

STUDENT THINK TANK FOR EUROPE-ASIA RELATIONS

CULTURAL COLLECTION





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About Artdialogo Asia

Artdialogo Asia is a cross-cultural art education institution. It aims to promote inclusion and diversity in a world where globalisation arises and countries become more and more interdependent. As such, Artdialogo encourages future generation to be well-informed of the cultures of other nations.

Professionalising and internationalising artistic practices.

Value and impact creation.

Inclusive and sustainable partnerships.

Cross-cultural dialogues through arts and arts education.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

STEAR is happy and proud to present its next official publication after the inaugural issue of the Journal of Asia and Europe Relations and the 2021 Conference Policy Briefs, namely this very special Cultural Collection!

Cultural exchange has been a major pillar of STEAR's vision since its founding in early 2021, and has continued to play a large role in determining the events we organize, the content we produce, and the goals we set for the future. The development of meaningful connections across continents is in no small part contingent on exposure to, and a genuine interest in, each other's cultures, no matter the form. Through this Collection, we hope to facilitate further exchange by featuring a selection of works from European and Asian youth.

The Cultural Collection includes not only a selection of high-quality artworks made by youth across Europe and Asia, but also contains a number of other elements: books, films, and online content curated and recommended by STEAR members, a selection of articles on relevant cultural topics produced by our fantastic team of writers and editors, and last but not least, a custom-made Humans of STEAR rubric curated by our very own Juliette Odolant, featuring cultural stories and anecdotes from STEAR members across the globe.

We'd like to thank the rest of the STEAR board, especially our Presidents Luke Cavanaugh and Dao Nguyen, for their assistance in developing the Cultural Collection, as well as all STEAR members who volunteered to have their stories featured in the Humans of STEAR rubric. Additionally, a massive thank you to everyone who was involved in the Global Village event last month - if it weren't for the many performers, attendees, and organizers who made our flagship cultural event happen, we would not have had the same platform to produce this written accompaniment to the amazing performances we saw there. Our gratitude also extends to Asia Society Switzerland, who generously sponsored the organization of the Global Village.

Last but certainly not least, we are immensely grateful to the talented members of the Artdialogo team, who were invaluable to the development of this publication; they were involved in the procurement of a variety of artworks, the creation of portraits for the Humans of STEAR rubric, as well as the preparation of the poster for the Global Village and the front cover. Their values and goals align very closely with our own, and we highly recommend you stay up to date on their work through social media and their website.

We hope that you enjoy reading through the Cultural Collection and that it inspires you to engage with cultural expressions in whatever form, now and in the future!

Jedidja van Boven and Nawathas Thasanabanchong, Editors in Chief

Juliette Odolant and Quinlan Rijks, Associate Editors

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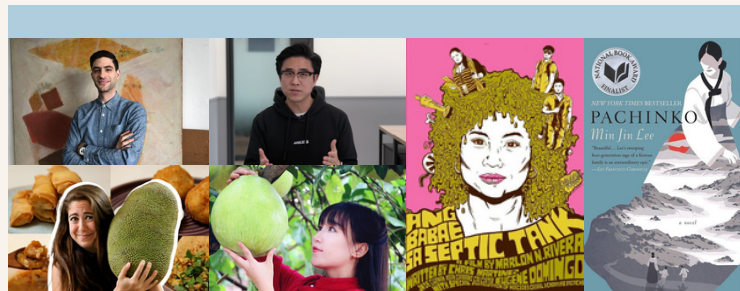
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GENDER BENDER



Instagram: @jxdngphotography
Website: linktr.ee/jxdngphotography

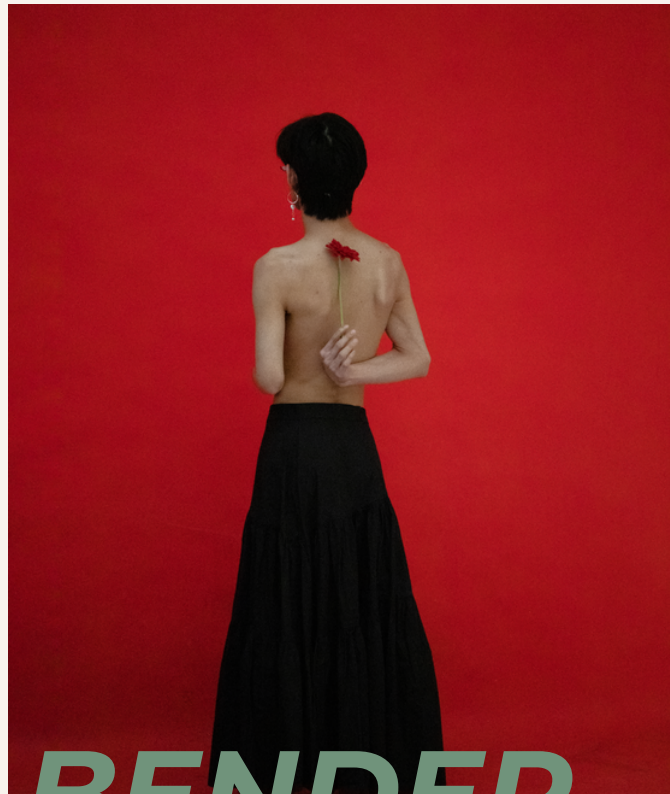
By Jessica Dang

About:

Jessica Dang is a photographer and curator of Platform exhibitions, a tri-annual art exhibition based in Melbourne, Australia.

She uses photography as a means to connect with others and capture the essence of human connection – its stories, rawness and beauty.

Her latest work 'Gender Bender' aims to explore and project masculinity and femininity in ways that are not commonly depicted in everyday life. It was a challenge to gender norms with use of hair, make up and fashion.



GENDER BENDER

This collection of photos are part of my personal year-long gender bender photo series. The aim of my photos was to project masculinity and femininity in ways that are not commonly depicted in our everyday life. I wanted to challenge gender norms and expectations through fashion, hair and makeup. This series is essentially an exploration of my own queerness, aimed at pushing gender boundaries as I know it.

Growing up in a traditional Asian family meant that there were clear expectations on what I could, and couldn't do as a girl. I wasn't allowed the space to dress, act and speak in a way that wasn't gender-bound. The lack of space to do so hindered a lot of my personal growth surrounding my identity and sexuality.

Fortunately, I am now able to create this space in my art to connect with my own masculine and feminine energies alongside those that I work with. An important aspect of this series for me is sharing this safe space with others who may also need it. I know how important it is to be able to wear your identity proudly and that's why I also try to work with a mainly queer team. I wanted to allow them to have a space where they can be themselves, unapologetically; where masculine and feminine energies can co-exist regardless of one's gender.





In the second week of January, a friend and I had a chat about our New Year's resolutions, and she told me how stressed she was since she hadn't been on track with her goal to exercise daily. She then asked me about my resolutions, and I told her, without having given it a thought before that moment: "My resolution this year is not to stress out as much, especially concerning goals that I set for myself."

Later that week, I stumbled upon an article in a medical journal that outlined the negative effects psychological stress can have on your body, ranging from anxiety, insomnia, and depression to a doubled rate of heart attacks.

These statistics made me think a lot – in a society that expects us to be our most ambitious, successful, and determined selves, how can we take a step back and recharge? In a society that makes us start the new year with a promise to outperform our former selves, how can we break the vicious cycle of competition?

"I want to stress less without stressing about the fact that sometimes, stress cannot be avoided"

This year, my resolution is a simple, but demanding one: I want to stress less without stressing about the fact that sometimes, stress cannot be avoided. Until now, I haven't been able to relax and recharge just as much as I intended to – but I'm giving my best not to stress out about that.





JOSHUA S. SALCEDO

Hope for a Better World

Mixed Media on Canvas
91 x 121 cm

2021

DESCRIPTION

My artwork is based on the world we have today. A world that is still full of hope and dreams amidst chaos. Each country represents Hope. The rainbow color signifies that we can surpass anything as long as we have faith (represented by a pigeon) and perseverance (represented by the hands holding the world). The tree symbolizes that having peace in this world means that you are growing a Peaceful Society. The golden face wants to show the importance of being audacious on voicing out his or her opinions. Let us accept each other. And Let us live in a peaceful world.

Growing up, I lived between my German and Chinese heritage in the mega-city that is Shanghai. After 17 years, my family and I moved to Germany's political center and capital, Berlin, where I began my undergraduate studies. Currently, I am back in China, pursuing a postgraduate degree in Beijing.

So when people in China ask me, I tell them that my home and my family are in Berlin. Sometimes I tell them my home is in Shanghai, where my maternal grandparents live. When people in Germany ask me, I say I am from Shanghai, because that is where I have spent most of my life. Sometimes I say Berlin, because that is where my parents have settled down. Outside those two countries, I answer with a mix of all of the above.

I suppose it has something to do with the fact that I feel equally connected to both. Maybe I also feel the need to explain my multicultural identity and provide an answer that is easily definable. With time, though, I have become comfortable with being more objective in answering, no longer feeling the need to be overly reductive. Answers about home can be as complex as you feel they need to be. And I don't think home can be summarized in one word. It is a patchwork of people, places and memories.



" I DON'T THINK HOME CAN BE SUMMARIZED IN ONE WORD. IT IS A PATCHWORK OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND MEMORIES. "



LYRA
Pandanggo sa Ilaw



DYAH
Tari golek kenyo tinembe

DESCRIPTION
Tari golek (golek dance) tells about a girl growing up.



Dao Nguyen

My culture, Vietnamese culture has been influenced by both China and the U.S., hence my childhood was empowered by heroism in 金庸's novels and Hollywood's superhuman series. Now I am 25 and I do not remember exactly about their stories, but one thing I always bear in my mind is great power comes with great responsibility, and only the brave one can change the world the way they hope to see.

Before STEAR, I have been living and studying in many countries, and it causes an identity crisis inside me. Ijeoma Umebinyuo once said that "So, here you are too foreign for home too foreign for here. Never enough for both." I have had it stuck in my head for such a long time, and I know many people out there are also longing for connection.

"TOO FOREIGN FOR HOME, TOO FOREIGN FOR HERE" : I KNOW MANY PEOPLE OUT THERE ARE ALSO LONGING FOR CONNECTION.

Therefore, my purpose when establishing STEAR is to bring third culture individuals together. Indeed, meeting a bunch of youngsters who shared the same experience and passions at STEAR gradually develop a sense of belonging in me. It is a very unique and fruitful journey that I am truly grateful for.





ALLY ZLATAR

Crossing Paths

Acrylic On Paper
50 x 75 cm

2021

DESCRIPTION

These works explore my journey and collaboration during the ARTICULATE Program. Throughout this experience I embraced new cultural perspectives of ASEAN cultures. In particular, I learned from my partner some of her favourite fillipino artist Fernando Amorsolo. Inspired by his work I immersed myself into his world through painting. These works embody my experience of fully engaging with new cultural perspectives in this program and sharing my personal experiences with the cohort and the audience.

There is a dog in the Shilin Night Market in Taipei, a *shiba* of puffy brown cheeks, that sunbathes every day next to the stinky tofu stall. I find myself staring at him after class, with a healthy amount of envy. I stare at the black cat too, who practically lives at the temple and has become immune to the attention of tourists and noisy evening travelers. She is shameless in her study of the *baozi* crumbs others leave behind at night.

They both roam the main street of the market as rulers would with two territories, one of the day, one the night, witnesses of far more faces than I could count. I also sit down next to the cat on the stairs by the temple, some evenings, making funny noises that I believe cats would react to. She does not pay much attention, either way.

The night market has a tight balance from daylight to evening, constantly changing in nature, that keeps pulling me in. Every time, I find something different, something I missed, but those two, they are full-time residents of the brightly lit streets of Shilin.



