

MEDIA RELEASE

SAM'S NEW LEARNING GALLERY WELCOMES CURIOUS AND AUTHENTIC ENCOUNTERS WITH CONTEMPORARY ART

Inspired by the carefree spirit of childhood, the new all-ages space fosters a playful curiosity in both the young and young at heart as they learn and explore contemporary art.



Learning Gallery at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Singapore, 16 July 2024 – Singapore Art Museum (SAM)'s **Learning Gallery** opens at its home ground at Tanjong Pagar Distripark, transforming Gallery 2 on Level 1 into a space that is designed to spark curious and authentic encounters with contemporary art for visitors of all ages. Established as part of SAM's continued support of art education, the Learning Gallery reflects SAM's dedication to nurturing an understanding of broader issues through contemporary art in visitors of all ages as they embrace a spirit of exploration, imagination and spontaneity.

Open to the public from 20 July, the Learning Gallery harnesses the creative potential of approaching contemporary art with a childlike perspective, creating opportunities for reflection and meaningful engagement with the artworks and themes explored. The Learning Gallery features five artworks by notable local and regional artists that have been specially selected from the National Collection or commissioned to extend the learning of contemporary art to all

ages. Selected artworks in the Learning Gallery will be refreshed annually to introduce new perspectives and insights while keeping the space dynamic and reflective of our contemporary times.

June Yap, Director of Curatorial and Research at SAM, said, "SAM's new Learning Gallery at Tanjong Pagar Distripark is a dedicated space for visitors of all ages to engage deeply and personally with contemporary art through the uninhibited curiosity and openness of a child. Exploring childhood as a shared experience that connects us all regardless of age, we hope that the exhibition provides visitors with the opportunity to gather and learn from each other. By nurturing art education and facilitating dialogue on pressing social issues, SAM remains committed to broadening perspectives and enriching lives through the power of art."

Embracing a childlike spirit of exploration to make room for diverse perspectives

Outside the gallery, adult visitors will be greeted by a letter addressed to their inner child, prompting them to approach the exhibition with an open mind and tap into the formative experiences of their childhood. Upon entering the gallery, children are invited to experience the artworks in their own special way. With this focus on the inhibited perspective of a child, this edition of the Learning Gallery proposes that new dimensions to appreciating and learning about contemporary art can arise when one embraces a spirit of curiosity, imaginative playfulness and spontaneity.

The gallery is thoughtfully designed as an escape from the rapid pace and complexity of modern life with a low-stimulation and calm environment ideal for reflection and focused learning. With visual and auditory stimuli intentionally kept minimal, visitors are given the space to form authentic and personal connections with the artworks, encouraging creative exploration and meaningful conversations with fellow visitors. In addition, each artwork is accompanied by separate sets of wall text tailored to children and adults, further creating avenues for shared experiences and dialogue across all age groups.



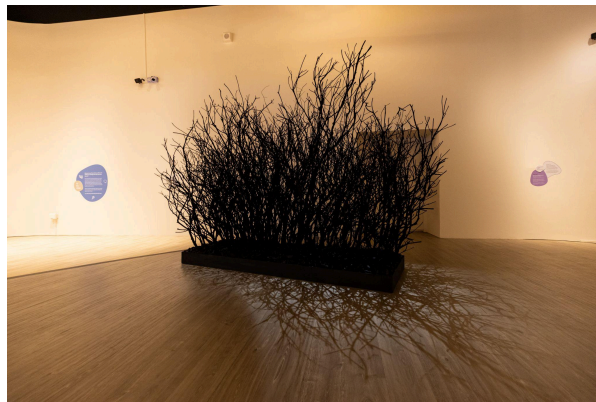
Interactive space at the Learning Gallery at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark.

Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

The Learning Gallery also incorporates various interactive elements to allow for deeper engagement with the artworks, creating multiple opportunities where families can bond over art. For instance, visitors can browse through a selection of books related to the artworks and the emotions they evoke at a library located within the space. Furnished with bean bags, visitors can relax, read and enjoy a variety of books catering to readers of all ages, from preschool children to tertiary-level adults. In addition, the gallery also features an interactive wall that encourages free play and boundless creativity as it transforms and reacts to the unique touch of each visitor. Finally, visitors will also find a response wall near the gallery exit, where they are invited to write letters to themselves and encouraged to express how they feel after experiencing the artworks. In line with the wider objectives of the Learning Gallery, the activity seeks to foster impactful interactions with the artworks by getting participants to connect and reflect on their inner selves.



Installation view of Nguan's *Untitled*, from the series *Singapore* (2011 - 2013), as part of the Learning Gallery at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.



Installation view of Han Sai Por's *Black Forest* (2024), as part of the Learning Gallery at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Featured artworks span various media and diverse forms of presentation, responding to themes of home, nature and the environment, people, places, memory and time, raising important and timely questions about what it means to live in contemporary times. These include works from Nguan's *Untitled, from the series 'Singapore'*, and Cultural Medallion recipient Han Sai Por's *Black Forest*. The former comprises a series of photographs through which Nguan captures quiet, everyday scenes in Singapore. Conveying palpable feelings of alienation and nostalgia, the work prompts reflection on the realities of modern life in our homeland. On the other hand, Han's striking installation featuring a destroyed "forest" of charcoal logs reflects her interest in the impact of human activities on the natural world. It presents an evocative image of the harmful effects of deforestation, while also highlighting Nature's resilience against catastrophe.

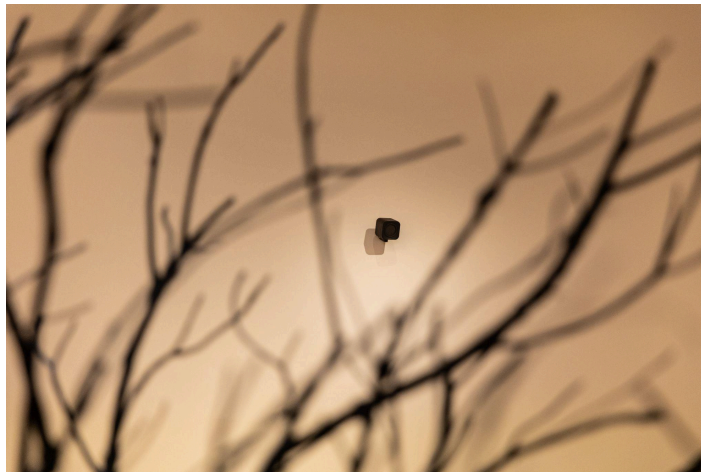


Installation view of Migrant Ecologies Project's *{if your bait can sing the wild ones will come} Like Shadows Through Leaves* (2021), as part of the Learning Gallery at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.



Installation view of Tang Da Wu's 深疤鳳 *SEMBAWANG* (2013), as part of the Learning Gallery at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Also included as part of the line-up is Migrant Ecologies Project's ***{if your bait can sing the wild ones will come} Like Shadows Through Leaves***, which captures a distinct sense of place, specifically of Tanglin Halt, one of Singapore's oldest social housing estates that runs alongside a former railway track. Showcasing repeated visits to the site, the film traces the remaining fragments of calls, echoes, shadows and memories that still animate the space as it undergoes drastic urban transformation. Visitors will also encounter Tang Da Wu's 深疤鳳 ***SEMBAWANG***, which was inspired by the "tok-tok bird" or large-tailed nightjar species that made nightly visits to the area near The Artists Village when it was located in Sembawang, making its presence known with its distinct "tok-tok" call. Featuring diamond-shaped mirrors that represent its tears, the work portrays the avian as a triumphant creature emerging from the ashes of its rebirth.



