



**Esplanade  
Presents**

**Visual Arts**

# THE LIFE



# OF THINGS

JAN - APR 2018

**KEVIN FEE  
LIM SOKCHANLINA  
PHAN THAO-NGUYEN  
SARKER PROTICK  
SIM CHI YIN  
UUDAM TRAN NGUYEN**



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# THE LIFE OF THINGS

Objects and places are repositories of history and conduits of memory, associated with experiences both personal and collective. While they are material things with physical attributes, they also have symbolic qualities that represent abstract ideas, signal emotion, and in the case of animistic belief systems, possess energies that people powerfully relate to.

In three exhibitions around Esplanade, artists from Singapore and the region present new and recent photographs, paintings, sculpture, video and installations. Broad in historical and geographical scope, these artworks uncover ways that colonial legacies, geopolitical tensions, and urban development leave material traces of their existence on things and places. In these exhibitions, objects and landscapes become discursive sites for the expression and interpretation of competing historical narratives and the complexities of contemporary experience.

Kevin Fee (b. 1990, Singapore) works with photography and moving images to explore the relationships between humans and the social norms and regulatory systems in society. Winner of the Kwek Leng Joo Prize of Excellence in Still Photography (2016), he has exhibited at the Dali International Photography Festival, Deck, OH! Open House and Noise Singapore (2015).

Lim Sokchanlina (b. 1987, Cambodia) uses documentary and conceptual practices in his photographic, video and performance works, which engage with socio-political, economic and environmental changes in present-day Cambodia. His work has been exhibited in Phnom Penh, Jakarta, Bangkok, Singapore, New York, Berlin and other cities. He is a founding member of the artist collective Stiev Selapak / Art Rebels and exhibition spaces Sa Sa Art Gallery, SA SA BASSAC and Sa Sa Art Projects.

Phan Thao-Nguyen (b. 1987, Vietnam) uses painting, installation, video and performance to explore tropes of social conventions, history and tradition in contemporary society. A graduate in painting and drawing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, she has exhibited widely in Asia. A 2016-2017 Rolex Protégée, she was mentored by artist Joan Jonas. Phan is also part of the collective Art Labor, which explores cross-disciplinary practices and develops art projects that benefit the local community.

Sarker Protick (b. 1986, Bangladesh) makes work that explores the possibilities of time, light and sound. His portraits, landscapes and photographic series engage philosophically with the specificities of personal and national histories. His work has been exhibited in London, New York, Paris, Germany, South Korea, and Dubai, among other places. A recipient of the 2015 World Press Photo Award and the 2017 Australian Photobook of the Year grand prize, he is also a faculty member at Pathshala–South Asian Media Institute.

Sim Chi Yin (b. 1978, Singapore) focuses on history, memory and migration through the mediums of photography and new media. A Nobel Peace Prize photographer for 2017, she has exhibited at the Istanbul Biennale, Photoville New York, Objectifs Singapore and the Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art South Korea, among other venues. She does commissioned works for publications including the *New York Times Magazine*, *Time*, and *Harpers*. A finalist for the 2013 W. Eugene Smith Grant in Humanistic Photography, she was awarded a Magnum Foundation Photography and Human Rights fellowship in 2010.

UuDam Tran Nguyen (b. 1971, Vietnam) works with new media, performance, photography and sculpture to reflect on contemporary life at a time of globalisation. He has exhibited at the National Art Centre and Mori Art Museum (2017) and the Aichi Triennale, Japan (2016); the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial, Australia (2015); Bildmuseet Museum, Sweden (2015); and the 4th Singapore Biennale (2013), amongst others. He was also a recipient of the Jury Selection Prize at the 18th Japan Media Arts Festival (2015).

Curator Sam I-shan is a producer with Esplanade Visual Arts, focusing on artist commissions and the mediums of the moving image and photography.





19 JAN – 8 APR 2018

# Subliminal City

UuDam Tran Nguyen (Vietnam) and Lim Sokchanlina (Cambodia)  
**Esplanade Concourse and Tunnel**

Extending across the Esplanade Tunnel and Concourse, the works in this exhibition draw upon familiar elements of the city, including vehicles, streetscapes, buildings, and public spaces. Lim Sokchanlina's video installation and photographic series *Urban Street Night Club*, *Wrapped Future*, and *National Road Number 5* take as its subjects the often-overlooked fences and hoardings of building sites, and memorialise the demolished sites and affected buildings left in the wake of construction projects in Phnom Penh.

*Serpent's Tails*, UuDam Tran Nguyen's three-channel video and large-scale sculptural installation is inspired by the motorcycle, the most prevalent form of transportation in contemporary Vietnam. A vehicle essential for daily living and driver of economic growth, it also causes city congestion and environmental pollution. Exploring the effects of urban development and social change in mainland Southeast Asia, Lim and Nguyen's works express the tensions and transformations that arise from rapid population and physical growth, as well as burgeoning economic ambitions coupled with societal inequity.