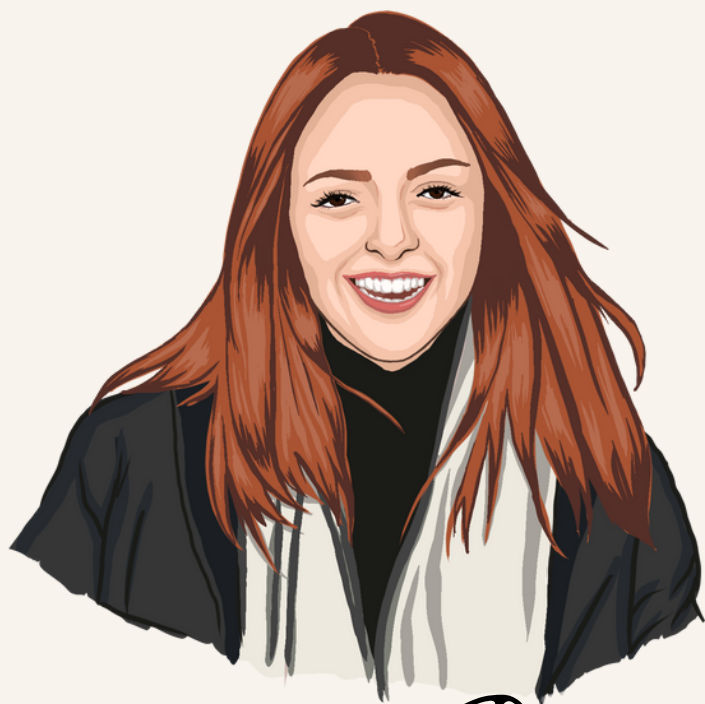
Elisa Lenker

**THE NIGHT MARKET
HAS A TIGHT BALANCE
FROM DAYLIGHT TO
EVENING, CONSTANTLY
CHANGING IN NATURE,
THAT KEEPS PULLING
ME IN.**

Art-is-Tree

05.15.2021

Art grows in each one of us. It is a living thing, It grows new branches. It sustains. It is a tree that nurtures life. It gives birth to new beginnings. It breathes color into existence. It helps ripen different art forms. The seven arts. The seven hundred arts. Art is infinite. It connects cultures. It reaches out to the farthest recesses of the human mind. It nourishes the spirit. It heals the very fabric of the soul. It weaves each strand to make us whole. It unites us. Without it, life would be a blank slate. There is no debate, for this is our fate. And when we believe, we will see. We are the tree. Art-is-tree.



Juliet Pegg

**" A RANDOM ACT OF
KINDNESS RESTORED
MY FAITH IN
HUMANITY AND
REMINDS ME JUST
HOW GOOD KOREAN
BARBECUE IS. "**

A defining moment from my travels was during a trip to Seoul at the end of several months travelling across South Asia. I'd miscalculated my budget, and on my final day found myself with only money for the airport transfer. Someone from my hostel kindly took me to dinner, treating me to a family-run traditional Korean barbecue restaurant hidden on a backstreet - the kind of place that doesn't make it to Tripadvisor but gives you a true insight into local culture.

It was one of the best meals I'd ever eaten, but when I offered to bank transfer my friend later, he instead asked me to 'pay it forward'. He'd had a similar situation, and a stranger had paid for his dinner, in return asking that he do the same one day for another traveller. I've since paid it forward, and in the process hopefully continued the chain reaction. That final evening epitomised the generosity of strangers that I'd experienced from my travels, with a random act of kindness restoring my faith in humanity and reminding me just how good Korean barbecue is.



NENG LINA LESTARI

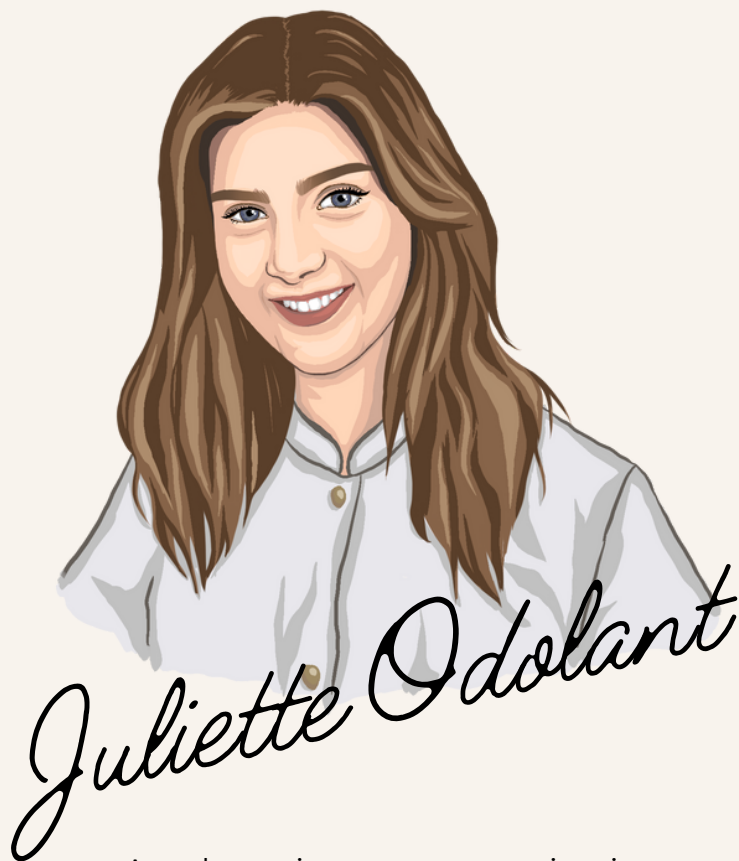
DESCRIPTION

Woman Today

Digital Artwork on Paper
A3

12.05.2021

This is a portrait of a woman who is well aware, strong and independent. An epitome of beauty and confidence of her time amidst adversity brought about by the Pandemic. She continuously thrives and radiates from within for her heart, soul and mind are all in place. The mask being worn by the woman is a symbol of a life line . A symbol of owning and making her choice in defining what is good for her. A symbol of protection and awareness. Above all, this portrait is a manifestation of my commitment and solidarity along with the rest of the world in making our society a better place to live in. We may not be able to go back to a COVID free world but we may move forward in solidarity when we know how to listen and understand the world around us, and for that I will wear my mask and glow naturally and beautifully as a woman of today.



Another rainy, warm morning in Taipei, Taiwan. Pedestrians stroll past, the majority invariably dressed in cool monochromatic hues, as always impeccably turned out and wielding all kinds of interesting contraptions - a bubble tea bag/strap/holder - yes these exist, a testament to the Taiwanese love of the 方便 (practicality, convenience) -, bento box, umbrella and all. My attention is drawn to a woman who walks by, balancing all these necessities as well as a small, expensive-looking pram, which her partner gazes into adoringly. Peering down as I always do on these occasions to get my daily dose of cute baby serotonin, I'm met by a rather furry surprise. The occupant of this pram is not a member of the human species, but instead one of the canine family. The first time this misunderstanding occurred I was both amused and mystified.

After nearing five months in Taiwan, it has now become somewhat less of a surprise, or even in fact more of an expected norm. Indeed, pram-pushed dogs are a particular quirk of this country, as are regular trips to the doggy spa and canine catwalk fashion. The root of this dog-coddling culture? A growing trend amongst young couples of adopting pets rather than having children, owing to the high cost of living and raising children relative to income, the prevalence of later marriages, increasing female labour participation rates, and changing attitudes towards child bearing. The consequence: Taiwan has the lowest birth rate in the world, with just 1.07 children per woman, and the stunning statistic of pets making up a larger proportion of the population than children (there are more domestic animals in Taiwan than children under age 14).

“ **WITH A STROLLER ON THE STREETS OF TAIPEI JUST AS LIKELY TO CARRY A PUPPY AS A HUMAN BABY, ONE HAD BEST MAKE DO WITH WHATEVER SMALL, ADORABLE CREATURE IS STRAPPED WITHIN.** ”

On this particular occasion, recovering from my initial surprise, I smile down dumbly at the dog anyway - it also happens to make for a great source of serotonin. With a stroller on the streets of Taipei just as likely to carry a puppy than a human baby, one had best make do with whatever small, adorable creature is strapped within.



ANITA A/P KALAICHELVAN

DESCRIPTION

Indian Traditional Dance

Acrylic and Watercolour On Canvas
30 x 30 cm

09.05.2021

Bharatanatyam is traditionally a team performance that consists of a solo dancer and accompanied by musicians. Previously Bharatanatyam is called Sathir Attam that originated in Tamil Nadu and it is the oldest classical dance tradition in India. Bharatanatyam contains some type of tradition, a term to describe the dance techniques and style specific to the guru. Bharatanatyam style is noted for its fixed upper torso, bent legs and knees flexed combined with spectacular footwork, and a sophisticated vocabulary of sign language based on gestures of hands, eyes and face muscles.

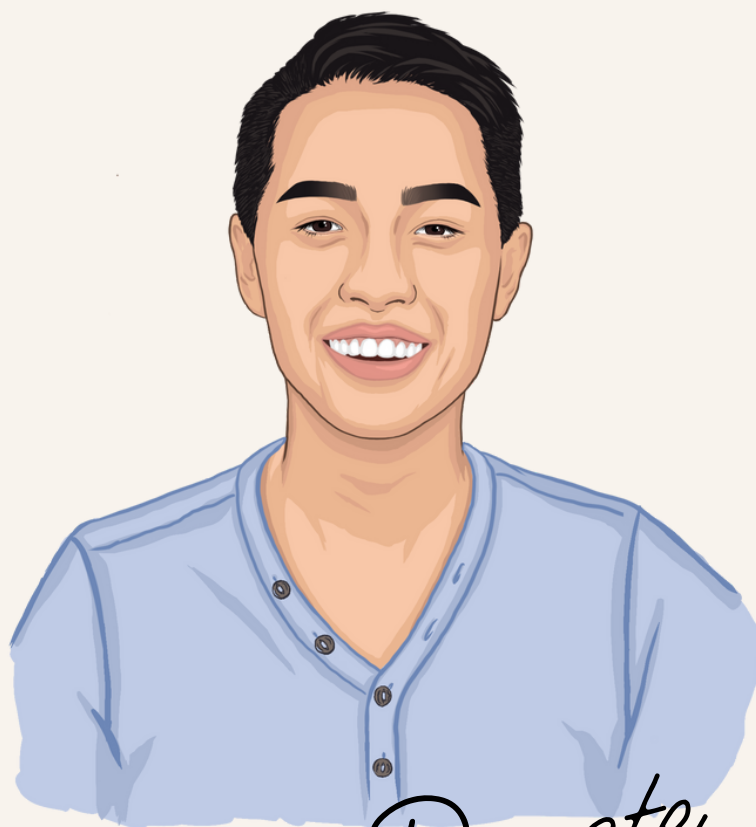
The dance is accompanied by dancers and a singer, and typically the dancer's guru is present as the Nattuvanar, director, and conductor of the performance and art. The dance has traditionally been a form of an interpretive narration of mythical legends and spiritual ideas from the Hindu's. The performance of Bharatanatyam, like other classical dances, includes pure dance, solo expressive dance and group dramatic dance.

I personally chose Bharatanatyam dance as my artwork because it has so much of meanings and movement which contains a lot of meanings and because it is also one of my cultures' traditions. There are a lot of musical instruments which are used to make the dance succeed and different elements are joined to make the performance even spiritual and attractive which at the end makes the painting holistic.

"The 'travel' experience that defined my life the most is, ironically enough, one that I cannot remember. It was when I, having been born in Taiwan, was adopted by Dutch parents and moved to the Netherlands at the age of five months. Even though I have lived practically all my life in the Netherlands, and feel much more Dutch than Taiwanese, I can never fully let go of my Taiwanese identity. When people see me they immediately assume I am from Asia, which can lead to fun conversations, but to racist remarks as well. When I was younger there have been times I wished I could shed off my Taiwanese identity.

However, I have learned that I never could, and am increasingly embracing that identity now.

In fact, I am currently studying China & Globalisation in London, which leads me to reflect on what it means to be Taiwanese on a daily basis. STEAR is also part of my embracing of my Taiwanese identity. It connects Europe and Asia, two continents that I want to connect fully in my own identity as well.



Keen Donatz

**" STEAR CONNECTS
EUROPE AND ASIA,
TWO CONTINENTS
THAT I WANT TO
CONNECT FULLY IN
MY OWN IDENTITY
AS WELL. "**



RAB (BUI BAO TRAM)

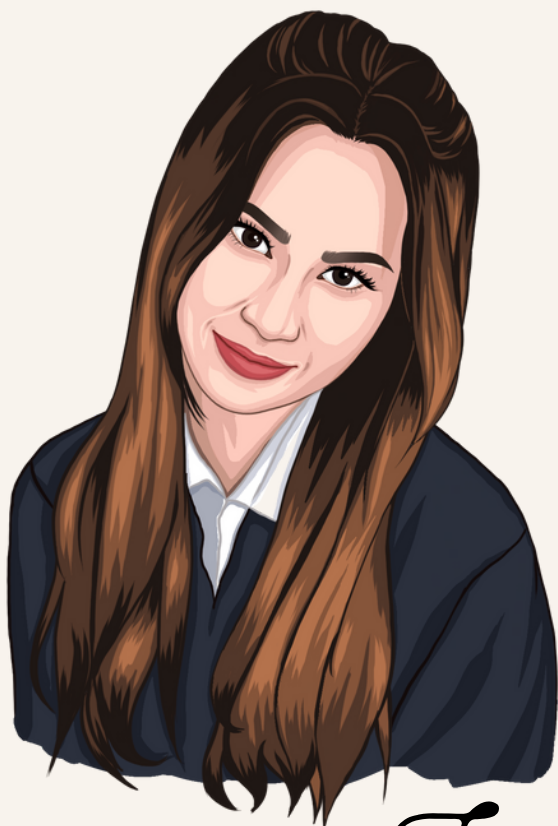
Self-portrait 1

Acrylic On Canvas
30 x 30 cm

10.05.2021

DESCRIPTION

This is the first artwork in the series "Anonymity" that I inspired after taking the course of Articulate. I learned how to interpret my inner questions into visual stories through personal style class. This series comes from the story I always wondered how humanity will be remembered after we die. Through the words of others but no identity, through the achievements we left but no one knows about us, through photos but without a story behind?



