



LEE WEN
at
**Art Basel
Hong Kong
2014**

Published specially for the exhibition of **Lee Wen at
Art Basel Hong Kong 2014**, organised by iPRECIATION

Published, designed and edited by

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ISBN 978-981-09-0010-6

With the support of



NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL
SINGAPORE

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MESSAGE

Helina Chan

The work of Lee Wen (*b. 1957*) is provocative and strong in character, born out of the tensions and struggles of one of Singapore's foremost performance artists. Beneath the humor that appears in his work lie the frustrations and ingenuity of an artist whose work developed in a place where public self-expression struggled, evident in the ban of funding for unscripted performance art in Singapore from 1994-2003. Yet Lee continues his performance at home and overseas. He is much respected and has been invited to perform on many international platforms such as Berlin, Glasgow, Venice, Brussels, Madrid, Tokyo, Toronto, Beijing, Santiago, Sydney, Dresden, Tel Aviv, Bern, Mexico City, Helsinki and Havana, amongst a host of many cities, from 1998 to 2014.

Lee's performances and work started as early as the 80s, he was ahead of the times in the bold social investigations and psychological interrogations of Asian culture and society. His work is complex, a mix of humor, criticism, sadness and bitterness with a depth that is not often found in the local art scene. This was recognized in 2005 when Lee Wen was finally lauded with a well-deserved prestigious Cultural Medallion by the National Arts Council, Singapore.

At Art Basel in Hong Kong 2014, we are showcasing the breadth of Lee's works accumulated over the past 20 years of his art practice. This is Lee's first debut in an international art fair. The work shown in this catalogue represents a significant phase of Singapore's art history and social identity of the Chinese diaspora, where most of the photographs were used as documentation and records of his performing works. These photographic works are created as fine art museum quality pieces, in collaboration with a master printmaker. It enables collectors, institutions to hold a piece of Singapore's art history with the artist's most iconic works. Critically, Lee Wen's work continues to lead the social inquiry that must be pursued, and the raising of uneasy questions that must be asked by any civilized society seeking to be relevant in this constantly changing world. He may be suffering from scoliosis from birth and Parkinson's disease in recent years but the force of his belief, his tenacity, his energy and his dreams make him an enduring, significant voice of Singapore art in the global art scene.

THE MEASURE OF MAN

Lee Wen

The politics of identity once supplied Lee Wen's iconic performance series *Journey of a Yellow Man* its conceptual ground in the 1990s. The bright yellow pigment that was smeared all over his body became an inescapable ethnic signifier writ large and was especially poignant to a Chinese-Singaporean artist working in London where the colour of his skin marked him out as different from the white British crowd. Colour became a symbol of distinction or derogation, depending on perspective. It was the locus of one's existence, and also for Lee to realize that his form of Singaporean yellow was also unlike the Chinese of elsewhere. Conversely, in order to redeem himself from "difference", the symbolic value of yellow could also be transposed to other more aspirational associative meanings – the universal appeal of the sun and gold provided that transcendental step away from the specificities of being Chinese.

Fast-forward 15 years: yellow remains a trademark colour of Lee but it is however put to another use. Leveraging less on the significations of race and ethnicity, the colour yellow becomes the conveyor of other ideas, forces and effects. Though the taint of the yellow man still persists, the yellow in his *Anthropometry Revisions* comes more into its own as a

vehicle to index the body. Yellow is that assistive colouration that helps direct attention towards the paint that forms the trace of the performances at play and the revision of art history. The immediate point of focus or contention is French artist Yves Klein's seminal series of *Anthropométries*. This is Klein's 1960 avant-garde experiment to transform the act of painting through literally having his female models paint the pictures by smothering themselves in his signature IKB blue paint and imprinting their naked bodies onto canvases. The cultural identity of yellow is not so much asserted as it is taken apart. It turns into a chromatic struggle between a younger artist over a predecessor that in places resembles an homage – one iconic colour, honoring by way of supplanting, the art historical standard bearer.

Crucially, Lee forsook the hygienic distancing of Klein, who never dirtied himself and engaged only female models to offer themselves as living paintbrushes which were ultimately orchestrated by Klein. Lee's *Anthropometry Revisions* featured two other artist collaborators, Jiang Jing (female) and He Liping (male), who left traces of themselves in concert with Lee rather than being directed by him. The gestures left behind are varied and suggestive, in postures

revelatory about each individual's tentativeness or forcefulness. No longer an even line of the languid female form, Lee mimics and mocks the Kleinian model, asserting himself as both possibly male and impossibly female.

Anthropometry, being the (pseudo) science of measuring human form and the gathering of its data to facilitate and advance other civilising purposes, becomes here in Lee's manipulation a poetic release of what it means to measure

a person. The archaic methodology of anthropometrics carried ideological fantasies about the optimal life of man and the imputed denigration of individuals who fail to meet the given norms. Lee reveals the silent threat of anthropometry's imputed violence, given that Lee also suffers from scoliosis, the abnormal degenerative curvature of the spine; but anthropometric presence in Lee's revisions is distanced by awareness that as humans, we cannot help but exceed the circumscription of artificial correlatives.