# Lim Sokchanlina

## *Urban Street Night Club*

2013

Single-channel video installation, sound, colour

Duration: 16:16 mins

## *National Road Number 5*

2015

Digital C-print

90 x 60 cm (each)

## *Wrapped Future*

2009 - ongoing

Digital C-print

110 cm x 70 cm (each)

Lim Sokchanlina presents three series that relate to his ongoing interest in the visual language and symbolic expressiveness of barriers, borders and routes in the context of a rapidly developing Cambodia. World Bank data for 2016 placed Cambodia's urban residents at 21 percent of the entire country's population, with urban areas expanding by about 5 percent yearly. The official borders of the capital city Phnom Penh are extending to include new communes and villages, with the population tipped to reach three million by 2018.

Observing the increasing scale of construction and demolition in Phnom Penh, Lim has been photographing building site fences all over the city since 2009. The head-on framing and intense sunlight of *Wrapped Future* make the barriers, streets and sky seem like a series of flat, variegated colour fields, given texture by the posters, graffiti, dirt, and damage on their surface, and the few structures behind that hint at their setting. The humble, temporary fence thus becomes a symbol of rapid cycles of change in the headlong rush for growth and gain. The title of each work provides coded information about each contentious site, evoking issues such as the loss of cultural heritage and the consequences of unregulated zoning. One image shows the previous location of iconic Cambodian architect Vann Molyvann's 1968 Preah Suramarit Theatre, now razed and slated for development. Visible on another fence are advertisements for developments on the entertainment, retail and luxury residential district Diamond Island, previously home to fishing villagers, some of whom had been forcibly evicted with no compensation.

The installation *Urban Street Night Club* continues this theme, with a facsimile of a typical flat-side metal fence, complete with support structure, assembled in the Tunnel. Projected on it is a single-channel video featuring stretches of fencing covered by advertisements that depict ancient temples of Angkor, tropical flowers, beaches and waterfalls. Made at an entertainment district near Phnom Penh's largest casino,

the video depicts the hum and buzz of evening street life, as people and vehicles pass up and down under the glow of neon lights. Juxtaposing multiple layers of reality, the installation captures the vividness of the city, while pointing to the contradictions between the idealised, post-card-like imagery featured on the barricades, and the tawdrier realities of daily existence.

A route that connects Phnom Penh to the borders of Thailand, *National Road Number 5* has been undergoing steady government development with the support of foreign investment, in line with ambitions to make it the "ASEAN highway" connecting key regions in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. The expansion of the road has a direct effect on the houses and business lining the highway, inching up to their frontage, necessitating their demolition, and in some cases, slicing up the buildings. Lim's eponymous series, created over the space of three months in 2015, captures an evocative sequence of half-houses and temporary construction that arose in response to the highway's relentless incursion. Each frame of his typological presentation captures the fleeting hybridity of detail present in places where the rural, urban, local and international collide with one another.



*Urban Street Night Club*, Lim Sokchanlina, 2013

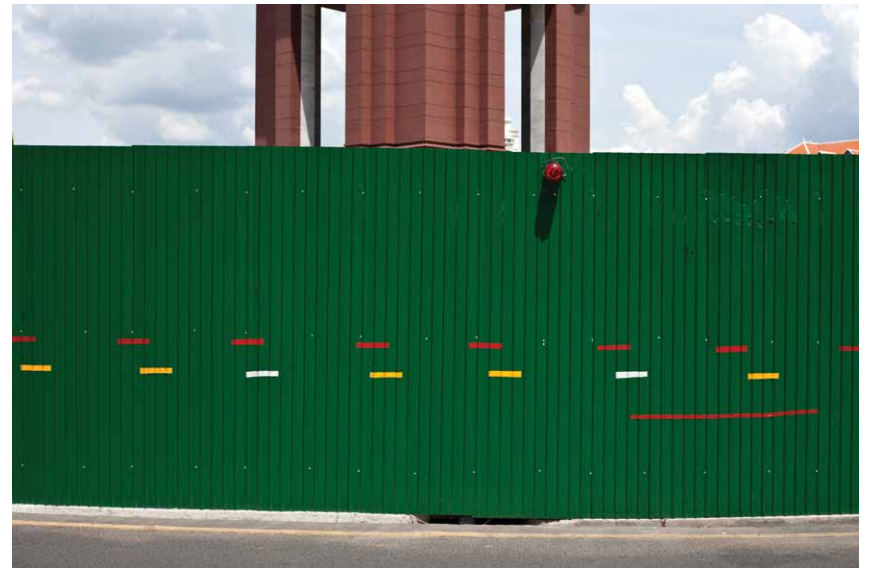




National Road Number 5, Lim Sokchanlina, 2015



National Road Number 5, Lim Sokchanlina, 2015



Wrapped Future, Lim Sokchanlina, 2009-ongoing



# UuDam Tran Nguyen

*Serpent's Tails*  
2015-17

Esplanade Tunnel:  
Three-channel HD video installation, 16:9, sound, colour  
Duration: 18:30 mins

Esplanade Concourse:  
Mixed media installation, dimensions variable

UuDam Tran Nguyen's videos reflect the ways that urban and rural landscapes in contemporary Vietnam have been transformed by dramatic economic and industrial development. The motorcycle is one of the most prevalent forms of transportation in the country, with more than 45 million registered in a population of 92 million. This humble vehicle is critical to people's daily routines, with thousands of them carrying all manner of people, goods and objects as they weave in and out of large roads and small lanes in a chaotically choreographed dance at all hours of the day. While they cause congestion and contribute to the toxicity of the environment, motorcycles are also symbols of inventiveness, entrepreneurial drive and upward mobility.