Krista Tammila

**I HAVE BECOME
ACCUSTOMED TO
KNOWING THAT
MOST PEOPLE WHO
MEET ME WILL NOT
UNDERSTAND
WHERE I AM FROM
AT THE FIRST
ENCOUNTER, OR
EVEN THE ONES
THAT FOLLOW.**

For those who have met me, they have gone through the grueling task of memorizing and understanding my background, which many have described as no easy feat, and rightly so. As someone who is genetically from Singapore and Finland, born in Bangkok, Thailand, grew up in Tokyo, Japan, has relatives in the US, spent countless vacations in Bangkok due to my grandparents living there, and currently have parents residing in Spain, (just to name a few) it is no wonder that everyone who I encounter is confused and amazed at the same time. I have become accustomed to knowing that most people who meet me will not understand where I am from at the first encounter, or even the ones that follow.

So when people ask me what country I consider "home" I simply tell them that I don't have one. For the longest time, "home" was Tokyo. After moving away, there was a constant change in the country not only where I resided in, but also my parents. I think being a so-called "third (or even fourth) culture kid" means that you don't really resonate with the countries you are from and the countries you live in. For some, not having a sense of "home" is unheard of and scary. But for me and many other people who have had the same international lifestyle as me, we have been lucky enough to call many different places our home.

NUR NABILAH

Gestures/Movements/Dance

DESCRIPTION

A performer of Dikir Barat uses a rabana Malay tambourine that is used in Islamic devotional music in Southeast Asia.

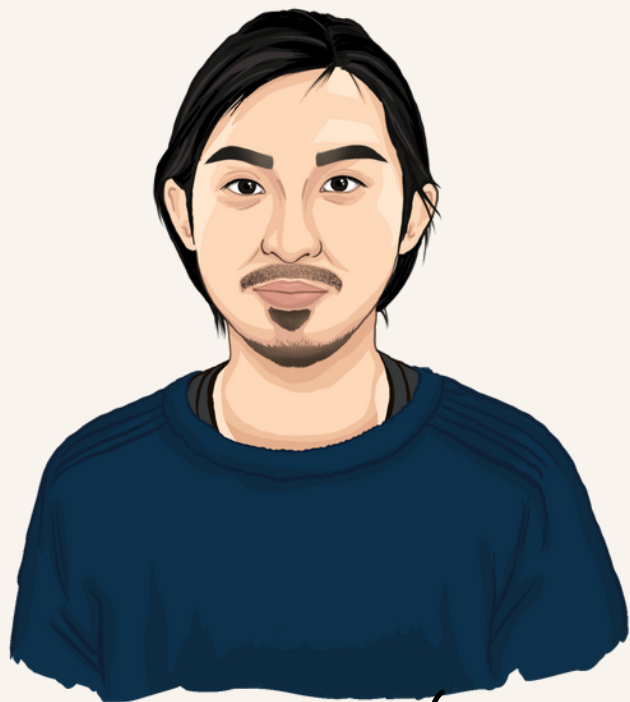


DANELLA

Morris Dance

DESCRIPTION

This is an artwork depicting traditional Morris dance.



Nam Nguyen

Stay hungry, Stay foolish :)

Steve Jobs might have galvanized the room when the Macintosh said “hello” in 1984, but when my first automated bot greeted its creator’s classmates last autumn, the room flooded with silence. My friends struggled to grasp why the digital culture class was needed, instead of, say, political economy.

After two years in the public, civil society, & private sectors in Vietnam, I identify strongly with the social sciences’ potential to connect between sectors. On the other hand, though I’m passionate about my supervisors’ guidance in policy & fieldwork, I couldn’t help but think about how innovations could boost the impacts.

As I branched into business when working for Vietnam’s only EV venture, I became excited the same way the 1984 Macintosh’s audience did. To me, such dynamics represent humanity’s capability, and it is astonishing what we have accomplished in just 40 years of digital revolution.

I aim to bring technological progress to the Global South’s citizens and inspire them the way I was. I believe that if given the opportunity, even people of seemingly inferior origins can be empowered to contribute to the locomotive of mankind’s progress.

If asked 2 years ago, I would likely dismiss business & tech’s role in development. But now, I don’t believe that science or the arts is more important in building a better world. I’m just embracing the former as an add-on approach to my identity and any community to which I belong.

I can proudly say that STEAR is that community.

***“ I AIM TO BRING
TECHNOLOGICAL
PROGRESS TO THE
GLOBAL SOUTH’S
CITIZENS AND
INSPIRE THEM THE
WAY I HAVE BEEN. ”***



ROSHAN ARABELLA
M. CERVANTES

*Basking Under
the Same Bright Sky*

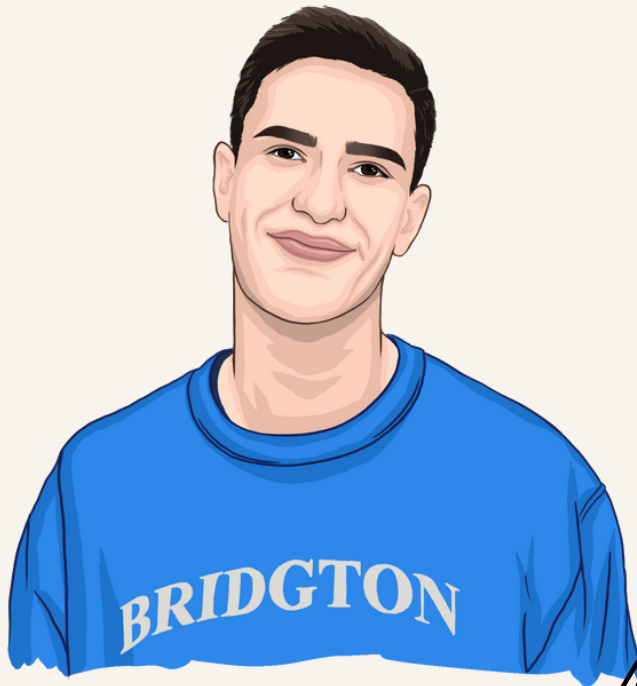
Acrylic On Canvas
40 x 30 cm

DESCRIPTION

This artwork is special to me because it essentially summed up my learning and memorable experiences during the ARTICULATE masterclasses, as well as illustrated my hopes for the program after its conclusion.

Apart from using a bright, cheerful color palette, featured prominently are the cohorts of the ARTICULATE program, the main subject of the artwork. I painted Finger Puppets in their traditional clothing to represent their nationalities. The raised hand symbolized all those involved in the initiative --- Artdialogo Asia, and Let's Reinvent supported by the British Council Malaysia- Arts – British Council and other partners-- that have inspired us to grow in every way possible. The verdant greens surrounding the hand symbolizes growth, while the dispersed dandelion seeds moving towards the sun signify the cohorts' high hopes, good wishes, and freedom as they bask under the same bright sky.

By providing a safe and supportive learning environment for the youth, I couldn't thank Artdialogo Asia and its partners enough for paving the way for inclusive opportunities among the youth through arts and cross-cultural education. The positive impacts of ARTICULATE shall forever resonate with me and propel us in our future artistic journeys.



Luke Cavanaugh

What has been a defining travelling experience in your life?

The first time I ever went solo travelling was around Eastern Europe in 2019, where one of the places I visited Minsk in Belarus. As a former Soviet republic, I had expected the country to look and feel similar to Russia, which I had just left. But looking across the harbour from my hostel to one of Minsk's commercial centres, it was the skyscrapers of Chinese companies that caught my eye. This proved a formative experience in my recognition of the importance of Europe-Asia relations, beginning a fascination with China as a foreign policy actor, and leading me to the Schwarzman Scholars programme and providing inspiration for STEAR.

***" I HAD EXPECTED
BELARUS TO LOOK AND
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RUSSIA. BUT LOOKING
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TO ONE OF MINSK'S
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THAT CAUGHT MY EYE."***

What are some of your New Year's Resolutions- do you think you'll stick to them?

Every year, I set myself the resolution of reading 26 books a year for pleasure. The great thing is that you can't fail at this resolution until December 31st, and by this point you are ready to start all over again ;). This January has been a busy one, and I only managed one- so I'm not too confident for the rest of the year!

What is the most beautiful, or bizarre thing you saw this morning as you walked down the street? Why did it strike you?

This morning began, as so many do these days, with a trip to the hospital to pick up my Covid test results. I stopped on the side of the road to get some street food for breakfast: a Chinese Jianbing pancake. These pancakes are just 7 yuan (about 1 Euro!!), and are absolutely delicious. If you are ever in China, they are the perfect start to the day!



MICAH "MEEKA" HILOTIN

*Pakikipagkapwa:
Unity Amidst
the Pandemic*

Watercolour On Paper
49.53 x 49.53 cm

May, 2021

DESCRIPTION

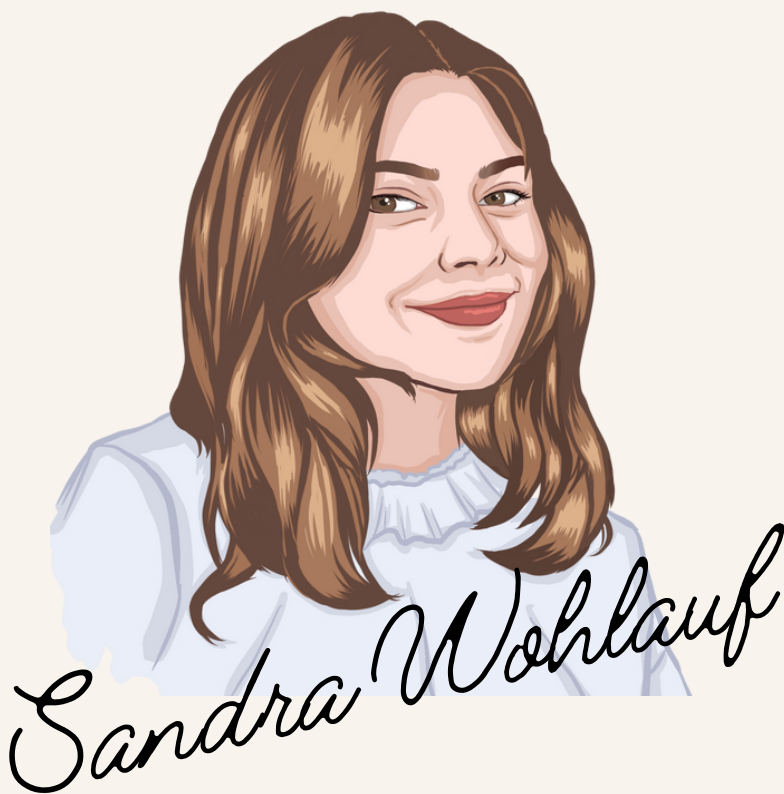
The painting is a visual representation of ART.I. CULATE 2021, a virtual gathering of artists from different countries to learn and share culture and arts.

This pandemic is challenging. It is alarming that aside from Covid-19, the world is facing social and political problems such as the dreadful issues of racism and chaos. I believe that change starts within us. Having empathy, connecting with others and humble collaborations can help us achieve peace and be united despite distance and differences.

In the painting, "Magkakaiba ngunit Nagkakaisa" (Different but United) is written in baybayin (Philippines' ancient scripture; form of writing). The maps of the countries of our Cohort are painted as the background. The concept is also inspired by the emergence of Community Pantries in the Philippines which showed the solidarity of people. It proves that love comes in different forms and colors.

Now, we need each other to survive and every soul is important. We can offer ourselves by sharing our art, sending messages of love, staying emotionally connected and help to STOP THE HATE. Hopefully soonest, we HEAL AS ONE.

Indeed, whatever situation it may be, art is alive and art is a powerful tool to communicate to the world!



I once climbed Mt Fuji at night just in Converse shoes, sweatpants, and a small headlight strapped over a beanie. What might sound like the beginning of an analogy to some proper life lessons is just the story of an impromptu decision of a broke and slightly arrogant 18-year-old who thought 'it can't be **that** hard' and refused to spend the extra Yen on more baggage only weeks before leaving the country. However, hiking Mt. Fuji to watch the sunrise felt like the right thing to do at that time, a sort of sentimental goodbye to the 'Land of the Rising Sun' which warmly welcomed me for the past year.

