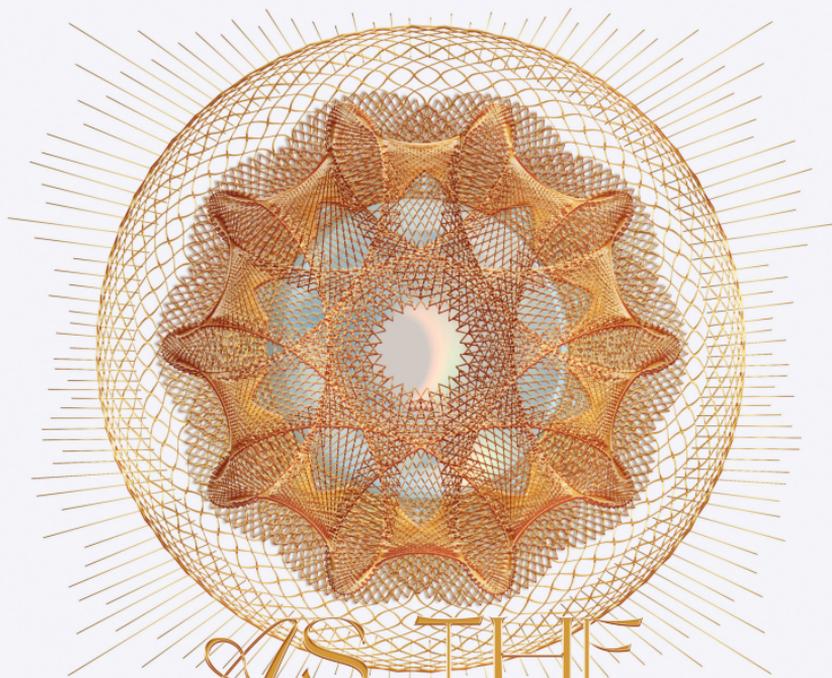


4 World Trade Center
Nov 15—Dec 15 2019



Heman Chong
Fyerool Darma
Ho Rui An
Erika Tan



AS THE
WEST SLEPT

As *The West Slept*, the title of the exhibition draws from a phrase, employed by Singaporean intellectual Kishore Mahbubani, to allude to distinct moments in Western history that have obscured the mercurial rise of Asia.¹ Developed specifically for Silver Art Projects in the World Trade Center complex, the exhibition brings together a series of contemporary art works that through displays of bravado examine the geopolitical stakes involved in the rise of 'Asia' and the glorification of Asian capitalism—such as we have seen in the phenomenal success of the Hollywood Film *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018).

The exhibition features artworks such as: Ho Rui An's *Asia the Unmiraculous* (2018), a lecture-performance and video installation that unpacks the racial, geopolitical and cultural implications of the Asian Miracle² and the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis as a way to speak to the different histories and complexities of imagining Asia in relation to renewed Asian futurisms brought on by China's ascendancy as a world power; Erika Tan's *Sensing Obscurity (I,II,III)* (2012), a series of videos works based on a performance in Saltram House which imagines "Chinese Chippendales" taking over an English Manor House (now National Trust property); Fyerool Darma's *The Poseur* (2019), a video

1 "Has the West Lost It? A Conversation with Kishore Mahbubani." Performance by Kishore Mahbubani, Global Georgetown, Global Georgetown; Georgetown University, 25 Oct. 2018. [m.youtube.com/watch?v=MkHmFOfRKdM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkHmFOfRKdM).

2 The Asian miracles refers to the economic growth (prior to the Asian financial crisis of 1997) of eight countries in East Asia—Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Their growth was due to state-directed capitalism and was also known to be 'miraculous' because of their simultaneous significant reduction in poverty and income inequality.

installation that through the aesthetics of the social media story excavates the figure of Munshi Ibrahim Long Fakir Kandou, a East India Company scribe, to point to the legacies of Asian capitalism; and Heman Chong's *Foreign Affairs* (2018–), an image of an embassy's backdoor represented as curtains that points to the quiet national facades of power that structure the globe and the societies we live in.