Capturing this complex struggle, the three-channel video *Serpent's Tails* in the Tunnel features dancers and motorcycle riders performing solo, *pas de deux* or group movements with plastic sculptures in different settings around Saigon, inflating the forms through their gestures but also with the exhaust air produced by these vehicles. The city and its spaces, marked by colonial, post-war and contemporary architecture, provide richly specific visual settings for the syncretic amalgamation of myths that Nguyen is inspired by. These include the Hindu narrative of the battle between gods and demons known as "the churning of the ocean of milk", the Greek and Roman tale of the serpents that attacked the Trojan priest Laocoön, and the battle gear of cavalry soldiers, evoked by the motorcyclists' garb of colourful helmets, face masks, and neck-to-ankle garments that protect their bodies from the elements as they charge forth on their vehicles toward an unknown future.



Film still from *Serpent's Tails*, UuDam Tran Nguyen, 2015



Film still from *Serpent's Tails*, UuDam Tran Nguyen, 2015



Film still from *Serpents' Tails*, UuDam Tran Nguyen, 2015

The work continues at the Concourse, with Nguyen's site-specific installation vibrantly manifesting the objects, imagery and performances presented in the *Serpent's Tails* video. The installation features the same inflatable sculptures in shapes that evoke tubes, tunnels, imaginary creatures and objects of daily use, as well as an assortment of real engines and mufflers that blow air into them, making the entire work move and breathe like a living thing. These sinuous shapes are visually akin to the dynamic trails of the daily journeys people take through the city, with their sprawl also suggesting the fast-paced, unevenly expressed nature of development in the region's growing urban centres.

Both the video and the installation draw upon the imagery of familiar objects like roads, vehicles, barriers, buildings and other mundane aspects of the urban fabric, but endowing them with anthropomorphic qualities, or transmuting them into entities whose meaning and function change depending on how subjects respond to them. At once contemplative and exhilarating, this work depicts the surging aspirations of a city's people, and suggests the multifaceted consequences of rapid physical growth and social change.

*Serpent's Tails* was supported in part by Honda Motor Co., Ltd. and Boon Siew Singapore Pte Ltd.





19 JAN – 1 APR 2018

# Relics

Phan Thao-Nguyen (Vietnam), Sarker Protick (Bangladesh),  
Sim Chi Yin (Singapore)

Jendela (Visual Arts Space)

The works in this exhibition engage with the colonial legacies and independence narratives of the region to draw attention to obscured histories and landscapes, while imagining alternatives to accepted truths.

Sarker Protick has been exploring and photographing regions that witnessed extensive migration of minority populations after the 1947 partition of India and the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. His series *Exodus* focuses on the little-documented districts abandoned during that time by Hindu landlords who left East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh), in part due to the confiscation of their properties via controversial land acts. These derelict, once-monumental feudal buildings have now been taken over by nature and enveloped into the daily life of the villages that surround them.

Inspired by her family history, Sim Chi Yin's research and photographic project *One Day We'll Understand* explores an aspect of the Cold War in Southeast Asia that is rarely spoken of. Seeking out stories behind the 1948-60 guerrilla war against the British in the Federation of Malaya, that emerged in part from anti-Japanese resistance during World War II, Sim travelled to China, Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia to interview and photograph people from her grandfather's generation, together with their treasured personal effects and the landscapes they remember.

Phan Thao-Nguyen's video installation, *Tropical Siesta*, and painting series, *Education of a Poet*, are set in the Vietnamese countryside and loosely inspired by tales from the 1651 text *History of the Kingdom of Tonkin* by French Jesuit missionary and father of romanised Vietnamese script, Alexandre de Rhodes. The children in the work are depicted as autodidacts who solemnly perform re-invented narratives with objects from Phan's richly imaginative visual iconography. Untethered from the strictures of historical legacy, their actions suggest how the authority of received wisdom might be disrupted by the possibilities of free play.



## Sim Chi Yin

*One Day We'll Understand*

2017

Photographic installation, variable dimensions

Two-channel video installation, 16:9, sound, colour

Duration: 5:00 mins

In Sim Chi Yin's family, the story of her grandfather has always been unspoken. One of tens of thousands of leftists deported to China by the British during the Malayan Emergency (1948 – 60), he died there at the hands of the anti-Communist Kuomintang soldiers in 1949, shortly before their surrender to the Communists in the Chinese Civil War. His story is the starting point for her ongoing project *One Day We'll Understand*, an exploration of this insurgency against the British in Malaya immediately after the Second World War.

Emergency rule was declared in June 1948 following violent acts by guerrillas from the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA), the armed wing of the Malayan Communist Party. The MNLA had emerged out of the leading anti-Japanese resistance group active during the 1941 – 45 Japanese occupation of Malaya, and had even received training and support from the British army. In 1948, however, the MNLA turned to guerrilla warfare against British-led forces amidst a confluence of factors, including labour unrest in the face of a failing post-war economy, ethnic tensions, and objection to the terms of the Federation created that same year.

