

crossing the third bridge

16 December 2025 – 24 January 2026

Kenneth Tam
Lee Mok Yee
Ming Wong
MM Yu
Sean Lean
Tintin Wulia
Wong Chee Meng

curated by Mikhail Vanan

Wei-Ling Gallery
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



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sump

Single-channel video
7 minutes 37 seconds
2015

'sump' documents a series of invented rituals between the artist and his father, staged in the basement of his father's home. Through a series of vignettes, Tam and his father enact contrived, often wordless scenes: standing together in a shower wrapped in plastic, applying dark ointment to one another's abdomens, or moving furniture. These gestures, sometimes absurd, sometimes intimate, reveal the complexities of their relationship and the subtle ways they communicate.

The work uses their bodies as a site to explore the fraught space of the Asian father-son relationship, where care and tension coexist. Tam's "acts of silence" demonstrate how emotional and interpersonal dynamics are expressed through movement, touch, and proximity, highlighting both the intimacy and difficulty of familial connection.

The Law of Repetition
Etching on Zinc Plate
93cm x 83cm (Each) (Total 12 pieces)
2018

In Chinese independent schools, the Four Cardinal Principles and Eight Virtues—a set of twelve Confucian moral values—were ever-present. They were engraved on classroom walls, embedded in architectural design, and even assigned as class names. Though linguistically simple and widely understood among Chinese speakers, these twelve words collectively guided how one should navigate relationships with family, friends, society, and nation. Their visibility within the school was a constant reminder of ancestral values inherited since the Song Dynasty.

In this work, I revisit these twelve virtues through the lens of linguistic ambiguity within the Chinese writing system. Using an ancient dictionary, I carefully selected twelve obsolete characters that share the same pronunciation as those moral tenets but carry different meanings, writings, or usages. These unfamiliar characters were written by a calligrapher in Kaiti—a classic typeface still widely used today for printed Chinese texts—and then engraved onto zinc sheets, a material commonly used for signage. This deliberate material choice evokes the formal authority of moral instruction, while the substitution of forgotten words raises questions about the anachronism embedded within the Malaysian Chinese education system.

Do we truly practise the same moral values we claim to uphold? Do we really understand these words by simply repeating them? Is understanding even necessary in the process of inheritance? By echoing the sounds of familiar virtues through unfamiliar forms, this work invites reflection on how language, repetition, and education shape belief—and whether what we preserve is meaning, or merely the appearance of it

The Vulnerable Blossom
Incense on plywood, house paint, gold leaf
138cm x 145cm x 4.5cm
2025

The word hua (華) originates from the meaning of “flower,” while also carrying connotations of “splendour” and referring to the Chinese people. It symbolizes both exuberance and decay — a cycle of blossoming and withering, a momentary existence that embodies transience itself.

Incense, as the artist’s chosen material, exists only to disappear. It extends his ongoing exploration of the diasporic identity of the Malaysian Chinese community. The material itself manifests between two worlds; yet in the physical realm, it remains fragile and indeterminate. This sense of ambiguity is also echoed in the use of joss paper imagery, where a golden rectangle is formed — a symbol suspended between the sacred and the material, hovering at the boundaries of the known and the unknown.

Wayang Spaceship
Single-channel video

25 minutes

Edition of 5 plus 2 Artist's Proofs (A.P.) (#2/5)

2022

Wong is known for his use of performance, video, installation and photography to create works inspired by films and popular culture, layered with people's identities, social structures and cinematic language. In recent years, he has been exploring Cantonese opera, a popular traditional entertainment for the Chinese.

The video work was first exhibited in *Wayang Spaceship*, a large-scale outdoor installation commissioned by the Singapore Art Museum in 2022, which Wong created. Here, "wayang" refers to Chinese street opera in Singapore, which is performed on a makeshift wooden stage. It is also used as slang for deliberate theatricality. Next to a container site that hints towards the country's history of development through trade and immigration, Wong had set up a Wayang stage made with metallic, reflective materials that mimic a spaceship. Shown on a screen surrounded by rainbow-coloured iridescent lights was a video collage that merged Cantonese opera footage from the 1950s to the 1970s with sci-fi films and his own video works. The protagonist, a scholar warrior - Wong's alter ego - embarks on a journey in the Wayang Spaceship through time, space and gender, in a strange trance created by a remix of Cantonese opera music, sci-fi sound effects, and flashes of strobe lights.

The transformation of tradition to suit the time and place as seen in Cantonese opera, and the world of sci-fi that embodies space as a new frontier that was once dreamt of – these elements recall the history of Singapore, where culture has been shaped by immigration and modern technology. Moreover, as in Wong's ongoing explorations, the actor, whose work transcends cultures, borders, time and genders, prompts reflection on socially-imposed roles and the identities that have been constructed by those roles. Wayang Spaceship is a theatre where the future can be glimpsed from the past. An exhilarating experience of sound, colour and visuals, the theatre is an invitation to be drawn into 'another world'.

