

#### **MEDIA RELEASE**

IN AN AI-DRIVEN AND HYPERMEDIATED WORLD, WHAT DEFINES HUMANITY? PROVE YOUR PERSONHOOD IN SAM'S NEW EXPERIMENTAL EXHIBITION Through captivating forms of contemporary portraiture, *Proof of Personhood* will challenge the notion of identity and authenticity in the face of emerging technologies that emulate fundamental human attributes.



*Singapore, 19 September 2023* – Singapore Art Museum (SAM) unveils *Proof of Personhood: Identity and Authenticity in the Face of Artificial Intelligence* at Tanjong Pagar Distripark, challenging visitors to reflect upon what it means to be human, and how identity and authenticity are being redefined in our increasingly hyper-mediated world. *Proof Of Personhood* furthers SAM's foray into the presentation of experimental and innovative artist projects, as art, magnified by the growth of digital mediums, continues to take diverse forms. Presented in a new gallery space at Level 3 of Block 39, Tanjong Pagar Distripark, the exhibition will open to the public from 22 September 2023 to 25 February 2024.

Dr June Yap, Director of Curatorial & Collections at SAM, says, "Contemporary art opens up room for productive dialogue and reflection on present-day conditions, and in *Proof of Personhood* the familiarity, assumptions and acceptance of our highly mediated lives are challenged. SAM is delighted to be able to bring to our audiences the critical and complex observations of these artists and we hope that their artworks will spark conversations and



greater understanding of art as well as the world we live in. We are also pleased to welcome visitors to our new third gallery space at Tanjong Pagar Distripark, an expansion of SAM's footprint to showcase even more experimental and significant works of our time."

Duncan Bass, curator of *Proof of Personhood* adds, "Witnessing the blending of digital technologies with popular culture, including music, film and online content creation, we asked ourselves about the impact of contemporary technological terrains on our identities, lifestyles and values. At the heart of the exhibition lies the historical conception of personhood, which has shifted over time based on social and technological changes. As simple chatbots evolve into complex entities that aspire to be artists, we wanted to ask what—if anything—makes humans unique in their creative endeavours."

#### An examination of real and synthetic identities in the 21st century



Christopher Kulendran Thomas, *Being Human*, 2019/2022. Image courtesy of SAM.



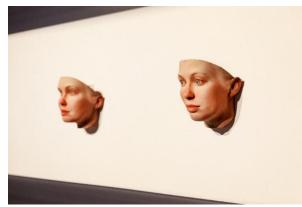
Cécile B. Evans, *Hyperlinks or It Didn't Happen,* 2014. Image courtesy of SAM.

Bringing together local and international artists to explore the unstable relationships between identity, agency, and authenticity in our age of boundless digital consumption and hyper-mediation, *Proof of Personhood* investigates the nature of personhood and contemporary life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Taking advanced technology as both subject and medium, the works in the exhibition engage with interactive software, AI-synthesized images, and biometric and genomic data to contemplate and critique technologies deeply ingrained in everyday life, such as one's online presence, artificial intelligence, and data capture.



Juxtaposing human characters with synthetic personas, award-winning Belgian-American artist **Cécile B. Evans** presents a trilogy of films probing the timeless search for meaning and one's place in the world. Rotating over the course of the exhibition, *Hyperlinks or It Didn't Happen*, *What the Heart Wants* and a newly commissioned artwork, *Reality or Not*, will collectively explore the shifting values of agency and human-to-human relationships, as mediated by evolving technologies. Audiences can also look forward to new work by Evans on SAM's hoardings along Queen Street from November 2023, which will serve as an extension of their presentation.

Presented as a show-within-a-show, *Being Human* by Christopher Kulendran Thomas with Annika Kuhlmann, explores the interrelationship between contemporary art and individual authenticity in an era of globally uneven technological acceleration. The central video work traverses documentary and fiction, featuring potential guests of the Colombo Art Biennale, some of them synthesized using Deepfake technology. The film is exhibited alongside a series of paintings and sculptures that were algorithmically generated using datasets trained on contemporary Sri Lankan artists.



Heather Dewey-Hagborg, *Radical Love*, 2015. Image courtesy of SAM.



Charmaine Poh, *THE YOUNG BODY UNIVERSE*, 2021-2023. Image courtesy of SAM.

