

# transcending...

MA ART THERAPY 2023



The word 'transcend' evokes movement, a subtle shift beyond something – boundaries, limits or realities. It hints at uncharted and timeless journeying. It whispers of growth unseen yet deeply felt.

Presented by the graduating cohort of the MA Art Therapy programme, the artworks in this exhibition tell a tale of wayfinding. Imbued with each art therapist's unique navigation of identities, thresholds and circumstance, the works converge on a single commonality – coming into their own.

River of Transcendence, our cover art, captures the theme of our group art show, Transcending...

This collaborative piece embraces the spontaneous nature of creativity and the power of art to connect us with something greater than ourselves. Our artwork illustrates the journey of a river, symbolising life and personal growth, using mixed media and found objects. The childlike and somewhat chaotic appearance reflects the beauty of unbounded expression and the transformative power of collaboration.

When viewed from a distance, the artwork's resemblance to cave paintings highlights the timeless human desire to create, share stories, and connect across time and cultures. The vibrant river also invites viewers to engage in a visual exploration reminiscent of maps and the game of 'I spy', discovering hidden treasures and details within the piece.

By combining our diverse perspectives we encourage viewers to delve into the rich tapestry of this river of transcendence, finding their own unique curiosities and discoveries, and experiencing a sense of wonder, playfulness and deeper meaning. What can you see? What associations do you make? Let your imagination guide you, unveiling connections that transcend the ordinary.





The two-year MA Art Therapy programme at LASALLE College of the Arts is the first of its kind in Southeast Asia. Augmenting the range of mental health options available in Singapore and the region, the programme is distinctive in defining the professional discipline in contemporary ways that are culturally relevant and meaningful within Asian and global contexts.

The practice-based, intensive training programme emphasises experiential learning through art-making, reflection and research. Approved by the Australian, New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association (<u>ANZACATA</u>), LASALLE's MA Art Therapy programme prepares graduates to become professionally credentialed as Registered Art Therapists (AThR).

The programme has been validated by Goldsmiths, University of London since 2012.

The programme maintains significant sustaining partnerships, relationships and collaboration with various industry and community partners, including the Art Therapists' Association Singapore (<u>ATAS</u>), and officially became the educational partner with <u>The Red Pencil Humanitarian Mission</u> in 2012.

Find out more about the MA Art Therapy programme via <u>http://bit.ly/LASALLE\_MAAT</u> Browse past year catalogues via <u>https://bit.ly/MAAT\_catalogues</u>

For programme enquiries, email: admissions@lasalle.edu.sg, or call +65 6496 5111.

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# Foreword

Reflexive practice is a core professional competency that is nurtured throughout the postgraduate art therapy student's extensive training, and begins to be evidenced through tangible outputs, including this graduating art therapy cohort's exhibition.

A deliberate and purposeful investigation into one's own aims, intentions, motivations and actions can lead to incredible insights, learning and transformation, perhaps even shifting to the direction of transcendence – an intriguing theme and metaphor consolidated to reflect the therapist/artists of the exhibition. Metaphor within psychodynamic art psychotherapy is critical to excavating the layered complexities and possible meanings within this discipline and is exactly the point of "*Year 3 – but, there's seeds...*". Linking an observed collective response to a particular stage of the global pandemic, there were many unexpected and confrontational aspects experienced over the course of the pandemic (and the training), yet, like the potentiality of the seeds encased, there is hope for growth, a (re)generation.





#### Ronald Paul-Michael Henry Lay

MA, AThR, ATR-BC Programme Leader, MA Art Therapy Ronald.lay@lasalle.edu.sg



Ronald P.M.H. Lay, "Year 3 – but, there's seeds...", digital photograph unmanipulated, 2023

#### Foreword

'Transcend' symbolically appears as compost to me. As a parallel journey, I have spent the past two years devotedly composting waste to turn into nutrient-rich soil, or black gold. Tending to discarded parts in its stages of abject decay then waiting for nature to take its course brought me to the depth of humility, and taught me something about composting life experiences as I unearth my personal vulnerabilities with dirt-covered hands, literally. It is not coincidental that the etymology of the word 'humility' is 'humus', Latin for earth or soil.

Composting transcends time – the past goes through a phase of breakdown, aided by elements that are mostly unseen and buried. The often misunderstood and reviled fungi, bacteria, all sorts of insect life and earthworms form an entire ecosystem which silently support the composting process and ultimately create a desirable environment to support new life, growth and regeneration. In the same vein, composting past experiences transforms our darkness into light. Embracing pain and fears as the past is broken down can only bring us closer to ourselves, and when we allow nature to take over, what we later sow transcends the limits of our own beliefs. Both redemption and also renewal – as compost, nothing is ever wasted.

My message to the cohort of 2023 is to hold dear your gentle inner voices and intuition that have kept you going and growing, for all faraway journeys you tread and all distances you go need a light source only you alone see.





