

## Tan Zi Hao

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### Bio

Tan Zi Hao is an artist, writer, researcher, and educator. His works have covered a wide range of subjects from translingual practices, imaginary creatures, to posthuman entanglements. His scholarship has been published in *ARTMargins*, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, and *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, among others. He is also a member of the type and design collective Huruf. He is currently a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Malaya.

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### Education

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| 2015–2020 | Ph.D. Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore. Dissertation: “History, Memory, and Islam Through the Animal: The Zoomorphic Imaginary in Cirebon.” Advisor: Associate Professor Irving Chan Johnson. |
| 2014–2015 | M.A. International Relations (Distinction), University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, Malaysia. Dissertation: “Orang Laut: The Rise and Decline of a Boundary Figure.” Advisor: Assistant Professor Armedeo Policante.            |
| 2011–2013 | B.A. (Hons) International Communications Studies (1st class), University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, Malaysia. Dissertation: “Jebat and Jekyll: The Harbingers of Crisis.” Advisor: Associate Professor Khoo Gaik Cheng.       |
| 2007–2009 | Diploma in Advertising & Graphic Design (CGPA: 3.9), The One Academy, Malaysia.   |
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### Selected Exhibitions

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| 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Pesan &amp; Kenangan</i>, HARTA Space, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</li><li>• <i>The Tongue Has No Bones</i>, A+ Works of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</li><li>• <i>Not Just in Black and White</i>, GDP Campus, Bukit Damansara, Malaysia</li><li>• <i>It Depends...</i>, Blank Canvas, Georgetown, Penang, Malaysia</li><li>• <i>All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt</i>, A+ Works of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</li><li>• <i>Serial and Massively Parallel</i>, S.E.A. Focus 2024, Tanjong Pagar Distripark, Singapore</li></ul> |
| 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Prosthetic Memories</i>, Damansara Heights, Malaysia</li></ul>   |

- *Art Jakarta*, JIExpo Kemayoran, Jakarta, Indonesia
- *Dream of the Day*, ILHAM Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- *A World, Anew*, S.E.A. Focus 2023, Tanjong Pagar Distripark, Singapore
- 2022 • *ILHAM Art Show 2022*, ILHAM Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- *Level 3A*, CIMB Hotel Art Fair, Element Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- *Steep & Sample: Possible Futures/Impossible Present*, A+ Works of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- *Synthetic Condition*, UP Vargas Museum, Quezon City, Philippines
- *A+ Preferred*, A+ Works of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- *Kathmandu Triennale 2077*, Patan Museum, Nepal
- *A Short History of Instant Noodles*, A+ Works of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2021 • *Phantasmapolis: 2021 Asian Art Biennial*, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan
- *Crypto for Cryptids*, JWD Art Space, Bangkok, Thailand
- *No Vacancy*, CIMB Artober 2021, Element Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- *Art Moments Jakarta Online*, Jakarta, Indonesia
- *Errant Life, Promiscuous Form*, Gravity Art Space, Quezon City, Philippines
- *Holding Pattern*, A+ Works of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- *What's Left for Gathering*, Mutual Aid Projects, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2020 • *Wawasan 2020: Townhall*, Tun Perak Co-Op, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- *Back to Art*, A+ Works of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2019 • *Rasa Sayang*, A+ Works of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2018 • *The Horizon is Just an Illusion: New Thoughts on Landscape*, OUR ArtProjects, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2017 • *M*, A+ Works of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- *ILHAM Contemporary Forum (Malaysia 2009–2017)*, ILHAM Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- *Man&God Bangkok*, Tribes Community, Bangkok, Thailand
- 2016 • *Singapore Biennale: An Atlas of Mirrors*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
- *Man&God*, Giovanni DeCunto, Boston, United States
- 2015 • *OFFART: An Experiment with Flies and Farts*, PORT commune, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia
- *Dia-Spora*, Festival Idearaya, Shah Alam, Malaysia
- *The 8th Nyoba Kan Butoh Fest 2015*, Publika, Solaris Dutamas, Malaysia
- *South by Southeast*, Osage Gallery, Kowloon, Hong Kong
- 2014 • *The Spectre of Qiu Nan*, From Bandung to Berlin, Foundation Cartier, Paris
- *Xenophilic Handshakers, Xenophobic Shellpickers*, 89Plus: Commentary, 72-13, Singapore
- *Eating Wind*, VT Art Salon, Taipei, Taiwan

