

T:>WORKS PRESENTS  
A NEW COMMISSION  
**THE SWIMMING  
POOL LIBRARY**

BY **BRIAN GOTHONG TAN**

Live performance at 72-13

Live-cast Online Stream



**28 - 31 October 2021 | 8pm, 3pm**

# ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



T:>Works Artistic Atelier supports a mid-career artist or creative who is looking for new challenges to their work. As part of our vision of thought leadership amongst artists, it is pertinent not to limit this capacity development. In a country where artists are seen as vendor suppliers by government funding agencies, it is important to insist that artists are primary to generating public discourse, debate, and enriching the public life of our citizenry. Without engaged artists in the public sphere, we are all the poorer as a nation, destined to lag behind in a governance style dominated by control at all costs, fear of innovation and difference.

I was convinced after our work in the international alternative universities/artist residencies programme, The Flying Circus Project, and rebooting the Singapore Arts Festival as Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA), there was an urgent need to reduce the infantilization prevalent in Singapore. The trend to simply concentrate on emerging artists and not planning the career paths of mid-career artists may result in a lack of sustainability in the ecosystem of the arts. Further the absolute dearth of care for mature artists, who have pioneered the contemporary arts in Singapore (circa mid 1980s), may lead to a brain drain and the collapse of collaboration between citizen and government in the future potentialities of Singapore.

The hallmark of the Artistic Atelier is that the mid-career artist or creative is encouraged to develop carte blanche their trajectory for three years. T:>Works commits our artistry, our engagement resources, our intellectual care to the Artistic Atelier. Instead of demanding the mid-career artist or creative to become part of the company infrastructure, we value their independence outside of our structure, to lead their own creative team to fruition. T:>Works collaborates rather than controls the narrative.

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T:>Works began this new direction in 2019 with the invitation to Noorlinah Mohamed to begin a festival platform, focused on engagement and listening specifically to communities. Noorlinah continued the trajectory of the O.P.E.N. pre-festival of engagement from SIFA into T:>Works Festival of Women or Not Ordinary Work, N.O.W. We were honoured to support her journey and hope this will continue into our collaborative Artistic Atelier with Brian Gothong Tan.

I have known Brian since inviting him to Ho Chi Minh City to participate in The Flying Circus Project in 2007. In 2008, we collaborated deeply and joyfully in the creating Vivien and The Shadows in Carolina Performing Arts, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA. These TheatreWorks (the former name of T:>Works) projects built up our trust and we continued working together in different formats: Bertolt Brecht's Good Person of Szechwan for Landestheater Linz, European Cultural Capital 2009, the 2015 SIFA commission of The Incredible Border Crossers in Palais de Tokyo in Paris, and in 2016, his own SIFA commission sited within Ron Arad's installation at Gardens by the Bay. So we are no strangers in collaboration and I am very happy to welcome him to this parallel artistic utopia, the paratopia of T:>Works Artistic Atelier.

**ONG KENG SEN**

Artistic Director, T:>Works



# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



When Keng Sen approached me sometime in 2020 during the first lockdown about the idea of creating an artistic atelier, I was intrigued. My journey with T:>Works really started with the 2007 edition of the Flying Circus, in which Keng Sen assembled an international group of artistic nomads and took us to places like Pulau Ubin, a cruise to nowhere and Ho Chi Minh City.

That experience had a profound impact on the way I view art and my own artistic process; that being an artist in this day and age meant something more than creating a product that could be consumed by the public. Living on a tiny island like Singapore that is highly controlled, it is very easy to lose sight of what is at stake, when economics rule, and concepts like spirit and soul hardly mean anything. But for the next few years since that Flying Circus, I was caught up in the machinery. The truth is it is very difficult, or near impossible to be an artist in Singapore. There is just no space, and time, here to be radically creative and experimental, and to truly dream of something that is profound and meaningful to the world.