The various ways that the Emergency has been historicised is instructive: in conventional readings of the Cold War in Southeast Asia, it is held up as a textbook example of a successful counterinsurgency campaign by the British and Malayan governments, particularly when contrasted against American efforts in Vietnam from the 1950s to the 1970s. This commitment to and commemoration of the Emergency is unsurprising considering the economic importance of Malayan tin and rubber to Britain, and the waning influence of empire in a decolonising world. At the same time, historians have also detailed controversial measures deployed by the authorities against the fighters—dubbed bandits and Communist Terrorists—and whole populaces around them. These include forced mass resettlement, large-scale detention and deportations, and emergency regulations that have to this day been partly retained as legislation. Seemingly abstract policies, these had long-lasting repercussions on the individuals and communities involved, as can be seen in Sim's own family history.



*One Day We'll Understand*, Sim Chi Yin, 2017



*One Day We'll Understand*, Sim Chi Yin, 2017



*One Day We'll Understand*, Sim Chi Yin, 2017

Seeking to uncover and visually express these personal stories and under-represented perspectives before these individuals passed away, Sim travelled to China, Hong Kong, northern Malaysia and southern Thailand to interview and photograph them in person, together with some of the belongings they kept from that period. Her portraits are forthright, and images of their artefacts unembellished, as if to make transparent the primary sources of her research and let these bodies and belongings speak their own experience amidst the sweep of human history. Offering other ways of accessing memory, her project suggests that the empirical purity of history is not feasible and that there are no singular gatekeepers to the past.

Communism in Southeast Asia continues to be a controversial and somewhat repressed topic today, due to the complex ways it intersects with independence movements and nationalist histories across the region. The guerillas of the Emergency who fought occupying and colonial powers under its aegis represent the incipient strands of this diverse and divergent movement, which is yet to be fully analysed or represented in the present day. In their own ways, they acted on their aims and beliefs in the name of their struggle, but in the end, it is the victors who inscribe history.

*One Day We'll Understand* was supported in part by the Asia Society's Chinafile project, New York, Docking Station, Amsterdam, the Ee Hoe Hean Club, Singapore, and the International Women's Media Foundation, Washington DC, USA.



# Sarker Protick

## Exodus

“Disintegration” and “Elegy to Empire”

2015 - ongoing

Photographic installation, variable dimensions

“Arrival”

2018

Single-channel video, 16:9, black and white

Sound: Pump organ and ambience

Duration: 8:00 mins

Sarker Protick explores questions of time and space in photography. His work ranges from experiments with light, shadow and luminosity, to documentary work engaging with the complex history and geographical diversity of Bangladesh and the wider Bengal region.

Since 2015, Sarker has been exploring and photographing abandoned feudal estates and decaying buildings previously owned by Hindu *zamindars* (land owners) or landlords. The changing relationship between the land, its rulers and subjects as reflected in these regions is also a story of Bengal's history: from the 1500s onward, the Mughal Empire established a system of apportioning tracts of land for the purposes of revenue collection, with the Muslim authorities receiving tax tributaries from conquered Hindu rajas. When British colonisers took over Bengal in the late 1700s, they entrenched this feudal structure with the Permanent Settlement, a system intended to extract large shares of revenue for the East India Company, while creating a small class of landed local aristocrats loyal to the British. It resulted, however, in the disenfranchisement of rural tenants, rifts between Muslim villagers and Hindu minority landlords, as well as unintended land speculation.



Exodus, Sarker Protick, 2015-ongoing



Exodus, Sarker Protick, 2015-ongoing

Following the 1949 partition of India, Bengal was split, with predominantly Hindu West Bengal going to India, and predominantly Muslim East Bengal going to Pakistan. Renamed East Pakistan, East Bengal was to become the independent nation of Bangladesh following the Liberation War of 1971. Amidst the chaos of decolonisation and new nationhood, huge migrations were taking place: Hindus were leaving East Bengal for India, and in the same way, Muslims departed West Bengal. The wealthiest and most well-connected—including landlords and large business owners—were the first to leave upon the loss of their political and social power. At the same time, a series of controversial laws dating from 1948, culminating in the Vested Property Act of 1974, allowed the confiscation of property from any groups declared “enemies of the state”. This led to the appropriation of many feudal properties and tracts of agricultural land that had belonged in the same family for generations, further spurring the departure of the *zamindars*. Sarker's series, *Exodus*, focuses on what remains of these abandoned landscapes and little-documented buildings, many of which have been taken over by nature and gradually enveloped into the daily life of the surrounding villages.



Exodus, Sarker Protick, 2015-ongoing



Exodus, Sarker Protick, 2015-ongoing

While contextualised by the events of the region, the work reflects broader philosophical ideas about the scale, directionality and universality of time. The section titled *Disintegration* features buildings and structures broken apart by the elements and enshrouded by tropical foliage. Despite the incompleteness of their forms, the architecture's classical symmetry invites the eye to naturally trace lines where arches, columns and walls were once whole. Hybrid in their design and setting, they visualise specific ways that colonial and independence histories have marked the country, reflecting how the rise and fall of dominions can be read in the transformation of physical structures.



