



STUDENT-LED TOURS

MEDIUMS

Histories to Forms

by **ANG ALEXANDRA COBANKIAT**

MEDIUMS

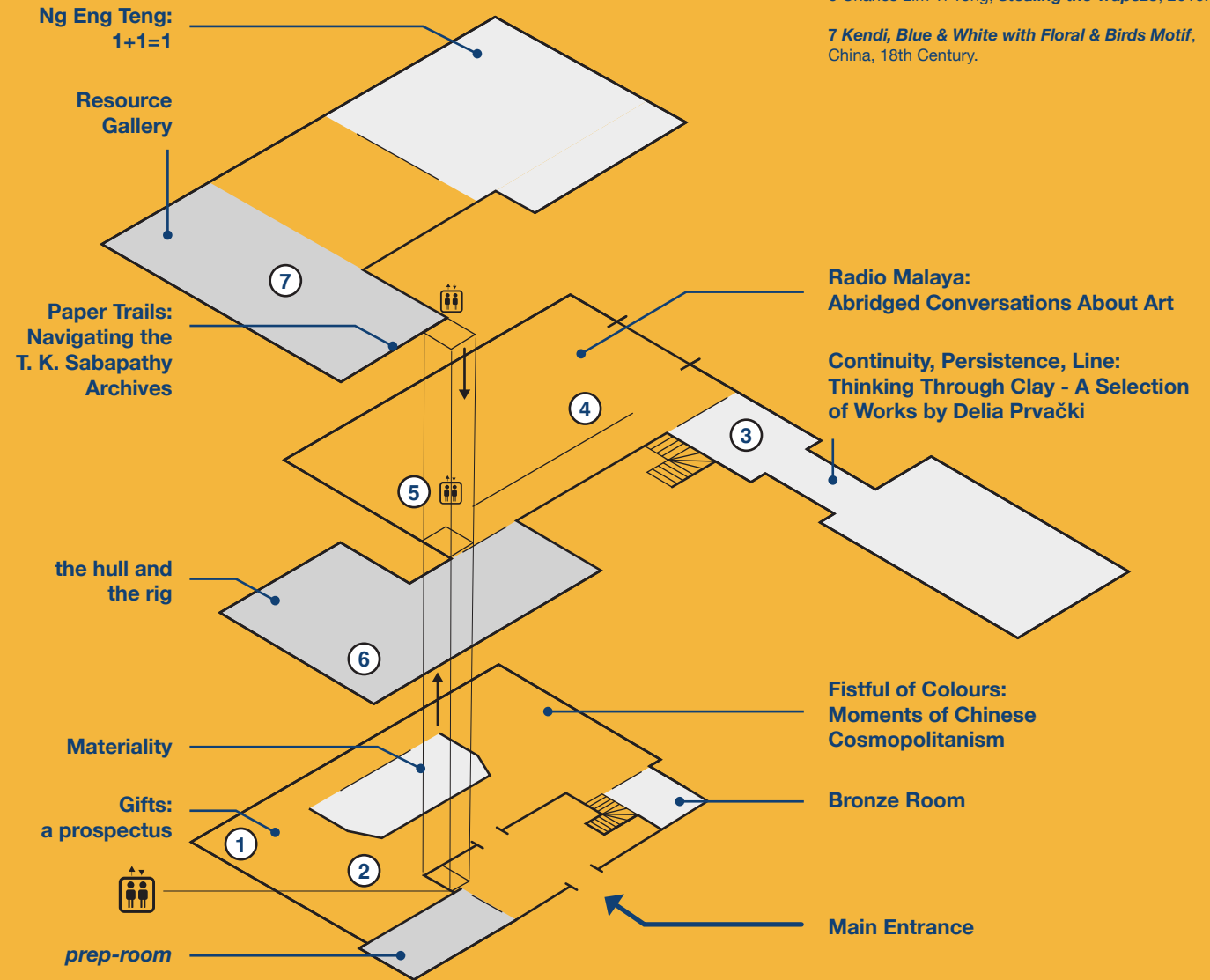
Histories to Forms

This tour will guide you through the galleries of the NUS Museum, showcasing how artists use various mediums to explore different ideas and push the boundaries of what knowledge can encompass. The tour also features objects without clear artist attributions, emphasising the idea that objects themselves can hold and convey history. By defining what knowledge entails, we also set the boundaries for what we consider to be true. Museums, as places where knowledge is created, play a significant role in how the histories of artists and institutions intertwine when their works are displayed. Covering diverse subjects such as the human body, gossip, and economic development, the tour aims to demonstrate how the way objects are represented can lead us to develop our individual paths of understanding.

On Cover:
Harry Chin Chun Wah, ***Street Scene (Coffeeshop)***,
1978; Pen & watercolour on paper, 46.3 x 61cm.

NUS MUSEUM

FLOOR MAP



STREET SCENES

1

The two artworks you see depict Harry Chin's personal drawings of a street scene in Singapore, capturing a nostalgic view of the areas near the Singapore River where he used to walk for affordable dinners. Below these personal drawings are official artworks that Chin created during his time as an advertising manager for the Far East Organization from 1977 to 1999.