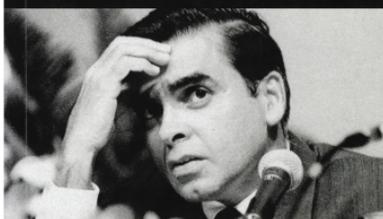
Through performances that demonstrate and unpack idioms of prestige and narrative logics derived from the relationship of systems of governance to global markets, the artworks in *As the West Slept* try to make sense of today's imaginary of a triumphant Asian future and its attendant stakes. In turn, the art works ask us to re-consider the legacies of the geopolitical shifts we see today and the ways in which we speak about them.

Frontcover exhibition masthead and website design was provided by Studio Vanessa Ban. They were designed by Munirah Mansoor. It is inspired by guilloche patterning—a technique of producing precise, intricate, repetitive patterns through mechanical engraving. This technique is used in the production of currency and is a mode of certifying value. The colour scheme of gold and polite pastels speaks to the dual impulses of what the designer considers 'Asian bling dynasties' that endeavor to ostentatiously show wealth, while portraying themselves by using neutral colours of civility and class. The design also recalls an eye, speaking to the perspectives that specific world views produce. www.asthewestslept.com

ASIANS CAN THINK, TOO

アジア人も考えることができる

CAN ASIANS THINK?



KISHORE MAHBUBANI

"He is the most forceful, combative and insightful spokesman for the new Asia. The region's current difficulties do not lessen the long-term validity of his message." — Owen Harnes, editor, *The National Interest*

"The millennium," says Kishore Mahbubani, "is a European event." Noting that the millennium marks a turn in European, not Asian, calendars, Mahbubani adds that the last millennium should rightly be celebrated as the European Millennium. For Asians, this was the lost millennium, but if Asians "get their act together", the present millennium would see the region regain the glory last achieved over a thousand years before at the height of such great empires as Song, Angkor and Srivjaya.

For the Singaporean former diplomat and leading figure of the global intellectual elite, Asia was surprised by the West because "Asians have held Asia back." Thus the question he chooses to title his book, "Can Asians Think?" To find the answer, one does not even have to turn the pages, for it is offered on the very cover in the photograph of a thinking Mahbubani himself. The irony, of course, is that not only is the Asian here thinking, he is thinking as the Cartesian subject would: cogito, ergo sum. Identical to himself, the Asian—that is, Cartesian—subject must plumb the depths of his being and recover the spiritual and cultural strength to propel him into the future. He must show that Asians can think, too.

キシュール・マブバニは「千年祭とは、ヨーロッパの行事である」と述べた。マブバニはさらに、千年紀が、アジアではなく、あくまでヨーロッパの題においての区切りであり、従ってこの度の千年紀はヨーロッパの祝い事であるべきだと付け加えた。アジア人にとっては失われた千年祭だ。しかし、アジア人が「しっかりと固執する」ことができれば、現在の千年紀を、かつて千年以上前に宋・アンコール・シュレ・アプジャヤといった偉大な帝国が築き上げたような栄光を、再びこの地域にもたらすことができるだろう。

シンガポールの元外交官であり、世界的知的エリートを代表するこの人物にとって、アジアが西洋に追い越されたのは「アジア人自らがアジアを押しさへつていったためである」と考え、よって彼は、自著の題名を「アジア人は考えることができるのか?」という問いにした。その答えは、ページをめくる必要すらなく、表紙の考えるマブバニの肖像写真に思い出すことができる。これに込められたアイロニーは、単にアジア人が考えているだけでなく、彼が「我思う、故に我在り」といったデカルト的省察で悲劇している点にある。彼自身と同じアジア人—すなわちカルト的主体—の存在を深く掘り下げ、未来へ磨くための精神的・文化的な強度を回復し自ら示さなければならなかったのだ。アジア人も考えることができる、と。

A NEW HORIZON

新たなる水平線



In c. 440 BC, the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, wrote: "Beyond the tract occupied by the Persians, Medes, Sarmatians, and Colchians, towards the east and the region of the sunrise, Asia is bounded on the south by the Erythraean sea, and on the north by the Caspian and the river Araxes, which flows towards the rising sun. Till you reach India the country is peopled; but further east it is void of inhabitants, and no one can say what sort of region it is. Such then is the shape, and such the size of Asia."