Adele Tan received her PhD in art history from the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London and is currently Curator at the National Art Gallery Singapore. Her research focuses on contemporary art in China and Southeast Asia, with a special interest in performative practices and new media.

WORKS

SPLASH!

2003

Giclee print on cotton rag paper

109.2 x 109.2 cm (each)

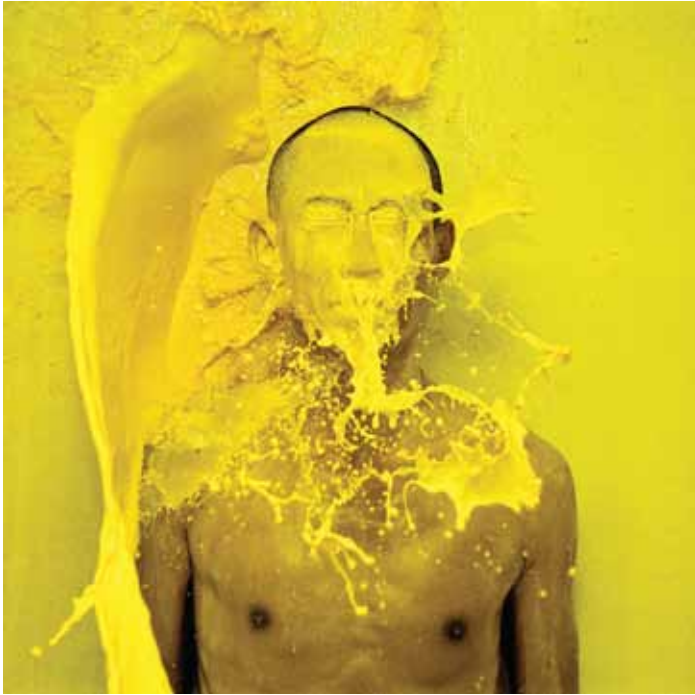
5 Editions

Splash! was originally part of a mixed media installation. The installation consisted of a narrow tunnel lit by yellow neon lights and a looped video projection at the end of the tunnel showing Lee Wen standing unflinchingly, enduring pails of yellow paint hurled onto him.

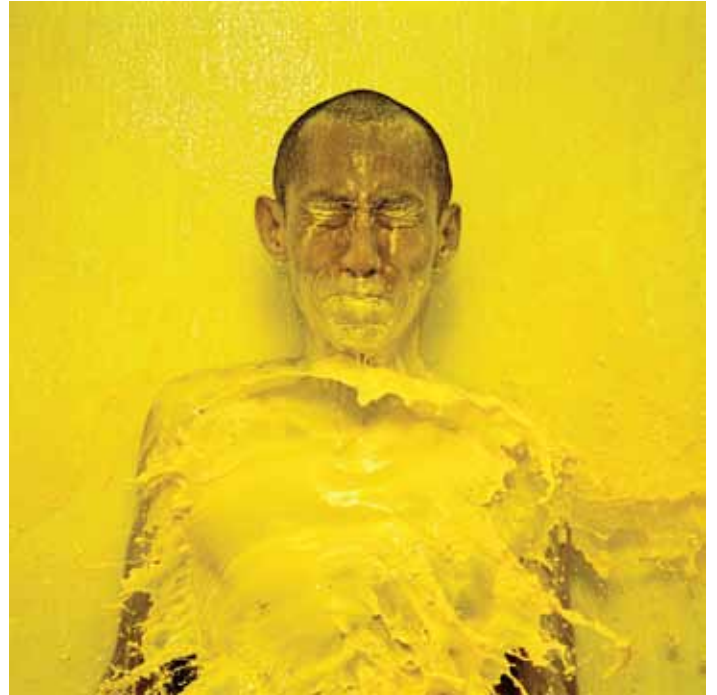
In this work, Lee once again takes on his *Yellow Man* persona. Unlike his *Journey of a Yellow Man* series, where he travels to various parts of the world, this work presents Lee silently withstanding the ethnic identity forced onto him, represented by the splashing of yellow paint. 'Yellowness' is presented here in radical excess to show how the stereotyped and simplified representation of Asians can annihilate individuality.



Splash! #1 & 2, 2003
Giclée print on cotton rag paper
109.2 x 109.2 cm



Splash! #3 & 4, 2003
Giclee print on cotton rag paper
109.2 x 109.2 cm



Splash! #5 & 6, 2003
Giclée print on cotton rag paper
109.2 x 109.2 cm



Splash! #7 & 8, 2003
Giclee print on cotton rag paper
109.2 x 109.2 cm

YELLOW ON YELLOW: DREAMBOAT

1998 – 2014

Acrylic paint on photograph, giclee print on cotton rag paper
152.4 x 101.6 cm

Dreamboat was performed by Lee Wen at the 1998 Werkleitz Biennale in Germany. This work was one of the instances where Lee performed as the *Yellow Man*, but not as part of the *Journey of a Yellow Man* series.

In this performance, Lee began the performance by standing at the edge of a dyke in a zinc bathtub, without being covered in his signature yellow paint. Instead, he performed the entire process of painting and washing paint off his body in the performance itself. Through various actions, the performance reflected the tension and displacement of his Chinese cultural identity. Rowing around a river with his bare hands, Lee discussed the Chinese diaspora, conjuring the stereotypical arrival of yellow-skinned people on foreign lands.