The Swimming Pool Library is my first tentative step into this atelier, where I go back to my artistic roots of my visual arts training. I explore issues that are close to my heart that I have never really articulated throughout my life, and created nine chapters of various art forms in an immersive installation, with the 10th chapter as a performance that audiences will experience in the space. Due to the ever-changing health regulations, we had to scramble and re-structure The Swimming Pool Library, so now the 10th chapter will be released first, and the exhibition in January 2022, with various satellite talks and engagements with other artists, writers and thinkers in between. This re-think has produced a possible way to create art in this age of pandemic, that a work could exist for various months instead of a weekend or two. This will be the direction that the atelier will take on for the next three projects.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank my various collaborators who have contributed greatly to this project: Ronald, Lian, Umi, Izzy, Irfan and Karen, who have given life to the performance, and made real what was just abstract musings in my head. To Kaylene Tan and spell#7 for Various Gangsters, a text that has inspired me endlessly all these years. To the poets: Andrew, Andy, Rodrigo, Nikhil, Stephanie, Irie, Paul, Irfan and Carissa, for your courageous voices and powerful words. To my designers and the production crew who are part of my artistic family: Andy, Boon, Theresa, Ashley, Bobbie, Justina and the crew. To my cinematic brothers: Eric, Yee Sheng and Fadhli, of which I would have given up film if not for their infectious passion and inspiration. My T:>Works family, Traslin, Soo Mei, Noorlinah and of course Keng Sen, my mentor and guardian angel, who is responsible for making everything happen. And finally to James, who I am nothing without... thank you for always being there, supporting and believing in the vision and sticking through all the ups and downs.

**BRIAN GOTHONG TAN**

Director, The Swimming Pool Library



# POEMS PERFORMED FROM "EXHALE: AN ANTHOLOGY OF QUEER SINGAPOREAN VOICES"

"Self portrait as river as  
town plan as stumbling as  
seen on google earth"

**Stephanie Chan**

"Bargaining with the  
Patriarch with apologies  
to Deniz Kandiyoti"

**Carissa Cheow**

"Beautiful Boxer"

**Andy Winter**

"Everyone Said It Would Feel  
Sacred When It Happened"

**Stephanie Chan**

"Health Cock Up"

**Ad Maulod**

"Thirst"

**Rodrigo Dela Peña, Jr.**

"Girls"

**Irie Aman**

"An X-Rated Ode"

**Nikhil Mahapatra**

"Ode to Happy Together"

**Paul Jerusalem**

"83"

**Irfan Kasban**

"I watch the student  
actors perform Angels in  
America the day after I  
am diagnosed positive"

**Andrew Sutherland**



# OUR CAST (in alphabetical order)



## **Azizul 'Izzy' Mahathir**

### ***Vanda Miss Joaquim***

"In TSPL, I play the persona of a cat. When I'm not doing TSPL, I am Vanda Miss Joaquim, the national "flower" of Singapore. You can find me @vandamiss.joaquim or the alley streets of every gay bar in Singapore."



## **Irfan Kasban**

"In TSPL, I play the persona of Brian Gothong Tan. I mean The Artist.

When I'm not doing TSPL, I'm a person disguised as an artist. A bit too close for comfort. Not a starving one, but could afford to be a little slimmer. And not to mention richer.

You can visit/find me on @irfan.kasban on Instagram. My insta-stories are honest, heartfelt, and harrowing auto-biography of my life presented as a durational, site specific, immersive epic. I also accept donations in cash or in kind. Yes I am that kind of artist. No shame. Give me money. Please."



## **Karen Tan**

"In TSPL, I play the persona of Brian Gothong Tan. When I'm not doing TSPL, I'm Brian Gothong Tan. I'm right-handed."



## **Lian Sutton**

"In *The Swimming Pool Library*, I play the persona of Brian Gothong Tan. When I'm not doing TSPL, I'm playing pretend for money elsewhere or unemployed. You can find me @lian.sutton on Instagram where I'm still trying to figure out how to (do an Instagram) story."



## **Ronald Goh**

"In TSPL, I play the persona of a coming-of-age twink discovering his sexuality and the realities of modern day romance. When I'm not doing TSPL, I'm working in a PR agency & working on a 5-track music EP to be released next year. If not, I'll be sipping on some oat milk oolong tea or doing yoga. You can visit/find me @ronaldgoh\_ or come talk to me after the show. Don't worry, I'm not really into piss play ;)"



## **Umi Kalthum Ismail**

"In TSPL, I play the persona of a conflicted woman. When I'm not doing TSPL, I am in a wet market. You can find me high up in the mountains."