In his time, Herodotus would have witnessed the founding of the Port of Piraeus. He might even have gazed into the horizon from Piraeus as he contemplated the question of Asia. But he most certainly wouldn't have imagined that the port, then known for its impressive fortification, would today be run by a foreign country he didn't even know existed.

In August 2016, the Chinese state-owned shipping company, COSCO, acquired a 67% stake in the port, taking over its management and operation. While "Asia" was used in ancient Greece to refer to the mostly unknown and seemingly boundless space lying to its East, today, it is the European market, of which Piraeus is the entry point, that is figured as a sizeable terrain yet to be fully penetrated by Chinese goods and capital.

紀元前440年に、古代ギリシアの歴史家ヘロドトスは次のような記述を残している。「ヘルシニア、メディア、サキアペルシス、エリキニアおよび海の家郷においては、一方には紅海が北側ではカスピ海と、東方に向かって流れるアラクス河とが延びている。インドに至るまでのアジア地域には人が住むが、インドがら東の端はすでに無人の境で、その情勢を語り得るものは一人もない。アジアの形状と大きさは上記のとおりである。」

ヘロドトスが生きていた時代ならば、彼はピレウス港の成り立ちを目撃してははずである。アジアについて考えをめぐらせながら、ピレウスから水平線を望んでいたかもしれない。要害として非難に侵れていたことで知られるその港が、今日では彼の中に存在していなかった異国によって運営されることになるとは、想像すらしなかっただろう。

2016年8月、中国の国営海運会社COSCOは、港の67%の株を取得し管理と運営を引き継いだ。古代ギリシアの時代には東の彼方へ広がる未知の領域とされていたアジアも、現在ではピレウスを入口とするヨーロッパ市場のごとくあり、中国の製品と資本が全域に浸透せんとする、広大なエリアを指すまでになったのである。

+ Opening Performance,
Asia the Unmiraculous by Ho Rui An
November 15 2019, 6pm—7pm

The Financial Times in March 2019 boldly claimed that 2020 will mark the beginning of the Asian Century—a new Asian Age defined in part by Asia being home to half of the world’s middle class and its economies being larger than the rest of the world.³ Drawing upon research undertaken over two years across Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia, *Asia the Unmiraculous* is a lecture-performance that diffuses the aura of a “miraculous” Asia by examining the 1997 Asian financial crisis against the economic “miracle” that preceded it. In critically engaging with this history, Ho’s *Asia the Unmiraculous* interrogates the ‘return’ of Asia to the future and fundamentally questions the many ideologies we employ when speaking about the global market and the interventions of states into economies.

3 Romei, Valentina, and John Reed. “The Asian Century Is Set to Begin.” *Financial Times*, 26 Mar. 2019, www.ft.com/content/520cb6f6-2958-11e9-a5ab-ff8ef2b976c7.



* Heman Chong

Foreign Affairs #116, 2018
Signed and dated verso, unique UV
print on unprimed canvas
Courtesy of Amanda Wilkinson Gallery

Foreign Affairs is a series of seemingly banal photographs of embassy backdoors. *Foreign Affairs*#116, in particular, is a nondescript embassy backdoor that is 'hidden' among its double(s). Perhaps its only perceivable tell is the faint reflection of Chong furtively taking the photograph. Against the surrounding landscape of the World Trade Center Complex, New York's financial district, *Foreign Affairs*#116 is presented in the exhibition as oversized curtains that drag slightly against the floor—pointing to the very materiality of curtains as part of a building's infrastructure that frames and obscures views from its windows.

Read alongside art works that directly engage with the histories of Asian capitalism—defined by a diverse range of approaches which sees the state play an active role in the market and the rise of an Asian century—*Foreign Affairs*#116 is literally a doubling of embassy backdoor against the buildings of an international financial hub. It implicitly points to the 'national' foundation of power that structure the globe, inadvertently shaping the societies we live in and framing our individual lives.