For his solo exhibition at Art Basel Hong Kong 2014, Lee smeared yellow paint over his image on the photograph which originally served as documentation to the performance at the 1998 Werkleitz Biennale. By repeating this action over and over again, Lee relives his Yellow Man persona, reinforcing that one cannot get away from expectations and stereotypes – while consciously revisiting Yellow as an ethnic symbol and all the messages it embodies.



Yellow on Yellow: Dreamboat, 1998 – 2014

Acrylic paint on photograph, giclee print on cotton rag paper
152.4 x 101.6 cm

STRANGE FRUIT

2003

Giclee print on cotton rag paper

109.2 x 109.2 cm (each)

5 Editions

A bulbous structure, made up of a cluster of red Chinese lanterns which the artist attached to the upper-half of his body, featured in this performance work. *Strange Fruit* was made in response to the legal requirement for artists to hold a public entertainment license in Singapore before they could perform. While immediately recalling Billie Holiday's iconic song about a victim of lynching, hung to a tree like a 'strange fruit', the lanterns also bring to mind the Chinese lantern festival as well as related Chinese customs and iconography. By using the occasion of the festival to give himself a right to perform without a public entertainment license, Lee not only alluded to the restrictions placed upon the practice of performance art, but also the suffocation of personal identity. The lanterns, which obstructed Lee's entire upper body from view, signify an excessive display of ethnicity which in turn obliterates the individual.

"The performance was done with intention to be seen in an exhibition as art works in the media of photographs and video installation. It was done knowing that it was the lantern festival. The use of lanterns for this work during lantern festival also gave me a right to perform without a public entertainment license as it was in a way a personal celebration of doing a one man lantern procession..."

For 'Strange Fruits' a cane canopy structure was made and instead of covering it with green vines it was attached with Chinese red lanterns. The lanterns are typical symbols of Chinese ethnicity found in Chinatown and Chinese restaurants all over the world. Carrying this as the yellow man gives it an over-the-top image, almost a double emphasis of stereotyping of ethnicity in identity formation.

The lanterns were carried through different landscapes typical of Singapore, from downtown shop-houses to back alleys, housing estate, green park and ending on a beach. It is likened to a lantern procession during lantern festival or even like a karvadi carried during Hindu festival of Thaipusam. An inflated rubber tire tube is tied to the inside of the canopy and floated on the sea. The final image is that of the lanterns floating off in the sea as if going on another journey beyond. The video installation in the exhibition has splashing of waves on the beach in the sound track, which only became more apparent as we see it floating off the beach and into the sea."

– Lee Wen

Strange Fruit, 2003
Giclee print on cotton rag paper
109.2 x 109.2 cm





Strange Fruit, 2003
Giclee print on cotton rag paper
109.2 x 109.2 cm



Strange Fruit, 2003
Giclee print on cotton rag paper
109.2 x 109.2 cm



Strange Fruit, 2003
Giclee print on cotton rag paper
109.2 x 109.2 cm

ANTHROPOMETRY REVISION NO. 1

2006

Giclee print on cotton rag paper

102 x 135 cm

5 Editions

“From its Greek roots, ‘anthropometry’ literally means the ‘measurement of humans’. In anthropology, it refers to the measurement of human individuals for the study of human physical variations for comparison and classifications. In the early nineteenth century, it was linked to Anthropological Criminology, and had various misconceptions, such as wrongly associating criminal characteristics to primitive humans, monkeys and apes. Anomalies and defects in the human form or severe difference in physiological

ANTHROPOMETRY REVISION NO. 2

2006

Giclee print on cotton rag paper

175 x 102 cm (each)

5 Editions

characteristics were also seen as evidence of physical inferiority or psychological disposition of a born criminal. With direct reference to my own body, distorted at birth by scoliosis, they critique the aesthetic of the pose for consumption, within a society with conflicting desires and aversions of a body longed for and yet repudiated.”

– Lee Wen



Anthropometry Revision No.1, 2006
Giclee print on cotton rag paper, 102 x 135 cm



Anthropometry Revision No.2, 2006
Giclee print on cotton rag paper, 175 x 102 cm (each)

YELLOW ON YELLOW: JOURNEY OF A YELLOW MAN

1992 – 2012

Acrylic paint on photographs, inkjet print on archival paper

39.2 x 52 cm, 39.2 x 26.7 cm (each)

Exhibited at Singapore Art Museum, 2012

In Lee Wen's *Journey of a Yellow Man* series of performance-based works, the journey alludes to the migration and movement of people in-between cultural traditions and contemporary situations. During his time in London, in the 1990s, Lee was mistakenly assumed to be from China on the basis of his skin colour and features despite being Singaporean; yet when he encountered Chinese from mainland China, they had various expectations of his knowledge of Chinese language and customs. Such conflicting cultural perceptions and expectations heightened the sense of dislocation and displacement which eventually became a defining characteristic of his works.