Installation view of Julian Abraham "Togar"'s *A Gesture* (2016), as part of the Learning Gallery at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Finally, the Learning Gallery features ***A Gesture*** by Julian Abraham "Togar", which extends Togar's exploration of the act of listening. The work is conveyed sonically through sounds that resemble a person clearing one's throat or whispers of "sssttt" sounds in varying tones. While the artist is interested in the differences in how people interpret these sounds depending on their cultural background, experiences and knowledge, Togar also tests how sensitive audiences are to a sonic work in a room with other visually tangible pieces.

To celebrate the launch of the Learning Gallery at SAM, visitors are invited to participate in the festivities at the Opening Carnival happening on 20 July 2024 from 10am to 4pm. Visitors can enjoy traditional games, art activities, and free childhood snacks, making it a memorable day of art experiences at SAM. As part of the programming for the Learning Gallery, visitors can collect a free activity guide to interact with the artworks and a "Stick with SAM" sticker book with a specially designed set of stickers inspired by the artworks in the Learning Gallery. In the coming months, members of the public can also look forward to special programmes conducted by artists and specialists, such as art therapists, later in the year.

As part of its commitment to bring art closer to the local community, SAM extends the experience of the Learning Gallery beyond the museum through the presentation of ***ChildISH*** at the libraries. *ChildISH* features poems by five local poets Amanda Chong, Hamid Roslan, Pooja Nansi, Charlene Shepherdson and Daryl Qilin Yam that were crafted in response to the works featured in the Learning Gallery at SAM. The poems are complemented by an artwork from

local illustrator Tan Zi Xi, featuring drawings by pupils from Ang Mo Kio Primary School, creating a rich, multisensorial showcase. The presentation is currently on view at Punggol Regional Library till 21 July 2024 and will travel to various regional libraries across Singapore until 16 December 2024. More details on *ChildISH* can be found in Annex B.

Admission to the Learning Gallery is free for all visitors. It will be open at Gallery 2, SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark from 20 July 2024. For more information, please visit bit.ly/SAM-LearningGallery. Media assets can be accessed via <https://bit.ly/SAMLearningGallery>.

- Annex A: Exhibition and Artwork Details
- Annex B: Opening Carnival and *ChildISH*

###

For media queries, please contact:

Farah Aqilah

Manager

Tate Anzur

+65 8163 0808

farah.aqilah@tateanzur.com

Natalie Sim

Senior Associate

Tate Anzur

+65 9710 6570

natalie.sim@tateanzur.com

About 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 www.singaporeartmuseum.sg

Annex A: Exhibition and Artwork Details for the Learning Gallery

Learning Gallery at SAM

From 20 July 2024 onwards | Level 1, Gallery 2, SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark

Spark curiosity, rekindle wonder, explore contemporary art with the uninhibited spirit of a child, and rediscover the joy of learning.

Established as part of Singapore Art Museum's continued support of art education, the Learning Gallery is dedicated to having people engage and understand broader issues through contemporary artworks. These artworks have been specially selected from the National Collection or commissioned to extend the learning of contemporary art to all ages.

Inspired by the theme of childhood, this edition of the Learning Gallery encourages child-like curiosity in encounters with art. Visitors are invited to embrace the spirit of exploration and have an uninhibited relationship with the world.

The Learning Gallery exhibits artworks in various media and across diverse presentation forms. It features artists Julian Abraham "Togar," Han Sai Por, Nguan, Tang Da Wu, and Migrant Ecologies Project. The artworks navigate ideas such as home, nature and the environment, people, places, and memory and time. They also raise important and timely questions about what it means to live in contemporary times.

Artwork	Description
<p>Nguan <i>Untitled, from the series Singapore</i> 2012 Archival pigment print 100 × 100 cm Collection of Singapore Art Museum</p>	<p>In the series <i>Singapore</i>, Nguan expressively captures quiet, everyday scenes on the streets of Singapore as well as the sense of alienation and solitude that pervades the city. By taking spontaneous portraits of strangers while exploring Singapore on foot, he presents overlooked aspects of the mundane. The artist once stated that loneliness is "just a symptom of modern life everywhere—we're living in closer proximity to each other than ever before but feeling further apart." The themes explored in this series are sombre and soft, conveying a sense of nostalgia and warmth. In these photographs, a dozen untold stories and personal histories are waiting to unfold.</p> <p>About the Artist: Nguan's photographs contemplate big city yearning, ordinary fantasies and emotional globalisation. He has published three monographs: <i>Shibuya</i> (2010),</p>