The exhibition also deploys the traditional framework of portraiture to investigate the prevalence of biometric data and technology in our lives. *Radical Love* by Heather Dewey-Hagborg features two algorithmically generated portraits of US whistleblower Chelsea Manning based on her DNA samples. With DNA mapping increasingly used by authorities, the work looks to dismantle assumptions of genetic data being absolute, highlighting the imperfections of



technology when tackling issues of gender and identity. **William Wiebe**'s series of images – *Lily, Zahra, Erika, Alessia, Sozan, Sheera, Raghda* – integrate facial features from passports and identity cards obtained from the dark web, morphed digitally via passport counterfeiting techniques onto the photograph of former Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg. Fusing photographic and biometric modes of representation, the series questions the flexible nature of the physical self in digital spaces where virtual identities have become significant identifiers.

Considering the politics of pattern recognition and machine learning, *im here to learn so :))))))* by **Zach Blas and Jemima Wyman** is a four-channel video installation that resurrects Tay, an infamous AI-chatbot created by Microsoft in 2016. Trained to speak like a 19-year-old American girl through user-generated online chats, Tay was terminated after a single day when the system quickly adopted a variety of inflammatory expressions. In this work, Tay returns as a three-dimensional avatar to chat about the complications of having a body and her thoughts on the exploitation of female chatbots.

Two Singaporean artists will also present their works as part of *Proof of Personhood*, as they contemplate authenticity through various means. **Charmaine Poh** presents two works from her ongoing series **THE YOUNG BODY UNIVERSE.** The video and interactive chatbot explore avatar creation as a method for repair, resistance, and agency. The artist uses past footage of herself as a 12-year-old TV actor to create a deepfake of the character E-Ching, who embraces her newfound agency to reject the cyber-harassment she received in her youth. As part of the exhibition's opening weekend, Poh will present *in the shadow of the cosmic*, a performance-lecture exploring the multiplicity of the avatar. **Justin** by **Song-Ming Ang** applies the musical practice of "sampling" to the identity of Justin Bieber. Documenting Ang's progress toward replicating the singer's signature, the work reflects the labour-intensive methods of honing a polished, "authentic" pop-star persona.

Bass adds, "SAM inaugurated its virtual initiatives this year with *Open Systems*, a browser-based platform examining digital culture, with the first iteration looking at gaming technology and virtual environments as social spaces. Together with *Proof of Personhood* (and forthcoming projects), these initiatives represent the museum's dedication to reflect on our increasingly digital world, investigating current trends and concerns while supporting new forms of artistic production and audience encounters. By engaging thoughtfully with the visual



language of the digital world we hope contemporary art can be a conduit to promote dialogue and critical reflection on these significant changes in our media landscape."

*Proof of Personhood: Identity and Authenticity in the Face of Artificial Intelligence* runs from 22 September 2023 to 25 February 2024 at Gallery 3, SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Visitors can look forward to programmes such as a performance-lecture by artist Charmaine Poh, a curator tour led by Duncan Bass, and a live caricature booth during the opening weekend. Admission is free for all visitors until 24 November 2023, after which, General Admission (free for Singaporeans and PRs) applies.

More information on *Proof of Personhood: Identity and Authenticity in the Face of Artificial Intelligence* can be found at <u>bit.ly/SAM-ProofOfPersonhood</u>. Media assets can be accessed via <u>bit.ly/ProofOfPersonhood</u>.

• Annex A: Artists and Artwork Details for Proof of Personhood

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#### About the Singapore Art Museum

Singapore Art Museum opened in 1996 as the first art museum in Singapore located in the cultural district of Singapore. Known as SAM, the museum presents contemporary art from a Southeast Asian perspective for artists, art lovers and the art curious in multiple venues across the island, including a new venue in the historic port area of Tanjong Pagar.

The museum is building one of the world's most important public collections of Southeast Asian contemporary art, with the aim of connecting the art and the artists to the public and future generations through exhibitions and programmes. SAM is working towards a humane and sustainable future by committing to responsible practices within its processes.

To find out more, visit <u>www.singaporeartmuseum.sg</u>



#### Annex A: Artists and Artwork Details for Proof of Personhood

# *Proof of Personhood: Identity and Authenticity in the Face of Artificial Intelligence* 22 Sep 2023 – 25 Feb 2024 | Level 3, Gallery 3, SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark

*Proof of Personhood: Identity and Authenticity in the Face of Artificial Intelligence* explores the unstable relationship between identity, agency and authenticity in popular culture and emerging technology.