Emylia Safian

MA, AThR Lecturer, MA Art Therapy Clinical Placement Coordinator



Emylia Safian *Return to soil* Image of experimental rust and waste dye on repurposed cotton Dimensions variable 2023

# Foreword

*Deep Gathering* uses the felting process as a metaphor for life. It started with an inkling of an idea which I then developed intuitively within the supervision of the graduating cohort. I like the vibrancy, warmth and delicacy of loose unwoven fibres; when matted or blended, they gave way to unexpected shapes and depth, which inspired me to push forward.

Watching how students interacted with the piece was intriguing. It was beautiful to hear them discuss the small changes they could make in their actions and professional work. The shapes in the piece are abstract and organic, sometimes dictated by the accidents or the way the colours blend to give unexpected forms and depth, which inspire many phantasies, memories and emotions. They hold aspects of our personalities and histories, how we bring ourselves holistically into a loop, to see who we are, our limitations and vulnerabilities—offering witness to wholeness with an eye forward. They make me feel like I am watching a spring garden pushing out from the ground.





Wong June Teck, Daniel MA, AThR Lecturer, MA Art Therapy



Wong June Teck, Daniel, Deep Gathering, Needle felting, merino wool, embroidery cotton, and other fibres (detail image), 19 x 18 cm, 2023

# Foreword

[calligraphs] is a series of sculptural drawings flirting with the iconography of emojis, para-verbal languages, sigils, leaf-bitten larval feeding trails, and fluidities behind the ghosts and traces of rigid structures... Their forms are haunted by recollections of many hours spent practicing '习字', or the repetitive writing of Mandarin Chinese characters in order to commit them to memory.

The pictogram functions as both portal and wall: a viewer either enters its world or strikes, repeatedly, the stone barrier of its labyrinth form.

As language gives form to communication through the mutual agreement and knowledge of the meanings assigned to its symbols, so an artwork provides both a being and a home for what its creator expresses and shows. Through working with the students I have had the privilege of witnessing their individual journeys in overcoming challenges, not least that of completing their programme despite the historic global disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and developing a creative voice of their own through their artworks. I wish the graduating cohort a full and nourishing time ahead as each embarks on a new professional and personal chapter. My heartiest congratulations on your growth in reaching this significant milestone.



Weixin Quek Chong

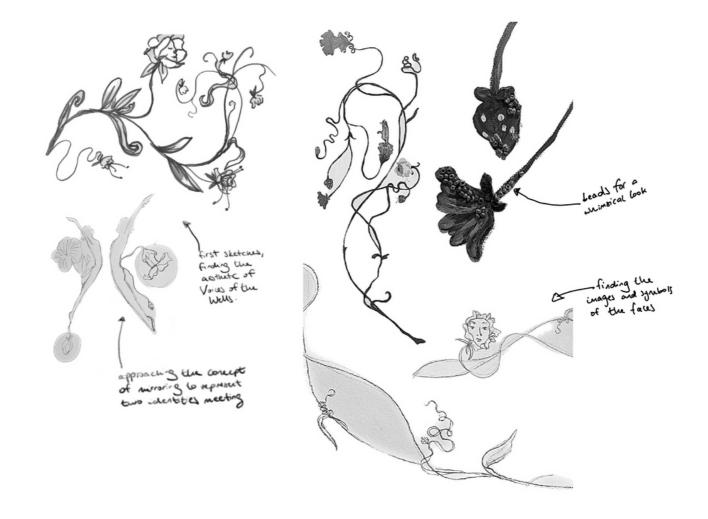
MA Artist Lecturer (Studio), MA Art Therapy



Weixin Quek Chong Installation view of calligraphs from the series: calligraphs / 习字 Faux fur, stainless steel, glass Dimensions variable 2022 – ongoing



Alix van der Vaeren, *Voices of the Wells,* painting, 80 x 100 cm, 2023





# Alix van der Vaeren

*Voices of the Wells* is an exploration of two identities, how they nurture and challenge one another.

It is a mirror of a journey that is coming to a close and how the faces formed have melded and fused to become one. This artwork was inspired by memories, old and new stories, elegance, movement, childlike wonder, and the beauty of nature.



Alix's creative process is inspired by nature, mindfulness, the practice of self care, and her own experience as a woman, an artist and now an art therapist. Her art is not limited to a material or method, rather the idea inspires the form.

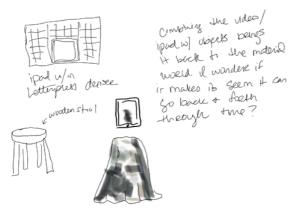


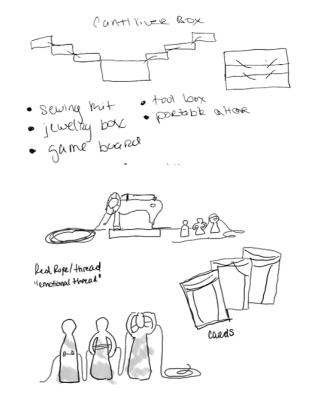
Armanda Colson, *Poetics of Self Discovery*, 7:08 min video installation still images, 2023

Game being a liminal space, fluidity Of hime, alterent times



inspired by the stuff in the bottom of your puete, the junk drawer, all the deparate parts have some pupple or meaning. Iting liminal space a miniature thrift store.







