

T:> Works presents a new commission by Brian Gothong Tan

#Metazomia

@72-13,

Home of T:> Works

31 Dec 2022 - 20 Jan 2023

a 360° interactive and immersive
cinematic experience by award-
winning and multi-disciplinary artist,
Brian Gothong Tan.

Advisory 16 (Some Mature Content)



MESSAGE

Brian Gothong Tan Artist, #Metazomia

#Metazomia is the second commission of the Artistic Atelier, following *The Swimming Pool Library*, a work that spanned four months. It explored sexuality and masculinity in a cryptic autobiographical tone. It took the form of a live-streamed performance and an immersive installation that was a hybrid of a swimming pool changing room and a dance club.

With **#Metazomia**, the title refers to two things: the Metaverse, and a metaphorical highland region in South East Asia - Zomia - that escaped centralised government as postulated by James C. Scott. I am attracted to ideas of utopias, specifically those promised by technology and the digital realm, and the inherent dystopias that they engender through blind spots. Indeed, the initial impetus for **#Metazomia** started about 10 years ago when I discovered the Bitcoin white paper written by Satoshi Nakamoto, a mysterious anonymous programmer, that came up with the world's first decentralised public blockchain. My encounter with this new concept came during a time when digital apps were promising utopias of a fairer and more balanced world. Although they offered solutions to some fundamental problems, as with all new technologies, they bring unforeseen consequences. They are still subject to decisions made by a few powerful people at the top. In that manner, they exacerbate old institutional problems like hegemony and control, and multiply them by tenfold.

The 1939 film, *Wizard of Oz*, released by MGM studios starring Judy Garland, perfectly encapsulates visually some of my initial ideas. I use the film as a starting point to explore ideas surrounding freedom, control and questioning of power and authority, and the idea of where "home" really is. Artificial Intelligence also plays a key part in this work. I am most fascinated by the speculative nature of A.I. tools. Its iterative and random process of coming up with images, relying on the sensitivities of prompts that you feed it, is sympathetic to how humans create with their subconscious. I find it has many similarities with Tarot cards, which I describe as A.I.'s analogue version. Tarot cards depend on a system of symbols and archetypes and chance to assemble a reading. It relies on the user's understanding and personal imagination to create a logical and meaningful narrative. A.I. uses a large archive of data to arrive at an acceptable result.

As with all my other works, unorthodox and unusual narrative structures are foundational to my creative process. In **#Metazomia**, I try to imagine what a decentralised narrative structure would look like, yet, mindful that a balance between chaos and coherence is necessary. Kaylene Tan is instrumental in this journey. Her use of language elucidates the world I conjure with images. Her amazing talent as a writer and her gift of empathy as a collaborator has enabled me to create freely and provided a poetic yet direct entry into the work.

#Metazomia is not an easy work. It demands both active participation and surrender. I invite audiences to journey with me in this immersive cinematic experience, to roam free, imagine and dream. In these chaotic and traumatic times, we need to heal and be responsible for our own salvation.

I'm grateful to my always-dependable creative team: Fadhli, Ian, Varian, Yeesheng and James, for making the work come alive. Cake, for always supporting me with anything I need in the last minute. My actors: Izzy, Ben, Liz, Irfan, Yanling and Sangeetha, for trusting the process and giving their all. Noorlinah, for always pushing the boundaries, sharpening ideas, and teaching me all about NFTs. Kaylene, for being the artistic light I followed in the darkness. And finally, my T:>Works family: Traslin, Soo Mei, the staff at T:>Works, and Dr. Ong Keng Sen, for believing in my vision and creating the space for it to exist.

MESSAGE

Ong Keng Sen Artistic Director, T:>Works

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 infantilisation 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.

ABOUT T:> WORKS

Established in 1985, T:>Works is an independent and international arts company based in Singapore at its space, 72-13. It is currently led by Artistic Director, Dr. Ong Keng Sen.

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

To this end, there is a strong educational perspective with research and discourse contextualising histories, contemporary experiences, and situated art practices of the global south.

T:>Works also serves to investigate the current urgencies of being located in Singapore, and larger Asia, through different creative expressions in the public sphere. It is a recipient of the National Arts Council Major Company Grant from 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2025. T:>Works is an Institute of Public Character with charity status.