In the end, me and my friends looked quite ridiculous next to all the other people sporting proper climbing gear, looking overall prepared to face the several hours long climb of a mountain standing proud at 3,776m height. We didn't even make it all the way to the top until the first lights of the sunrise illuminated the sky, stopping just short off the peak at the 8th out of the nine stations of the trail.

I climbed a few more mountains in East Asia after that – the Baegundae trail on Bukhansan by Seoul, Hehuashan and also Alishan for another unforgettable sunrise view in Taiwan – and swore to myself that one day I would go back and make it all the way to the top of Mt. Fuji as well.

Yet, it also doesn't feel like I failed in climbing Mt. Fuji even if I didn't make it to the top. As they say, 'the journey is the reward' and when thinking of that night, not failure but laughter-through-hardship with my friends, intense relief to have reached the 8th station at all and absolute amazement watching the sunrise come to my mind. I am glad I took the spontaneous challenge even though I wasn't fully prepared for it and might have looked like a fool to others. Years later, I find myself wishing some of that spirit, of that arrogance back. Especially now trying to find my footing in the world, I tend to hesitate, not quite feeling prepared enough, feeling like I'm missing some essential 'gear' that other people bring to this enormous climb called 'life'. I am trying to re-learn to say, "screw that".

Just go for it. Climb that mountain. It might have been some sort of analogy after all.

***" I AM TRYING TO RE-
LEARN TO SAY,
"SCREW THAT".***

***JUST GO FOR IT. CLIMB
THAT MOUNTAIN.***





ETHAN

Singki

DESCRIPTION

Singkil originated from the people of Maranao - it is an epic derived from the story of darangen. Although I am not from Mindanao, I decided to draw this dance because as a child I was drawn to its story whenever I would go to stage plays or cultural shows

NENG LINA

*Balinese Dance from
Indonesia*

DESCRIPTION

Traditional Balinese dances are the oldest form of performing arts in Bali. Traditional dances can be divided into two types, sacred dance called Wali and entertainment dance called Bebalihan. Wali (sacred dance) is usually performed in some ritual ceremonies only because it has strong magical powers and only can be performed by specific dancers. Bebalihan are usually performed in social events. In addition to entertain, Bebalihan also has other purposes, such as welcoming guests, celebration of harvests, or gathering crowds. Bebalihan has more variations than Wali.e.



Home for me is the feeling of connection to the places and people I value in my life. I grew up between Germany and Thailand, went to schools in both countries and spent warm summers with my grandparents. My home is not a place, but the people and memories tied to certain landmarks.

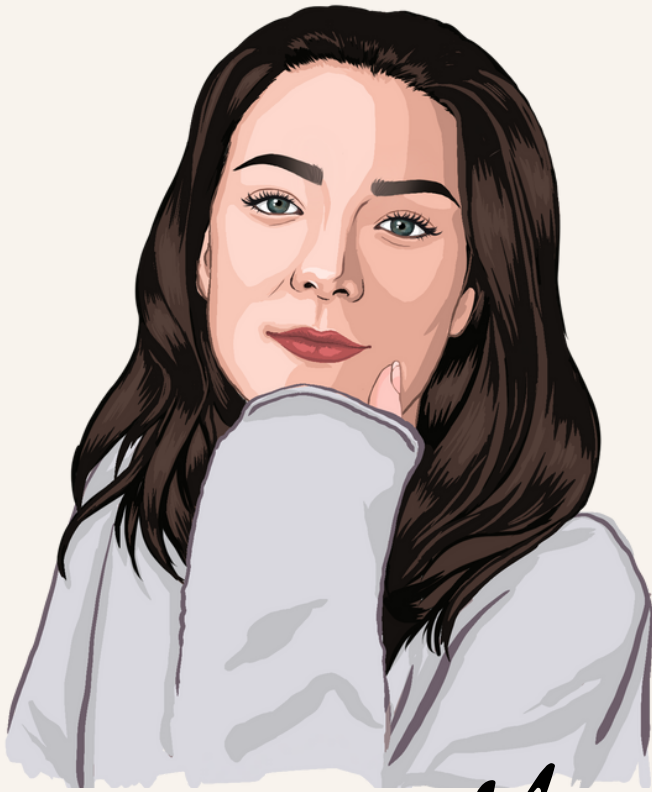
When I miss home, whichever one it is, I find myself browsing Google Maps, tracing my steps from school back home, my favourite noodle soup stall, finding my grandmothers garden or my favourite swimming spot. Growing up across different countries was something quite special. I felt like a living link between both worlds- watching both cultures mix and create something uniquely wonderful. An instant feeling of connection arose when I met other people who were also half Thai half German with the same experiences. Our exchange somehow created this little space in between Thailand and Germany, a space inhabited by us, the ones who were rooted in both cultures.

After graduating from secondary school, I spent a gap year abroad in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia and am now studying in London, UK. Wherever I go, I try to create or find a space I feel comfortable in, which I can call my little home away from the people who make up my immediate social circle. And it's truly nice to see how I will always feel a connection to these places and all the people that I was able to build a relationship with during that time.



Sophie Zwick

Being a part of STEAR has ultimately taken my conception of home a bit further than I would have imagined. In one of our surveys on the words that we associate with STEAR I saw members answering with the word family. I do believe that STEAR has offered me a new way to build strong relationships with people that have never met in my life before: people whose lives in their respective countries I've never got to experience myself and yet the bond that we've build through our commitment to STEAR is equal to the relationships that I formed with friends, that I have met in real life. Growing up between two cultures has ultimately expanded my concept of home. I know that it is not a single location, it is not just the people, but the deep feeling of connection I have to the places and people that I had the honour to meet.



Stella Meyer

**" THERE IS A LOT OF
PRESSURE ON ME AND
MY GENERATION
- TO SAVE THE PLANET,
TO ADVOCATE FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS, TO
ACHIEVE EQUALITY,
TO GET ENOUGH Zs. "**

"So, what are you gonna do when you graduate?" People tend to ask that question a lot, even while I was still studying they'd badger me with it. I usually just shrugged and thought, I'll cross that bridge when I get there. I'm there now and I don't have a clue. The possibilities are endless and I'm spoilt for choice. As an inherently indecisive person and member of the FOMO-generation, that is an excruciating situation to be in. I'm acutely aware of how incredibly lucky and privileged I am to have so many options and to have the freedom of picking a career for myself at all.

Yet, I also feel like there is a lot of pressure on me and my generation - to save the planet, to advocate for human rights, to achieve equality, to get enough Zs. You also don't want to have just any job. It should be prestigious, well-paid, a stepping stone for your career. I read once that you only regret the things you haven't done and not the things you have done. But by choosing one thing, don't I inevitably also decide against a variety of other options? How am I supposed to choose? How do I know what's right for me?

Born to Manchester below the many smokestacks stretching from Salford to the city-centre, I'd like to think that I embody some of the industrial essence. Whether it's stoicism in the face of seemingly insurmountable work or a lingering resentment of the South, these traits must've come from somewhere. There's also something about being from this city that makes one feel like an outsider. 'I'm not British, I'm Northern' would make a good print on a mug, although it would naturally be disputed by my dad's side of the family, who are all Scottish.

Still, it's this combination of work-spirit and otherness that; when asked to give someone a brief background, encourages me to say, first and foremost, that I'm from Manchester. Once described as 'hell on Earth', it now boasts a population of over 2 million from all over the world - upholding a wide spectrum of faiths, embodying an expansive array of traditions, and all interconnected by this spirit of otherness and the shared opportunity to bask in the industrial landscape - all now converted into apartments, of course. In this way, I'm a proud Northerner and an optimist for what the city might grow into in the future.



Stewart Knights

**IT'S THIS
COMBINATION OF
WORK-SPIRIT AND
OTHERNESS THAT
WHEN ASKED TO
INTRODUCE MYSELF
MAKES ME SAY, FIRST
AND FOREMOST,
THAT I'M FROM
MANCHESTER.**



MARIA ANGELICA TEJADA

MABUHAY

Marker Pens and Gel Pens

On Bristol Board

33.02 x 43.18 cm

2019-2020

DESCRIPTION

My artwork is a representation of the colorful majestic festivals and symbols of my country Philippines. I used here metallic shades using pens just to break the norm of the profound and vibrant colours, as for me Metallic is somehow symbolized purity and patriotism.

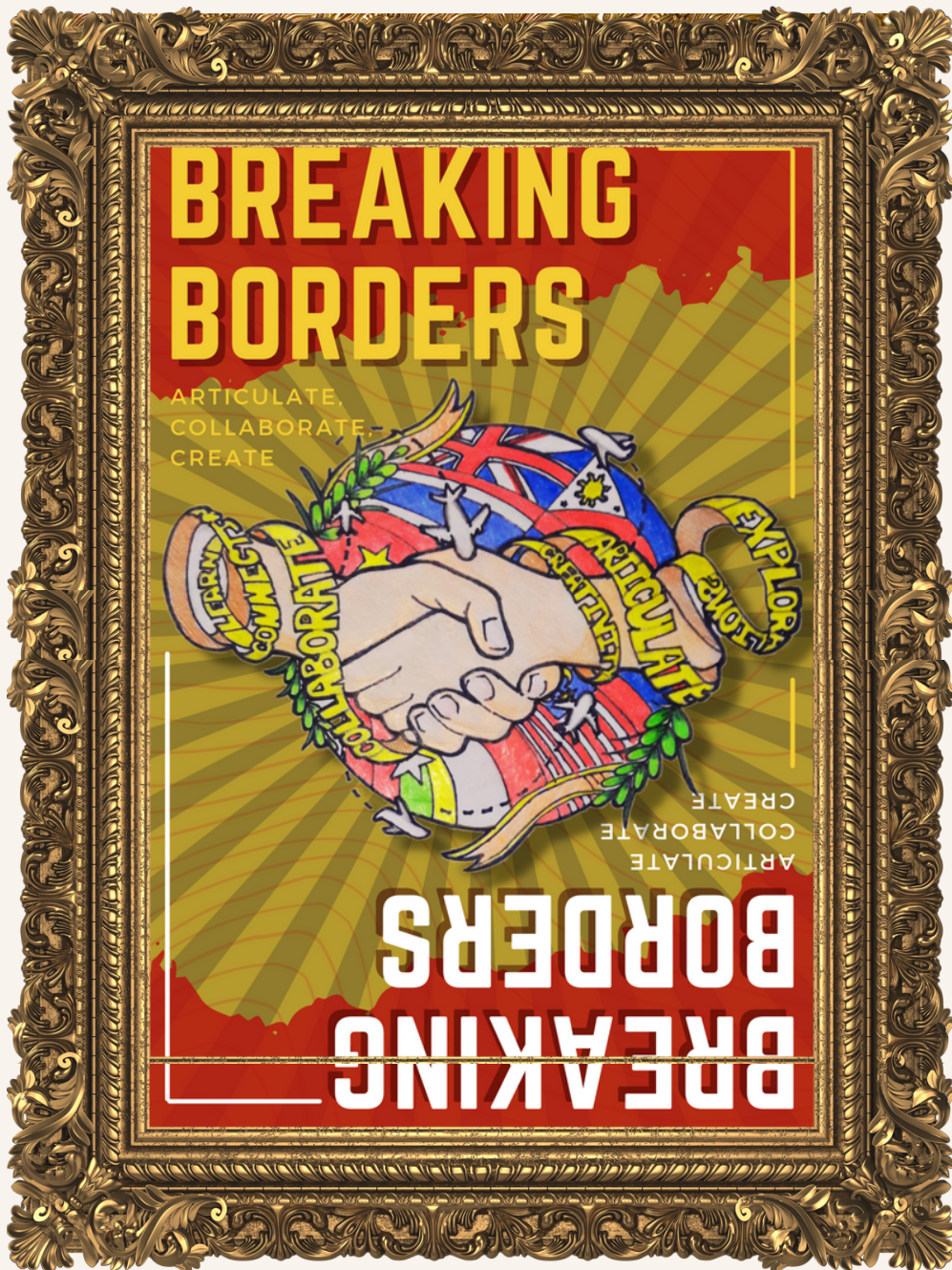


Veronica Burgstaller

**" FOR ME, AFTER
MANY YEARS OF
BEING IN LIMBO AS
TO WHAT
I REALLY AM, I AM
CONTENT TO SAY
THAT I AM BOTH
EUROPEAN AND
ASIAN. "**

I was born in Vienna to an Austrian father and a Balinese mother. In my childhood, I was always sure that my home is Vienna and strongly identified myself as Austrian, mainly because I spent most of the time either living in Austria or in Indonesia with only shorter stints in other countries. And in Indonesia people would view me as a white foreigner, so I also never thought I was really Indonesian. As I grew up and spent more years abroad, and then leaving Austria for good at 14, I began to feel more distant from the idea of Austria as my home.