Exodus, Sarker Protick, 2015-ongoing



Exodus, Sarker Protick, 2015-ongoing

In the video work *Arrival*, set in the remains of a feudal palace as well as the first railway station in East Bengal, a traveller appears to return to his old home from places unknown. However, doubt is cast on the possibility of a journey by repeated imagery of dismantled railway tracks lying in mounds and the melancholic sound of a hand organ playing in a minor key, serving as both summoning and dirge. The primary movement in the frames is mist, smoke, natural objects blown by the wind, or the slow progress of remote figures walking in the distance. It is the stillness of the traveller that anchors the work, suggesting that the search for lost time is also an interior, psychical one.

The section called *Elegy to Empire* features portraits and vignettes of rural life with a series of triptychs and diptychs laid out in a grid, with fields of view that move between wide vistas of land and sky, to intimate close-ups of minute detail and texture. Seemingly distinct aspects and occupants of these landscapes are united by affinities of form, shape and gesture, creating a visual rhythm in space that bridges regional specificities: a leaning line of a tree finds an echo in a cracked wall, a woman's pose resembles a curled shell, and a small pile of 150 year-old books lies as dormant as earth beneath moss.

As they progress from left to right, these works also move from light to dark. Sarker's approach to making the work was a combination of the long exposures he is known for, and a methodical revisiting and photographing at very specific times of the day and in the year. This introduces another experience of time different from historical time, one that belongs instead to the cycles of the natural world, and includes the diurnal movement of day to night, and the rotation of seasons as they relate to agriculture. Such notions of cyclical time are shared and mythologised by many cultures, and suggests both the inexorable loss of time passing, but also the possibilities presented by a kind of time that begins to end and ends to begin.



Exodus, Sarker Protick, 2015-ongoing



## Phan Thao-Nguyen

*Tropical Siesta*

2017

Two-channel HD video installation, 16:9, sound, colour

Duration: 13:45 mins

*Education of a Poet*

2014 - ongoing

Watercolour on paper, variable dimensions

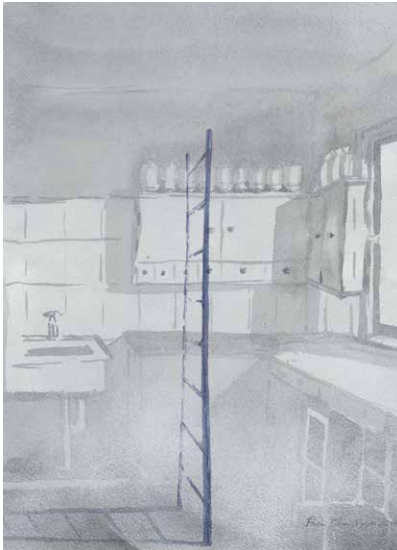
Phan Thao-Nguyen's two-channel video installation *Tropical Siesta* is loosely based on accounts from two works by Alexandre de Rhodes: *History of the Kingdom of Tonkin* (1650) and *Rhodes of Viet Nam: The Travels and Missions of Father Alexandre de Rhodes in China and other Kingdoms of the Orient* (1653). Set in "Vietnam. The Present", *Tropical Siesta* postulates a state where agriculture is central and people live in self-sufficient farming and fishing communes. The main protagonists are children who, in the absence of adults, have invented their own curriculum based on stories from the Rhodes texts, representing them through play and performance. Re-enacting stories titled *About Crime and Punishment*, *The Water Goddess* and another tale about a young Vietnamese martyr, the children perform these and other make-believe lives, with tools and toys such as bamboo ladders, twig whistles and chalk, amidst the rural setting of a village school and rice fields, and natural landscapes of hills, gullies, and rivers.

Alexandre de Rhodes was a French Jesuit priest who travelled and proselytised in and around what is known as present-day Vietnam between 1620 and 1646. Although the works he authored were part of the earliest wave of European publications about life in the Indochina region, he is best known for his contribution to the creation of romanised Vietnamese script, or *quốc ngữ*, codifying it in his Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin dictionary *Dictionarium Annamiticum Lusitanum et Latinum*, published in Rome in 1651. The choice of Rhodes as source text is intriguing for the way the stories of its time offer parallels to other more recent moments in Vietnamese history: in the 1600s, the territory was divided between the Trinh lords of the north and the Nguyen lords of the south and centre. In 1627, war broke out between the two dynasties and lasted till 1673. At the same time, Indochina and Europe were engaging in trade and commerce, but also creating systems of knowledge through cartography, published accounts and discourses, and cultural and artistic exchanges, with movements of information and influence flowing in both directions. French colonialism was to come later, by the 1880s. In this broad view of time, ascent and decline, or division and unification are but part of the cycle of historical change.



Film stills from *Tropical Siesta*, Phan Thao-Nguyen, 2017





The Bauhaus Kitchen, Phan Thao-Nguyen, 2017

While *Tropical Siesta* is seemingly located in the present day of a country we seem to know, the parameters set by its narrative are not completely familiar, and the world it depicts is not wholly dystopic, utopic, or fabulist, but contains elements of each. This strange confluence of times is a strategy of typical dystopic fictions where the narrative might speculate a kind of future as a way to critically examine the present. *Tropical Siesta*, however, is hardly a straightforward “future history”. Inspired by parochial sources from the past, contextualised with actual historical events, and leavened with imaginative elements drawn from cultural myth and the artist’s rich personal lore, the work invites the viewer to actively engage with these complex temporal fragments to reconstruct, infer and predict.