With the title *Journey of a Yellow Man*, however, it is easy to pay too much attention to 'Yellow Man', at the expense of 'Journey'. In Lee's works, it is through the process of 'journeying' that identity is constructed and deconstructed. Lee's art has taken him all over the world, from London, 1992, to various other countries including Thailand, India, Poland and Germany. As the Yellow Man journeyed the world, he faced a mixture of reactions to his identity. For instance, he was read as a shaman (holy man) in India, whereas in Thailand the yellow man was associated with religious symbols as well as modern 'dangers' such as Thailand's rampant sex industry. In the context of varying cultures and religions, Lee continues to use his yellow

man persona to present, interrogate and discuss issues of ethnic stereotyping, while rejecting a singular understanding of ethnicity.

"The chains gave the 'impression of social bondage, constraints and restrictions on the freedom of 'individuality, movement, thought, actions, growth and behavior. At the same time they were strongly linked together giving direction, continuity and security. The red color implied a sense of urgency, danger, and a sign for alertness and perhaps even blood-ties. During the performance, the improvisation showed my reactions to these qualities of the chains. I needed them to give me security, comfort and direction. Yet I wanted to be free from them – for by attaching myself to them I got entangled, tied down and restricted. The performance ended when I lined them up into a path and lighted up pieces of solid fuel between them forming a row of fire or light. The light or fire formed a circle at the end of the path. I laid 'inside the circle and revolved' in it. The fire alluded to truth and revolution for I believe that to be free we must go through a human revolution in order to manifest a golden nature."

- Lee Wen



Yellow on Yellow: Journey of a Yellow Man, 1992 – 2012
Acrylic paint on photographs, inkjet print on archival paper
39.2 x 52 cm, 39.2 x 26.7 cm (each)



ANTHROPOMETRY REVISION

2008

JJ Series

110 x 75 cm (each)

LW Series

110 x 79 cm (each)

HLP Series

110 x 75 cm (each)

Acrylic on paper

Exhibited at Red & Grey Art Contemporary, Chengdu, China, 2008

In *Anthropometry Revision*, Lee Wen revisited the works and ideas of French avant-garde artist Yves Klein. While the term ‘anthropometry’ literally means the ‘measurement of human beings’, it was also the name of Klein’s series of monochrome body paintings. In Klein’s experimentation of various methods of applying paint, he used nude female models as ‘living brushes’ to capture the imprints of the human body. Lee, however, rejected the hygienic distancing of himself to the body. In his revisions, Lee used his own body and those of his artist friends to ‘paint’ on the paper, while conscientiously resituating the performance within an Asian context by using yellow paint, which is suggestive of his identity as a Chinese person.

“I proposed to make a performance re-visiting the historical performance of Yves Klein’s Anthropometries (1960) with reference to my own context as well as within local conditions.

In 1958, Yves Klein began a new series of body paintings. He conducted some models in using the female body to make body prints and paintings on paper. On March 9, 1969, Anthropometries of the Blue Period was performed at the International Gallery of Contemporary Art in Paris. While the ‘Monotone Symphony’ was being performed, with a nine-piece orchestra playing one single note.

Yves Klein had three nude models cover themselves in blue paint and affix their body prints on the white papers, laid out on the gallery walls and floor. In using the models as if paint brushes, Klein’s motivations were based on that of ‘removing the hand’ of the artist. The invited audience, made up of numerous artists, collectors, and critics, was subsequently invited to take part in a general discussion.

Based on these explorations by Yves Klein, I proposed to do Anthropometry Revision: Yellow Period Series where I will re-open discussions of Klein’s work in contemporary situation such as: Why should the bodies be that of women models only? Klein’s motivations were based on that of ‘removing the hand’ of the artist, however performing it myself together with other artists, not only (will we) use our hands, but also our own bodies. Can this be done in an Asian context? Yves Klein doing this work in Europe had various implications which may not have been consciously addressed. Other questions are approached if I proposed to use Asian bodies and a music orchestra, which is non-western. What is the position of painting today in contemporary art practice with reference to Yves Klein and performance art?”