Nguan, *Untitled*, from the series *Singapore*, 2012. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Untitled*, from the series *Singapore

2011

Archival pigment print

100 × 150 cm

Collection of

Singapore Art Museum

How Loneliness Goes (2013) and *Singapore* (2017). *Singapore* was named as one of the ten best photo books of the year by The New York Times Magazine. Nguan's work has been widely seen on social media and cited as being a significant visual reference for acclaimed films such as Lulu Wang's *The Farewell* (2019) and Domee Shi's *Turning Red* (2022). He is a graduate of Northwestern University.



Nguan, *Untitled*, from the series *Singapore*, 2011. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Untitled*, from the series *Singapore

2013

Archival pigment print

100 × 100 cm

Collection of
Singapore Art Museum



Nguan, *Untitled*, from the series *Singapore*, 2013. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Untitled*, from the series *Singapore

2013

Archival pigment print

100 × 100 cm

Collection of
Singapore Art Museum



Nguan, *Untitled*, from the series *Singapore*, 2013. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Untitled*, from the series *Singapore

2013

Archival pigment print

100 × 100 cm

Collection of

Singapore Art Museum



Nguan, *Untitled*, from the series *Singapore*, 2013. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Han Sai Por
Black Forest

2024

Wood and charcoal

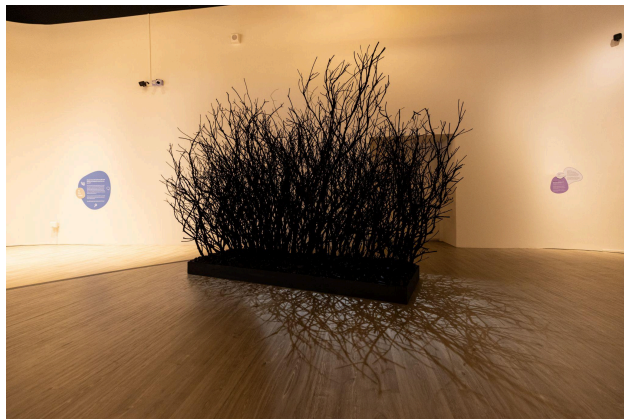
Dimensions variable

Collection of the artist

Black Forest is an ongoing project that was initiated by Han Sai Por in 2011 and revisited in 2013 and 2016. This 2024 version is a testament to Han's commitment to exploring the profound impact of human activities on the natural world. The installation presents a striking visual of an obliterated forest, the haunting aftermath of relentless deforestation. Upon closer observation, some branches appear unburnt. These branches suggest the inherent resilience of nature despite the destructiveness of humankind. Beyond aesthetics, Han's work offers powerful commentary on the human management of forests and the enduring spirit of the environment.

About the Artist:

Renowned sculptor Han Sai Por is celebrated for her mastery in transforming hefty granite blocks into vibrant, life-like figurative forms and organic shapes.



Han Sai Por, *Black Forest*, 2024. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

After graduating from the Singapore Teachers' Training College in 1968, she pursued studies in Fine Art at Wolverhampton University, United Kingdom, and furthered her education in Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University, New Zealand, from 2004 to 2008. She has held exhibitions in Southeast Asia, China, South Korea, North America and Europe. Han's creations grace permanent collections in prominent venues such as Singapore's hotels, libraries, Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) stations as well as parks in Malaysia, Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom. Recognised for her outstanding contributions to the arts, she was honoured with Singapore's Cultural Medallion in 1995.