* Fyerool Darma

'*The Poseur* (After Ballads), 2019,
High definition with sound,
5:39min

Produced with the support of
Temenggong
Artists-in-Residence Program
Image courtesy of the artist,
Fyerool Darma

Written and Art Direction:
Fyerool Darma
Talent: Remy
Styling: Taufiq Rahman
Editor and Director of Photography:
Harith Redzuan
Camera operator and Grip: Hudzaifah
Voice: Amy (British UK) ttsMP3.com
Sound: karat & d'LapSap (垃圾)
Assemblage
Mix: G8_£A\$TERN_L¥F

Fyerool Darma's *The Poseur* (2019) is a video installation that excavates the figure of Munshi Ibrahim Long Fakir Kandu, a scribe for the East India Company whose jawi peranakan dress has been immortalised by colonial accounts as an Asian pastiche of Indian, Chinese and Malay fabrics—representative of trade from 'the Far East'. The central figure in Fyerool's video—a stand in for Munshi Ibrahim Long Fakir Kandu—rotates through different outfits as fabrics are added to his form until he is completely hidden by 'his clothing'. This accumulation is paralleled by Fyerool's own practice of adorning his 'paintings'. The video is narrated with excerpts from Maria Graham's 'Journal of a Residence in India', in which she details her encounters with Munshi Ibrahim Long Fakir Kandu—the equivalent of contemporary gossip from a socialite party. The artist's subtitles are his own response to and attempt at resisting Graham's narrativising. Framed through the aesthetics of social media stories and island oases, Fyerool maps the 'fashionable' trappings and accumulative tendencies of middle class aspirations onto an imagination of colonial history, pointing to the historical legacies of Asian capitalism as we know it today.



✦ Ho Rui An

Documentation of *Asia the Unmiraculous*, 2018 –

Lecture and video installation with digital prints on paper mounted on LED-illuminated acrylic, books and magnetically levitated hand model

Asia the Unmiraculous is a lecture-performance that diffuses the aura of a 'miraculous' Asia. An extension of the opening performance, the video installation features documentation of the performance and posters in the style of real estate listings. In Ho's own words the project is "an examination of the ideological contestations between neoliberalism and the development state model that unfolded amidst the "Asian Miracle" during which the invisible hand of the market was pitted against the interventionist hand of the state." Ho's account of these histories navigates intellectual histories that have framed 'Asianess' such as how the Ancient Greeks perceived Asia to how Chineseness was represented during the anti-Chinese movement in the United States in the 19th Century to how Kishore Mahbubani famously framed Asians through the rhetorical question "Can Asians think?" at the turn of the 21st century.

Ho's *Asia the Unmiraculous* was originally co-commissioned by the 12th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea and Yamaguchi Center of Arts and Media, Japan. This edition is updated with the World Trade Center complex in mind, it illustrates the tenuous links of history, economics and ideologies of development that tether us to a global marketplace. Placing the different historical turns of an imaginary of 'Asia' alongside renewed Asian futurisms which Ho frames in relation to China's ongoing One Belt One Road initiative, *Asia the Unmiraculous* is not just a historical account but an urgent questioning of geopolitical shifts we see today.