Growing up with a fascination for East Asia, living there, but at the same time keeping in touch with my Indonesian heritage, I grew closer to the Asian culture. On the other hand, while living in the Netherlands, UK and Germany for the past years, I have felt more welcome there than I had ever in Austria where I had experienced quite a few instances of racism. Travellers or people who move a lot around would sometimes say that they are international or global. For me, after many years of being in limbo as to what I really am, I am content to say that I am both European and Asian.



MIGUEL MATTHEW BALADAD

DESCRIPTION

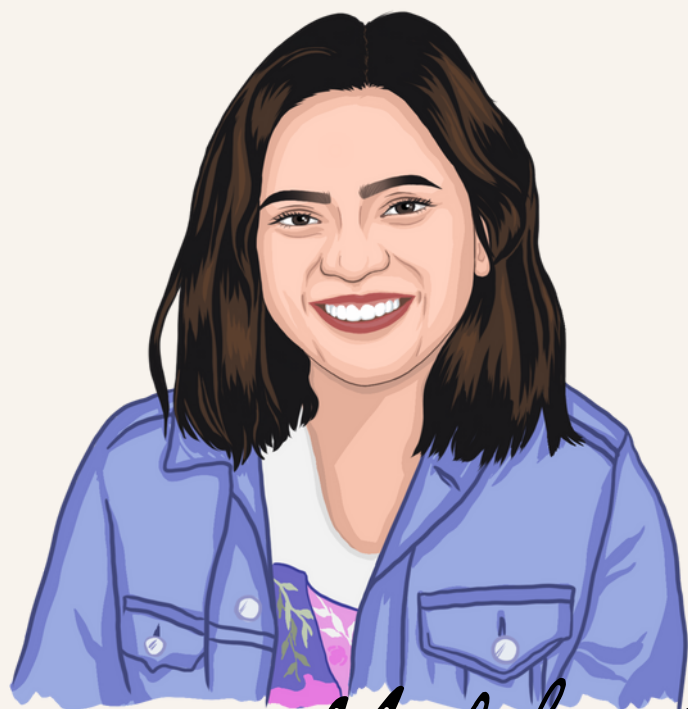
Breaking Borders

Colour Markers and Pencils on Paper
with Graphic Design
50.80 x 72.60 cm

12.05.2021

This piece entitled "Breaking Borders" is a digital visual rendition of the artist's experience and journey during ARTICULATE 2021.

This masterpiece portrays the nature and the challenge of today's society- collaboration and communication. The Pandemic in the eyes of the artist unboxed the abilities of everyone to reach out despite the far distances and differences. Miguel saw the ability of his shared passion and creativity with the rest of the cohort in breaking borders and going beyond the traditional ways just to ARTICULATE, COLLABORATE, and CREATE.



Ziarla Malabanan

I learned how to do the groceries, wash my clothes, cook my food, and manage my money. The trip made me realize how naïve and spoiled I was, and it pushed me out of my comfort zone. I also realized how big the world is and that I know so little about it - it was a very humbling experience. Ironically, as I am learning about other cultures through this exchange, I discovered many things about myself and my own country. After my engagement with the school, I also traveled to beautiful neighboring countries like Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, and Austria. Indeed, this trip was life-changing, and I would not be the person I am right now had I not taken this trip.

When I was 18 years old, I signed up for a summer exchange and taught English and culture at a public school in the Czech Republic. It was my first time traveling outside of Asia and on my own. I was in my 2nd year of University - I was young and idealistic. I thought I knew a great deal about the world, but this changed when I took the trip. During those two months, I lived with people who came from different parts of the world – Singapore, India, and Egypt. I shared my culture with elementary students who had no idea where the Philippines was. I ate Czech food, drank Czech beer, and immersed myself with locals for eight weeks.

“

**IRONICALLY,
AS I LEARNED ABOUT
OTHER CULTURES
THROUGH THIS
EXCHANGE TO THE
CZECH REPUBLIC,
I DISCOVERED MANY
THINGS ABOUT
MYSELF AND MY OWN
COUNTRY.**

”



EAST ASIAN POPULAR CULTURE AND RENEGOTIATION OF GENDER SEXUALITY

Written by Nicola Crowe

Although the representation of diversity in gender and sexual minorities has become a part of mainstream culture, inclusivity remains an issue that requires continual improvement globally. Within the Western world, representation of minorities within television, film, theatre, and music remains limited, despite supposedly leading the way in advancing the rights of the LGBTQ+ community on an international scale.

This is especially concerning considering the significant benefits that come from representing such identities, providing increased rights and freedoms to those commonly marginalised, while also creating a platform for understanding and renegotiating these boundaries – offering the ability to reconceptualise what gender and sexuality means to individuals and societies as a whole. Despite the common assumption that East Asia lags behind the West due to the retention of traditional gender roles, the region's use of representation within popular culture has actually offered greater fluidity of gender and sexuality than witnessed elsewhere.

Drawing on the work of prominent academics, the performative aspect of popular culture can be understood to play a central role in the creation and reproduction of identities. For Foucault, the societal discourses formed around aspects of identity, such as gender and sexuality, create subtle power interactions that result in individuals' acceptance or marginalisation (Hurford, 2009, pp.11). Han (2006, pp.85) details that through power mechanisms, individuals can be constructed as gendered, racialised, or sexualised bodies, as with "the gendering [and feminisation] of 'oriental' men... to disguise western homoerotic desires within the confines of occidental heterosexuality". By emphasising certain characteristics over others, specific bodies are deemed as not belonging to the mainstream, predominantly Western culture, resulting in the exclusion of many. Categories of gender, sex, and eroticism are [then] not seen as innate but as constricts formed to support or subvert the structure of the dominant culture", with the body being a primary site of contesting political, social, and sexual struggles (Gabrovska, 2009, pp.72).

Linking this to Butler's work on performativity, popular culture then becomes an act of doing gender and sexuality – a means of defining what concepts such as masculinity and femininity mean, as well as which identities those performing are considered to belong to (Hurford, 2009, pp.12). This then entrenches certain groups as the accepted norm over others. One such recent example has been the perceived authenticity of gay Asian drag queens, with not only physical characteristics of performers, but racialised beliefs regarding the supposed femininity of Asian men compared to their Western counterparts, reinforcing this identity (Han, 2006, pp.83). Thus, modes of popular culture represent a crucial part of the conceptualisation of societal attitudes on gender and sexual expression. And as popular culture varies greatly between nations, it is then easy to understand the different histories and realities of minority communities globally.

In reference to the East Asian region of Japan, China, and South Korea, both historically and currently, popular culture has significantly contributed to establishing and renegotiating the norms and boundaries of gender and sexual expression, which have often been less dichotomous than those seen within Europe.

Historically, traditional East Asian entertainment, such as Japanese Kabuki theatre and Chinese Opera, has, to a certain extent, opposed Western beliefs and stereotypes and instead offered the opportunity for the exploration and understanding of minority communities. With the presence of crossdressing in both forms of theatre, gender binaries were still enforced, yet in a way which ultimately enabled them to be challenged.

Despite often emerging from and appearing to entrench more conventional gender dichotomies, the performative aspect of popular culture itself interestingly disrupted these norms. For example, the crossdressing present within Chinese opera originated as a result of highly restrictive historical gender norms, as Ming and Qing dynasty societies strictly controlled interactions between men and women, meaning that all-male or all-female casts were a necessity to avoid social impropriety (Tian, 2018).

Yet, despite the practicality of this gender segregation, the complex and challenging nature of these roles ultimately meant that performers were breaking through the barriers of gender – subverting the very norms that informed the practicalities of theatre at the time. Assigned a role within opera school, actors were expected to commit to developing the corresponding traits and skills expected of them, which was an especially difficult task for those performing crossdressing roles and therefore expected to embody “an unattainable masculine or feminine ideal” that not even those belonging to either gender could achieve (Tian, 2018). Similarly, Kabuki theatre, which was performed exclusively by men, also functioned as “a main site for production of gender in premodern Japan” (Gabrovska, 2009, pp.71), as while some presentations of masculinity and femininity reflected society at the time, others were more fantastical – see below the contrast of aragoto characters, the exaggerated heroes or villains in kabuki that wore bright costumes and makeup, compared to the onnagata characters, the more subtle yet traditional portrayals of female characters by male actors.





Figure 1: Aragoto. Source: Japan Zone. (2021). Kabuki Theater [Photo]. Available from: <https://www.japan-zone.com/culture/kabuki.shtml>.



Figure 2: Onnagata. Source: Via Madrid TV. (2018, June 25). The kabuki company Heisei Nakamura performs for the first time in Spain [Photo]. Available from: <https://www.viamadridtv.es/41751/la-compania-kabuki-heisei-nakamura-actua-primera-vez-espana/>. [CN1]

This has worked to push the accepted categories of gender and sexuality in a way that ordinary people were unable to do. Although stemming from traditional binaries and divisions, this historical form of popular culture resulted in the unintentional but important development of new gender identities and characteristics, ultimately underlining the potential that the arts hold for promoting greater understanding and pluralism within daily life.

This tradition has undoubtedly been perpetuated in the modern popular culture of East Asia, proving especially influential due to recent growth of communication and globalisation. New forms of popular East Asian entertainment such as K-Pop, anime, and manga have proliferated both within and outside the region, increasing the spread of their associated values and ideas.

Although this has recently shifted towards creating a more inclusive array of gender and sexual expressions, East Asian popular culture has previously contributed to the enforcement of traditional roles. For example, within Korean popular culture such as K-dramas and films in the 1980s and 90s, the salaryman was the dominant male aesthetic, centred around traditional strong, ruling, and authoritative men as the preferred norm (BBC, 2018). Modelled after historical war heroes and rulers, this dominant mode of masculinity was strongly tied to classic Chinese heroes in literature, with a focus on occupation rather than sexual ties (Carlos, 2019). Furthermore, the K-Pop industry has tended to favour the reinforcement of patriarchal representations of women, especially through presenting female bodies as for heterosexual male desires (Garza, 2019, pp.5). With K-pop idols representing the peak of Korean beauty standards, such as small, v-shaped faces, pale skin, and slim figures, it is understandable that many ordinary citizens are suffering from negative body images due to the pressures to fit these strict ideals.

Ultimately, the perpetuation of these standards through popular culture has led to a culture of excessive beauty product consumption and high plastic surgery rates, meaning that individuals - especially young Korean women - are putting themselves in danger by dieting, using potentially harmful skin lightening products, and undergoing permanent procedures to achieve the K-Pop idol look (Keng, 2021). Meanwhile Japan continues to generate two distinct kinds of gendered manga, with heroic action storylines (shonen) targeting male readers, and romantically oriented stories (shojo) targeting female readers (Hurford, 2009, pp.4).

Through this, this form of popular culture is shown to not innately challenge social norms, often cementing their existence. However, it does have the power to renegotiate and entrench new identities due to its central position in society.

Nevertheless, the more revolutionary role of popular media in East Asia can be observed through the broadening representation of different gender and sexual expressions in recent years. As categories of identity such as gender have undergone intensifying questionings since the 1970s and the queer movement has developed, the meaning of masculinity and femininity, and the predominance of heteronormativity, has been transformed across Asia and the world (Carlos, 2019). To reflect and contribute to this, aspects of Asian popular culture have changed alongside mainstream culture to reflect divergence from strict traditions and allow the development of more modern understandings and representation. Anime and manga series have started to promote more mainstream models of lesbian sexuality, provide commentary on the need for queer spaces, and legitimate a broader range of sexual practices and gender identities (Hurford, 2009, pp.64).

Furthermore, K-Pop stars have increasingly been shown to play with traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, ultimately opening possibilities for average citizens by creating new accepted forms of being (BBC, 2018). Potentially undergoing the greatest renegotiation, traditional perceptions of masculinity have been softened through the proliferation of K-Pop groups. Due to the intensive training and strength involved in the process to becoming a K-Pop idol, this form of masculinity has retained elements of traditional, refined Confucian masculinity - with which Korea has strong ties (Carlos, 2019). However, with the use of makeup and hair dye, tightly choreographed routines, and polished fashion, male K-Pop stars have successfully developed an accepted feminine or androgynous masculinity, widening "what it means to be a beautiful man in a heterosexual or non-heterosexual way" (BBC, 2018).

Unfortunately, this has contributed to unrealistic beauty standards for men alongside women, with the more feminine or androgynous K-Pop idol look forcing Korean men to pay greater attention to cosmetics, haircare, and maintaining an idealistic body type than before (Keng, 2021) - potentially acting as a negative equaliser to the widening of masculinity. Nevertheless, the expansion of East Asian popular culture has undoubtedly acted as a central platform for the negotiation and exploration of personal identities, highlighting the importance of popular culture not just for entertainment purposes, but as a basis for change.