Migrant Ecologies Project
{if your bait can sing the wild ones will come} Like Shadows Through Leaves

2021

Video, single channel, 16:9 aspect ratio, colour and sound (surround)

28 min

Collection of the artists

This film by art collective Migrant Ecologies Project is about Tanglin Halt, one of Singapore's oldest public housing estates in Queenstown, and the process of its urban renewal, from the demolition of its buildings to the relocation of its residents. The collective made repeated visits to Tanglin Halt to trace the echoes and memories that still animate the area, like shadows through leaves.

The birds are presented as silhouettes or puppets in the habitats where they were once observed, exemplifying a mode of storytelling that evokes a restorative process known as "rewilding." Transformative encounters in Tanglin Halt are interwoven with calls of different species of birds, narration and poetry to form a layered tale in which both humans and birds search for a place that once existed, while conjuring possible future returns.

About the Collective:

Migrant Ecologies Project comprises an eclectic mix of individuals, from cinematographers to writers, who come together to co-create artworks. Amidst an ever-changing list of collaborators for each artwork are some mainstay



Migrant Ecologies Project, *{if your bait can sing the wild ones will come} Like Shadows Through Leaves*, 2021.
Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum

collaborators, such as artist, composer and sound designer Zai Tang. The collective's works have featured in the Diriyah Biennale (2024), Istanbul Biennale (2022), Singapore Biennale (2022), SeedCultures Svalbard 2019, Taipei Biennale (2018), Rockbund Shanghai/Fondazione Sandretto re Rebaudengo (2018), NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (2017), among other festivals and institutions.

About the Founder:

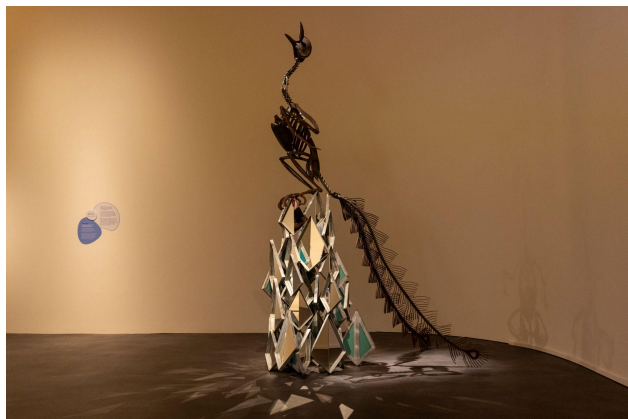
Lucy Davis is a visual artist, art writer and founder of Migrant Ecologies Project. Her transdisciplinary and often collaborative endeavours encircle ecologies, animal and plant studies, materiality, memory and storytelling, primarily but not exclusively in Southeast Asia. Davis was a founding faculty member of the School of Art, Design and Media at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (2005–2016). Davis is currently an Associate Professor (Contemporary Art) in Visual Cultures, Curating and Contemporary Art (ViCCA) Department of Art & Media, Aalto University, Finland.

Tang Da Wu 深疤凰 SEMBAWANG 2013

Mixed media
Dimensions variable
Collection of Singapore Art Museum

深疤凰 (*shēn bā huáng*) is Tang Da Wu's Chinese homonym for an area in Singapore called Sembawang, whose actual Chinese name is 三巴旺 (*sān bā wàng*). The Artists Village (TAV), an artistic community of like-minded practitioners that Tang founded in 1988, was located in Sembawang, in the north of Singapore. It was a dynamic space for exhibitions, performances and discussions, which challenged traditional artmaking and pioneered new art forms in Singapore. 深疤凰 translates to "phoenix of deep scars." The avian creature in this work bears a resemblance to the "tok-tok bird" (Large-tailed Nightjar or *Caprimulgus macrurus*) which appeared nightly near TAV. TAV left its premises in Sembawang in 1990 and this work conveys Tang's feelings about the event. The creature in his artwork is perched on a cluster of diamond-shaped mirrors, which represents its tears as it emerges from the ashes of its rebirth.