- *GANGGUAN*, 67 Tempinis Gallery, Bangsar, Malaysia
- 2013
- *Eating Wind*, Run Amok Gallery, Penang, Malaysia
  - *Creative@ities*, Kaohsiung Design Festival 2013, Pier 2 Art Centre, Kaohsiung City, Taiwan
  - *Gerai Commemorative Crap Endless Possibilities 1Malaysia*, Publika, Solaris Dutamas, Malaysia
  - *The Soil is Not Mine*, Art for Grabs, Annexe Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
  - *Barricade: 7th Kuala Lumpur Triennial*, Publika, Solaris Dutamas, Malaysia
- 2011
- *Kata-Kita*, Publika, Solaris Dutamas, Malaysia
  - *Buka Jalan*, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
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### Awards and Honours

- 2022 SAM S.E.A. Focus Art Fund, Singapore Art Museum and S.E.A. Focus
- 2018 Honour Roll: Graduate Students' Teaching Award (in recognition of sustained high performance in winning the award three times), National University of Singapore
- 2015 NUS Research Scholarship, National University of Singapore
- 2013 IAPS Scholar, The Institute of Asia and Pacific Studies, University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus
- 2013 102030: 20 Emerging Young Creatives Under 30, Antalis Malaysia
- 2011 The Star Scholar, The Star Education Fund
- 2010 Top 25 Under 25, Malaysian Today
- KLUE Blue Chili Awards 2010, KLUE Magazine
- 2009 Dean's List Scholar, The One Academy
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### Publications

#### Journal articles

"The Forest Withdrawn: A Historiographical Trope for Mediating Change in Cirebonese Chronicles," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 180 (2024), pp. 1–35.  
<https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-bja10057>

“Bags of Stories: Thinking with Household Casebearers in the Anthropocene,” *ARTMargins* 12, no. 3 (2023), pp. 76–88. [https://doi.org/10.1162/artm\\_a\\_00364](https://doi.org/10.1162/artm_a_00364)

“The Fall of Singapura: The Necessity of Unjust Violence in the *Sejarah Melayu*,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 54, no. 3 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463423000462>

“The Chimeric Trace: Makara and Other Connections to Come,” *Art in Translation* 14, no. 3 (2022), pp. 338–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17561310.2022.2114674>

“Xenophobic Malaysia, Truly Asia: Metonym for the Invisible,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 21, no. 4 (2020), pp. 601–613. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2020.1835101>

“Raja Bersiong or the Fanged King: The Abject of Kedah’s Geopolitical Insecurity,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 48, no. 142 (2020), pp. 263–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2020.1794584>

#### Book chapters

“In the Trail of Fragrance and Tigers: Sensing a Pre-Islamic Fugitive King in the Islamic Present,” in Ute Meta Bauer (ed.), *Climates. Habitats. Environments*. (Singapore & Cambridge: NTUCCA & MIT Press, 2022), pp. 150–159.

“Circumventing the 1980s Along Zulkifli Dahlan’s Meandering Lines,” in Nur Hanim Khairuddin (ed.), *Bumi Larangan: Zulkifli Dahlan* (Kuala Lumpur & Ipoh: Zulkifli Dahlan Gallery & Teratak Nuromar, 2017), pp. 52–65.

“Invisible Body: An Othering Narrative,” in Nur Hanim Khairuddin, Beverly Yong, and T.K. Sabapathy (eds.), *Narratives in Malaysian Art, Vol. 2: Reactions – New Critical Strategies* (Kuala Lumpur: RogueArt, 2013), pp. 113–126.