An imagined future always requires the presence of a mutable past. In these works, history is inseparable from notions of progress, particularly as it relates to economic development and educational opportunity. The paintings from the series *Education of a Poet* are part of Phan’s ongoing exploration of philosophical and systemic approaches to education and belief, through the medium of painting and sculpture. In this iteration, she presents 11 new watercolours, some related to scenes and iconography from *Tropical Siesta*, and others that visualise different aspects of modernity, that feature the ladder as symbol and protagonist. In the video, the ladder was cast as a tool of discipline, one which people were compelled to carry as a burden, or to follow the harsh logic of its line. In these paintings, however, its elevation and forward thrust are emphasised, and it appears in a Bauhaus setting, becomes part of a Becher typology or is positioned in a mechanised landscape of coal and hydropower. An everyday object prevalent on the streets of cities and towns all across the country, the ladder is, for Phan, a symbol of the rapid modernisation of Vietnam.

If we draw a trajectory from the collectivism in *Tropical Siesta* to the ascendant growth represented by the *Education of a Poet*’s symbolic ladder, we might read the story of contemporary Vietnam’s economic miracle. However, the gaps, fissures and imaginative detours in the works also allow us to ponder the unspoken costs behind the extensive reforms and dramatic social transformation that have taken place in the last 70 years. Untethered from the strictures of historical legacy, the tales and events in these works are at once a personal vision of the country’s complex histories and as-yet evolving future, but also a space where one might imagine ways the present might otherwise be.



Phan Thao-Nguyen 2017

Boy Sitting on Mirror The Crossbow No. 02, Phan Thao-Nguyen, 2017



8 JAN – 8 APR 2018

# Museum of Modern Sympathy

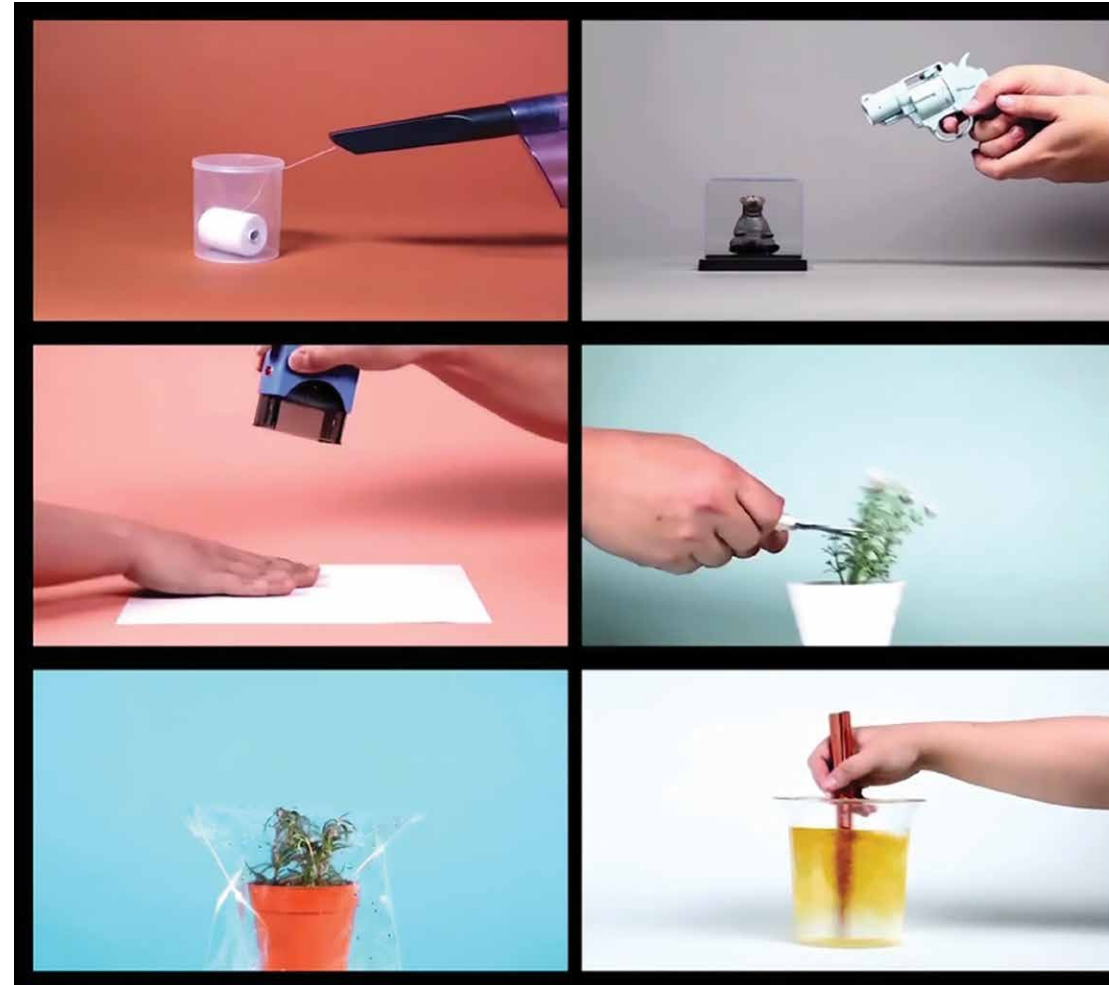
Kevin Fee (Singapore)

Community Wall

The elusive emotion of sympathy is a feeling of concern for another person based on the perception of shared resemblances, rather than shared distress. The three works in this exhibition respectively expand upon this notion using objects and evoking relationships that might arise from them.

