

The Undiscovered Country

“The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns.”

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Act 3, Scene 1, 80-81)

“Death left its old tragic heaven and became the lyrical core of man: his invisible truth,
his visible secret.”

— Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*

Life is a series of cycles of inhalation and exhalation. It may be long, but it is never endless. There will be a time, when we will have only one breath left in our body, a last exhalation, which will not be followed by an inhalation, and which will therefore conclude our earthly journey.

All we know regarding death is that it is an inevitable universal event. Throughout human civilisation man has confronted this eventuality by cheating death, by being part of something eternal. But this has been laid bare by science and the age of enlightenment. Science has taken over our dying bodies and declared death as an enemy, the antithesis to its practice. We have become gradually fearful, closed off and unprepared for that which comes to us all. The presence of death is increasingly removed from our homes and our lives and we are no longer in touch with its inevitability. However much it is repeated, it is endlessly exorcised and we are increasingly disconnected from it.

The Undiscovered Country is a performance art event that addresses the pervasive unrest we experience today, as we become increasingly disconnected from the reality of our own mortality.

Artists Daniela Beltrani and Rajinder Singh has invited four fellow artists to a meditation on death and dying to examine the proximity of our life to death, shifting the perspective from life and death as opposing concepts to life and death as inextricably linked states of being.

The performances will explore the mindful and engaged encounters with death and dying while addressing the colonisation of the human body and its treatment by the promise of immortality and eternal salvation. In other performances, alternate artistic representations of death and dying become sites for opening ideas about life and living

e.g. the interconnectedness of all living and non-living things and what it means to our passing and how we are always already implicated within the ecological.

Artists

Daniela Beltrani

Ezzam Rahman

Isabelle Desjeux

Rajinder Singh (in collaboration with Tinu Verghis)

Sophia Natasha Wei

Tinu Verghis (in collaboration with Rajinder Singh)

Programme

There will be a daily meditation session on death (open to public, by registration, max 20 participants) led by Daniela Beltrani. All performances will be indoors and will be scheduled throughout the duration of ArtStage. No special requirements for the performances, apart from one projector. Each performance is recommended to last no more than one hour.

Bio

Daniela Beltrani (co-curator artist)

Daniela Beltrani (b. 1968, Rome, Italy) is an artist based in Singapore. In 2011 she attained her Master of Arts in Contemporary Asian Art Histories from LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore. She holds 500-hour yoga instructor, sound practitioner and mindfulness coach certificates. She is currently pursuing a graduate diploma in Applied Positive Psychology. Since 2010 Daniela has led solo and group exhibitions, and contributed articles for art publications, and catalogues with a focus on contemporary art in Southeast Asia, and performance art. She has presented over 90 performances, in the Philippines, Singapore, Italy, Myanmar, Cambodia, Turkey, Indonesia, Finland, China, Malaysia, India, and Mexico. Daniela is focused on promoting an understanding and appreciation of performance art as the most appropriate art form to facilitate a meaningful encounter between artist and audience. Her artistic practice extends to theory, photography, video, relics collection, and organising/attending events. Her latest series, *From Human Doing to Human Being*, intends to elicit an audience response from levels of consciousness beyond mind, intellect, and ego, with a view to recover our sense of true self, through actions of meditative quality, carried out mindfully, in repetition, stillness, silence, and/or non-verbal communication.

www.danielabeltrani.art

Rajinder Singh (co-curator artist)

Rajinder Singh (b. 1964, Ipoh, Malaysia) is an artist and researcher who holds an enduring interest in South Asian magico-religious belief systems and the shape and space that they deny us. His practice is dedicated to the vulnerability of the body and its pain, hidden behind the gestures and movements of worship and the grace of dance. Through his multifaceted practice Rajinder explores the variety of ways the human body unfolds at the intersections of the world of the otherworldly and the dynamics of global modernity.

Rajinder graduated with a PhD in Engineering (UK) in 1993 and a Master's in Fine Arts (Singapore) in 2010. His recent performances and exhibitions include WoundBloom (performance) Wei Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (2017); Cage of Deliverance, Wei Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (2016); Common Ground, Chan Hampe Gallery, Singapore (2015); The ceiling floats away with a sigh, Wei Ling gallery (2014); Muestra Colectiva de Verano, Isabel Anchorena Gallery, Buenos Aires (2014); Fold, ICA, Singapore (2012); MOLC, Chan Hampe Gallery (2012); Ya-ad, ICA, Singapore (2011); Ellaline, Stephanie Hoppen Gallery, London (2011).

www.unprimed.com

Ezzam Rahman

Ezzam Rahman is a multi-disciplinary installation and performance artist. He graduated with a Masters in Arts, Fine Arts from Goldsmiths University of London in 2017, Bachelor of Arts (Honors) in Fine Arts from the University of Huddersfield in 2010 and was formally trained as a sculptor from LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts. Ezzam is known for his interest in the body and his use of common, easily accessible and unconventional materials to produce works. Through his work, Ezzam features narratives that challenge/expand notions of identity politics, and the inherent paradoxes of presence and marginality. He was awarded a joint winner of the Grand Prize for the *President's Young Talents 2015* and the *People's Choice Award* by the Singapore Art Museum. Ezzam has been awarded the *Goh Chok Tong Youth Promise Award 2016* by Yayasan Mendaki and the prestigious *Young Artist Award* by the National Arts Council, Singapore.

Isabelle Desjeux

Isabelle Desjeux is an artist based in Singapore. She has a background in molecular biology (PhD, Edinburgh University UK, 1995) and a Masters in Arts (Fine Arts) from LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore (2010). Isabelle's research is based on the "refuse", the "leftovers", the "failures" and their function in the process of scientific

research, and a strong belief in the power of transformation over creation. Drawing from the similarities of practice of both worlds, Isabelle's art feels like science. Her art takes the form of videos, installations and lectures using elaborate techniques of *Pataphysics*.

Sophia Natasha Wei

Contemporary artist Sophia Natasha Wei (b. 1982, Singapore) pursues performance art as her main artistic expression. Her performances address the human condition, which she hopes her audience could re-create personal meanings and discover new experiences from. The corporeal endurance of the female body to achieve empathy is expressed through her visual language, where she works regularly with confines of space, distorted beauty and vignettes of dreamlike fantasy. In recent years, her works have evolved to present the liminal zone between painterly images and live action. She is an active contributor to the Singapore arts landscape with her artistic practice and work in education.

Tinu Verghis

Born in Kerala, India, Tinu Verghis worked as a fashion model for 15 years before joining LASALLE College of the Arts for both her undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Her stint on the cover of Vogue, in the magazine's epic foray into featuring dark skinned models, played a big part in her awakening as an artist – soon after, she left her modelling career to pursue art as a channel to address systemic injustice, social and gender inequalities.

In her practice, she uses her body as a political and poetic symbol to challenge and expand preconceived ideas surrounding systems of oppression. By re-examining cultural standards as well as the viewer's own sexuality, she hopes to unpack misogynist ideas of how the body of a woman is over idealised, systematically abject or subjected to intense policing. Tinu has won the President's Award at the International Biennale of Contemporary Art (Italy) in 2015 for her video art (*Under My Skin*) and The Winston Oh Travel Research Award (Singapore) in 2016.