



PRESS RELEASE

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From personal photo collection to exhibition: NUS Museum's latest showcase features visual narratives by 9 members of the NUS community

Singapore, 15 August 2023 – The National University of Singapore Museum (NUS Museum) will be unveiling a new showcase of visual narratives created by NUS students and alumni. Titled *Photography Journal Open Call (PJOC)*, the exhibition is set to open its doors on 16 August, and will present an eclectic collection of photographic works by nine NUS students, alumni artists and academic staff. Diverse in their approaches and intentions, these artists employ photography as a tool for conducting research that complements their respective academic and professional fields and as a medium for their own artistic experimentation.

"We are delighted to present this unique exhibition which features a collection of photographic works produced by talents that thrive within our university community - our very own students, alumni and academic staff. The exhibition demonstrates how photography can be a useful tool to support and enrich our research and work. NUS Museum seeks to provide a safe space for the NUS community to express their experiences, stories and even issues that they are most passionate about in a creative and meaningful way," said Ahmad Mashadi, Head of NUS Museum.

"These works are more than just images; they are windows into the diverse perspectives and passions that contribute meaningfully to conversations at the museum and our efforts for interdisciplinary learning on campus. Our hope is that this exhibition will inspire our students, faculty, staff, and all visitors to be more actively involved in our programmes and works housed within NUS Museum."

Open call and selection process

The works were curated from a pool of 27 submissions from participants hailing from various disciplines across NUS, during an open call period spanning from July to October 2022. A rigorous selection was held in December 2022, led by a panel of experts comprising industry professionals and academic experts including Lim Yaohui, executive photojournalist at The Straits Times and NUS alumni; Associate Professor Hans Tan, Deputy Head of the Division of Industrial Design at NUS College of Design and Engineering (CDE); Assistant Professor Simone Chung from the Department of Architecture at NUS CDE; and Siddharta Perez, Curator at NUS Museum.

Of the 27 submissions, nine proposals stood out and were eventually selected for the exhibition:

1. *Ephemeral Underground* by Cara Chiang, Year 2 student, NUS Faculty of Law
2. *Archiving Attentiveness* by Dan N. Tran, Year 4 student, NUS School of Computing
3. *Malignant Landscapes* by Dave Lim, visual artist, filmmaker and alumnus of Yale-NUS College (2019)
4. *Series C* by Ethan Zhang, Year 1 student, NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Science
5. *Warp & Weft* by Jonathan Tan, photographer and alumnus of NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (2019)
6. *Chromatic* by Lee Chang Ming, artist and alumnus of NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (2017)
7. *Sorry for the Inconvenience* by Ong Chan Hao, photographer, researcher, designer and alumnus of NUS College of Design and Engineering (2021)
8. *Psychiatric Space* by Peter Szto, Fulbright Distinguished Chair of the Social Sciences at NUS and visiting academic at the Faculty of Arts and Social Science's Department of Social Work in 2022
9. *Pinhole Cameras* by Sroyon Mukherjee, Research Fellow, Asia-Pacific Centre for Environmental Law (APCEL)

Viewing social work and mental health through different lenses

Psychiatric Space by Peter Szto delves into psychiatric environments with the aim of challenging stigmatized perceptions surrounding psychiatric care. A Fulbright Distinguished Chair of the Social Sciences in 2022, Szto is currently a Professor of Social Work at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and has been using documentary photography as a tool for conducting social welfare research.

Szto's images were compiled from his professional research and teaching endeavours, including depictions of rooms and fixtures of healthcare facilities in their transitional states, prompting inquiries into the influence of culture on discussions and perceptions surrounding mental health. *Psychiatric Space* also provides a valuable perspective on the use of photography as a medium for education, reflection, communication, and conversation, underscoring the power of visual storytelling in fostering understanding and empathy.

"Understanding how our minds perceive and interpret the social world is paramount in the field of social work. As a social worker, I rely on both ways of 'seeing' to validate hypotheses and generate reliable forms of knowledge. This insight not only informs my professional practice but allows me to connect more effectively with my clients and contribute to the promotion of social well-being," shared Szto on how photography aids his work.



Presented in a slideshow format, Psychiatric Spaces by Peter Szto provides insights that will question the viewers' perception and interpretation of mental health concepts.