*Misfortunes of the Inanimate* is a photographic archive of insentient things caught in unfortunate situations, prompting an anthropomorphic response to their plight. *One Minute Sympathy* is a CD featuring an artificial voice generator reciting conventional expressions of support, which might be used to self-soothe, or show concern on social media. In the video installation *To Live and Let Live*, conflicting actions are performed on everyday items like home and office appliances or natural and edible objects, thereby exploring ideas of opposing forces and the need for harmony, compromise and assimilation.

Fee's dryly humorous displacement of subtle human emotions onto objects and mechanisms prompts viewers to reassess the ways that identification and relationality exist between individuals in a society regulated by the burden of social and cultural expectations.



Film still from *To Live and Let Live*, Kevin Fee, 2016



Misfortunes of the Inanimate, Kevin Fee, 2017

Misfortunes of the Inanimate, Kevin Fee, 2017



# Public Programmes

Join the artists of *The Life of Things* as they speak about their work and practice in this series of talks, moderated by curator Sam I-shan.

**Artist Talk by UuDam Tran Nguyen (Vietnam)**  
**for *Subliminal City***  
 20 Jan 2018, Sat  
 11am – 12pm  
 Jendela (Visual Arts Space)

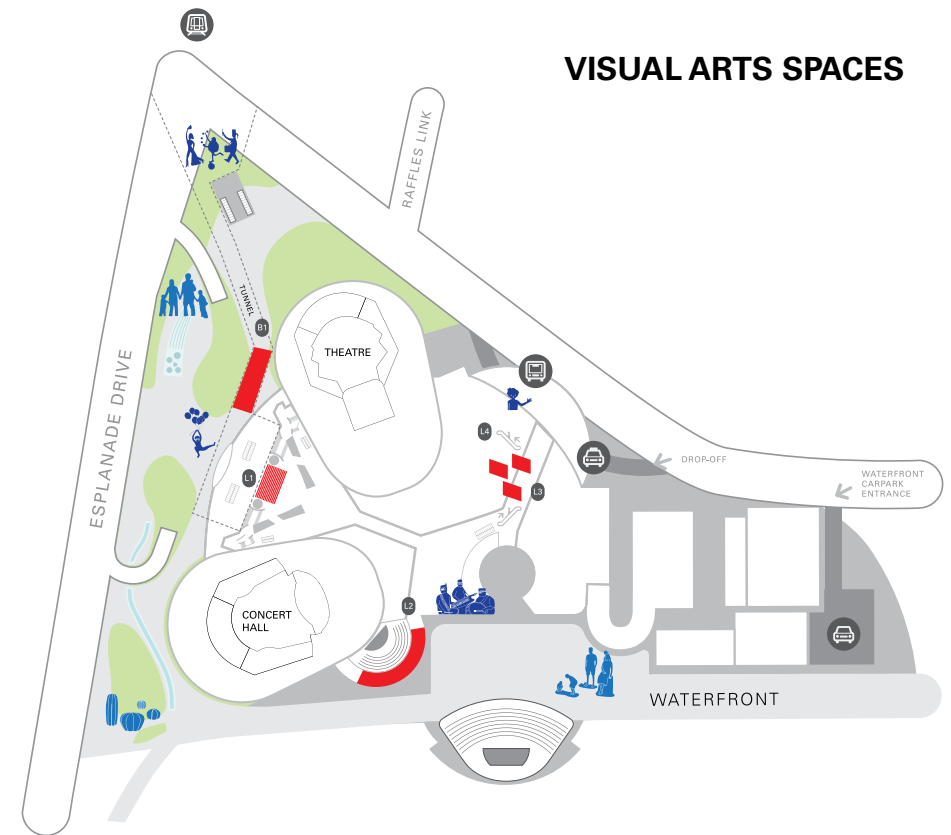
**Artist Talk by Lim Sokchanlina (Cambodia)**  
**for *Subliminal City***  
 20 Jan 2018, Sat  
 12 – 1pm  
 Jendela (Visual Arts Space)

**Artist Talk by Sarker Protick (Bangladesh)**  
**for *Relics***  
 20 Jan 2018, Sat  
 2 – 3pm  
 Jendela (Visual Arts Space)

**Artist Talk by Sim Chi Yin (Singapore)**  
**for *Relics***  
 20 Jan 2018, Sat  
 3 – 4pm  
 Jendela (Visual Arts Space)

# Acknowledgements

Amdadul Huq	Md. Shamsul Arifin
Do Ha Hoai	Nguyen Anh Giang
Elliott Koon	NTU Centre for Contemporary Art
Hasnoor Hussain	Pha Lina
Koh Aun Qi	SA SA BASSAC
Khaled Mahmood	Yap Jia En
Law Siak Hong	Zoe Butt