アッカド語で“外に出る”を意味する
“asu”の派生だと考える者や



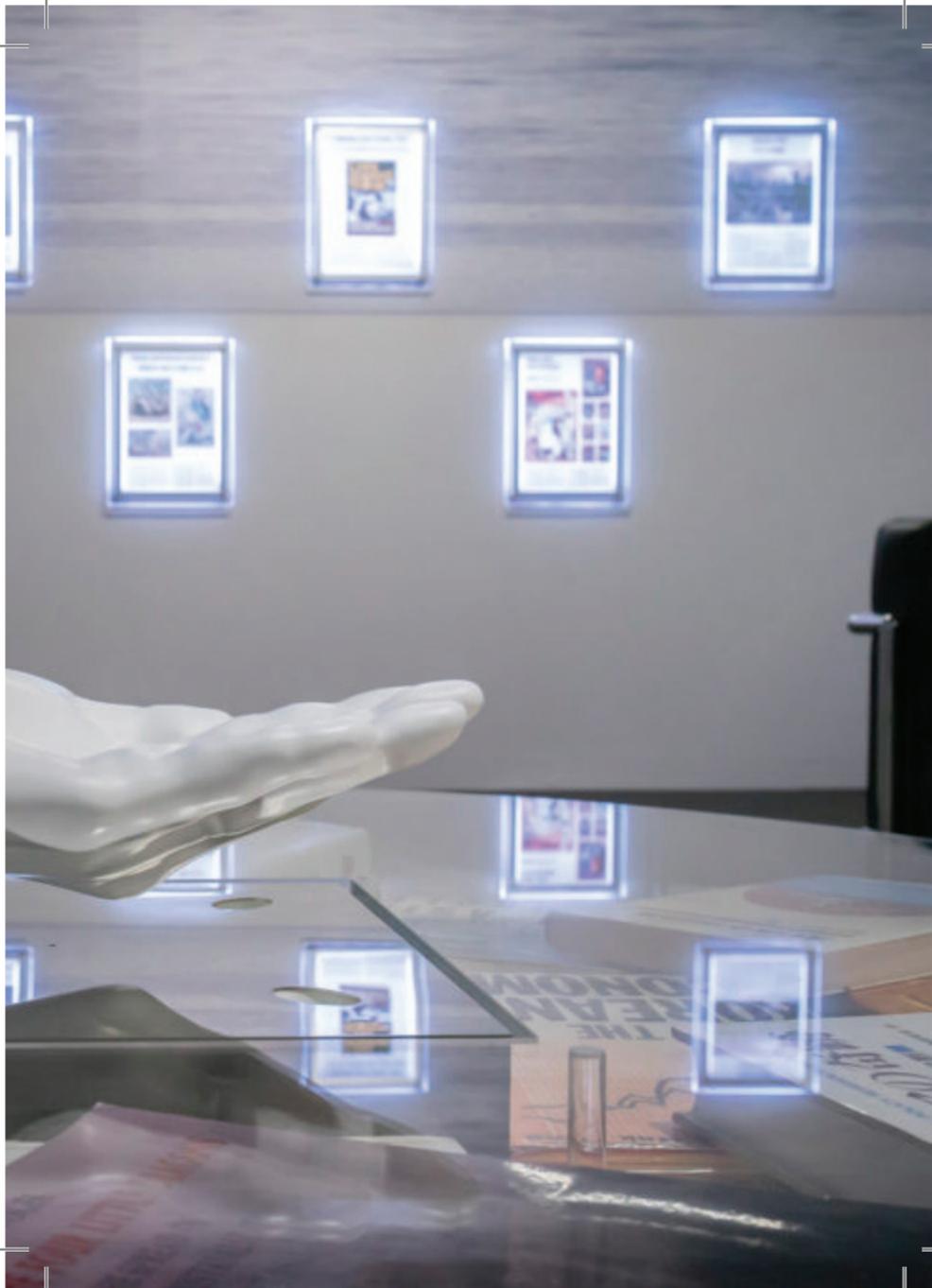
A photograph of a museum display case. The case is made of clear glass and contains several books and a white, abstract sculpture. The books are stacked, with the top one having a brown cover. The white sculpture is a smooth, rounded object. In the background, a wall with a wood-grain pattern features a small, glowing blue rectangular light fixture. The scene is lit with soft, ambient light, and the glass of the case reflects the surrounding environment.

Image courtesy of Ho Rui An.

MITI
JAPANESE MIRACLE

JOHNSON

ELITE VISA



✦ Erika Tan

Sensing Obscurity (I,II,III) 2012
Live performance elements
in collaboration with Kai Sundermann

Set in Saltram House, an English country house (now National Trust property), the work takes place 'some point in the not so distant future', which Tan describes as "an imagined future when China's ascendance as a global power has given rise to an opportunity to re-visit history differently". The videos are mixture of documentary and narrative film tropes. They bring together the cut and paste aesthetics of hip hop and chinoiserie, while making references to the history of Saltram House not just as a marker of British colonialism but also as a Hollywood prop (Ang Lee's *Sense & Sensibility* was filmed in Saltram House in 1995). In the work, the 'Chinese Chippendale' is seemingly a cultural product of a new international market. He is a character burdened with the labor of performing prestige and with the 'important' work of occupying Saltram House. In this way, Tan's work not only poses the timely question: What happens to symbols of cultural dominance when the world-order shifts? Moreover, her work in being staged with a live performance by Kai Sundermann also draws attention to the everyday labor that materialise world-order shifts. Blurring the lines between 'down-time' and 'show time', the Chippendale/gallery sitter draws attention to the figures that are front stage and the bodies that carry out 'backstage' labour.