– Lee Wen

2008

(left) JJ Series No.04

110 x 75 cm

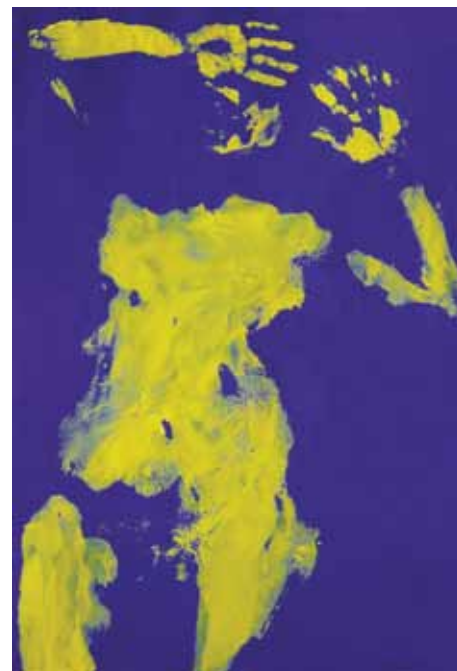
(middle) LW Series No.08

110 x 79 cm

(right) HLP Series No.02

110 x 75 cm

Acrylic on paper



2008

(left) JJ Series No.08

110 x 75 cm

(middle) LW Series No.04

110 x 79 cm

(right) HLP Series No.03

110 x 75 cm

Acrylic on paper



2008

(left) JJ Series No.02

110 x 75 cm

(middle) LW Series No.01

110 x 79 cm

(right) HLP Series No.04

110 x 75 cm

Acrylic on paper



2008

(left) JJ Series No.06

110 x 75 cm

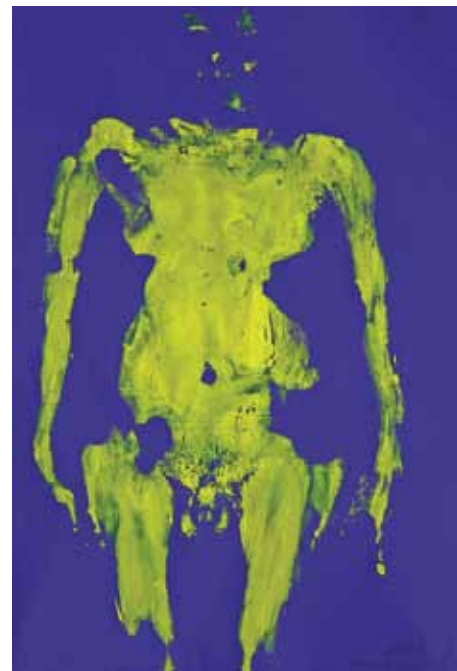
(middle) LW Series No.03

110 x 79 cm

(right) HLP Series No.01

110 x 75 cm

Acrylic on paper



2008

(left) JJ Series No.01

110 x 75 cm

(middle) LW Series No.06

110 x 79 cm

(right) HLP Series No.05

110 x 75 cm

Acrylic on paper





Anthropometry Revision - JJ Series No.03,
2008, Acrylic on paper, 110 x 75 cm



Anthropometry Revision - JJ Series No. 05,
2008, Acrylic on paper, 110 x 75 cm



Anthropometry Revision - HLP Series No. 08,
2008, Acrylic on paper, 110 x 75 cm



*Anthropometry Revision -
LW Series No.09, 2008*
Acrylic on paper, 110 x 79 cm



*Anthropometry Revision -
LW Series No. 05, 2008*
Acrylic on paper, 110 x 79 cm



*Anthropometry Revision -
LW Series No. 02, 2008*
Acrylic on paper, 110 x 79 cm



*Anthropometry Revision -
HLP Series No. 10, 2008*
Acrylic on paper, 110 x 79 cm

JOURNEY OF A YELLOW MAN NO.11: MULTI-CULTURALISM

1997

Giclee print on cotton rag paper

100 x 150 cm

5 Editions

This iconic image was a result of Lee Wen's performance at the *SeptFest Art Conference* held at The Substation, Singapore in 1997. Covered in yellow paint, Lee Wen sat among the panel and presented a paper which criticized the prevailing conservatism in Singapore's art scene. He also questioned the curatorial choices of *Singapore Art '97*, a national exhibition which predominantly featured watercolour and Chinese paintings whilst largely neglecting installation and performance art, despite claiming to have an all-inclusive policy. Lee later submerged himself in a metal basin of water and washed his body. He then bottled the yellowed water as a gift to the audience and proclaimed, "Now I am a watercolourist too!"

"Singapore as a social group has been defined by consequences of historical and political changes unavoidably linked to racial and ethnic sensitivities. We made the pledge to build a multiracial society ever since young in school. There has been an increased use of the term multi-culturalism, which is a positive development as we live in an increasingly complex and plural society. Visual art representations are an important component of symbolizing and continuing a

society's communal bonds. The manner in which representations take place in terms of production, selection for exhibition, and their consequent reception produces a certain view of a society's history and direction. Multi-culturalism is often cited as a major reason for our caution, control and censorship of the production and presentation of the arts here.

...In the face of pluralism, the discourse of multi-culturalism demands a wider perspective beyond race and ethnicity. It is a cross-cutting and shifting of identification which expands to include class-stratification, language, religion, gender, sexual preference, politics, science, ecology. These should not be excluded in its critical production and survey of art within a society, which aspires to be multi-cultural as well as plural."

– An extract from *Multi-culturalism: In Practice and On Paper*, a speech delivered by Lee Wen at The Substation's *SeptFest Art Conference*, Singapore in 1997.



Journey of a Yellow Man No.11: Multi-culturalism, 1997
Giclee print on cotton rag paper, 100 x 150 cm

THE WEN PAPER: MONDAY, JANUARY 3, 1994

2013 – 2014

Colour pencil and graphite on paper

29 x 41 cm, 2 panels

The Artists' General Assembly (AGA) was an end-of-year arts event initiated by the artist collective, organized by The Artists Village in collaboration with 5th Passage, an artist-run gallery spearheaded by Suzann Victor and Susie Lingham.