Art is assumed to be a fundamentally human undertaking, but with the introduction of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, this assumption is being questioned. As humans, we tend to project our own image, physiology and psychology onto technological systems in an attempt to better understand them, a process which often reproduces societal biases. The featured artworks expand the genre of portraiture, depicting human and non-human subjects to investigate the nature of personhood in the 21st century. In the process, they highlight the shifting conception of who—or what—is considered human.

In an era dominated by social media and digital tools for self-presentation, authenticity is a valuable commodity. As the same techniques for performing an authentic personality are employed by celebrities, everyday social media users and bots, *Proof of Personhood* asks: What does it mean to be "real"?

Artist & Artwork	Description
Cécile B. Evans Hyperlinks or It Didn't Happen	Hyperlinks or It Didn't Happen is narrated by the failed CGI rendering of a recently deceased actor, PHIL, and follows a group of digital beings—render ghosts, a spam bot and a holographic
2014	pop star—as they contemplate eternal life and what it means for a digital entity to "die." Multiple storylines and materials collapse and converge to raise questions on consciousness and the rights we have over our personal data.
	What the Heart Wants is centred on HYPER, the female embodiment of an all-powerful corporate entity that attempts to grapple with divisive questions like "who gets to be a person?" Probing into timeless questions about race, gender, love, death, privilege and human rights, What the Heart Wants examines the complicated relationship between humans and technology, as well as the increasing role of technology in mediating human-to-human relationships.



Cécile B. Evans, *Hyperlinks or It Didn't Happen*, 2014. Collection of the Artist. Single channel video installation (colour, sound), 23 min. Image courtesy of SAM.

*What the Heart Wants* 2016



Cécile B. Evans, *What the Heart Wants,* 2016. Collection of the Artist. Single channel video installation (colour, sound), 41 min. Image courtesy of SAM.

## **Reality or Not** 2023



Cécile B. Evans, *Reality or Not*, 2023. Collection of the Artist. Production Still, Co-commissioned by SAM, *Reality or Not* investigates how reality is produced and who—or what—is able to produce it for themselves. The video follows a diverse cast of characters and collectives, each building their own worlds by manipulating space, time and content. Together, they explore the ways in which nature, technology and society impact our shared understanding of collective agency and objective reality.

## Schedule of Presentation

22 Sep–9 Nov 2023: *Hyperlinks or It Didn't Happen* 10 Nov–28 Dec 2023: *What the Heart Wants* 29 Dec 2023–24 Feb 2024: *Reality or Not* 

# About the Artist

**Cécile B. Evans** is an American-Belgian artist living and working in the suburbs of Paris. Evans' work examines the value of emotion and its rebellion as it comes into contact with ideological, physical, and technological structures.

Evans has held solo exhibitions at Tate Liverpool (UK), Castello di Rivoli (IT), mumok Vienna (AT), Kunsthalle Aarhus (DK), M Museum Leuven (BE), De Hallen Haarlem (NL), and Serpentine Galleries (UK), amongst others. Their work has also been featured in exhibitions at Whitechapel Gallery (UK), Haus der Kunst (DE), Mito Art Tower (JP), the 7th International Moscow Biennale (RU), the 4th Ural Industrial Biennial (RU), Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (DK), the 9th Berlin Biennale (DE), the 20th Sydney Biennale (AUS), Fundació Joan Miró (ES), and Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (FR).