Through the performative aspect of popular culture, conventions can be both upheld and renegotiated, allowing for the challenging of traditional standards towards greater fluidity of identity. Acting as a "form of soft power to disseminate discourses and ideologies" (Garza, 2019, pp.4), popular culture enables the emergence of new social identities - deconstructing "dominant notions of doing gender while constructing cosmopolitan notions of femininity [masculinity, and sexuality] that can be accessed by all" (Garza, 2019, pp.26). In renegotiating and normalising a range of identities through these mainstream platforms, new possibilities are created for all individuals for acceptance and freedom of expression, contributing to more inclusive societies.



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HAUNTED SILENCE: TANGIBLE SUFFERING IN INDO-DUTCH HOUSEHOLDS

Written by Toby Zwama
Edited by Jedidja van Boven

Traces of colonialism linger throughout the entirety of Europe, and hesitance to address the past has kept large issues unaddressed, ignored or forgotten. The Netherlands and its colonial connection to Indonesia is known to most Dutch people, however the knowledge is shallow and the complexities of the past are rarely fully addressed. As the Dutch sociologist and author Paul Scheffer wrote in his book: "...if we don't reconsider our image of the past and if we don't grant our colonial history a definite space in our collective memory, we violate the truth and distort the historical record" (Scheffer in Boehmer & Gouda 2009, p. 37).

One group that is currently one of the largest ethnic minorities of the Netherlands are the Indo-Dutch, whose past is based in the Dutch East Indies. They are of mixed Indonesian-Dutch descent, but due to the path of assimilation ventured by their (grand)parents, they often find it hard to recognize their cultural background and struggle with forming an identity in the face of opposing discourses about the Dutch East Indies (Pattynama, 2012; Lindo & Pang, 1999).

Historical background

During the 1950s-60s, groups of Indo-Dutch people were repatriated to the Netherlands because of the chaotic and dangerous situation known by the Dutch as the Bersiap-period. The proclamation of independence by Sukarno and the power vacuum caused by the Japanese capitulation set the stage for an explosive situation that saw the Indonesian natives attempt to rid themselves of any outside influence. This included people of mixed origins. First generation Indo-Dutch repatriates often experienced many types of trauma, as Doornbos summarises: "The daily realities of the first-generation Indo-Europeans often involved brutalities of the Japanese occupation and decolonization; loss of the home country; repatriation to the Netherlands in the 1950-60s, marginalization and discrimination." While never having directly experienced these hardships, third-generation Indo-Dutch people are still strongly affected by the experiences of their parents and grandparents, showcasing how colonialism is still felt today.

Houses as haunted spaces

Dragojlovic (2015) used the haunted space of a family household as a framework, conceptualising 'Indisch atmosphere' to scrutinize intergenerational hauntings. Doornbos (2021) builds on this work together with Dragojlovic, writing of intergenerational haunting as a continuing effect of colonialism. Indo-Europeans' memories of the past are often characterized by the longing for *tempo doeloe*, meaning 'the good old days' in Malay. Colonial life is remembered through a romantic lens that does not critically remember the war violence, racialized violence and displacement. The difficulty to remember critically and the longing for *tempo doeloe* causes the engagement with trauma to be shaped with secrecy and repression (Dragojlovic, 2014). For new generations of Indo-Dutch people, this secrecy and repression is felt almost physically - like a haunting.

Hirsch (2008) coined the term 'postmemory' to signify the pervasive effects of (family) trauma on later generations, in her case second-generation Jewish people who survived the Holocaust. The same intergenerational transmission is in effect in Indo-Dutch households, though Doornbos and Dragojlovic (2021) specify that "often, it is not the trauma itself but rather the secrecy and lack of knowledge that surround it that haunt descendants and invoke questions concerning ancestry and silences." The ghosts of the past are so powerful especially because they become more tangible with repression and silence.

The findings of Doornbos and Dragojlovic show that Indo-Dutch participants of the study from all generations described a prevalent atmosphere of tension and grief, in which the family members felt the need to be vigilant, read the room and adapt to the (silent) suffering of their parents. They emphasized it was "typically Indisch" to deal with trauma through silence and repression. Nicole, born in the 1970s recounts:

My father was very silent. I found him unpleasant. He determined the atmosphere. He always sat at the same spot. We did not grow up with communication. Always silence. My father said nothing. We always needed to check how he felt. Everything was about him. My mother completely adapted.
(Doornbos & Dragojlovic, 2021, p 11)

On the other hand, the *tempo doeloe* could be recounted and this was sometimes done eagerly. Debbie, who was born in the 1960s, recalls: "Nothing was more fun than sitting around the kitchen table with my mum telling stories about the past, what things were like there. Anecdotes about ghosts, family and their adventures" (Doornbos & Dragojlovic, 2021).

The second-generation of Indo-Dutch still experience such struggles, while the trauma that originally caused it has not affected them personally. While articulating a desire to act differently than their parents, they find that they lack the necessary avenues to do so. Ivan describes this: "How can my father be a father to me? He cannot. Then, how can I be a father to my son? I cannot. Nobody taught me." The topics that were treated as taboo by their parents remained as such: off-limits, and a source of pain or anger.



Silence makes trauma tangible

Intentions to 'leave the past behind' have not actually gotten rid of the past within the household. The ghosts of trauma remained in the house, causing tense atmosphere through an absence of openness - a 'zone of unspeakability' (Dragojlovic, 2011) - and the presence of certain behaviours relating to strictness, emotional numbness, unpredictability and anger of parents (Doornbos & Dragojlovic, 2021).

Works like those of Doornbos & Dragojlovic remind us of the importance of continuing to discuss such difficult topics; not only to guarantee the establishment of a balanced, well-informed historical (trans)national awareness, but also to destigmatize various forms of historical trauma and thereby make them "speakable" again.

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INDIGENOUS LEGACY: THE FORMOSAN LANGUAGES OF TAIWAN



Written by Elisa Lenker

Lokah su'ga! Mihumisang! Aveoveoyx! Akokay! Djavadjavai! Nga' ay ho! These are all different ways to say hello and greet someone in Formosan languages (RTI, 2020), but do you know what they are?

When thinking of the Republic of China, more commonly known as Taiwan, it can be easy to overlook the rich linguistic history and variety that characterize the main island. Perhaps Mandarin Chinese, Hakka, or Hokkien come to mind – all of Sino-Tibetan origin and connected to early settlements from the mainland in the last centuries. However, a group of people has inhabited the mountains and plains of this island for thousands of years, becoming a linguistic hub for a large percentage of the world population. Meet the Austronesian indigenous people of Taiwan.

A long-standing history

It is believed that the first settlements at the Island of Taiwan from Austronesian communities go back 5,500 years, remaining unaffected and having sovereignty over the land for most of this time. Nevertheless, the Taiwan Strait's advantageous location in terms of trade and security eventually led to the arrival of foreign influences (Stephens, 2018).

The earliest records of encounters between Taiwan's indigenous tribes and incoming travelers date back to the 16th century on the island identified in European maps as Formosa – meaning 'beautiful' in Portuguese – when small merchants, fishermen, and pirates of Han Chinese origin visited the island. By the end of the 17th century, the Dutch East India Company had established a base in southwestern Taiwan and soon after ousted the Spanish base in the north of the island. However, this occupation only lasted half a century, before Ming Dynasty loyalists drove out the Dutch from Taiwan (Taiwan Government, n.d.). Gradually, migration from the mainland pushed indigenous communities back from their ancestral land.

Still, the indigenous population of Taiwan remained, although with much smaller numbers, and now facing disruption to their communities, territories, cultures, languages, and traditional values (Hsieh & Lakaw, 2019).

What are Formosan languages?

One cannot understand the history of Taiwan without first grasping the aboriginal cultures, languages, and tribes that have flourished there. The indigenous languages of the island form what are known as the Formosan languages. Even though the 16 indigenous tribes account for only 2.3% of the population of Taiwan (Central News Agency, 2016), there have been 26 recorded indigenous languages, at least 11 of which have become extinct (Robert Blust, 2013). In fact, because of the language used in politics and schools being Mandarin Chinese and the widely spread Sinitic languages Hakka and Hokkien, seven of them are currently endangered, and they are all vulnerable (RTI, 2020). Additionally, while these languages were originally distributed throughout the island in different tribes (see Figure 1), they currently tend to gather in the high lands of the island.

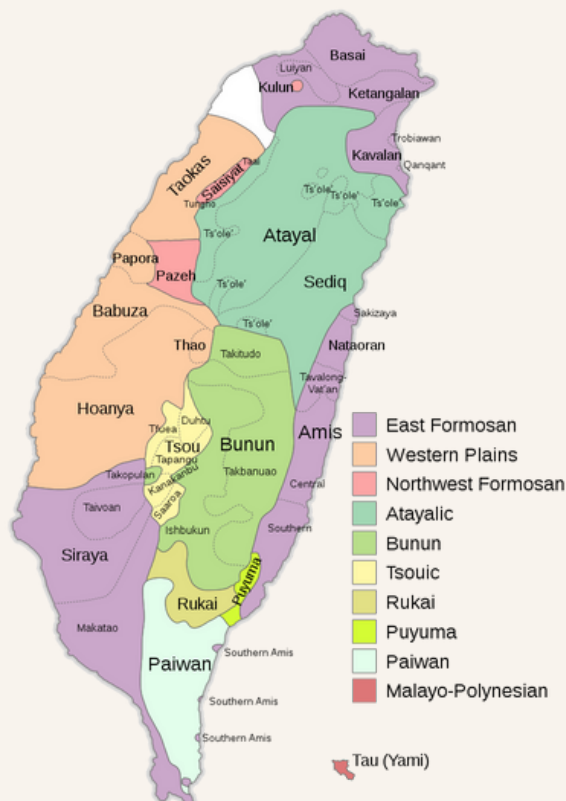


Figure 1. Families of Formosan languages before Chinese colonization, per Blust (1999).

As of now, only 15 indigenous Taiwanese languages remain in use on the island. The largest one, Amis, was spoken by 165,579 people in 2004, and the smallest one, Saaora, had merely three to five speakers in 2012 (Lewis, 2016; Blust, 2013). It is important to mention, however, that current speakers are not homogeneous, but rather a product of centuries of coexistence between ethnic groups, creating a rich mixture of cultures and languages. We can find in these languages plenty of loanwords of Sino-Tibetan origin, as well as from Dutch, Japanese, and Spanish (Blust, 2013).

However, Formosan languages are not just a linguistic variety. They hold a very important position in linguistic history and research as one of the largest sub-groups of Austronesian languages. Indeed, data suggests that all Austronesian languages – beginning with Proto-Austronesian – originated in Taiwan (Blust, 2013; Britannica, n.d.). This would mean that the spread of Austronesian languages may have begun with the migration of Taiwan's indigenous tribes to other regions, such as the Philippines and Hawaii (Kimoto, 2017). In fact, the 1,200 Austronesian languages – major examples being Malay, Javanese, and Tagalog – fall into 10 subgroups, and nine of them happen to be located in Taiwan (Diamond, 2000). While this discovery alone supports the need further research into other Austronesian countries' own historic and linguistic background, Taiwan's own small indigenous communities, sadly, are diminishing every decade.

A case of endangered linguistic gems

In similar fashion to Hakka and Hokkien, both from the Sino-Tibetan family, minority languages in Taiwan are losing ground to the island's lingua franca: Mandarin Chinese (Liao, 2008). Taiwan's indigenous communities are also losing ground to globalization and urbanization. For example, under the assimilationist Japanese occupation and the later Kuomintang regime in the 20th century, native languages were criminalized, and this has long-lasting consequences (Davidson, 2021).

Thus, despite the great value of Formosan languages in Austronesian linguistics research and cultural heritage, they are gradually disappearing.

Nevertheless, recent policy changes might yet have the potential to improve the position of Formosan languages. For the first time in history, President Tsai Ing Wen apologized in 2016 on behalf of the government to indigenous people for the pain and mistreatment they had endured for centuries. This was followed by the passing of the 2017 Indigenous Languages Development Act, which aims to preserve and promote the existing languages of Taiwanese aboriginals through several initiatives, such as Romanizing these languages, teaching them as a first language in schools, or developing smartphone apps for their study (Taiwan Government, n.d.; Taipei Times, 2015). Creating an environment that can protect Formosan languages, allow in-depth research, and promote native culture is not an easy task, but the first step has been taken. We can only hope that it is not too late.

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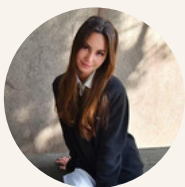
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THE SYNCRETISM OF SHINTO AND BUDDHISM IN JAPAN



Written by Krista Tammila

Edited by Juliette Odolant

Introduction

Japan is a nation rich in culture, one that is constantly developing yet which has nonetheless succeeded at remaining true to its origins. Shaped by a tumultuous history of war and natural disasters, the country was not always the bustling technological metropolis it is today. Although at first glance, modern day Japan seems to bear little resemblance to its past self, it has still been able to preserve its fascinating traditions and history. For this reason, when walking through Tokyo's bustling streets, you will no doubt stumble upon shrines and temples dedicated to worship.