The event recalled the 1989/1990 new year's 24 hour TIME show held on the premises of the original kampung village of The Artists Village before they were evicted. At its time, the 1993/94 AGA was the largest collaborative artist-organised event ever attempted in Singapore. It came out of a rising need felt by the organisers to increase the visibility of new practices emerging in various disparate artistic circles. The event aimed to provide a platform that could allow individual practices to meet within a larger community.

The week-long event sought to represent every discipline of contemporary practice and was put together through a spirit of volunteerism likened to the Gotong Royong of the kampong days. Opening on 26 December 1993, the week was jam-packed with forums, talks, screenings, performances as well as an exhibition installation.

In the midst of this ambitious project, tensions were brewing. The Public Entertainment Licensing Unit had found some content in the videos inappropriate and forbidden their screening. The erasure of some tapes angered some of the artists, leading to the enactment of protest performances. Without considering all these complications, the event was sensationalised in the local tabloid, *The New Paper*, with a provocative headline and slanted reporting.

In *The Wen Paper*, the reporting presented in the right panel may not be as racy as that of *The New Paper* in the left panel but it represents the unreported truth.

This work was first exhibited/commissioned for *The Artist, the Book and the Crowd*, curated by Ho Rui An, Ang Siew Ching and Karen Yeh.



The Wen Paper: Monday, January 3, 1994, 2013 – 2014
Colour pencil and graphite on paper
29 x 41 cm, 2 panels

ART VS. ART NO.1

2003, 2012

In collaboration with Wu Junhan

Modified vacuum cleaner, papier maché

46 x 32 x 26 cm

Exhibited at Singapore Art Museum, 2012

Art vs Art consists of two remote-controlled cars and vacuum cleaner, concealed beneath durian-shaped shells. The durians invite one to interact with them: two of them are capable of movement and engage each other in a race, while the other sucks up anything it finds in its way. In the Singapore context, these durian-shaped sculptures not only recall a regional delicacy, but also bring to mind the architectural highlight of Singapore's art scene – The Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay. Colloquially known as 'The Durian', this premier performance arts centre represents the national ambition to make Singapore the regional destination for world-class art performances. Lee likens this manifested goal to the functions of vacuum cleaners and racing machines, embedding an incisive critique on the commercial agenda and state-directed nature of the performance arts centre beneath a façade of lightness and humour.

ART VS. ART NO. 2

2003, 2012

In collaboration with Satoko Sukenari

Modified remote control cars, papier maché

51 x 35 x 25 cm and 50 x 34 x 26 cm

Exhibited at Singapore Art Museum, 2012

"To me it not only symbolizes the high culture in this increasingly affluent society but also that of central state directed agenda of cultural development in contrast to the other more humble and grassroots level of cultural work – what used to be known as alternative, or more conveniently generalized as experimental, radical manifestations of those who seek to express the ever-changing world and hence termed as contemporary, the avant-garde if not the cutting-edge label of art. Of course the ones presented as high art may also fall within similar descriptions if they were on the right track of risk-taking into bringing forth current vibes and motivated by similar veins of daring to challenge traditional practices in form and presentations; however I shun to say they tend to pander to a sophistication of distinction based on class, capital as well as conventions."

– Lee Wen



Art vs. Art No.1, 2003, 2012
Modified vacuum cleaner, papier maché
46 x 32 x 26 cm

Art vs. Art No.2, 2003, 2012
Modified remote control cars, papier maché
51 x 35 x 25 cm and 50 x 34 x 26 cm



PING PONG GO-ROUND

2013

Interactive mixed media installation

580 (dia) x 76 cm (h)

Exhibited at Suzhou Jinji Museum, China, 2013

Ping Pong or table tennis has been around for nearly a century now. As a sport, it is said to be almost equal for the women's game as compared to that of the man's. A game commonly played in China and Singapore, Ping Pong requires a minimum of two players, constituting a form of dialogue between the players on opposite sides as the ball bounces back and forth.

In this work, the structure and rules of Ping Pong are reinvented in the context of contemporary possibilities as the artist seeks alternative models of interaction. By reinventing the shape of a traditional Ping Pong table to that not unlike a conference table with no borders on its left and right, Lee Wen offers a different perception

of its limitations and opens multiple possibilities for broader dialogue. As opposed to traditional, rectangular-shaped Ping Pong tables, *Ping Pong Go-Round* is at once a multi-player game and a dialogue between numerous people, regardless of gender and age around a donut-shaped table.

First enacted in April 1998 Melbourne Australia, during an international event "Construction in Process VI – The Bridge", Lee's new take on Ping Pong has since gained attention from international media. Moreover, as *Ping Pong Go-Round* continues to be featured in exhibitions around the world, the work has gained an iconic status and encouraged dialogue and challenge through sport and games.