#### Newsletter and magazine articles

“Multilingualism and Its Discontents,” *Selamat Datang | Welcome: Typographic Streetscapes in Malaysia* (Sojanggal & Huruf, 2023), pp. 12–25.

“Sejarah Perkamusan dan pembahasaan: Seputar Bahasa Melayu dan Aksara Cina [History of Malay Lexicography and Language: On Malay Language and Chinese Characters],” *Svara*, no. 11 (2022), pp. 25–29.

“Unfulfilled Monolingualism, Deferred Multilingualism,” *Further Reading Print No.3: Graphic Design and Southeast Asia*, no. 3 (2021), pp. 42–50.

“Glossing Over Multilingualism: Translation and Mimesis in Chinese Pawnbroking,” *SEARCH Magazine*, Vol. 1 (December 2021), pp.104–109.

“What Animals Teach Us About Islam: Animal Reliefs in the Mosque of Kramat Mbah Buyut Trusmi,” *IIAS Newsletter*, no. 87 (2020), pp. 8–9.

“Students in Resistance and Youth Politics: A Reflection,” in Amateur (ed.), *The Youth Has Landed!* (Kuala Lumpur: Rumah Attap Library & Collective, 2019), pp. 49–57.

“Towards Vernacular Typography,” in *Jalan-Jalan Typography* (Kuala Lumpur: Huruf, 2018).

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### **Invited Lectures, Presentations, Dialogues**

2024 “Cantonised Malay in Context: A Sino-Malay Vocabulary for Precarious Life,” talk, Canto-Yay Festival, The Zhongshan Building, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, November 23.

“Facing Facades: Diasporic Literacy Through Shop Signs,” talk (with Yin Yin Wong), Malaysia Design Archive, August 31.

“Life Magnified: Denise Lai in Dialogue with Tan Zi Hao,” dialogue, The Warehouse Hotel, Singapore, January 19.

2023 “When Lingua Francas Meet: Learning Malay Through Cantonese,” talk, Canto-Yay Mini Festival, The Zhongshan Building, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, October 21.

“Jalan-Jalan Typography with Huruf,” guided tour and talk, I Want Festival, Petaling Street, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, September 17.

2022 “Encountering the Wilderness as Hyperobjects in West Java,” guest lecture (online), Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia, July 13.

2021 “Xenophobic Matters,” talk (online), organised by Faculty of Creative Media, Multimedia University, Cyberjaya, Malaysia, October 22.

“Dust Is Where We Meet,” talk (online), organised by The Design School, Taylor’s University Malaysia, Subang Jaya, Malaysia, September 24.

“The Politics of Addressing: Language, Nation, and Chineseness,” guest lecture (online), Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand, April 29.

2020 “Spiritual Traditions and Queer Technologies of the Body”, dialogue (online), organised by Para-Site, November 14.

“The Forest Is in the City Is in the Forest,” talk and workshop, organised by The Forest Curriculum (with New Museum and NTU Centre for Contemporary Arts

Singapore), National Arts Center, Laguna, the Philippines, February 20.

“The Unity That Splits: Multilingual Typography and the Language Conundrum in Malaysia,” talk, co-organised by Malaysia Design Archive and Huruf, Rumah Attap Library & Collective, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, February 8.

- 2019 “The Speculative History of Composite Creatures in Southeast Asia,” talk, Para-Site International Conferences, Asia Society, Hong Kong, October 12.
- 2018 “Politicising Everyday Life: A Zine-Making Workshop,” workshop lecture, organised by Imagined Malaysia, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, August 18.
- 2017 “Makara and Other Monstrous Connections,” guest lecture, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, October 2.
- 2016 “An Endlessness of Beginnings: The Skeleton of Makara (The Myth of a Myth),” talk, Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium, National Museum of Singapore, Singapore, January 21–22.
- 2015 “Questioning the Limits of Discourse,” guest lecture, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Sungai Long, Malaysia, July 14.
- 2014 “Xenophilic Handshakes, Xenophobic Shellpickers,” performance lecture, The O.P.E.N., 89Plus, TheatreWorks, Singapore, July 5–6.
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### Press, Features, and Interviews