VISITOR GUIDE TO #METAZOMIA

There are two Stations in #Metazomia.
We suggest you take your time to
wander through the two stations.

In **Station 1**, the A.I. generated digital images
manifest as objects.
In books, as postcards, on film strips and
as 3D printed sculptures.

Writer Kaylene Tan offers sumptuous narratives
in response to Brian's digital images.
They are printed in books displayed on a table.
Take your time to read them.

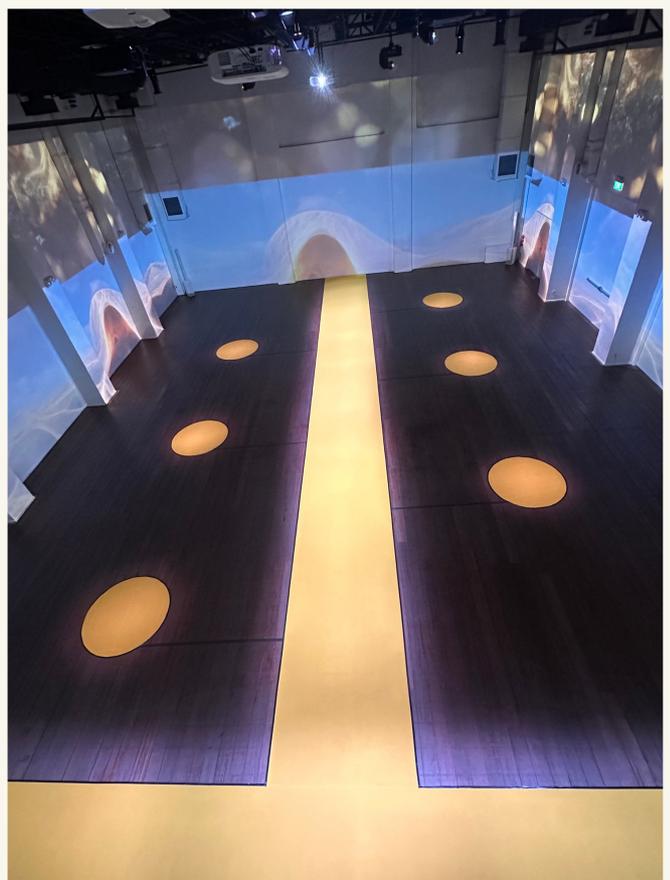
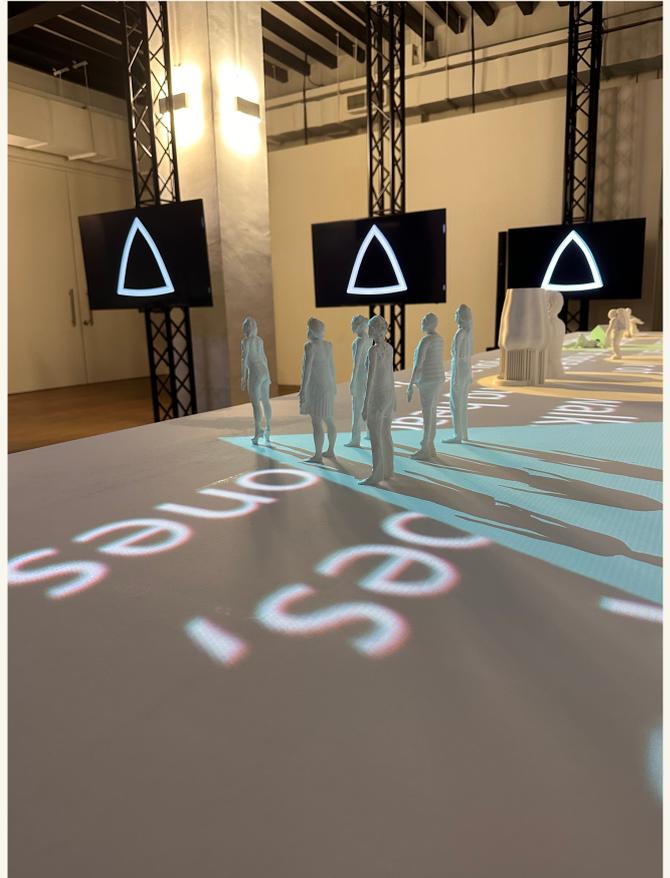
In the centre of **Station 1** is an interactive space,
where you experience the chance-like quality
of A.I. through a digital foretelling simulation.
Step into the centre of the circle to conjure
a random selection of images.
What does your image say, today?