Image credit © Eliza Gluckman 2012





Still from *Sensing Obscurity II: The Chinese Chippendales*
Image credit © Erika Tan 2012

Sensing Obscurity (I, II, III) was produced in partnership with Saltram House, National Trust and Plymouth College of Art. Funded by The Arts Council Lottery, National Trust's 'Trust New Art' programme, Plymouth Arts Centre, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. It was developed with the support of the B3 TalentLab and commissioned by Eliza Gluckman as part of Sinopticon.

Cast

Catarina Lau, Adam Lau, Jessica Li, Zongyang Li, Loi Xuan Ly, Chris Ong, Clem So,
Wang Weiming, Ming Qiang Xie, Jay Oliver Yip
Harmonica Player: Ming Qiang Xie
Singing: Zongyang Li
Voices: Kandemir Esmer, Erika Tan, untranslated anonymous voices
Spinners: Wang Weiming, Loi Xuan Ly, Chris Ong
Capoeira: Jay Oliver Yip, Adam Lau

Production

Director, producer, editor: Erika Tan
Production Manager: Ashley Cox
Assistant Directors: Kandemir Esmer, Beverley Fulford, Eve Mahoney, Gary Vincent Mead
Camera: Dierdre Dowley, Kandemir Esmer, Eve Mahoney, Gary Vincent Mead, Andy James
Post Production effects: Kandemir Esmer
Dance choreography: Catarina Lau
Dance assistant: Jessica Li, Adam Lau
Sound recording, design and mastering: Neil Rose
Creative consultant: Andy James
Technical consultant: Stuart Bailey

Music

After Chinoiserie, written by Neil Rose and Erika Tan, produced by Neil Rose, 2011.

Heman Chong is an artist whose work is located at the intersection between image, performance, situations and writing. His practice has had many lives through a diversity of mediums such as video installations, performances, paintings and conceptual interventions in mass media.

www.hemanchong.com

Fyerool Darma interrogates and complicates the cultural consumption of history in relation to contemporary markers of identity and class. His artefacts are based on an extensive visual vocabulary drawn from popular culture, literature, archives, the internet, and his own life.

www.fyerooldarma.com

Ho Rui An is an artist and writer working in the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance and theory. He writes, talks and thinks around images, with an interest in investigating their emergence, transmission and disappearance within contexts of globalism and governance.

www.horuiian.com

Erika Tan is an artist whose practice is primarily research-led. Recent research has focused on the postcolonial and transnational, working with archival artefacts, exhibition histories, received narratives, contested heritage, subjugated voices and the transnational movement of ideas, people and objects.

www.erikatan.net

+ About Silver Arts Project

Silver Art Projects is a new space for creative energy that contributes to the cultural vitality of lower Manhattan by providing ongoing sponsored studio space, artist mentorship, and a platform for artists.

Led by co-founders Cory Silverstein and Joshua Pulman, Silver Art Projects is a corporate social responsibility project established by Silverstein Properties, the real estate development firm that continues to lead in the revival of Lower Manhattan through the rebuilding of the World Trade Center. Silver Art Projects hopes to foster a continual dialogue around contemporary art in the lower Manhattan community.

The collaterals have been designed by Studio Vanessa Ban.

Curated by Kathleen Ditzig

Artist Assistants: Drew Hamilton, Nur Wardah Binte Mohamad, Yap Seok Hui,
Kate Hinshaw, Amanda Brooke Avery, Oscar Riquelme

Performers: Ho Rui An, Kai Sundermann

This project would not have been possible without the assistance of the following individuals and organizations: Joshua Pulman, Corey Silverstein, Magdalena Magiera, ARTFACTORY, Drew Hamilton, Evelyn Ang, Vanessa Ban, David Borgonjon, Junni Chen, Marlene Ditzig, Michael Ipsen, Elizabeth Larison, Charlene K Lau, Jametria, Rachel Loh, Linda de Mello, Jason Wee, Angela Tan, Serene Tan, Jeannine Tang, Kenneth Tay, Inez Yang, Wong Bing Hao, Kristian Wilson, Gregory Ng, Ammal Issa and Will Lee.

A Performa 2019 Consortium Project

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NEWYORK CITY

SILVER ART PROJECTS