“Tan Zi Hao: Lost (and Found) in Translation,” by Adeline Chia, *ArtReview Asia*, September 25, 2024: <https://artreview.com/tan-zi-hao-lost-and-found-in-translation/>

“Of Culture, Creation, and Casebearers: An Interview with Tan Zi Hao,” by Komal Keshran, *Kakiseni*, January 12, 2024: <https://kakiseni.com/of-culture-creation-and-casebearers-an-interview-with-tan-zi-hao/>

“Asia’s finest artists to showcase at S.E.A. Focus in Singapore next month, including Malaysia’s Tan Zi Hao,” *Malay Mail*, December 29, 2023: <https://www.malaymail.com/news/life/2023/12/29/asias-finest-artists-to-showcase-at-sea-focus-in-singapore-next-month-including-malaysias-tan-zi-hao/109697>

“Translation is a method of listening and a mode of care,” *S.E.A. Focus*, April 5, 2023: <https://seafocus.sg/tan-zi-hao-translation-is-a-method-of-listening-and-a-mode-of-care/>

“Empathy with Tan Zi Hao,” by Aminah Ibrahim, *Ilham Art Show 2022*, October, 2022: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oHxnsGPVKGpf3vdigV-1ET5EPKDX-xpa/view>

“Mutual aid and gathering: An artistic coexistence,” by William Tham, *Malaysiakini*, April 5, 2021:

<https://www.malaysiakini.com/columns/569471>

“Composite Creature, Ideology, and Language: An Interview with Tan Zi Hao,” by Au Sow Yee, *Nusantara Archive*, October 5, 2020:

<https://www.heath.tw/nml-article/composite-creature-ideology-and-language-an-interview-with-tan-zi-hao/?lang=en>

“Tan Zi Hao reads into the idiosyncrasies of language,” by Qishin Tariq, *The Star*, November 22, 2017:

<https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/culture/2017/11/22/tan-zi-hao-m-language-debut-solo/>

“Tan Zi Hao’s first solo exhibition, ‘M’,” by Mae Chan, *The Edge*, November 21, 2017:

<https://www.optionstheedge.com/topic/culture/tan-zi-haos-first-solo-exhibition-m>

“Not just mere words,” by Sarah NH Vogeler, *New Straits Times*, November 12, 2017:

<https://www.nst.com.my/lifestyle/sunday-vibes/2017/11/302292/not-just-mere-words>

“Soloing M in Art,” by Lim Soon Heng *BFM 89.9*, October 27, 2017:

<https://www.bfm.my/podcast/the-bigger-picture/front-row/tan-zi-hao-vincent-leong-soloing-m-in-art>

“New kid on the block,” by Emily Yap, *The Edge*, July 20, 2017:

<https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/new-kid-block>

“Podcast: Lingo Episode #3: Sexist Language,” by Kelvin Yee, *BFM 89.9*, April 12, 2016:

<https://www.bfm.my/podcast/bfm-show/lingo/lingo-episode-3-sexist-language-dr.-surinderpal-kaur-ap-chanan-singh-tan-zi-hao>

“This Little Red Book Confronts Sexism,” by Liz Stinson, *WIRED Magazine*, February 1, 2016:

<https://www.wired.com/2016/02/this-little-red-book-confronts-sexism-in-the-chinese-language/>

“How the ‘Type Geeks’ of Malaysia are Using Typography to Change Sexist Chinese Language,” by Justin Zhuang, *AIGA*, December 31, 2015:

<https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/how-the-type-geeks-of-malaysia-are-using-typography-to-change-sexist-chinese-language/>

“Podcast: GANGGUAN,” by BFM 89.9, *BFM 89.9*, March 21, 2014:

<https://www.bfm.my/podcast/the-bigger-picture/front-row/gangguan-junkit-zihao>

“Ghost of a nation: Presenting ‘freaky’ art,” by Rouwen Lin, *The Star*, March 16, 2014:

<https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/culture/2014/03/15/ghosts-of-a-nation>