# Armanda Colson

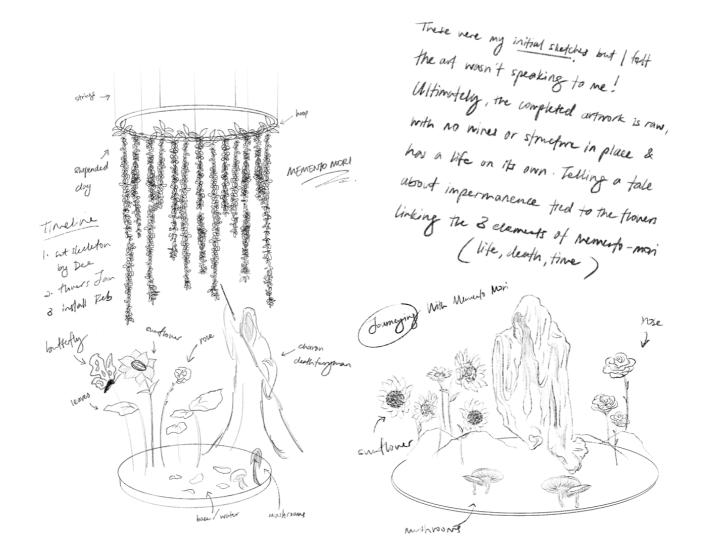
In *Poetics of Self Discovery*, Armanda delves into the liminal spaces of memory and home, exploring what is both temporal and eternal. Through her piece, she revisits a place from her past, to resurrect an aesthetic experience. When she puts her assemblage together she realises the familiarity between her childhood home and her mixed media artwork of a Thai hotel lobby. The convergence of these memories invites viewers into the fragmented recollection, surrounded by objects that reflect her past, present and future.



The sewing box, thread, scarves, figures, and reconstruction all become sacred acts of self-discovery, a playful bricolage of memory and identity, where something is restored with each assembly. As she and her mother view the nearly finished work, their voices overlap, echoing the journey of recollection. The work and the memory become intertwined as they come together, creating something new and uniquely embodied.



Candice Chan, The Gaze of Memento Mori, installation of sculpture and flowers, dimensions variable, 2023





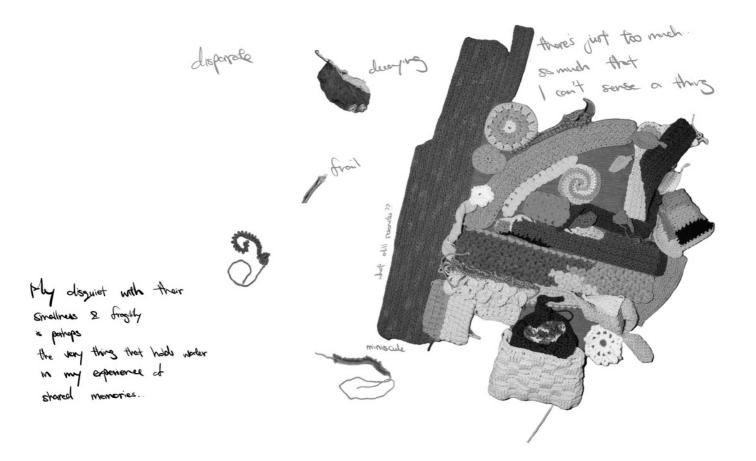
#### **Candice Chan**

The Gaze of Memento Mori explores the artist's own way of honoring death and dying. What started out as a soft reminder of time, life and death becomes a look into the intention of creating art, leaving a sense of vulnerability and rawness to her expression of emotions. As light passes through, it is through gazing that we discover the impermanence left behind.





Celeste Choo, Yours, Mine, Ours, installation (detail image), 200 (height) x 150 (width) x 100 cm (depth), 2023





## Celeste Choo

Characterised by an eclectic play with media and art forms, Celeste's art inquires on non/human interactions that shape memory and reality. This infatuation with transitory phenomena often imbues her works with a paradoxical sense of lively decay or elusive intimacy.

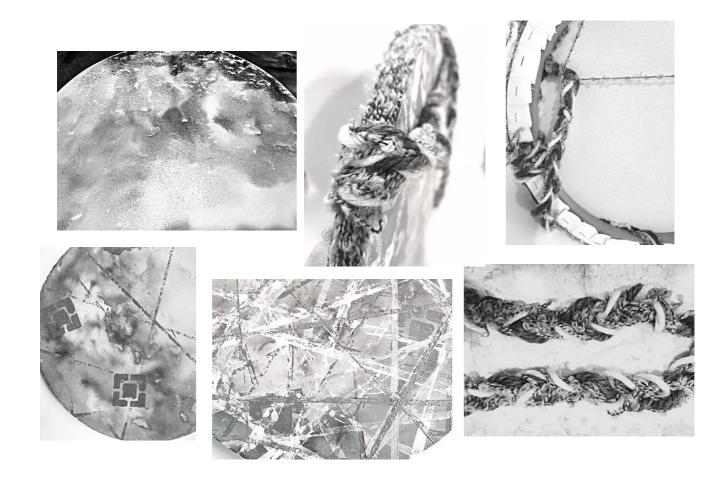


Ruminations on fleeting meetings birthed forty-two memory objects. Erosion by social and material forces leaves just a handful. A de-composed installation, *Yours, Mine, Ours* is the artist's uneasy acceptance of memory as finite, frail and ephemeral. It quietly observes decay's shaping of space and the phantasies we are tempted to inject into that potential.