Those who have been lucky enough to experience what Japan has to offer know that there are a myriad different ways Japanese people celebrate their traditional values. A good example of how religions or faiths are celebrated by the Japanese are the festivals or matsuri (祭り) in Japanese. Matsuri are public festivals which are celebrated all over the country and usually take place over a few days. They can range from the celebration of the Sakura flower to that of children, from the remembrance of one's ancestors to the reverence of ancient Japanese warriors. Many international tourists flock to Japan in order to attend these spectacular displays of culture. They not only provide an opportunity to try an incredible array of seasonal Japanese food and admire enchanting displays, but also highlight the spectacular originality of Japanese traditions. Matsuri usually occur around a Shinto shrine or jinja (神社), as it is the main place of worship (Ashkenazi, 1993). However, another faith holds a prominent position in Japan and shapes its many traditions – Buddhism.

The Syncretic combination of Shintoism and Buddhism

“We live as Shintoists, but die as Buddhists”

Some might think that Japan is a monotheistic nation due to its strong association with Shinto, which originates and is only practiced in Japan, but it is quite the opposite: many Japanese people practice both Shintoism and Buddhism (Matsunami, 2004).

Simply put, Shinto, originating in the late 6th century AD and as such the oldest surviving Japanese religion, is animistic in nature. This means that Shinto subscribers believe every single object, from people to rocks, contains a kind of soul or spirit (kami 神). When a particular natural object is said to have kami, it is often marked with a strip of white paper or the Shimenawa (標), a braided straw rope that is tied around the object and used for ritual purification. In Shintoism, there are no scriptures, no leader, no central profession of faith, nor even a concept of the afterlife. It is a religion where one does not need to join or be a member, but simply exists for everyone.

“In Japanese culture, there is a belief that God is everywhere – in mountains, trees, rocks, even in our sympathy for robots or Hello Kitty toys” – Ryuichi Sakamoto

Buddhism, though only introduced to Japan in the sixth century BCE., is the second largest religion practiced in Japan after Shintoism. Unlike Shintoism, Buddhism does not acknowledge a god or higher being but instead is centred on many scripts, a caste that studies the ancient scriptures, and lessons from the Buddha, a spiritual leader, philosopher, and teacher, which must be learned and followed.

Despite their differences, over the course of history Shintoism and Buddhism have become so intertwined that it is almost impossible to know where one begins and the other ends.

For example, in most Japanese homes a Buddhist and Shinto shrine sit side by side, protecting the house and family. Syncretic combinations of both religions, known as Shinbutsu-shūgō (神仏習合), are common in Japan and illustrate the duality of religious faiths present in the country, molded and shaped by its past. This combination of religious beliefs and faith is visible when it comes to practicing religion in Japan. Many Buddhist temples (寺) are attached to local Shinto Shrines (神社) or vice versa, where Japanese people see no inconsistency in worshiping both the Buddha and Shinto kami. Another interesting by-product of this amalgamation is that many deities in the Buddhist pantheon have taken on the identities of the Shinto kami. The resulting syncretic deity can be honored through both Shinto and Buddhism lenses, thereby bringing both religions closer together.

Both Shinto and Buddhism play an equally prominent part in Japanese society and culture. Instead of causing conflict by highlighting their incompatibility, both complement each other even though they are inherently different (Larsen, 2018). This is mainly because Buddhism has many adaptable qualities which enable its coexistence with Shinto. Indeed, many Japanese simply see the Buddha as kami, while others consider that kami could also achieve transcendence and enlightenment (Larsen, 2018). At its core, this fusion works because in Japan, unlike in Western religions and faiths, religion is rarely preached but is instead treated as a common moral code, a way of living; in this sense it becomes almost indistinguishable from Japanese social and cultural values, allowing for greater fluidity and thus cohesion. Japanese people have been able to alternate between both, or combine them - without conflict. For example, many Japanese people will organize a Shinto wedding ceremony but a Buddhist funeral.

Hinamatsuri and Obon: The festival of girls and the festival of souls

As mentioned previously, Japanese matsuri are prime examples of the syncretism of Shinto and Buddhism, as they showcase the different yet complementary ways in which Shintoism and Buddhism are practiced. For example, Hinamatsuri (雛祭り) is a popular Shinto holiday celebrated every year on March the 3rd. It translates to 'doll festival', but is more commonly known as 'girls' day'. During this celebration, schools, malls, and homes are set up to display platforms covered in a red-carpet material, adorned with Hinaningyo (雛人形), typically sets of 15 ornamental dolls dressed in the traditional court dress of the Heian period (Bhagat, 2019). The celebration revolves around celebrating women and praying for their continued health and happiness. While Hinamatsuri is a purely Shinto celebration, the matsuri Obon (お盆) or Bon (盆), on the other hand, is a Buddhist festival which nevertheless incorporates Shinto elements, testifying to the syncretic coexistence of these two religions in Japan. It takes place over the course of several days, and involves commemorating, honoring, and remembering the dead or more precisely, one's ancestors. This matsuri, influenced by the introduction of Buddhism, incorporates native ancestor worship which is homologous to the Buddhist Yulanpen Festival, originating from India. To celebrate this spiritual practice, paper lanterns called Chochin (提灯) are hung to guide the spirits with incredible firework displays called hanabi (花火大会), along with the impressive Obon dances called bon odori (盆踊り) (Vila, 2021). This Buddhist festival still bears the influence of Shinto practices. Indeed each year at the Kurumazaki Shrine, in Kyoto, a Shinto-style light show is performed to celebrate Obon.

Although the Hinamatsuri and Obon matsuri are inherently different in what they celebrate and the religious denomination they officially belong to, the fact that the majority of Japanese people participate in both practices and can incorporate elements of one into the other showcase the flexibility with which Shinto and Buddhist beliefs coexist.

Conclusion

The word 'matsuri' exists to denote religious festivals in general, but does not distinguish linguistically between a Shinto and Buddhist festival, confirming the inherent syncretism of these two religions and spiritual practices. Over the centuries, Japan has successfully sustained the harmonious coexistence of two belief systems. Its unique ability to intertwine Shintoism and Buddhism while still preserving the core concepts and values of both is testament to the creativity and adaptivity of its people.



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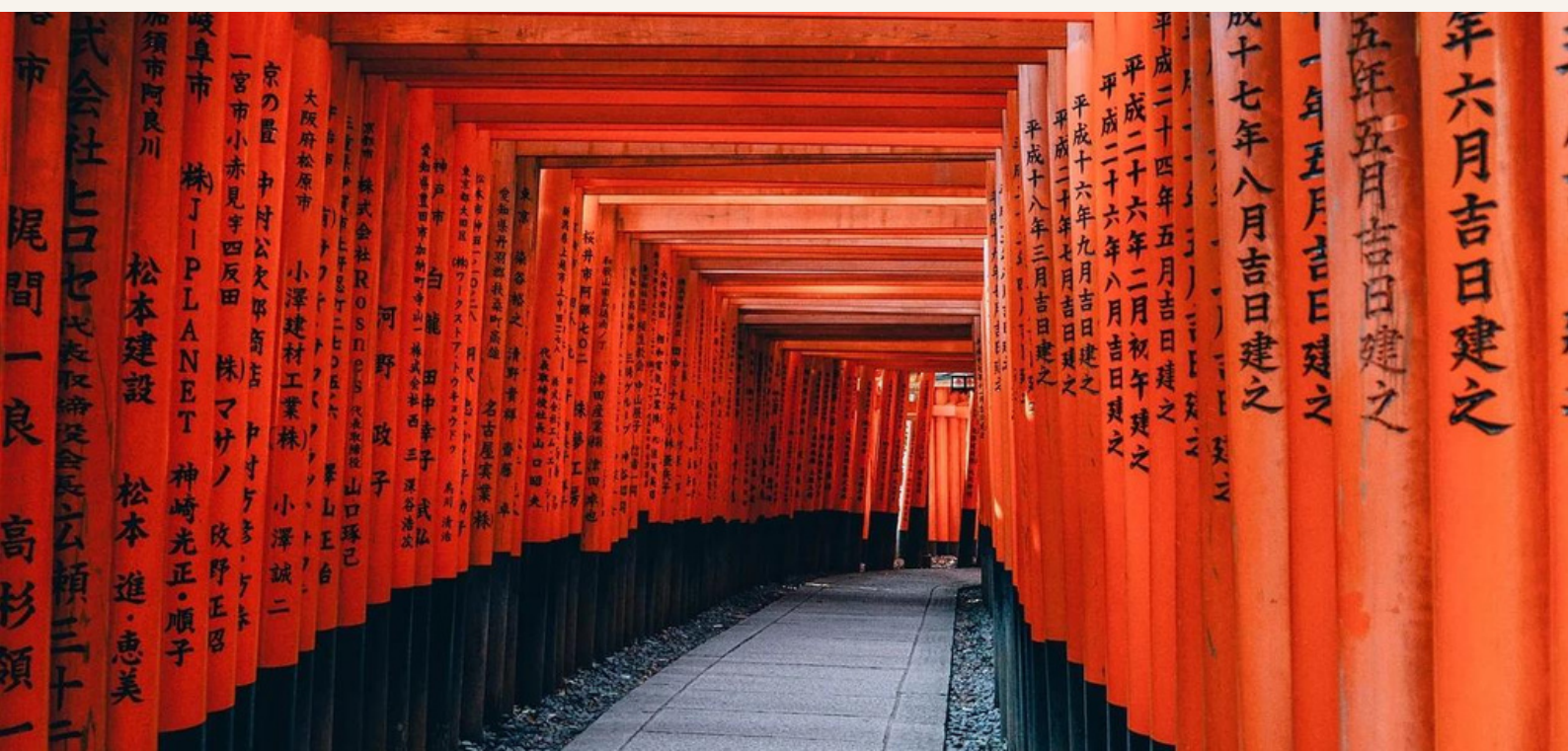
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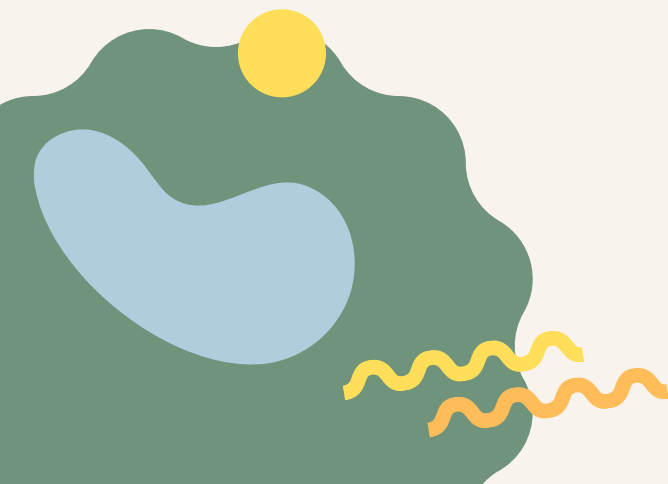


#RamadhanTips

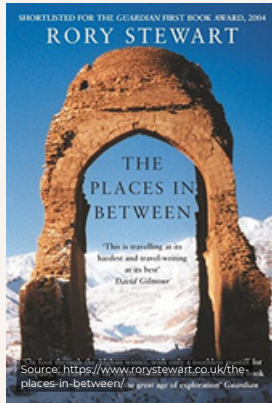
STEAR RECOMMENDS

BOOKS
FILMS
YOUTUBE CHANNELS

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BOOKS

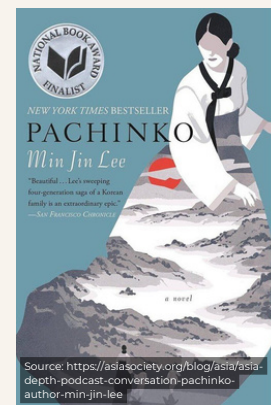


***The Places in Between* by Rory Stewart (recommended by Luke):**

Growing up in the United Kingdom, the mention of Afghanistan was clouded by news of the conflict there. But retracing the journey of Babur, the first emperor of Mughal India, Rory Stewart's part-travel journal, part- history lesson tells of an Afghanistan traditional and modern, steeped in cultural value. From his account of the Minaret of Jam, to his tales of Afghan villages, Stewart remains really loyal to the history of the country and its culture, providing both an academic and fascinating read!

***Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee (recommended by Stella, Veronica, Jedidja)**

This family epic, spanning multiple generations, focuses on the Zainichi (Koreans in Japan, which form one the largest immigrant groups in Japan). Its value lies in its balancing act between being realistic without becoming overly patriotic, but also in its compelling characters and explorations of gender, work, success, family, and belonging.