# CREDITS

Director

**Brian Gothong Tan**

Associate Producer

**James J. Tay**

Stage Manager

**Justina Khoo**

Lighting Designer &  
Technical Manager

**Andy Lim**

Sound Designer

**BOON**

Asst to Brian /  
Set Coordinator

**M. Nurfadhli Jasni**

Costume Designer

**Theresa Chan**

Live-cast Editor

**Eric Lee**

Camera Director

**Teh Yee Sheng**

Hair

**Ashley Lim**

Makeup

**The Make Up Room**

Assistant Stage Manager

**Christopher Ong**

Lighting Operator

**Yafiq Harraz Bin  
Mohamed Yunos**

Multimedia Operator

**Raziatie Bte Razmi**

Sound Operator

**Mohamed Mirza Shah  
Bin Mohamed Iqbal**

Production Crew

**Jed Lim**

Wardrobe

**Janette Audrey Chee Min**

Publicity / Marketing  
Design

**Howie Kim**

Publicity / Marketing  
Communications

**Michelle Bong Lejtenyi**

Public Engagement  
Programmes

**Noorlinah Mohamed**

Cast (in alphabetical order)

**Azizul 'Izzy' Mahathir  
(a.k.a. Vanda Miss Joaquim)**

**Irfan Kasban**

**Karen Tan**

**Lian Sutton**

**Ronald Goh**

**Umi Kalthum Bte Ismail**

A New Commission of

**T:>Works**

Special Thanks to:

Technical Equipment Partner



Official Ticketing Partner



T:>Works is supported by the National Arts Council under the Major Company Scheme Grant for the period of 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2022.



# JOIN US ON THE JOURNEY OF THE SWIMMING POOL LIBRARY

28 - 31 October: Live performance @ 72-13  
+ Live-cast Online Stream



The inimitable cast – Karen Tan, Irfan Kasban, Umi Kalthum Bte Ismail, Lian Sutton, Azizul 'Izzy' Mahthir (a.k.a. Vanda Miss Joaquim) and Ronald Goh – perform texts from performance company spell#7's "Various Gangsters" (2002) and writings from "EXHALE: An Anthology of Queer Singapore Voices" to present a layered portrait of the quest for love and belonging in the garden city.

6 - 23 January 2022:  
Visual and Sensory Exhibition

The full exhibition will open in January 2022, coinciding with Singapore Art Week. The genesis of The Swimming Pool Library, this visual and sensory segment, invites audiences to journey with the artist. Works including paper sketches, 3D printed sculptures, 3D film photography and DIY books will jigsaw the pieces of Tan's creative imagery of a boy's rite of passage.



10 November and 8 December 2021,  
5 January 2022: Talk series  
"Othering in Gender and Sexuality"



Speak openly in Othering in Gender and Sexuality; that's the aim. We gather over three in-conversations, beginning 10 November, to engage in intimate and open dialogue, and raise questions on expected ways of behaving, representing, as well as belonging to a community as well as society. Each conversation identifies a specific knotty issue on othering that heightens the complexities of identities where society's sexual and gender labels do not apply.

# About T:>Works

Established in 1985, T:>Works is an independent and international performance company based in Singapore. It is an Institute of Public Character. It is currently led by Artistic Director, Dr. Ong Keng Sen.

T:>Works' vision and mission is the pioneering of thought leadership in the arts focused on transdisciplinary, transcultural, and inclusive processes.

To this end, T:>Works' mission is to provide a strong educational perspective with research and discourse contextualising the histories, contemporary experiences, and art practices of South East Asia.

The mission of T:>Works also serves to investigate the current urgencies of being located in Singapore through different creative expressions in the public sphere.

# T:>Works Team

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**Heman Chong**

**Kathy Lai**

**Noorlinah Mohamed**

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**Ong Keng Sen**

Executive Director

**Traslin Ong**

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Communications &  
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**Deirdre Chang**

Communications &  
Engagement Intern

**Charlotte Tan**

Production Interns

**Yafiq Harraz Bin**

**Mohamed Yunos**

**Raziatie Bte Razmi**

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