The artworks illustrate different aspects of modern Singapore, reflecting Chin's connection to Singapore's history and his desire to share the country's early days with the younger generation. Additionally, the newspaper clippings provide an official narrative. Do the differences in the buildings depicted in the artworks evoke any feelings or thoughts about our ongoing urban development?



In Gifts: a prospectus. [Lower Floor]

Harry Chin Chun Wah, **Circular Road**, 1977; Pen on paper, 40 x 31.5cm.

Harry Chin Chun Wah, **Street Scene (Coffeshop)**, 1978; Pen & watercolour on paper, 46.3 x 61 cm.



In Gifts: a prospectus. [Lower Floor]

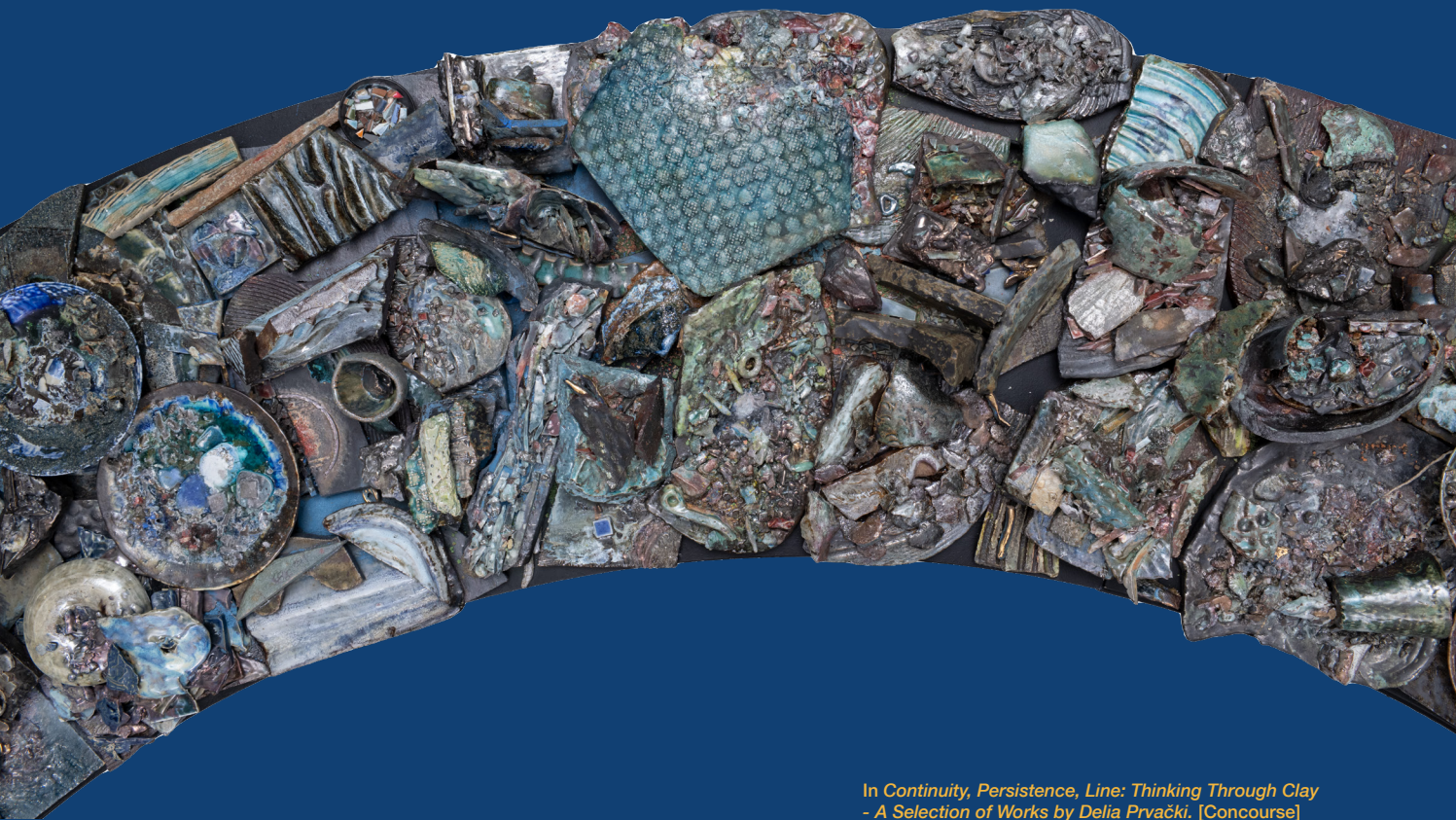
Ng Eng Teng, **Veiled**, 1995; Stoneware & glaze, 57 x 38 x 21 cm.

VEILED

2

Ng Eng Teng's work primarily involves abstract representations of three-dimensional (3D) forms, particularly stylized interpretations of human anatomy. This sculpture has several noteworthy aspects. Take note of the relaxed yet tense posture of the figure, as well as the hands, which convey a sense of hesitation. The presence of a mirror at the base draws attention to the lower half of the sculpture. Through the body language depicted, Ng ruptures conventional expectations for the human form, one that is familiar in terms of expression and basic anatomy, yet also peculiar when observed as a whole.