Ephemeral beauty and vulnerability

Cara Chiang, a second-year student at NUS Law, saw PJOC as an opportunity to share her own artistic exploration in photography, delving into her personal collection of candid and unfiltered pictures taken with a disposable Kodak film camera. Describing her approach as “seeking beauty in vulnerability”, her photos capture the authentic, raw and fleeting moments of nights out with her friends, encouraging viewers to appreciate such transitory moments in life.

“By consciously abstaining from post-processing, I aim to preserve the purity and authenticity of each captured moment. This approach preserves the imperfections and nuanced details, giving distinctive character to each photograph. In a world inundated with filtered images and carefully curated narratives, these photographs offer a candid and genuine perspective,” shared Chiang.



To add intrigue to the series and reflect the spontaneity of the creative process, Cara Chiang shot her collection of photos titled Ephemeral Underground on a 35mm Kodak 400 film.

Considering sustainability through a pinhole

Taking a different approach from the other artists, Sroyon Mukherjee created a set of pinhole cameras made of common household waste materials such as cardboard boxes, biscuit tins and beer cans, and experimented with producing images using them. As an environmentalist and environmental law researcher, Mukherjee is concerned with the accumulation of e-waste and the socio-ecological challenges it brings from camera production processes and electrical storage of photos/videos.

“While these cameras cannot fully replace traditional ones, they serve as a poignant reminder of the environmental repercussions associated with photography. They prompt us to contemplate our individual actions and consider how we can personally contribute to alleviating the impact on the environment,” shared Mukherjee.



Pictured above, the Pinhole Cameras by Sroyon Mukherjee will produce images by capturing the activity within the gallery and experimenting with time and exposure throughout the exhibition.

“Each contributor’s photographic exploration delves deep into their own unique interests and field of work, so visitors can expect a captivating visual journey that will shed light on various stories, experiences and issues close to the hearts of these artists,” said Nur Wardah Mohamed, PJOC’s Project Curator.

“Staging PJOC was one of the ways for us to actively engage with the NUS community beyond being a space for observation and supporting research and lessons on campus. With photography being a readily-accessible medium for people of all backgrounds and skill level, it is the perfect starting point for this journey. Whether participants are seasoned photographers or simply curious enthusiasts, they can explore and contribute to the vibrant tapestry of visual storytelling and open conversations at the museum.”

Located at the Concourse Level of NUS Museum, the exhibition will be open and free for public viewing from 17 August to 31 December. For more information on the exhibition and featured participants, please visit museum.nus.edu.sg/whats-on/pjoc/.

[Click here to download the photographs.](#)

For media enquiries, please contact:

Nur Azzahra Binte Kamal (Ms)

Strategic Planning Unit (Marketing Communications)

NUS Libraries & NUS Museum

National University of Singapore

DID: +65 6516 6339

Email: azzahra@nus.edu.sg

About National University of Singapore (NUS)

The National University of Singapore (NUS) is Singapore's flagship university, which offers a global approach to education, research and entrepreneurship, with a focus on Asian perspectives and expertise. We have 17 faculties across three campuses in Singapore, with more than 40,000 students from 100 countries enriching our vibrant and diverse campus community. We have also established our NUS Overseas Colleges programme in more than 15 cities around the world.

Our multidisciplinary and real-world approach to education, research and entrepreneurship enables us to work closely with industry, governments and academia to address crucial and complex issues relevant to Asia and the world. Researchers in our faculties, 30 university-level research institutes, research centres of excellence and corporate labs focus on themes that include energy; environmental and urban sustainability; treatment and prevention of diseases; active ageing; advanced materials; risk management and resilience of financial systems; Asian studies; and Smart Nation capabilities such as artificial intelligence, data science, operations research and cybersecurity.

For more information on NUS, please visit www.nus.edu.sg

About NUS Museum

As a university museum, NUS Museum's mission is to actively facilitate intellectual and cultural life within and beyond the University. With a distinct focus on Asia, the Museum contributes to and facilitates the production, reception, and preservation of knowledge through collections development and curatorial practice.

The Museum is a cultural hub, developing partnerships within NUS, the culture and heritage industry, and the global knowledge community.

Located at the [University Cultural Centre](#), NUS Museum comprises nine galleries and additional ancillary spaces which host a wide range of [exhibitions](#), [module collaborations](#) and [supporting programmes](#) that contribute to the cultural and interdisciplinary conversation within NUS and beyond.