About the Artist:



Tang Da Wu, 深疤凰 SEMBAWANG, 2013. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Tang Da Wu is widely regarded as a central figure in the alternative art scene in Singapore. In 1988, he led a group of young artists to establish The Artists Village, an art collective that spearheaded performance, installation and painting projects as well as exhibitions in public spaces. Since the 1990s, Tang's artworks have dealt with the subjects of memory, history and the environment. He was featured in the Singapore Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007 and has since brought critical attention to the development of art in Singapore with works such as *First Arts Council* (2011) and *Our Children* (2012), which were collected by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and presented in an exhibition and performance at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in 2017. More recently, he led a two-part performance titled《为什么要走出黑暗》 (*When Darkness Walk*) by La Tristesse Opera, in memory of artists Chng Seok Tin, Lee Wen and Tan Kian Por and to commemorate the group's tenth anniversary.

Julian Abraham "Togar"

A Gesture

2016

Sound installation

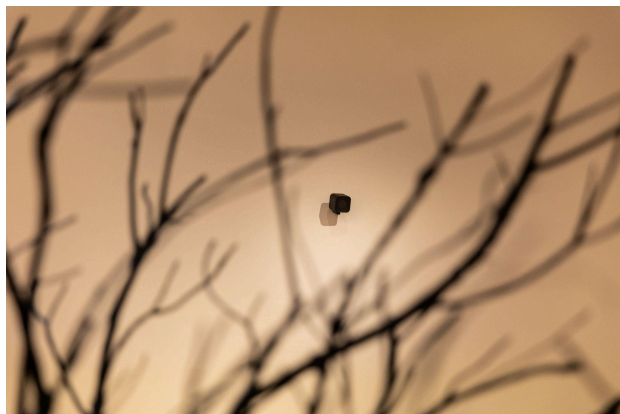
5 min 52 sec (loop)

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Through this work, Julian Abraham "Togar" explores the act of listening and highlights the visitors' relationship with sound within a space. Vocalisations like "sssttt" and "ehm" may be associated with sounds heard during a typical gallery experience, such as whispering or throat clearing. Through this sound-based artwork, the artist tests how sensitive we are to unseen aspects of the exhibition space. Each visitor's interpretations of the sounds are dependent on their background or state of mind at the time, suggesting that a gesture is partly defined by the party who receives it. However, ultimately, the sounds are simply varied intonations and articulations.

About the Artist:

Julian Abraham "Togar" (Muhammad Hidayat) is an Indonesian multidisciplinary artist, programmer and pseudo-scientist who often uses music and soundscapes in his work. Combining his different skills and interests, he explores the intersections of art, environment, science and technology. Togar engages in extensive research to create analytical artworks. His transdisciplinary practice derives from rhythms and systems, which, depending on the context of engagement, may consist of preserving, initiating, intervening,



Julian Abraham "Togar", *A Gesture*, 2016. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

supporting, negotiating, hacking or questioning. He often considers how to function within surrounding realities and is fascinated by the fact that even small interventions can bring forth changes geared towards the formation of new, sustainable support structures.



Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum; An illustration by local illustrator, Tan Zi Xi, featuring drawings by pupils from Ang Mo Kio Primary School.

ChildISH

Reignite your childhood wonder with a multi-sensorial experience at regional libraries across Singapore. As we celebrate the launch of the Learning Gallery at SAM, ChildISH warmly invites you to explore a whimsical world where art and poetry intertwine. This enchanting exhibition features the creative works of five talented local poets, each crafting literary pieces inspired by the Learning Gallery's artworks. Paired with a captivating installation by Tan Zixi, ChildISH offers interactive installations that seamlessly blend poetry and art, creating a unique sensory adventure.

Perfect for families and kids, this showcase promises to ignite curiosity and joy, celebrating the wonder of childhood. For more details, visit <https://bit.ly/SAM-ChildISH>.

Exhibition Schedule:

- Punggol Regional Library (5 June 2024 – 21 July 2024)
- Woodlands Regional Library (24 July 2024 – 8 September 2024)
- Jurong Regional Library (11 September 2024 – 27 October 2024)
- Tampines Regional Library (30 October 2024 – 15 December 2024)