Station 2 has three visual narratives.
Total duration: 20 minutes.

Each narrative has its own set of hidden images.
Step into the centre of a circle
gently, intentionally, carefully
to reveal the images.

To enter **Station 2**, follow the yellow path.
It leads you in. It also leads you out.
Sit, stand, lay. Be comfortable.
Give way. Take care.

Wander, wonder and linger.





Keen to take
a piece of
#Metazomia
home with you?

Purchase your favourite
artwork in #Metazomia.
For enquiries, please contact:
connect.tworks@gmail.com
or **6737 7213**





CREDITS

Artist: Brian Gothong Tan

Associate Producer: James Jordan Tay

Text: Kaylene Tan

Engagement Programmes: Noorlinah Mohamed

Lighting Designer: Ian Tan

Technical Manager: Varian Tan

Asst. to Brian & Set Coordinator: M. Nurfadhli Jasni

Director of Photography: Teh Yeesheng

Development Coordinator: Rae Mok

Front-of-House Manager: Brandon Ong

Actors

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

Benedict Lim

Elizabeth Sergeant Tan

Irfan Kasban

Ma Yanling

Rebekah Sangeetha Dorai

Production & Technical Team

Amirul Bin Azmi

David Li

Edwin Chee

Jed Lim

Paul Lim Wei Xiang

Huang Xiangbin

Roy Neo

T:>Works

Artistic Director: Ong Keng Sen

Executive Director: Traslin Ong

Administrator: Ong Soo Mei

Communications & Engagement Assoc.: Deirdre Chang

Administrative Support: Berlin Woo

Intern: Darwisyah Durrani

Board of Directors

Heman Chong

Kathy Lai

Noorinah Mohamed

Ong Keng Sen

Special thanks

Belinda Tan, Crystal Tan, Glen Tay, Dr. Joe Yap, Kelley Cheng, Leslie Lee, Meena Mylvaganam-Tay, Natalie Henedige, Ryan Su, Sharon Tang, content creators, the media, our volunteers and everyone who has supported the #Metazomia journey.



NARRATIVE COLLECTION

Kaylene Tan - writer, director, performer - wrote different text types as responses to Brian Gothong Tan's images.

Following Kaylene's experience, we invite you to consider penning your response (text, drawings, symbols) to the experience you had in #Metazomia.

Write your responses in the Narrative Collection book located at the Front-of-House.

By sharing your responses, you grant us permission to reprint them on the website as well as social media. We will upload the writings between now till 31 January.

Scan this QR code to submit your responses digitally.



Thank you.

NOTE: *Should you wish to contribute a response, but not permit a reprint, please indicate when submitting your contributions.*

For queries, please email: connect.tworks@gmail.com or call 6737 7213.

JAN-AUG 2023 T:>WORKS PROGRAMMES

2 - 20 Jan 2023:

#Metazomia by Brian Gothong Tan

14 - 16 Apr 2023:

PerForm Festival of Arts, Ideas & Activations

Jul 2023:

Return of the 24-Hour Playwriting Competition

10 - 20 Aug 2023:

KING by Jo Tan



TICKET HOLDER PRIVILEGES

- Flash your #Metazomia digital or printed tickets (Peatix / Klook) to enjoy 10% discount off F&B at **MEMO Cafe** in Studio M and **Beast and Butterflies** in M Social. Promotions valid till 31 January 2023.
- Ticket holders also stand a chance to win a lucky draw to a 1N/2D staycation at **Studio M** redeemable in 2023.

SUPPORT US

Make a difference and be a supporter of ideas, creation and innovation with as little as \$50.

We rely greatly on your generous contributions to help sustain the work we do. If you share our passion for thought provoking transdisciplinary work, inspire new thought process and investigate urgencies of our time through creative expressions , do support us.

As T:>Works is an Institute of Public Character (IPC), your contributions to us will enjoy 250% tax deduction. It will also be eligible for dollar-for-dollar matching by the Cultural Matching Fund (CMF), maximising the impact of your contribution to us.



T:>Works giving.sg

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