Then – Grandmother's House
Chromogenic Prints
12 x 18 inches (each)
Dimensions variable
Edition of 5
2022

Growing up, MM Yu lived with her paternal family in Navotas, near the piers of Manila. She recalls mountains of white sand stored in their home, later realising it was MSG, a food item stereotypically associated with the Filipino–Chinese. Her paternal grandparents had been involved in its production and trade. Every Sunday, her family visited her maternal grandmother's house at Paco (a district in Manila) to have lumpia (Filipino spring rolls).

Around 2001, when they moved to a condo in Quezon City, many belongings, including Yu's early paintings, were packed and stored at her grandmother's house, which had long housed items from different generations of her extended family. After her grandmother passed in 2002, the caretaker continued to maintain the house for over a decade.

At some point, burglars broke in, ransacked the house, and even lived there for a time. In 2022, before it was finally sold, Yu revisited the house and photographed it. Looking back at these images, she sees the ransacked objects as a genealogy of her extended family, where connections and narratives have become almost unrecognisable. Documenting the house and its objects becomes an act of retrieval, preserving memories and traces before they disappear.

Recollections
Lenticular Photographic Prints
4 x 6 inches (each)
Dimensions variable
Edition of 5
2001 – 2024

'Recollections' unfolds as a long, accumulated gesture that spans more than two decades. For this body of work, MM Yu returned to a roll of film first exposed in 2001, then rewound and used again to photograph her surroundings years later. The act produces layered frames where past and present collide within the same strip of emulsion. Figures, objects, and fragments of place merge into one another, and the resulting images hover between legibility and dissolution.

Yu describes this method as a way of fusing two temporalities. Old scenes sit beneath new exposures, sometimes emerging clearly and sometimes buried under later impressions. These lenticular prints capture that uncertainty. They shift as the viewer moves, and the images refuse a single, fixed reading. What appears stable in one moment blurs in the next.

The work reflects on how generational memory operates through accumulation. Certain details return with clarity while others persist only as outlines or faint textures. Yu presents these overlaps without sentimentality. Instead she attends to the mechanics of remembering, where traces of the past remain present even when their original contexts have slipped away. The series forms a quiet archive of ordinary moments carried across years, and its layered surfaces invite viewers to consider how personal histories gather, fade, and persist within the act of looking.

Tracings
Instax Film
Dimensions variable
1st edition of 10
2024 – 2025

Tracings (2025) considers portraiture as a site where inherited narratives surface in subtle ways. The series gathers Instax photographs of second and third generation Chinese Filipinos, individuals whose families migrated to the Philippines generations earlier. MM Yu approaches each sitter with directness. The portraits are small and immediate, and their plain aesthetic diminishes any sense of hierarchy among them.

This visual economy positions the viewer in a charged space. The apparent anonymity created by the Instax format prompts questions about how identity is read, assessed, and sometimes misread. Viewers may attempt to locate markers of Chinese ancestry within the faces before them. That instinct reveals a long history of categorising bodies through surface cues, a history that continues to shape how diasporic communities are perceived in the Philippines and elsewhere.

Yu does not treat these portraits as ethnographic material. Instead she arranges them as fragments of a wider, collective biography, one carried across generations and shaped by migration, kinship, and memory. The work points to the limits of visual legibility and foregrounds the gap between how identities are lived and how they are interpreted. In doing so, 'Tracings' presents a quiet study of a community that has long participated in the making of the Philippine social fabric, yet is often defined through external gazes rather than its own stories.

青花十八罗汉香炉

(translated as: Blue and White Porcelain Incense Burner with Eighteen Arhats)

Automotive Paint on Steel

91cm x 200cm

2022

Sean Lean's 青花十八罗汉香炉 adopts the outline of a Qing blue and white incense burner, an object traditionally used in both domestic and temple settings as a mediator between the human and the spiritual. Incense burners carry the weight of ritual and moral instruction, since they anchor practices of remembrance, devotion, and ethical reflection. By choosing this form, Sean engages with a vessel that has long shaped how Chinese communities structure memory and belief.

The imagery of the eighteen arhats reinforces this focus. Arhats are figures who embody discipline, perseverance, and resilience. They appear throughout classical porcelain as guardians who watch over households and temples. Their presence on incense burners once served as a reminder of moral steadiness and spiritual vigilance. Sean keeps their poses and expressions visible, though he interrupts their continuous narrative with vertical inserts of steel and automotive paint. These interruptions transform the vessel from a unified symbol of spiritual clarity into a constructed object marked by competing layers of meaning.

The work speaks to his ongoing examination of cultural inheritance. His research takes him through periods of upheaval in modern Chinese history, including the cultural revolution and the global circulation of state narratives that followed. These histories complicate the stability that incense burners and arhats traditionally represent. The materials in the work reflect this tension. The surface mimics porcelain but contains none of it. Steel, automotive coatings, and controlled rust introduce a sense of corrosion and exposure. Rust softens the promise of permanence and stresses how cultural memory shifts under political pressure and ideological framing.

