

For immediate release

Looking within: What makes an exhibition?

NUS Museum presents exhibition introspecting into curatorial impulses
and the exhibitionary medium



Gallery impression, "*There are too many episodes
of people coming here...*", NUS Museum, 2016

SINGAPORE, October 2016 – Assembling themes, excerpts and texts from recent exhibitions alongside installation and video works by artists Charles Lim, Dennis Tan and Zai Kuning, "*There are too many episodes of people coming here...*" is part of a continuing effort by NUS Museum to challenge local museological and curatorial practices and histories¹. The exhibition opens on 25 October 2016 with a film screening and panel discussion between artist Zai Kuning and art historian T.K. Sabapathy (**More information in Annex C**).

Featuring converging subjects and mediums, the exhibition introspects into how contexts have shaped the exhibitionary medium, the curatorial and its publics. Siddharta Perez, Assistant Curator, NUS Museum, shares, "To continue working with artists we've developed ties with and showing their work is concurrent to our practice of revisiting exhibitions that have been important to our development as an institution, both in curatorial thought and thematics. Engaging the role of context for us has meant suggesting such possible parallels as we move away from particular subjectivities and trajectories."

A project the exhibition returns to is ***In Search of Raffles' Light: An Art Project with Charles Lim*** (2013), in which Charles Lim, a former Olympic sailor turned filmmaker, began exploring the themes that have shaped much of his recent practice, including his presentation at the 2015 Venice Biennale's Singapore Pavilion. Alongside excerpts from 2013, the exhibition presents the Southeast

¹In the past two years, NUS Museum has been accoladed by the International Council of Museums for the 'prep-room', an exploratory and participatory initiative ([2016](#)); as well as presented an exhibition exploring the shifting balance of authorship in exhibition-making ([2015](#)). In collaboration with local institutions and practitioners, the museum also presented three iterations of [Curating Lab](#), a curatorial development programme, from 2009 to 2015.

Asian premieres of Lim's recent works ***Stealing the Trapeze*** (2016), a video work suggesting parallels between regional sailing history and Western competitive methods; and ***silent clap of the status quo*** (2016), presenting video footage of underwater sea cables. In alluding to an oft-unseen role in driving global networks of communications and capital, the work also foregrounds the transformation of the maritime environment. Lim shares, "The sea is often seen as this sublime space because of the impressions and images we see all the time. But when we consider how it has been corporatised, militarised and industrialised, it really is very much occupied, even divided."

While the projects comprising the exhibition deal broadly with similar mediums, images and methods, their convergence seeks to introduce new complexities. In particular, several works draw focus to the imaginings, practices and histories of seafaring communities in the region:

- ***Sails off Singapore*** (1958) is a rare colour film of colonial Singapore by Dr Ivan Polunin (1920-2010), presented courtesy of the Ivan Polunin Collection. Although commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation in the late 1950s, the film is incomplete without a soundtrack. Polunin, a British-born polymath and medical lecturer, is known for his exceptional personal archive of colour documentation of Singapore in the 1950s to 1970s.
- Both a visual and aural documentation of artist Zai Kuning's period of stay with the Orang Laut of the Riau islands, ***Riau*** (2003) delves into the intimacies of the community's dislocated histories. Part of the artist's larger project on the Riau archipelago, the film has been screened in various film festivals and biennales.
- ***Pujangga*** (2016) emerged out of artist Dennis Tan's stay with a Keban family in the Riau islands in 2015, when he learnt to build traditional Kolek sailboats. Working with the craftsmen and two original boats to produce the work, Tan examines self-organisation, the transmission of skills and knowledge and the nature of cultural continuities.

"*There are too many episodes of people coming here...*" is on display in the NX1 Gallery (Concourse Level) until 31 January 2017.

For more information about the exhibition, media interviews, gallery tours or high resolution images, please contact:

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[Annexes](#)

- Annex A: The exhibition
- Annex B: Featured artists
- Annex C: Upcoming programmes
- Annex D: List of artists, contributors and exhibitions
- Annex E: NUS Museum
- Annex F: NUS Centre For the Arts