What could this torso be trying to communicate to you?



In Continuity, Persistence, Line: Thinking Through Clay
- A Selection of Works by Delia Prvački. [Concourse]

Delia Prvački, **Gold Rush**,
2012; Stoneware, glaze, gold lustre, glass, wood,
414 x 414cm x 30 cm.

GOLD RUSH

3

The artwork has been displayed in various forms at different exhibitions. It was first conceived in 2012 and updated in 2014 by Delia Prvački, resulting in a new version called the *Gold Rush* circle. This large circular composition reflects the artist's evolving knowledge and personal reflections on specific subjects. The story behind the artwork is linked to Prvački's background, growing up in a mining region and within a mining family. In 2010, she sought to address the significance of rare earth metals for modern existence, as

these metals are essential components of technology found in computers, phones, and surgical instruments. Prvački views her artwork as a way to communicate accumulated information and convey accumulated information through allegories constructed through different materials and installations.



In Radio Malaya: Abridged Conversations About Art. [Concourse]

Fyeroor Dharma, **P♥traire Familiya**, 2023; Polymethyl methacrylate (Acrylic Tiger), epoxy resin (NicPro), chameleon carbon fibre polyvinylchloride and polyacrylate adhesive (Vvivid XPO) on anodized aluminium alloy, polyurethane varnish on digital print on polyethylene vinyl (Oracle), honeycomb retroreflective tape (Grip-On), non metalized reflective tape (Steve & Leif) on polymethyl methacrylate (Acrylic Tiger), 400 x 300 cm.

4

P♥RTRAIRE FAMILIYA

The artwork incorporates photographs of objects from the NUS Museum's South and Southeast Asia collection, as well as images from the internet, a 90s music video, and written poems. By merging personal and institutional histories, the piece explores the challenges of seeking cultural authenticity in a world saturated with information. It draws on advertising materials and the patterns found in computational languages to question the distinction between physical objects and the non-physical realm of information.

How might your understanding of the artworks you see around you differ if they were presented in this digitized and remixed form?

LET'S CHAT

5

Let's Chat is a performance piece by Amanda Heng, first staged in 1996. During the performance, Heng invited the audience to sit and chat with her at a table, while drinking tea and cleaning bean sprouts. The work was subsequently presented at local shopping malls, markets, and at the NUS Museum. The performance also traveled abroad, with a stop at the Kawabata shopping mall in Japan. The aim of the performance was to encourage the audience to rediscover the simpler joys of *kampung* (Malay for "village") life.

It invites audiences to reconsider the often negative perception of conversations between women as 'gossip' by revealing how the simple act of chatting, so entangled within everyday rituals and activities, act as vectors for forging friendships and support between people.



In Radio Malaya: Abridged Conversations About Art.

Amanda Heng, **Let's Chat**, 1996-Present; Table, chairs, photographs, performance.

STEALING THE TRAPEZE

6

In 1992, as a student at Cranleigh School, artist Charles Lim Yi Yong stole a book that claimed English sailors invented the trapeze in 1938 along the Thames. Inspired by this history, Lim created the work *Stealing the Trapeze* in 2016. The piece is based on the specific tool used for navigation, widely used in competitive sailing today. The film *Stealing the Trapeze* draws a comparison between *kolek* racing and Olympic sailing. Notably, the *tembang* used in the *kolek* is almost identical to the sailing trapeze used by the Singaporean sailors. The video starts with a silent scene, showing 9 sailors rowing a boat, with 6 of them controlling the trapeze. Subsequently, the scene juxtaposes these *kolek* sailors with a team of Singaporean sailors, with each group occupying half of the screen. Their pulling and rowing motions appear similar.

This prompts the question: why did the artist place them side by side?



In the hull and the rig. [Concourse]

Charles Lim Yi Yong, *Stealing the Trapeze* (still), 2016; Video installation, books.



In Resource Gallery.
[Top Floor]

*Kendi, Blue & White
with Floral & Birds
Motif*, China, 18th
Century; Ceramic, 20
x 15 cm.

KENDI

7

The NUS Museum's collection includes the University of Malaya (UM) and Nanyang University (NU) collections, which were merged over time. The objects on this level illustrate how institutional history is reflected in the histories of the objects themselves.

The history of Southeast Asian trade can be traced through the kendis. These vessels were once household items and a common export product for carrying water. Many kendis originated from different countries in Asia and eventually ended up in Singapore. The display of the kendis depicts their rich histories and their connections to Southeast Asian culture, as well as the museum's own history of collecting items shifted between NU and UM. Can you try to group them based on the spout shape or common designs?

The biographies of the objects and the movements of collections between institutions illustrate how labels construct knowledge within museums. This also demonstrates that the acquisition of knowledge is an ongoing process that evolves as we create more theoretical frameworks to organize information.

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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.



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