The steel panels operate as both structural intervention and personal positioning. By cutting into the reconstructed burner, Sean situates himself within the object rather than outside it. The darker sections suggest the difficulty of navigating archives shaped by selective documentation and propaganda. The arhats, once steady guardians, now occupy a disrupted terrain that mirrors the uncertainties within Sean's research.

Within this artwork, the incense burner becomes a site where devotional form, historical rupture, and contemporary critique converge. The viewer encounters a familiar ritual object that has been rebuilt with visible seams. Meaning settles in these seams, where spiritual guardianship meets political complexity, and where Sean locates himself within a changing understanding of cultural identity.

venom
Automotive paint on steel
100cm x 86cm
2025

Venom takes the silhouette of a 'jue', a ritual vessel once used for warming and pouring alcohol in early Chinese ceremonies. The jue signified order, memory, and ancestral connection. Sean adopts this form to consider how those meanings shift when placed in the present.

Across the surface, he layers two visual languages. One is built from neon pinks and blues that feel synthetic and volatile. The other draws from classical murals, where court attendants or celestial figures move with quiet elegance. These figures remain visible, yet the graphic colours press through them, altering the rhythm of the scene.

The work was developed during the Covid-19 pandemic, when Chinese communities around the world faced suspicion, misinformation, and intensified scrutiny. The colour palette carries this atmosphere. Instead of the warmth of ceremonial drink, the vessel appears to hold a liquid charged with unease. The title sharpens this reading and signals a shift from ritual nourishment to something more corrosive.

Within this tension, the jue becomes a container for cultural memory under pressure. Its outline preserves continuity, while its surface records disruption. Sean positions the work as a reflection on how identity was tested in a period of global uncertainty and how inherited symbols absorb the weight of those experiences.

liminal death

Print on organza fabric, 3 pieces
510cm x 130cm, 510cm x 130cm, 510cm x 90cm
2023

In 2019 I had an Artistic Research Fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution, and I was fortunate to be able to work with leading entomologists and mosquito specialists in the Walter Reed Biosystematics Unit, or WRBU, in Maryland. During my time there, while studying live mosquito specimens, I was captivated by what I began to call “liminal death.” These are deaths that happen during metamorphosis, right at the critical moment when the mosquito larvae emerge from their exoskeleton. In other words, they’re moving across the border between two completely different habitats: water and air. This is such a fascinating process. It was almost like seeing the birth of a human baby except for a big difference: the mosquito is much more active in this process compared to a human baby. They sort of step out of their larval exoskeleton and this needs to happen very quickly, because otherwise they risk drowning. So not all of them would make it, of course. Some, like you can see in this specimen, would emerge head and wings first, but would never step out of their larval shell before it’s too late.

So death here is a death in process, frozen in time, preserved in ethanol. This makes me think of my grandfather’s death. My grandfather disappeared in 1965, and was never returned. So his death was underway and unfinished: his body was never found, so, in fear, my family preserved their hope - and was suspended by this hope – that he was still alive. We are aware that there is no hope that he was still alive, but in the sake of keeping hope in a sea of fear and hopelessness, we decided not to know, to preserve our hope. Talking about preservation: ethanol preserves specimens quite well, but may alter the specimens’ original appearance. Over time, ethanol can also evaporate, affecting the preservation of the specimens. This is another way to say that time heals: it does something to memory. Healing can be thought of as a sort of modification to one’s memory, reimagined in its relation to emotion. But still, my grandfather never really died. He has a liminal death.

Population
Acrylic on canvas
100cm x 100cm
2025

This artwork takes the form of a pie chart referencing Malaysia's 2025 population distribution. Yet, it deliberately omits all numbers, data, and labels, challenging the state's reliance on statistics to define identity. Instead of presenting information, the work invites the audience to feel and visualize the balance within our multiracial society.

As a Malaysian-Chinese, Wong Chee Meng uses this unlabelled chart to reflect on the quiet but essential presence of his diasporic community within the nation's shared composition, neither dominant nor silent, but inseparable. The absence of statistics becomes a strong gesture of inclusion, reinforcing the project's core principle: identity and belonging transcend numerical analysis.

Sometimes understanding requires no explanation; we simply know that we are part of the whole. This work becomes a mirror of belonging, reminding us that no community should be ignored or excluded.

Malaysian Landscape
Card, Colour Sticker, and Postcard Display Stand
33cm x 33cm x 14.8cm x 150cm
2025

This work transforms the project from static contemplation to direct, participatory dialogue. Participants are asked to physically create their own ideal Malaysian landscape using colored stickers that represent the nation's diverse populations and practices. By showing that no single size or shape defines our terrain, the resulting composition emphasizes that a beautiful landscape is forged through variety, harmony, and active coexistence.

On the reverse, participants contribute their personal narrative by responding to the project's central question: *'As a Malaysian, living in a land of many backgrounds and stories, how do you define your sense of home?'* These collective visual and written responses form a living, evolving archive that directly informs and guides the subsequent phases of the Malaysia Home Project— continuing the exploration of heritage, shared space, and what it truly means to call this multicultural nation 'home'.