Cherry Lee, *Cocoon,* mixed media on canvas (detail image), 60 cm in diameter, 2023





#### Cherry Lee

Safe spaces are something the artist constantly yearns, seeks and takes refuge in. Emerging as a representation of both physical and metaphorical spaces, this artwork pays homage to all past, present and future safe spaces the artist has and will create for security and protection.



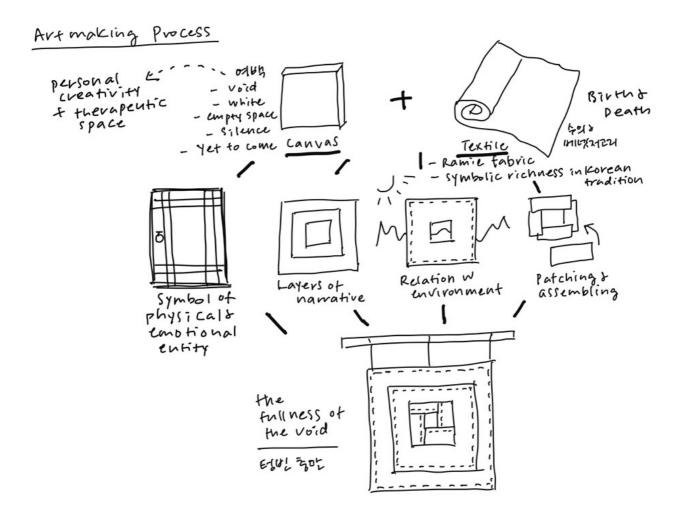
*Cocoon* uses a circular canvas to symbolise unity and protection. Strings of yarn are carefully circled around the canvas ritualistically and as a boundary – watchful, as the artist reveals her inner self, but also vibrant, fleeting and cautious against the outer world. Lines that intersect are draped over her inner self, providing partial concealment and safety. Using a variety of yarn and acrylic paint in tones of grey to illustrate the ephemeral boundaries constructed at various crossroads, the artist cocoons herself against potential harm.



Choi Young Jin Suzan **Textile Canvas: The fullness of the void** Korean ramie fabric 70 x 70 cm 2023









# Choi Young Jin Suzan

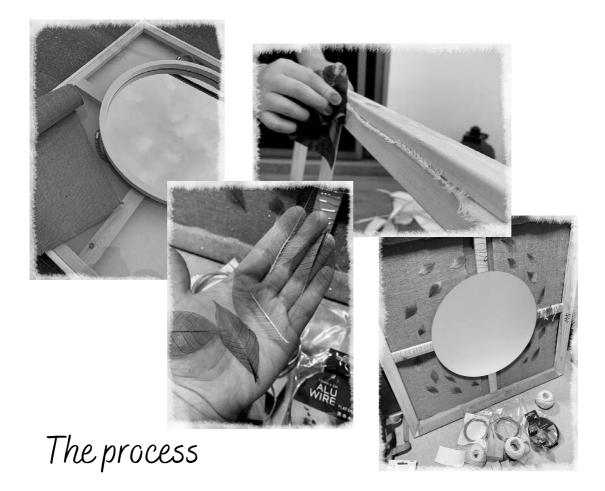
Textile art stretches back generations and is associated with rich personal and collective narratives. Created by repeated weaving of fibers to form an interconnected structure, textile is also reflective of the complex relational reality in which we live.



This artwork explores both Young Jin's personal and professional identity through the use of Korean ramie fabric, a textile that in Korean culture, accompanies a person from birth to death; and the symbolism of a blank canvas, that while seemingly empty, is in truth, a powerful seed-bed for both unspoken narrative and unlimited creativity. This concept, known in Korean as 여백 (yeo-baek), presents empty spaces as an elevated realm of art that considers the empty 'void' as an impregnated full-ness, filled with waiting and hope for a relational encounter of the self and the other in the therapeutic space.



Colette Alexandratos, *Self-reflective homeostasis*, mixed media, 76.2 x 76.2 cm, 2023





# **Colette Alexandratos**

The foundations of Colette's curated piece lay within the concept of balance. Balance has been an important factor to the artist, not only for her studies but applying the concept of balance in everyday rituals.



