The children's comments featured content, formal art elements, personal connections, creativity and imagination, affect and vocalisms. Personal connections made up two-thirds of the children's responses. Descriptions focusing on content featured more prominently in artworks depicting people while abstract artworks elicited comments that were more creative and imaginative in nature. This study highlights the rich experiences that young children gain from viewing artworks and the importance of including art viewing into the early childhood curriculum in Singapore.

Jacqueline Chung is the Senior Principal and the Academic Director of St. James' Church Kindergarten. She holds a Masters in early childhood education and is currently a PhD candidate. Her doctoral thesis focuses on young children's learning through viewing artworks. Jacqueline also holds a degree in English Language and Literature, three different teaching diplomas in fields of music, dance, and early childhood education, and a leadership diploma in early childhood education. She is a strong advocate for the creative arts and believes that the arts allow young children to express themselves in multimodal ways. With 18 years of experience in early childhood education, she regularly conducts talks, parent workshops and teacher training on a variety of topics surrounding the visual arts, music, language and literacy, learning environments, mentoring and leadership. In 2014, Jacqueline received the Outstanding Early Childhood Leader award from the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA), Singapore.

Stéphanie Xatart

Lasalle College of the Arts

Early Photographic Portraiture of Rulers in Asia: A Shifting Representation of Power

In the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Asian nations were increasingly confronted with expansionist Western powers. Nationalist modernism developed in response to the intrusive actions of Westerners whose motives were frequently exploitative. Despite the broadly common experiences of East and West in the development of nationalism- a concept that encompasses new ideologies regarding the structuring of society after the Enlightenment, the American and French Revolutions, and the Industrial Revolution, differences emerge when the phenomenon is viewed in a localised modernity. The period witnessed multiple political, social and industrial transformations. Under the pressure of gunboat diplomacy and other interventionist and threatening actions, rulers closely observed Westerners, welcoming at times some of the political, technological and diplomatic tools that had been employed at the service of expansionism, and opening themselves significantly to the West, undergoing a process of Westernisation to modernise their nations in response to increasing pressure. Photography, a novelty in both the West and East, was embraced in this context. How specifically monarchs and other national rulers appropriated photography to advance their political and ideological goals is the focus of the presentation with the example of Meiji Japan and the Chakri dynasty of Siam, the latter particularly during the reign of its two most prominent monarchs. Early photographic representations of power across Asia will be considered with particular attention to the common practice of deploying a normative iconography.

Stéphanie Xatart trained in general art history at Ecole du Louvre, Paris where she specialised in Oceanic Art. Between 2004 and 2007, she was research assistant in the Art of Asia, Oceania and Africa Department at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston where she co-curated an exhibition entitled *Material Journeys: Collecting African and Oceanic Art 1945-2000*. She is currently expanding her horizons pursuing an MA in Asian Art Histories at Lasalle College of the Arts, Singapore where her thesis focuses on the materiality of the art of Pich Sopheap.

Edmund Lim

National Institute of Education

Remembering Our Presidents: A Visual-Cultural Exploration

How are the Presidents of Singapore remembered? How are their contributions and legacies commemorated? This paper explores the ways in which the presidents of Singapore from 1965 to the present are remembered and commemorated through works of art. The creation of the visual images and structures is part of the public and personal narrativizing of a national history tied to the legacies of the country's presidents. Aspects of national culture will be explored in terms of the visual cultures of memory and remembering among individuals and communities in Singapore.

Edmund Lim W.K. (林伟杰) is the director of SKEG (Singapore Knowledge Enterprise Group). He has served as the Director (Special Projects) of Education Consultancy Division and Strategic Development in Educare, a Co-operative of the Singapore Teachers' Union. Edmund has conducted talks for school leaders and educators from Singapore, Russia, Japan, Indonesia and the Philippines. He conceptualized and conducted leadership programs on dynamic thinking for Russian school leaders. Edmund provided coaching and education consultancy services in Tatarstan, and has conducted seminars for ministers and ministry officials from Russia. He is currently pursuing his PhD with NTU-NIE.

Edmund was a former vice-principal and principal in secondary and primary schools. He taught for 4 years at the National Institute of Education (NIE), where he conducted courses for teachers, undergraduates, military officers and overseas educators. Edmund is a founding council member of the World Association of Lesson Studies (WALS).

Edmund's publications include journal papers, history-related books and an award-winning children storybook. He has also co-written papers on the Singapore education system <http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/wang-iverson.pdf> and teacher development in Singapore <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/education/SingaporeEDU.pdf>.

iola Lenzi

School of Art, Design and Media

Vu Dan Tan's cadillac performance *RienCarNation*: re-thinking Communist Vietnam's 1975 victory

Hanoian Vu Dan Tan (1946-2009) was among the most prolific and plastically experimental of Vietnam's late twentieth century visual practitioners. Yet although internationally recognised from the 1990s, and his oeuvre (1979-2009) straddling Vietnam's art historically crucial pre- and post-doi moi period, Vu Dan Tan and his work have yet to be exhaustively examined and researched.

Building on the small body of texts about Vu Dan Tan, this paper will explore the artist's perspective on Vietnam's evolving history with the United States a quarter century after the Fall of Saigon. To this end it will examine his two-continent installation and performance piece *RienCarNation* (1999-2000). Employing a Cadillac he names Icarus as material, in this work Vu Dan Tan alters the car's form and function, shifting between California and Hanoi over time and space. Via the car's transformation and re-contextualisation, the piece's interweaving of history and mythology, and through a planned but thwarted driving-performance in Hanoi, Vu Dan Tan provides alternative perspectives on Vietnam's victory while subtly subverting sanctioned accounts of the nation's past as a means of challenging current political structures.

This paper will frame *RienCarNation* in a period when Vietnam's doi moi reforms had kicked-in, the US trade embargo had been lifted, and global consumer culture was a shocking new reality impacting all Vietnamese. To this end the paper will show how *RienCarNation* articulates the complexities of doi moi's reception and critical views of the Vietnam-USA relationship in the late 1990s from the Vietnamese perspective. Finally, by comparing *RienCarNation* with other Southeast Asian artworks that deploy history as a critical entry point, the paper will locate Vu Dan Tan in the wider regional art history.

iola Lenzi is a Singapore researcher, curator and critic of contemporary Southeast Asian art. Originally trained in law, she studies practices grappling with history and society, analysed within Asian cultural frameworks. Her exhibitions and writings centre on Southeast Asian art as a critique of power and agent of social empowerment. She has curated exhibitions of Southeast Asian art at ARTER/Koc Foundation, Istanbul (2014); Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (2013); Goethe Institut Hanoi, Saigon, Yangon (2012-2015); Singapore Art Museum (2011); Esplanade, Singapore (2009-2011); James Thompson Foundation, Bangkok (2006); Sculpture Square, Singapore (2003 & 2004), and is the curator of masterpieces - digital art in Southeast Asia, Samsung Projects, ongoing. Lenzi is a lecturer in the Asian Art Histories MA programme at Singapore's Lasalle-Goldsmiths College and the author of *Museums of Southeast Asia*. She is pursuing doctoral studies on Hanoi artist Vu Dan Tan at ADM/NTU Singapore.