***Kafka on the Shore* (海辺のカフカ) by Murakami Haruki (村上 春樹) (recommended by Quinlan)**

Murakami Haruki leads you down the rabbit hole and into a world more wondrous than can be imagined, described in the down-to-earth, naturalistic style of writing he is known for. You will realize when reading that, even though Murakami's premises are fantastic to say the least, they are so well written that you're inclined to believe these things could actually happen. This, to me, makes Kafka on the shore a temporary escape from reality without equals in the modern day literary realm.

***The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov (recommended by Toby)**

A Russian classic, depicting the Soviet life of the 1930s with mystical themes and fantastical language. This is my favorite book and because I think it is best enjoyed without knowing too much of the plot, all I will say is that it is about some mischievous demons - perhaps the devil himself - who have come to Moscow to test its people. I highly recommend the 50th anniversary edition, translated by Pevear and Volokhonsky, for its gorgeous prose.



FILMS

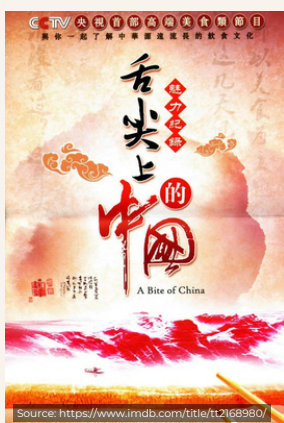


Racing Extinction - 2015 ***(recommended by Quinlan)***

A documentary on climate change, illegal wildlife trade and the anthropogenic destruction of the planet that brings you to tears by showing you the beauty of the nature we're so bent on destroying. I have watched many documentaries about the environmental challenges faced by us today, from the infamous Cowspiracy to Leonardo DiCaprio's Before the Flood, but none have impacted me as much as Racing Extinction. The cinematography and music in this award-winning documentary are, in my opinion, unmatched and have brought me to tears on many occasions. This documentary teaches that the beauty of nature knows no bounds, and neither does the destruction humans have caused. That's why action is necessary yesterday, not tomorrow.

On the Job - 2013 ***(recommended by Ziarla)***

Action/thriller film that brilliantly exposes the corruption in the Philippines at every possible level. The story revolves around politicians and prison officials who secretly hire convicts to assassinate their enemies. These convicts quickly return to prison (ironically their safe haven) after conducting their hits.



A bite of China - 2014 - 2018 ***(recommended by Gisele)***

A Chinese documentary series on the history of food in China. It not only showcases the eating and cooking of Chinese people in different regions, but also speaks on a deeper level, showing people's lifestyles and social interactions through storytelling.

The Woman in the Septic Tank/Ang Babae sa Septic Tank - 2011 (recommended by Jamina)

A satire of the global art film scene shows two filmmakers constructing an exaggerated "poverty porn" film aimed at international film festivals. Hilariously skewers stereotypes about the so-called Third World, and shows how shallow pity can be.



YOUTUBE CHANNELS



Li Ziqi

(recommended by Jedidja)

Documentary-style videos starring a young Chinese woman living in the Sichuan mountains. Videos show traditional cooking, art, crafts, celebration of holidays, and farming, all done with traditional techniques and with extremely high production quality. Not a lot of speaking so no Chinese language knowledge required!

Asian Boss

(recommended by Quinlan)

Arguably the best, independent and freely-accessible video reporting on Asian politics and culture available today. Centered around street interviews.



Baumgartner Restoration

(recommended by Jedidja)

This one might sound niche, but this is a high-quality channel run by a professional art conservator. There is nothing stranger than seeing complete strangers bond in the comments over the proper way to bind a lining to a canvas, but these videos are very relaxing and give a fascinating perspective of conservation and fine art in general.



Beryl Shereshewsky **(recommended by Ziarla)**

Super cool vlog channel of a foodie who gets food recommendations/recipes from people around the world and tries to cook it herself. There's a theme for every episode, e.g. "What the world eats when they are sick" (Japan, India, Singapore); "Trying your Cozy Rainy Day Food" (Germany, India, Puerto Rico).



RECAP: STEAR VIRTUAL GLOBAL VILLAGE 2022



Written by Kyay Mon & Jedidja van Boven

On 19 February 2022, STEAR launched its flagship cultural event known as the “Global Village”, bringing together participants from around the globe to celebrate the diversity of Eurasian culture and arts. The virtual Global Village offered youth from across the continents a space where they could learn about and experience cultural diversity through interactions with cultural experts and practitioners.

Opening Ceremony

In his welcome speech, STEAR Co-President Dao highlighted the powerful role culture plays in transforming societies, strengthening communities, and fostering a sense of identity and belonging. He went on to share that the aim of STEAR’s Global Village was to provide young people with an opportunity to connect with each other and explore new cultures, thereby deepening their cultural understanding. To make this a reality amidst restrictions posed by the pandemic, the Global Village used an innovative meeting platform called Gather.Town (or simply Gather), which enriched the immersive experience for participants.

Following Dao’s remarks, STEAR was honored to welcome two distinguished guests for their opening speeches. The first keynote speaker was Ms. Ann Follin, Vice-Chair of the Asia-Europe Museums Network. Ms. Follin is also currently the Director General of National Museums of World Culture Sweden and has more than 35 years of leadership experience in various senior positions in the cultural sector. Ms. Follin shared how museums offer new layers of meaning and new perspectives, sparking inspiration and creativity. She also introduced various exhibitions and projects that have harnessed the powers of creativity and technological innovation to engage people from all over the world and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

The second guest speech was given by Ms. Rensje Teerink, Head of Division in the European External Action Service. Ms. Teerink is an expert in South Asian relations and a seasoned diplomat with 27 years of experience in diplomacy and foreign service. The focus of Ms. Teerink's speech was on the historical development of diplomatic relations between Europe and Asia and its impact on youth. To illustrate the significance of Europe-Asia relations, she brought attention to major political platforms such as the European Union's Cooperation Framework with ASEAN and Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). Furthermore, she emphasized that cross-cultural interactions among youth from two regions should be nurtured and cultivated to promote understanding and tolerance.

After the Opening Ceremony, participants were invited to the Gather space that had been customized for the Global Village performances and workshops. Find out more about the performers and experts below!

Awang Samrow

Awang Samrow is an upcoming Terengganu (east coast part of Malaysia) Experimental Malay Cultures Neo Psychedelic Rock Music project by musician Fahmi Samsudin. They just started making music last year and have finished their debut album already. The music they screened was very experimental and expressive, while also being upbeat and relaxed. It is a wonderful example of how an artist can put his heart and soul into a piece of music.

PheonOx

The Oxford PheonOx Chinese Dance Society is a newly formed student-led organization at the University of Oxford and also the first Chinese dance society there. Their vision is to share Chinese culture through dance, bringing people together to foster intercultural exchange in Oxford and beyond, as well as celebrate the diversity of cultures. Their appearance at the Global Village involved a riveting minute-long group choreography of a Chinese dance performance, and treated us to a truly outstanding artistic spectacle.

Watching the group perform their routine and move in unison to perform intricate maneuvers, steps and flourishes was a sight to behold indeed!

Weirong Li

In Weirong Li's talk, she touched upon the benefits and disadvantages of growing up in an international environment. As Third Culture Kids (TCKs) can experience unique difficulties, Weirong Li shed light on the skills and talents of this group, such as cultural intelligence and cognitive flexibility, and more importantly – how one could use these skills during a career. Her start-up 'Raw Culture' dives deeper into these issues and is certainly worth checking out!

Irene Vettiyadan

Irene Vettiyadan took us on a journey to Indian dance culture. She elaborated on the history of this style of dance and showed the audience that it is not just about a certain way of moving, but about telling the spectators a story. Irene demonstrated the various movements, which were so detailed they almost resembled sign language. The audience was motivated to join, which resulted in a small, online Indian dance group!

Lucia Choi

Lucia Choi's exhibition was captivating, beginning with a video of her calligraphy art, and then taking us through basic Korean by taking our names and writing them in Korean characters. Each radical was explained to us, and we were given the chance to write Korean on our own too, whilst all the while she gave us a short but fascinating history of the Korean Language.

Soydivision Berlin

Soydivision Berlin's performance was incredibly interesting. Starting with a screening of a YouTube video that they had made, of sound and light performance, Ariel then explained the power of art in social movement and the origins of the group. Many interesting questions were asked about the experience of being a diaspora artist and using art for social good; this performance perfectly encapsulated the mission of the Global Village.



STUDENT THINK TANK FOR EUROPE-ASIA RELATIONS VIRTUAL GLOBAL VILLAGE

FEBRUARY 19, 2022

Opening Ceremony

CULTURE
Transforming Societies
Strengthening Communities
Fostering a sense of identity and belonging

Ms. Ann Follin
Vice-Chair of the Asia Europe Museums Network

MUSEUM
New perspectives
Sparking inspiration and creativity
New layers of meaning

GLOBAL VILLAGE
to provide young people with an opportunity to connect with each other and explore new cultures, thereby deepening their cultural understanding.

Dao Nguyen
STEAR Co-President

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTIONS
NURTURE AND CULTIVATE TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND TOLERANCE

Ms. Rensje Teerink
Head of Division in the European External Action Service

Expert Workshops

Ms. Lucia Choi
최루시아
Korean Calligraphy Artist

Joyce Fung
Scholar of Peking University & Harvard University

Weirong Li
CEO, Raw Culture

Cultural Performances

Awang Samrow
Musician

Ariel Orah
Founder, Saydivision LLC

Irene Vettiyadan
Indian Performer

The Oxford Phoenix Chinese Dance Society

Krou Yeung School Dance Group

Hiyas ng Sining Folkloric Dance Troupe

Closing Ceremony

STUDENT THINK TANK FOR EUROPE-ASIA RELATIONS
Erasmus+

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES
2022 IS THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF YOUTH

Immersion

Exchange

Solidarity

Themis Christopidou
Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport & Culture of the European Commission

Nico Luchsinger
Executive Director at Asia Society Switzerland

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Luke Cavanaugh
STEAR Co-President

GLOBAL VILLAGE
an example of valuing cultural transmission and storytelling.

STUDENT THINK TANK FOR EUROPE-ASIA RELATIONS

Joyce Fung

Joyce Fung virtually took us to the campus of Yenching Academy through her expertly crafted stories and captivating photographs. The entire showcase was very immersive, with Joyce leading us through different spots inside the campus, explaining to us what it was like now and 100 years ago. She also shared her experience building the exhibition and the public's positive reception towards her work.

Sopheak Nuon

Sopheak Nuon, coach for the Krou Yeung School Dance Group, screened two performances: Robam Koh Angre (also known as ballet dancing with wooden sticks) & Robam Chun Cheat Peak Tich (indigenous ballet dancing). Robam Koh Angre is a traditional dance performed to celebrate the harvesting season and was one of the most popular amongst traditional dances in Khmer society. Meanwhile, Robam Chun Cheat Peak Tich was performed to enhance solidarity and friendship between Khmer people and the indigenous groups. The audience loved both performances and appreciated how Sopheak enthusiastically explained the dances' meaning and significance to Cambodian traditional arts and dance.

Closing Ceremony

After participants had a chance to check out the diverse performances, it was already time for the Closing Ceremony, during which STEAR had the opportunity to once more host distinguished guest speakers who made time in their busy schedules to provide us with their valuable messages.

We were honored to have Themis Christophidou, Director-General of Education, Youth, Sport and Culture at the European Commission, speak during the Closing Ceremony. Ms. Christophidou noted the similarities between the goals and efforts of STEAR and the European Commission in uniting young people across Europe and Asia. She also highlighted the fact that 2022 is a doubly special year for this goal:

not only does 2022 mark the 35-year anniversary of the Erasmus+ program, which is entirely built on principles of immersion, exchange, and solidarity, but it is also the European Year of Youth. In other words, it is essential that both established institutions and new youth organizations use these opportunities to work towards their shared goals.

Then, Nico Luchsinger – current Executive Director at Asia Society Switzerland, and experienced in a variety of fields all relevant to both Asia Society and STEAR's missions – shared his insights with audience members. Mr. Luchsinger spoke about the growing interconnectedness of Europe and Asia, with the latter having become such an important global player in recent years. He noted that cultural competences, especially 'Asia competence, as actionable skills need to be trained across the broader population (including youth) – in that regard, Asia Society and STEAR share the same vision.

Finally, STEAR Co-President Luke closed off the event by reflecting on the ways in which STEAR has been endeavoring to bridge Europe and Asia through culture as a main focus of the organization. Making a reference to Te-Ping Chen's book *Land of Big Numbers*, Luke emphasized the importance of valuing cultural transmission and storytelling, of which the Global Village has been an example.

More cultural events are on the way in the upcoming months, and we hope to continue to see many of you there as we did at the Global Village! We'd also like to thank all the wonderful performers, speakers, and team members who made this complex and ambitious event possible, as well as all the participants who made this into a truly interactive experience.



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