## VISUAL ARTS SPACES

### PUBLIC ART

#### OUTDOOR

**Happy Family of Five**  
 Chua Boon Kee  
 Forecourt Garden

**Makan Angin**  
 Lim Soo Ngee  
 Waterfront

**Seeds**  
 Han Sai Por  
 Waterfront

#### INDOOR

**Jamboree**  
 Charmumu & Mrydette  
 Tunnel, B1

**The Gathering**  
 Christine Lim  
 M Level

**Come Together**  
 Speak Cryptic  
 Recital Studio, Level 2

**Baby Bubble**  
 Iwan Effendi  
 Level 4

### EXHIBITION SPACES

TUNNEL  
 B1

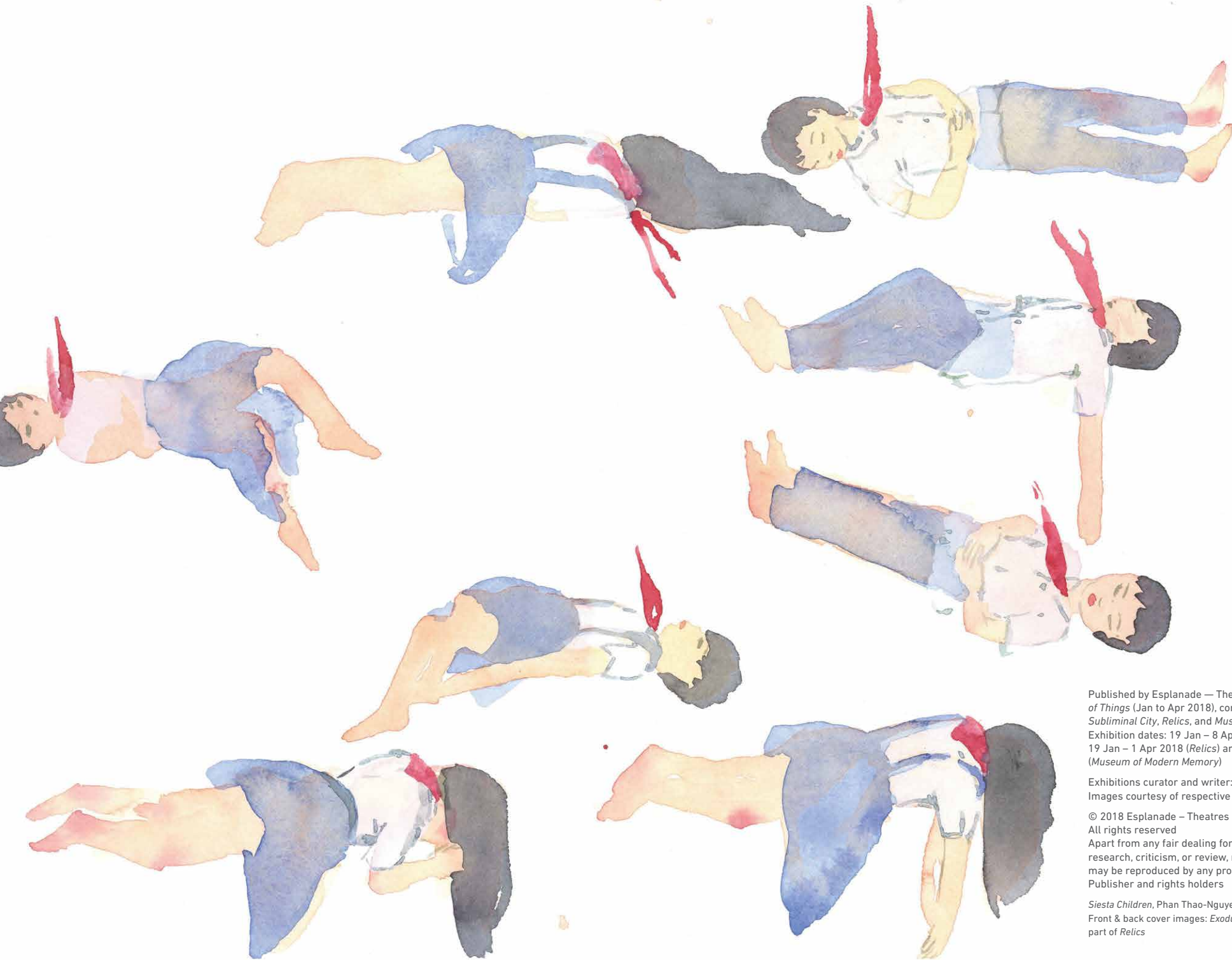
CONCOURSE  
 LEVEL 1

JENDELA  
 (VISUAL ARTS SPACE)

COMMUNITY WALL  
 LEVEL 3

LEVEL 2,  
 ESPLANADE MALL

**Opening hours**  
 Mon – Fri, 11am – 8.30pm  
 Sat, Sun and Public Holidays  
 10am – 8.30pm



Published by Esplanade — Theatres on the Bay for *The Life of Things* (Jan to Apr 2018), consisting of the exhibitions *Subliminal City, Relics*, and *Museum of Modern Memory*  
Exhibition dates: 19 Jan – 8 Apr 2018 (*Subliminal City*), 19 Jan – 1 Apr 2018 (*Relics*) and 8 Jan – 8 Apr 2018 (*Museum of Modern Memory*)

Exhibitions curator and writer: Sam I-shan  
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*Siesta Children*, Phan Thao-Nguyen, 2017, part of *Relics*  
Front & back cover images: *Exodus*, Sarker Protick, 2015-ongoing, part of *Relics*