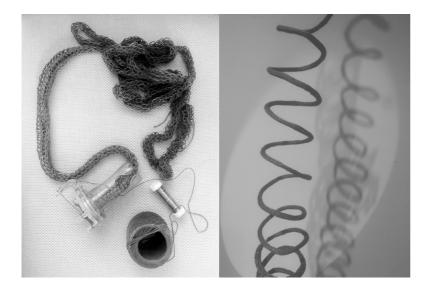
The MA Art Therapy programme has been a challenging self reflective period for the artist that has enabled inner and outer growth. With this, Colette's artistic framework combines the forces of biology, psychology and art. As a result, *Self-reflective homeostasis* was created.

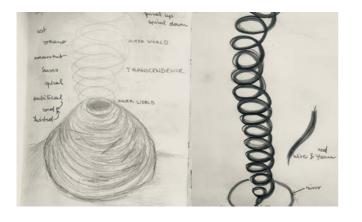
While elements around and within us are constantly moving, evolving and changing, the challenge is how to keep a constant stability. The robust shapes of the mirror and wooden frame hold a stillness, while there is a flow of energy and movement around and within them.

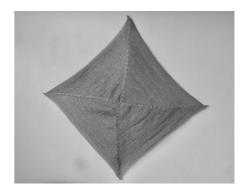
Just like a self-regulating organism, the mind and body are united as one in this process of creating balance.

Giuseppina Urso Self-transcendence Installation of sculpture Dimensions variable 2023

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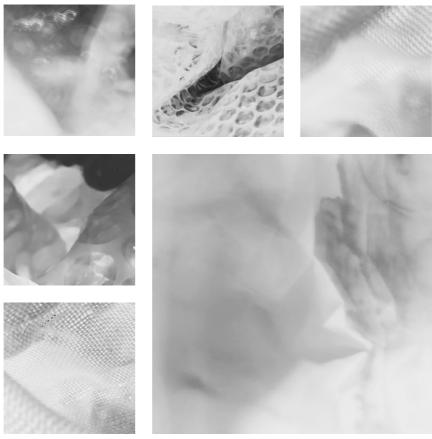
## Giuseppina Urso

The artist believes that the body is both the subject and object of intentionality – it is experienced as an object in the world yet manifests itself through experience. This constant traction is what makes the human experience so meaningful and worth exploring.

Aiming to provoke, tease and encourage viewers and their human interaction, the artist's work explores the relationship between the performer, artwork and observer as an interactive aesthetic and intersubjective phenomena. Her artworks take on a fully experiential perspective which represents an attempt and journey of searching for a psychological safe space. The spiral symbolises the holistic development of the artist's life through the rotating seasons of the years, winding its way towards her search for meaning and encounters external to herself, ultimately experiencing self-transcendence.



Hamidah Otheman, What's Your Play, mixed media installation (detail images), 2023



introspectiveness, timelessness, repetitiveness





## Hamidah Otheman

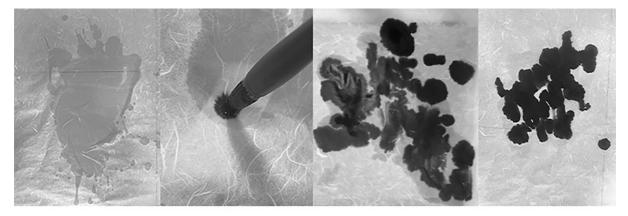
Hamidah's creative practice takes inspiration from the light-hearted to tragedy and everything in between that is imaginable. This led her to artistically explore what play and playing meant to her.

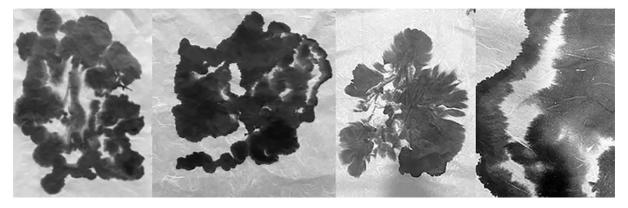
What's Your Play is the embodied resolution of her dissonance with play and playing. Only relying on her body's disclosure as her guide, she engaged in a dialogue with her embodied experience. While the way forward was fraught with resistance and articulating anything remotely intelligible with sound linearity required her to wring comprehension out of every fibre of her being, eventually, she realised that resisting was futile. She then began to accept it as her labour of play and charged ahead into play's victory of timelessness and repetitiveness.



Junha Lee, *To hold a potential,* ink on paper on wooden frame, 46 x 155 cm, 2023

The process







## Junha Lee

The black ink on Korean paper portrays unwinding complexity and tranquillity, while the paper depicts the theme of identity. *To hold a potential* captures the slow expansion of ink, which contains the puddle created on the white paper. It represents the artist's transforming identity towards becoming an adequate container.



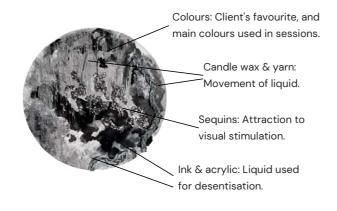
The wooden frame stretching the thin Korean paper symbolises the artist's identity as a painter, which complements her present developing identity as an art therapist. She attempts to convey her identity as an artist and art therapist, refusing to distinguish between these two.