Ping Pong Go-Round, 2013
Interactive mixed media installation
580 (dia) x 76 cm (h)

TWISTED FATE, TWISTED VALUES, TWISTED PAIN

2013
Pastel on paper
150 x 120 cm



Twisted Fate, Twisted Values, Twisted Pain, 2013
Pastel on paper, 150 x 120 cm

BLUE NARCISSUS: A ROMANTIC SELF-PORTRAIT

2013
Pastel on paper
150 x 121 cm



Blue Narcissus: A Romantic Self-Portrait, 2013
Pastel on paper, 150 x 121 cm

ASVAMEDHA - THE SACRIFICE OF THE HORSE

2002 – 2014
Colour pencil on wood
30.3 x 30.3 x 3.3 cm



Asvamedha - The Sacrifice of the Horse, 2002 - 2014
Colour pencil on wood, 30.3 x 30.3 x 30.3 cm

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Lee Wen (b. 1957)

Born in Singapore, Lee Wen is a multidisciplinary artist. After leaving a banking career to enrol at LASALLE College of the Arts, Lee graduated with a Master of Fine Art in 2006. Best known for his 'Journey of a Yellow Man' performance-based series, Lee is one of the pioneers of performance art in Singapore.

Lee relies on the strategic deployment of visual, kinesthetic symbols and signs in his works. Through various constructed personas, his works allow visitors insight into his roles as an artist. Lee has been exploring different strategies of time-based and performance art since 1989. His work has been strongly motivated by social investigations as well as inner psychological directions using art to interrogate stereotypical perceptions of culture and society.

Lee's essays, texts and investigations are an important reference, not only for Singapore and Asian artists, but also for performance art scholars and researchers worldwide.

Lee is a contributing member of *The Artists Village* in Singapore and has been participating in *Black Market International*, a performance art collective. Lee is also co-organiser of *R.I.T.E.S. - Rooted in the Ephemeral Speak* (2009), a platform to support and develop performance art practices, discourse, infrastructure and audiences in Singapore. In 2003, Lee spearheaded the *Future of Imagination*, an international performance art event.

In 2005, Lee was awarded the Cultural Medallion for his contributions to the development of contemporary art in Singapore.

Education

- 2006 Master of Fine Arts, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore
- 1992 City of London Polytechnic, London, United Kingdom
- 1990 LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore

Solo Exhibitions

- 2012 Lee Wen: Lucid Dreams in the Reverie of the Real, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
- 2008 Anthropometry Revision, Soo Bin Art Int'l, Singapore
- 2007 Freedom of Daydreams, Mothers of Imagination, Your MOTHER Gallery, Singapore
- 2004 Unframed 7, P-10, Singapore
- 2003 Strange Fruit, The Substation, Singapore
- 2002 Everybody Should Be Happy, Utterly Art, Singapore
- 1996 Hand-Made Tales, The Black Box, TheatreWorks, Singapore
- 1995 Neo-Baba, VA-nishiogi Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 1993 Journey of a Yellow Man No.3: DESIRE, The Substation, Singapore

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2013 Cascadence: Singapore Redux, iPRECATION, Singapore
- 2012 Venice International Performance Art Week, Venice, Italy
- 2011 R.I.T.E.S. "Rooted In The Ephemeral Speak" #01/2011, The Substation, Singapore
- 2011 "This Is Performance Art", Aberdeen and Glasgow, Scotland
- 2011 "Negotiating Home, History and Nation: Two Decades of Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia, 1991– 2011", Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
- 2011 Future of Imagination 7, Goodman Art Centre, Singapore
- 2010 National Review of Live Art 2010, Glasgow, Scotland
- 2010 Future of Imagination 6, Sculpture Square, Singapore
- 2010 "The winds project" encontro internacional da performance, Teatro TUCA, Sao Paulo, Brazil
- 2010 Performance Platform Lublin 2010, Poland