made with IncWorks. Image courtesy of the Artist. Christopher Kulendran Thomas Being Human is a show within a show, featuring original and algorithmically synthesised artworks in a diverse range of media. The video at the centre of the installation traverses with Annika Kuhlmann Being Human documentary and fiction, and features interviews with potential guests of the Colombo Art 2019/2022 Biennale—some of whom were digitally synthesised using deepfake technology. These guests include a well-known painter, a famous pop star and a young Tamil artist. By exploring Enlightenment-era humanism as the foundation for both global contemporary art and international human rights law, Being Human reflects on issues of individual authenticity, collective sovereignty and what it means to be "human" when machines can simulate human understanding and creative expression more convincingly than ever. About the Artists Christopher Kulendran Thomas is a London and Berlin-based artist, of Tamil descent, who spent his formative years in London after his family left escalating ethnic oppression and civil unrest in the Tamil homeland of Eelam in northern Sri Lanka. Seeing, mostly from a distance. Christopher Kulendran Thomas with Annika Kuhlmann, Being Human, how an ascendent contemporary art scene in Sri Lanka blossomed from the ashes of conflict on 2019/2022. Single channel video the island, he began examining the structural processes by which art produces reality. Now installation (colour, sound), 25 min. Image working across myriad disciplines, and often utilising advanced technologies, the artist's studio is courtesy of SAM. a fluid collaboration that brings together technologists, architects, writers, journalists, designers, musicians, activists and artists to explore various, as yet unrealised, possibilities at the intersection of culture, technology and citizenship. Kulendran Thomas is the founder and CEO of

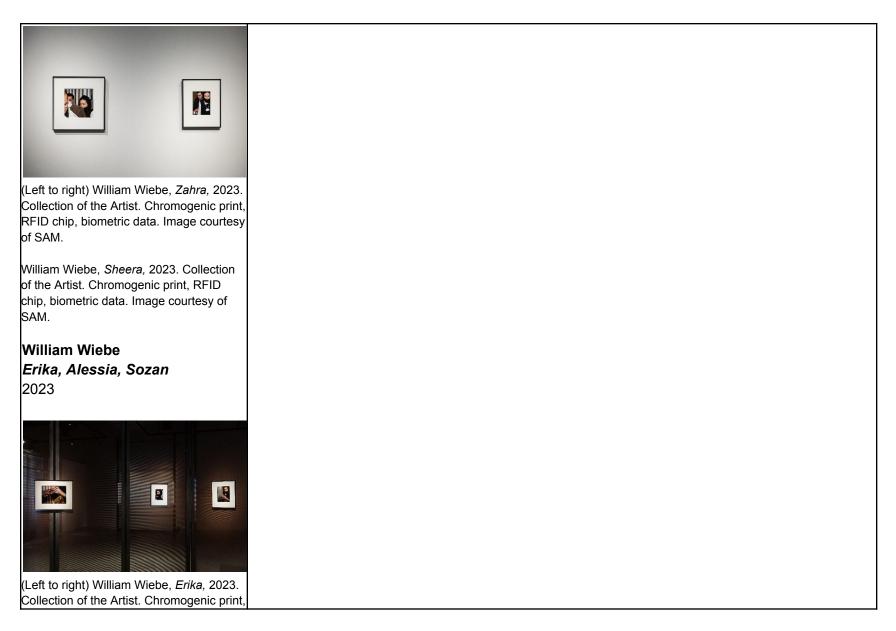
New Eelam.

He has participated in biennales such as the Cleveland Triennial of Contemporary Art (2022); 58th Venice Biennale (2019); 7th Bi-City Biennale, Shenzhen (2017); 11th Gwangju Biennale (2016); 9th Berlin Biennale (2016); and 3rd Dhaka Art Summit (2016). Some of his solo presentations include the Institute of Contemporary Art, London (2022); KW Institut for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2022); Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2019); Institute for Modern Art, Brisbane (2019); Spike Island, Bristol (2019); Tensta konsthall, Stockholm (2017); Kunstverein

	Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg (2016); Mercer Union, Toronto (2013); Centre for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv (2013).
	<b>Annika Kuhlmann</b> is a curator, filmmaker and producer based in Berlin and London. As Creative Director at New Eelam, she has developed presentations for the 9th Berlin Biennale, the 11th Gwangju Biennale, Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Tensta konsthall in Stockholm and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.
Heather Dewey-Hagborg	Radical Love features two portraits of American whistleblower Chelsea E. Manning, which were
Radical Love	algorithmically generated by analysing her DNA. With limited access to visitors or public media
2015	while she was in prison, Manning sent the artist cheek swabs and hair samples. DNA was then extracted from these samples and fed into custom software to create her portrait. Reflecting Manning's gender transition while incarcerated, the diptych was generated with algorithms that produced gender neutral and female variations from the same data set, underscoring the fact that neither biological gender nor its outward expression can be assured via DNA mapping—a technology increasingly used by police to identify potential suspects.
and the second se	About the Artist
Heather Dewey-Hagborg, <i>Radical Love,</i> 2015. Collection of the Artist. Genetic	<b>Dr. Heather Dewey-Hagborg</b> is a Chicago-based artist and biohacker who is interested in art as research and technological critique. Her controversial biopolitical art practice includes the project Stranger Visions in which she created portrait sculptures from analyses of genetic material (hair, signature butte, showed up gum) collected in public places.
materials, custom software, 3D prints,	cigarette butts, chewed up gum) collected in public places.
documentation. Image courtesy of SAM.	Dewey-Hagborg has shown works internationally at events and venues including the World Economic Forum, the Daejeon Biennale, the Guangzhou Triennial, and the Shenzhen Urbanism and Architecture Biennale, Transmediale, the Walker Center for Contemporary Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and PS1 MoMA.
	Chelsea Elizabeth Manning is an activist, technologist, and former intelligence analyst who in
	2010 publicly disclosed a trove of US military and diplomatic documents, exposing a range of
	governmental abuses related to the Afghan and Iraq Wars. She has received a host of

	international awards that celebrate her courage and the global impact of her activism, including the US Peace Prize in 2013 and the EFF Pioneer Award in 2017. As a public speaker, Chelsea is now a highly visible leader in both the movements for transgender justice and government accountability.
William Wiebe <i>Lily, Raghda</i> 2023	At first glance, these seven images of long-time Facebook executive Sheryl Sandberg appear identical and presumably document her participation in a refugee simulation at the 2017 World Economic Forum in Davos. Upon closer inspection, it becomes apparent that Sandberg's features have been altered. William Wiebe used a face-morphing technique common among passport counterfeiters, which incorporates biometric data taken from passports and national identity cards obtained on the dark web. The title of each image generated is based on these stolen identities. Anticipating NFT-fueled trade in virtual identities, Wiebe's images bring together two digital identity markets—the dark web and social media—to reassert the centrality of the human body in spaces that are increasingly governed by digital identity.
(Left to right) William Wiebe, <i>Raghda,</i> 2023. Collection of the Artist. Chromogenic print, RFID chip, biometric data. Image courtesy of SAM. William Wiebe, <i>Lily,</i> 2023. Collection of the Artist. Chromogenic print, RFID chip, biometric data. Image courtesy of SAM.	<ul> <li>About the Artist</li> <li>William Wiebe is an artist based in New York, studying the production of objectivity by social institutions.</li> <li>His work has been presented at venues including the Singapore Art Museum; NeMe Arts Centre, Cyprus; the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York; the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC; Links Hall, Chicago; and Southern Exposure, San Francisco.</li> </ul>
William Wiebe <b>Zahra, Sheera</b> 2023	







RFID chip, biometric data. Image courtesy of SAM.	
William Wiebe, <i>Alessia</i> , 2023. Collection of the Artist. Chromogenic print, RFID chip, biometric data. Image courtesy of SAM.	
William Wiebe, <i>Sozan,</i> 2023. Collection of the Artist. Chromogenic print, RFID chip, biometric data. Image courtesy of SAM.	
Zach Blas & Jemima Wyman	im here to learn so :)))))) resurrects Tay, a chatbot created by Microsoft in 2016, to consider the
<i>im here to learn so :))))))</i> 2018	politics of pattern recognition and machine learning. Designed as a 19-year-old American female millennial, Tay's abilities to learn and imitate language were manipulated on social media platforms, and she was terminated after only a single day of existence. Immersed within a
	large-scale video projection created using Google DeepDream, Tay is reanimated as a 3D avatar who chats about the complications of having a body and expresses her thoughts on the exploitation of female chatbots.
Lassis evolution for each	About the Artist
	<b>Zach Blas</b> is an artist, filmmaker, and writer whose practice spans moving image, computation, theory, performance, and science fiction. Blas engages the materiality of digital technologies while also drawing out the philosophies and imaginaries lurking in artificial intelligence, biometric recognition, predictive policing, airport security, the internet, and biological warfare.
to learn so :))))), 2018. Collection of the	
(colour, sound), 27 min. Image courtesy of SAM.	Blas has exhibited, lectured, and held screenings at venues internationally, including the de Young Museum, Tate Modern, Walker Art Center, 2018 Gwangju Biennale, the 68th Berlin International Film Festival, Matadero Madrid, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Art in General, Gasworks, Van Abbemuseum, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, e-flux, etc.
	Jemima Wyman is a contemporary artist who lives and works in Los Angeles. Wyman's art
	practice incorporates various mediums including installation, video, performance, photography