This work celebrates the artist's professional growth, mirroring her subjective experience of holding the space, fostering transparency and bracing vulnerability.



Lela Aswad, *Sensory Intersubjectivity,* mixed media on canvas, each 40.64 cm in diameter, 2023

Alanning Grocess



Net fabric: Mimicking the ear. See through to portray the absorbtion of sound. Layers of ink, watercolour and poster colour: Various sounds. Gradual size of shapes: Pitch and frequency. Colours: Loud, frustration and client's favourite fast food logo. Spiral pattern: Cochlea. Yarn (with essential oil): Olfactory sensitivity.



Patterns: Various movements when seeking proprioceptive input.

Colours: Sensory integration, heightened senses and energy.

Sequins & beads: Rhythm and frequency of movement over sustained period.

Lights: Visual sensitivity.



## Lela Aswad

Paying homage to three clients she worked with, *Sensory Intersubjectivity* is a mixed media artwork delineating their unique way of processing and integrating information from their body and environment. Lela hopes to spark curiosity and contemplation through the eight senses.



Inspired by nature, architecture, people and travel, she has always been drawn to lines, texture, shapes and colours. Through meticulous arrangement of objects and intricate layers of rhythmic mark making, she allowed her unconscious mind to steer her art, creating an organic flow.



Loh Kar Heng, ., mixed media installation (detail image), 2023

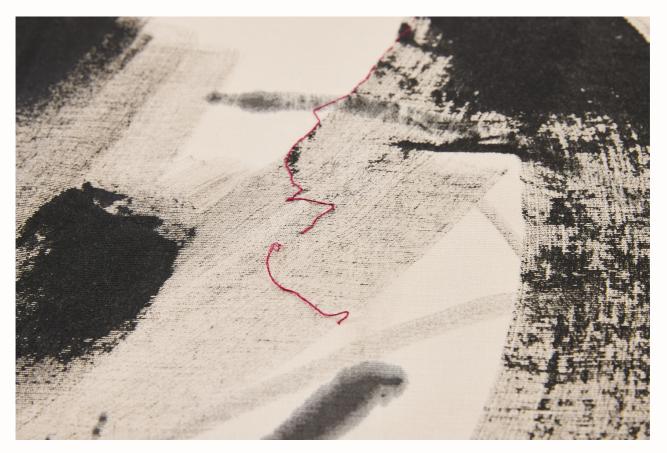




# Loh Kar Heng

Kar Heng appreciates symbolism and conceptual art. Through his exhibited work, he simply asks, "*Why not?*"





Natalie Ang, *Embracing Becoming*, mixed media installation (detail image), 102 x 129 cm and 118 x 270 cm, 2023





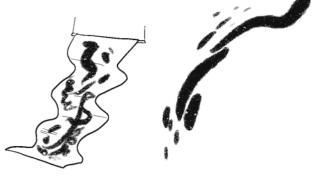




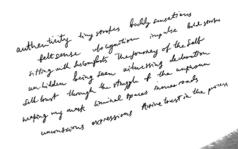


INTUITIVE

/Intiju:ItIV/ using or based on what one feels to be true even without Conscious reasoning; institutive









## Natalie Ang

*Embracing Becoming* is a mixed media artwork that reflects the artist's deeply personal experience of self-discovery and formation of her art therapist identity. Each ink and thread mark made on the fabric of liminality represents the complex and nuanced parallel process of diving into the artist's inner world, learning to trust her intuition and senses.



The artist's active engagement with trusting in the process of embodied creation revealed itself to be intrinsically connected to the process of learning to trust in herself and find her voice. By honouring the delicate and profound inner journey of learning to be, *Embracing Becoming* invites viewers to reflect on their own experiences of growth and self-discovery.



Ng Wei Xin, *Please, come home*, mixed media (found objects, natural material, borax), 60 x 45 cm, 2023

what will home feel like... smell like? will you feel it in the deepest parts of your feet bones and heartbeat... where you can drop without hesitation into its soft embrace. rest, becomes a right for every human not some luxury to be chased by dead ones grief, the fertile earth guiding losses toward renewal and new life.



# Ng Wei Xin

"Please come home and once you are firmly there, Please stay home awhile and come to a deep rest within." - Jane Hooper

*Please, come home* reimagines zen gardens in an outsider art environment, blending found and natural materials into a landscape bridging dualities. Personal and collective grief, a field of emotions and sensations in our mindbodies, are given space and honoured as one strolls, slows down, and rest in this garden. Through the artist's work, nature is rediscovered as a space and place which offers rejuvenation and, potentially, a sense of home.

Wei Xin's art practice features a responsive blending of natural and found materials into nature-inspired forms. Art-making is an embodied meditation and self-care practice used to process daily and existential challenges. This heartfelt creative engagement supports his clients' work.