2010	BONE 13 – Festival für Aktionskunst, Berne, Switzerland	2005	National Review of Live Art – MIDLAND 05, Perth, Australia
2009	International Performance Show-Ceramic Passion, 5th World Ceramic Biennale, Icheon, S. Korea	2005	Situations, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
2009	Infr'Action '09 -Festival International d'Art Performance, Paris, France	2005	REACH OUTLYING 2005 Tupalive Taiwan International Performance Art Festival, Taipei, Taiwan
2009	Rasa Aksi-4 Artists From Singapore, Lublin, and, Warsaw, Poland	2005	Spaces and Shadows: Politics of fun, House of World Culture, Berlin, Germany
2009	Live Action Göteborg 09, Gothenburg, Sweden	2005	Self-portrait Performativ, langaut, Golberode, Dresden, Germany
2009	Momentum- Platform for Performance-Art, Brussels, Belgium	2005	BLURRRR 5 biennial of performance art, Tel Aviv, Israel
2009	10th OPEN International Performance Art Festival, Beijing, China	2005	Bone 8, Schlachthaus Theater, Bern, Switzerland
2009	LIVE International Performance Art Biennale, Vancouver, Canada	2004	130 Bank Gallery, 10th Anniversary Commemoration Exhibition, Kitakyushu, Japan
2008	“Small East Co-prosperity Restaurant 08”, Tokyo, Japan	2004	National Review of Live Art - 2004, Glasgow, Scotland
2008	Intervene! Interrupt! Rethinking Art as Social Practice, University of California, Santa Cruz, USA	2004	2nd DaDao Live Art Festival, Beijing, China
2008	Kết Nôi : Vietnam-Singapore Performance Art Dialogue, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore	2004	Sustainable, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Tokyo, Japan
2008	Blow!5- Performance Art Meeting between Singapore and Germany, Hildesheim & Ilse, Germany	2004	The Future of Imagination 2, Sculpture Square, Singapore
2008	The Artists Village: 20 Years On, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore	2003	Aciones en Ruta, Mexico City and Encuentro Intl de Performance Yucatan, Merida, Mexico
2007	National Review of Live Art 2007, Glasgow, Scotland	2003	The Future of Imagination, The Substation, Singapore
2007	IX Międzynarodowy Festiwal Sztuki Akcji “Interakcje 2007” Piotrkow Trybunalski; Bielsko-Biała, Poland	2002	“Alter-Native Dialogues”, Video/ Performance collaboration with James Luna, Tokyo, Japan
2007	Made In China, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art; Humlebæk, Denmark	2002	Recontre Int'l d'art performance de Quebec 2002, LELIEU, Quebec, Canada
2007	Future of Imagination 4, 72-13, TheatreWorks, Singapore	2001	EXIT International Festival for Unusual Live Performances, Cable Factory, Helsinki, Finland
2007	LONG'ACTION 07- rencontres franco-chinoises d'art performance, Sète France	2000	Critical Response, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
2006	The Future of Imagination 3, The Substation, Singapore	2000	Expo 2000, Performance with Black Market International, Hanover, Germany
2006	TROUBLE #2, halles de schaerbeek, Brussels, Belgium	2000	TransEuropa -Theatre Festival 2000, Hildesheim, Germany
2006	acción!06MAD - III Encuentro Internacional de Arte de Acción. Madrid, Spain	2000	Artists Investigating Monuments - AIM projects, Raffles Landing Site, Singapore.
2006	4th DaDao Live Art Festival, Beijing, China	1999	Rånd, Festival der Regionen, Zuckerfabrik Enns, Austria
2006	7a*11d International Festival of Performance Art, Toronto, Canada	1999	The Third Asia Pacific Triennale of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia
2006	DEFORMES, Primera Bienal de Performance, Santiago, Chile		
2005	National Review of Live Art - 2005, Glasgow, Scotland		
2005	Crossing Time International, Dartington College of Arts, Totnes, Devon, England		

- 1999 Nokia Singapore Art 1999, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
- 1998 Construction in Process VI - The Bridge, The Artists Museum, Melbourne, Australia
- 1998 Sub-Fiction, Werkleitz Biennale 1998, Tornitz & Werkleitz, Germany
- 1998 3rd Asian Performance Art Series, Tokyo, Japan
- 1998 ZUG. Flexible:X, Performance Art Operation Work, Dresden, Germany
- 1997 SeptFest Art Conference-Multi-culturalism, The Substation, Singapore
- 1996 Recontre International d'art Performance Et Multi-media 1996, Quebec, Canada
- 1996 Between the Visible and Invisible, Lahore International Arts Workshop, Pakistan
- 1995 2nd Nippon International Performance Art Festival, Tokyo & Nagano, Japan
- 1995 Castle of Imagination, 3rd International Artists Meeting, Bytow, Poland
- 1995 MA: East West Study Project, Dusseldorf & Darmstadt, Germany
- 1994 4th Asian Art Show, Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka and Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
- 1993 5th Fukui International Video Biennale, Tawara, Fukui City, Japan
- 1993 Sense Yellow, Concrete House, Nontburi, Thailand
- 1992 International Sculpture Symposium, Gulbarga, Karnataka, India
- 1990 TIME Show, Artists Village, Ulu Sembawang, Singapore
- 1990 C.A.R.E.: Concerned Artists for the Environment, Artist Village, Singapore Art Festival, Singapore
- 1989 HAPPENINGS, National University of Singapore, Singapore
- 1989 The Drawing Show, Artists Village, Ulu Sembawang, Singapore

Awards

- 2005 Cultural Medallion, Singapore

Selected Residencies

- 2008 Artist-in-residence, Red & Grey Contemporary, Chengdu, China
- 2002 Artist in Residence, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore

- 1998 Artist in Residence (Asia Europe Ministerial Meeting, Cultural and Arts Program) supported by Visiting Arts, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Gasworks Studios, London, UK

Workshops and Seminars

- 2006 NRLA (National Review of Live Art) International Winter School, Glasgow, Scotland
- 2005 LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore
- 2005 Nanyang College of Fine Art, Singapore
- 2004 Faculty of Fine Arts, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Tokyo, Japan
- 2004 Hanoi University of Fine Arts, Hanoi, Vietnam
- 2004 University of Ulster, Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdoms
- 2003 Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2003 Faculty of Fine Arts, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Tokyo, Japan
- 2002 LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore
- 2002 Musashino Art University, Tokyo, Japan
- 2001 Musashino Art University, Tokyo, Japan
- 2001 Faculty of Fine Arts, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Tokyo, Japan
- 2001 LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore
- 2001 Nanyang College of Fine Art, Singapore
- 2000 Nanyang College of Fine Art, Singapore
- 2000 LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore
- 1999 LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore
- 1998 Norwich College of Art and Design, Norwich, United Kingdoms
- 1996 Faculty of Fine Arts, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Tokyo, Japan

Public Collections

- Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
- Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan
- Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane, Australia

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ISBN 9789810900106



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