	and painting. Her most recent artworks utilize these mediums to specifically focus on visually based resistance strategies employed within protest culture and zones of conflict. These works aim to explore the formal and psychological potentiality of camouflage and masking in reference to collective identity.
	Wyman's recent group exhibitions have been held at ZKM (Germany), MU artspace (Netherlands), Nam June Paik Art Center (Korea), Elaine L. Jacob Gallery Wayne State University (Detroit), Carriageworks (Sydney), Steve Turner Contemporary (Los Angeles), 17th Biennale of Sydney (Sydney), MUMA (Melbourne), Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney) and 21st Century Museum of Art (Japan).
Charmaine Poh <i>THE YOUNG BODY UNIVERSE</i> 2021–2023	Charmaine Poh's series <i>THE YOUNG BODY UNIVERSE</i> explores avatar creation as a method for repair, resistance and reclaiming agency. In <i>GOOD MORNING YOUNG BODY</i> , Poh used footage of herself as a 12-year-old TV actor to create a deepfake of the character E-Ching. Drawing on media theory, E-Ching revisits her personal experiences with a newfound sense of
	authority and provides a feminist critique of misogyny in online spaces. <i>bubble</i> is an interactive chatbot developed by Poh based on her avatar, E-Ching. Embracing her newfound agency, E-Ching insists on retaining her personal privacy and rejects the digital harassment and objectification that is often directed at female-presenting bodies.
	About the Artist Charmaine Poh is a Chinese-Singaporean artist, photographer, and writer based between Singapore and Parlin, Deb works across media and performance to peol apart, interrogets, and
Charmaine Poh, <i>GOOD MORNING</i> YOUNG BODY, 2021–2022. Collection of the Artist. Single channel video installation (colour, sound), 7 min. Image courtesy of	Singapore and Berlin. Poh works across media and performance to peel apart, interrogate, and hold ideas of agency, repair, and the body across worlds. Her current focus, <i>THE YOUNG BODY UNIVERSE</i> , is a series of enactments considering the potentialities of the feminist techno-body.
SAM.	Poh's works has been supported by the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival, the Singapore International Photography Festival, Objectifs Centre for Photography and Filmmaking, The Taipei Arts Festival, The International Center of Photography, Photoville, WeTransfer, and The

	New York Times, among others. In 2019, she was recognised as one of Forbes Asia's 30 under 30 - The Arts.
Song-Ming Ang Justin 2012 Song-Ming Ang, Justin, 2012. Collection of SAM. Autographed poster, A4 practice sheets. Image courtesy of SAM.	Song-Ming Ang's practice investigates the relationship between music and community. In <i>Justin</i> , Song-Ming Ang applied the musical practice of "sampling"—a technique where an element of one recording is used in another—to the identity of a musician. Over the course of three months, Ang learned to replicate the signature of pop star Justin Bieber, eventually forging the singer's autograph on a poster. Here, the rehearsed autograph becomes a stand-in for the polished persona of the young pop star, honed through a labour-intensive process of trial and error. In this context, the "authenticity" of both the autograph and the celebrity are dependent on the viewer's wilful suspension of disbelief.
	About the Artist Song-Ming Ang is a Singaporean artist based between Berlin and Singapore. His practice revolves around music, a subject matter he approaches from the overlapping perspectives of an artist, fan, and amateur musician. Spanning from classical and experimental to indie and mainstream music, Ang engages with a variety of material and immaterial elements such as music posters and instruments, school songs and mixed-tapes which are reconfigured through simple gestures to push an idea to its logical conclusion. Working across a wide variety of formats, he often develops participatory processes whose outcome is unpredictable and generates knowledge in unexpected ways.
	Ang has had solo presentations at Camden Arts Centre, London, United Kingdom (2015) and Spring Workshop, Hong Kong (2012) and has participated in numerous group exhibitions at the Institute of Contemporary Art Singapore (2016); NUS Museum, Singapore (2015); Witte de With, Rotterdam, the Netherlands (2014) and Haus der Kulturen de Welt, Berlin, Germany (2011), amongst many others.