

Found & Lost

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lightness of finding and losing through drawing



[Found](#) & Lost. Images with the kind permission of the curator.

“Found & Lost features the works of eight Singapore artists concerned with questions of representation in relation to the act of drawing... Curated by Guo-Liang Tan, the exhibition serves as an extension of the ideas explored in Aversions, a drawing publication project in which the artists explore and respond to the boundaries of drawing within their own artistic practices, delving into issues such as peripheral vision, perpetual delay, the impossibility of the image, and the fragmentation of language and memory in relation to the act of drawing. As a parallel exhibition, Found & Lost continues along and beyond the initial line of enquiry into the nature of visual representation. Many of the works move between the act of observation (looking at) and that of introspection (looking for), proposing a correlation between the visible and the invisible in the way meaning is constantly being interrupted and negotiated by shifts in perception.”(extracted from exhibition press release)

The works in the exhibition are diverse in their engagement with the artists’ unique interests, choice of materials, and presentation, yet coherent in the choice of works and theme of the exhibition. Similar in their questioning of what constitutes the visible and invisible, ‘ways of seeing’, and the pervasive use of ‘the line’. The artists independently explore a story line, a line ‘mapped’ by the body in space, scribbled lines drawing from memory, an almost invisible line by white letraset on a white wall, a wall of threadlines suspended in mid-air. Contextually speaking, the works resonate strongly, and would bode well with an adventurous art audience. Placed in the context of a commercial gallery, it marks a generous, and bold move to support the artists in Singapore.

The work by Khiew Huey Chian is site specific, spanning the width of walls, creating a visual spectacle of two floating, ‘apostrophe’ marks, cast in the air. Yet made of thread, strung precariously on nails from one end to the next, they represent the artists’ largest thread gallery installation to date. The lines glisters as one shifts while still looking at it, as if looking for a rainbow. Always interested in something temporal, transient and light-handed,

it follows the minimalist traditions of simplicity in presentation, and more conceptual in approach.

The break through works by Ian Woo are simply stunning, resembling a hybrid of organic muscles and crystal lattices; objects that float in the middle of large paper surfaces. Employing various monochrome values possible with the pencil, these are acted out, almost exploding onto itself. Unlike his earlier abstract acrylic paintings, these clusters are without a landscape or context, residing instead in our understanding of his processes of mark-making, possessing both clarity and obscurity; of minute details in each pencil stroke, yet devoid of apparent real representation.

The video of a lone man swimming and in the act, clearing a path of algae in an abandoned swimming pool by Charles Lim is possesses European aesthetics, yet universally poetic. The art is caught in that singular act, caught between the reflection of the monitor and the swimmer trapped in the screen. We are left transfixed wanting to see what happens, except to find that the path clearing continues, and we too start drifting in consciousness. The work is better regarded as a video installation than a record of a performance. Metaphorically, we can guess that it could represent a catharsis by both the viewer and performer to clean and glean, or an intervention that disrupts the logical, an entry point into our subconscious understanding of one's interpretation of the act. Resembling an excerpt from a dream, the viewer is left to fill in the gaps, pondering and swimming in ambiguity.

The video pieces and light drawing by Erika Tan is incredibly social, and perhaps a metaphor for the construct of a collective memory of Mount Fuji. Layered, and incredibly simple, line drawn over and over again, the boundaries shifts and our vision blurs.

Sookoon Ang's unusual 'Horse', made of helium alphabet-shaped balloons and cast iron numbers 1 to 6, is a playful take on one's association of meaning and that of written language. A Kantian approach with phenomenology might leave us further baffled. How we try to understand the work is split between the word 'horse' formed by light helium balloons and the heavy cast iron numbers which they are tied to. The visual irony might be an easier way to approach the work, in the traditions of Surrealist Rene Magritte and his visual juxtapositions.

Matthew Ngui's re-presentation of his seminar work, *Chair* (2008) is refreshing. The work is literally deconstructed, left in transport crates, and flanked by a video and photographs. Its significance to Singapore conceptual art, and its persistence to question perspectival vision remains unchallenged.

Shubigi Rao's work borders on invisibility, creating passages of text using white letraset on a white wall. What is left on display, are both the text, and the letraset sheets which the letters came from, revealing the clue for the viewer to look harder, or rather impossibly at the text. The metaphor here could perhaps be the need to fill in the gaps with our imagination, based on the title of the work, just as how the 'seeing' is never complete, under the kind of lighting and setting.

Found & Lost, does challenge the act of observation and introspection of the viewer. Seen in the correct spirit and light, it allows one to see lines – from maps, double yellow lines, carpet patterns – before losing attention, more clearly than before. One keeps 'finding and losing' artful situations in other instances. The lightness of the exhibition, bordering on the visible

and invisible is equally intriguing, challenging one's perfect 6/6 vision or augmented vision, both of the physical world, and one's openness and inclusion of what is not necessarily there, but essential to appreciating and accepting contemporary art.

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye."
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in *The Little Prince*

8.0 of 10 stars. The exhibition accompanies the book *Aversions*, a drawing publication project (~~SG\$50, from Osage Gallery whilst stocks lasts~~ Errata: \$40 during *Found & Lost* exhibition period, and thereafter \$55). Another side note, the works do not reproduce well on photograph, just like how a drawing with its graphite sheen always looks better on paper, than a reproduction.

Aversions, to some, may be confusing if they regard it as a catalogue. It is not. It does not necessarily follow the works of all the artists, nor does it describe or explain the works in the exhibition. If one follows the written work of the curator, Guo Liang, the text lies between a kind of expository descriptive essay and fiction-writing. Here, Drawing is almost treated like a character in a story, and his past, present and future revealed. The works are not mere illustrations to the text, but actually as important as paragraphs themselves; *Aversions* is thus a book that 'flips' between the literal and visual, attempting to draw another side of process as art to our attention.

Aversion, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd Edition 1989, could mean the following:

1. The action of turning away oneself, one's eyes, etc.
2. The action of averting, warding off, or getting rid of
3. A moral turning of oneself away, estrangement
4.
 - a. An averted state of mind or feelings; a mental attitude of opposition or repugnance; a fixed, habitual dislike; an antipathy
 - b. Const. (*towards, against, obs.*), *from, to (for), inf.*
5. *transf.* of things
6. An object of dislike or repugnance
7. *attrib.*, as aversion therapy, treatment, therapy or treatment designed to render a particular habit repugnant to someone addicted to it

Osage Gallery, Singapore
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