Nuraishah Abdullah, *A Quiet Energy*, digitalised photographs on acrylic, A5, 2023

Stop 3: materials \$ object! Step 1: camera or handphone?? acrylic print? projection Step 2: taking photos! Making a decision ... losistics EHD





## Nuraishah Abdullah

A Quiet Energy is a series of five digitally enhanced photographs printed on acrylic pieces, reflecting the artist's childhood love for clouds.

The work invites viewers to step forward and resonate with what the artist sees and feels – standing apart to take in a beauty that speaks of calmness and joy, as well as stepping closer to look at the work's minute and intimate details. Viewers are encouraged to ponder the qualities of clouds – their fleeting appearance and quiet whimsicality which belie the strength they carry. The silent experience of being attuned can create shifts in energy beyond one's wildest imagination.



Polina Disilvestro, Reality vs Phantasy (triptych), photographs, acrylic paints on acrylic frames (detail image), all works 59 x 43.5 cm, 2023





## Polina Disilvestro

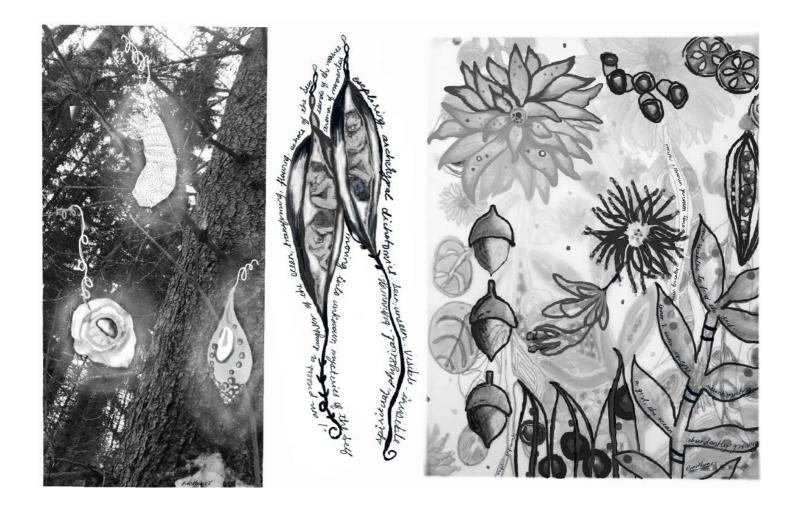
As an artist, Polina draws her inspiration from the intersection of reality and dreams. She is fascinated by the interplay between the conscious and the unconscious and employs her active imagination to analyse, understand and derive meaning from the events, situations, and people around her.



In *Reality vs Phantasy*, Polina has given free rein to her imagination, allowing it to transform the initial feelings of frustration, alienation, and disconnectedness into acceptance. This introspective process has led to a profound feeling of integration and to a certain sense of closure. Modifying photos through an 'analogue' technique using acrylic paints has allowed Polina to connect to each image on a more intimate level – seeing it develop, grow and metamorphose from something alien to something personal and familiar.



Prarthna Agarwal, *Opening the doors of the inner sanctum*, multimedia installation, 40 x 60 cm each, 2023





# Prarthna Agarwal

The artist humbly invites viewers to her *inner sanctum*, a series of pods embraced by a soft membrane of botanical recollections that cocoon the viewer with a spectrum of colour in an immersive sensorium.

The limitless possibilities of combining, creating and evolving a multitude of elements deeply intrigued the artist's creative process, leading her to reflect on the dichotomies of our conscious and unconscious ecosystems.



Each pod is a significant archetype that warmly unveils interconnections of the artist's inner and outer self while evoking divergent sensations of seeing, sensing, breathing, hearing, discovering, and eventually embracing. The botanical cascade offers a space for releasing one's own echoes through tactile interaction and introspection while journeying through the transcendence of the inner and outer worlds.

Individually conceived, this sentient composition transpires the dichotomies of origins: visible and invisible, spiritual and physical in a euphonious space where reflection takes precedence.



Siti Mariam Bte Md Salim Variegation Plasticine 30 cm in diameter 2023







Exploring and experimenting

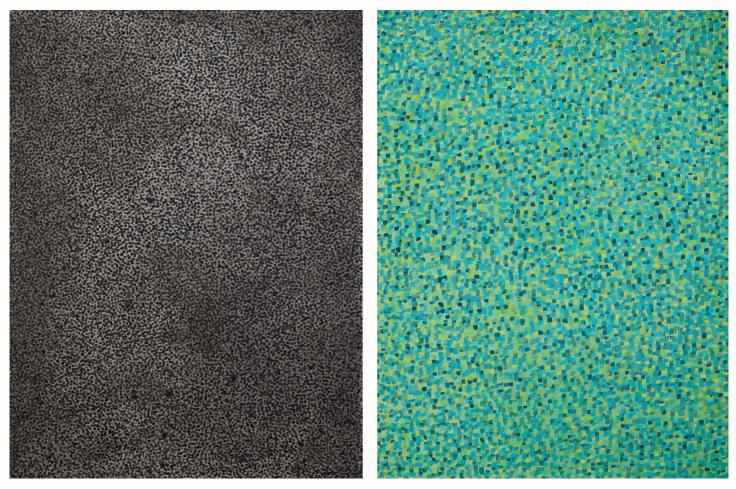


# Siti Mariam Binte Mohamad Salim

As a medical social worker, Siti supported patients and loved ones who had experienced traumatic loss. As a witness to such experiences, she was keen to find other methods of supporting her clients' expressions and find healing from the trauma and grief. This led her to take up the MA Art Therapy programme as she believes that the arts is an innate and powerful creative tool which can be tapped on to support healing and growth.

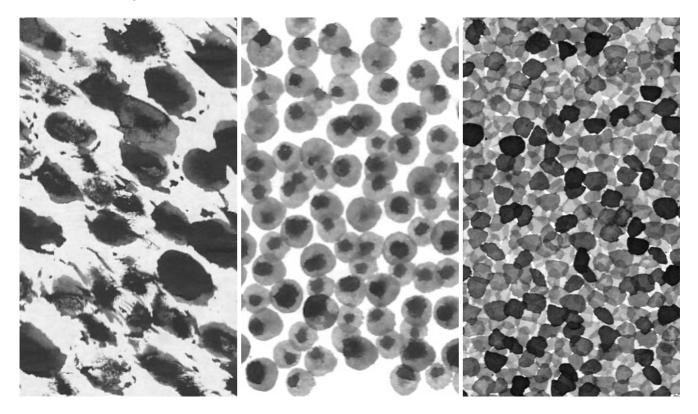


Often when we are besieged with a difficulty, we normally find it hard to focus on anything else except the problem. *Variegation* is the product arising from the artist's clinical experiences and belief that even in the most difficult situation, we can find love and joy. Her artwork is an exploration of colours through plasticine as the art medium.



Suwen Low, Chaos to Release and Order, Chinese ink on canvas, 76 x 120 cm each, 2023

### Mark-marking Experimentations





### Suwen Low

This diptych captures fragments of the artist's pursuit of safety, control, focus, and balance amidst transitions and uncertainties, closely intertwined with her therapeutic work with patients hospitalised for complex medical needs or safety concerns related to trauma and violence. Her unconventional, repetitive mark-making methods and ritualistic creative process imbue the artwork with a meditative state of flow, containing the experiences of both patient and artist.



Through a fusion of repurposed Chinese inks on canvas, the artwork transcends predetermined outcomes, revealing the artist's profound connections with nature and culture. An interplay of light and shadow, reminiscent of the ever-changing natural world, encourages viewers to reflect on their own transitions, uncertainties and personal quests for stability and autonomy.



Yin Gege, *The moment it stops*, mixed media (clay, glass, cardboard, wax), dimensions variable, 2023









# Yin Gege

The moment it stops embraces materials with contrasting weights, colours, textures, and different ways of manipulation to build a body or structure that manifests a sense of growth.

The artwork is an embodiment of the artist's urge to create spaces for dialogue to happen and flow naturally amidst creativity, rationality and emotions. Inspired by daily life encounters with inexplicit thoughts and feelings, the artist explored the potential of art-making in taking a person through their inner journey. Throughout the making process, the artist celebrated a transformation of the self as well as that of the artwork.

The title *The moment it stops* initially described an imagined and impossible outcome with an absence of time. It now manifests a sense of acceptance, playfulness and empowerment in creating our own moments of conceptual stops via art-making and embracing the continuity of self-explorations.

# Acknowledgements

We would like to express our deep appreciation to the individuals who have played an instrumental role in shaping our learning experiences. Their commitment to fostering an environment that is respectful of our unique artistic expressions and human experiences has helped us to develop our artistic skills and clinical knowledge, and have enriched our understanding of the field.

We wish to extend our gratitude to **Mr Ronald Paul-Michael Henry Lay**, our Programme Leader, for his unwavering dedication to the programme and for instilling in us a strong sense of ethics and psychodynamic training. Through his experiential methods, we have become cognizant of ethical boundaries and have been equipped to face various professional challenges that have developed our resilience and self-reflexive practice.

We are grateful to our clinical supervisors and lecturers, **Mr Wong June Teck Daniel** and **Ms Emylia Juita Md Safian**, for providing their steadfast authenticity and nurturing presence throughout our learning journey. We are deeply grateful for their tireless efforts in providing us with constructive feedback on our learning processes, which has been instrumental to our growth and development. Our appreciation extends to **Ms Rachel Yang**, our part-time lecturer, **Ms Malar Villi Nadeson**, our Director of the Ngee Ann Kongsi Library, and our **thesis supervisors** for their invaluable support, tutelage and dedication.

Lastly, we extend our heartfelt thanks to **Ms Weixin Chong** and **Ms Kelly Reedy**, our esteemed studio art lecturers, for their pivotal role in developing our artistic skills and enhancing our artistic practice. Their advice and support have enabled us to explore new artistic boundaries and expand our creative potential.

# Acknowledgements

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