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**MEDIA ALERT**

**PerForm presents Digital Keynote by Dr Jerrine Tan**  
***A Land Imagined: A Transnational Framework on Land Reclamation and Labour***



Pictured: A Land Imagined poster (left: image credits Akanga Film Asia), PerForm Fellow Dr Jerrine Tan (right).

SINGAPORE, 1 September 2022 – T:>Works warmly welcomes its next PerForm Fellow, researcher and writer Dr Jerrine Tan, whose interests lie at the intersection of the global anglophone, transnational literature and film, gender and sexuality studies, and critical race theory. Dr Tan is currently an assistant professor at City University Hong Kong.

The digital keynote titled **A Land Imagined: A Transnational Framework on Land Reclamation and Labour** will consider the modern-day “coolie”, a labourer, against the backdrop of acclaimed film *A Land Imagined*, while drawing from Saidiya Hartman’s text on the fungibility of bodies and Lisa Lowe’s writing on immigration and citizenship. It will be hosted and moderated by T:>Works Artistic Director Dr Ong Keng Sen on 22 September 2022.

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Yeo Siew Hua's *A Land Imagined* is interspersed with long scenes at a work site. The camera often rests on the droning work of machines and workers carting and sorting gravel. But for all the movement that is displayed, no change has taken place. Piles of gravel are demolished and moved to make new piles. The persons in the film appear similarly fungible: an injured labourer can become a driver, a corpse may or may not explain a disappearance. Ultimately, the site is revealed to be a land reclamation site which reveals that movement of gravel is not a closed innocuous system, but is part of a zero-sum game, in which one country grows bigger by cannibalising those around it.

Using the film as a medium, Dr Tan will connect the parallels between the movement of land across bodies of water during the process of land reclamation, and the movement of indentured labourers to Singapore. She makes clear the invisibility of their labour contrasted against the brash display of their finished structures, much like the gravel of Singapore's reclaimed land under our feet is no longer named after their homeland but a part of the island.

While the film may be a neo-noir mystery thriller, its backdrop remains very much deep in reality for migrant workers. Hartman and Lowe's texts and interests on exchange, labour, and transnational movement offer a critical framework with which we can think about how the film takes up the racial, national, and gendered intersections of these issues. Dr Tan's lecture will unpack the film's imaginative and responsible form of transnational assemblage which connects cultures and people not through labour or even soil, but through art.

T:>Works' PerForm, a fellowship platform that cuts across silos, disciplines, and fields, to support contextualised research, situated practices, and translocal knowledge production as a shared resource for the future. Dr Tan joins the Fellowship alongside Fellows Shubigi Rao, Ho Rui An and Nurul Huda Rashid, whose lectures are now available through T:>Digital, an initiative created to increase the longevity and expand the reach of such digital lectures.

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### Digital Keynote

A Land Imagined: A Transnational Framework on Land Reclamation and Labour  
Hosted and Moderated by Dr Ong Keng Sen

### Date

Thursday, 22 September 2022

### Time

8pm (SGT/HKT) | 8am (EDT) | 2pm (CEST)

Register for the Zoom Webinar here: [bit.ly/Jerrine-PerForm](https://bit.ly/Jerrine-PerForm)

Check your local time [here](#)

For enquiries, email [connect.tworks@gmail.com](mailto:connect.tworks@gmail.com)

For press images please access [here](#)

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### About Dr Jerrine Tan

[Dr Jerrine Tan Ee-Wen](#) (she/her) is an Assistant Professor of English and currently teaches in Hong Kong. She received her PhD from Brown University and was previously a Visiting Lecturer in Global Anglophone Literature at Mount Holyoke College. Her research interests include World Literature, Transnational Literature, Critical Race Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Film. Her scholarly and public writing have been published or are forthcoming in *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Cambridge Companion to Kazuo Ishiguro*, *Lit Hub*, *WIRED*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Asian American Writers' Workshop*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and *Post45*.

Her most recent article [Protest Hides in Plain Sight in Hong Kong](#) was published in *WIRED*.

### About Dr Ong Keng Sen

Dr Ong Keng Sen is the critically acclaimed Artistic Director of T:>Works and the arts space 72-13. Best known for his transcultural Asian productions of Shakespeare, Ong founded the Arts Network Asia and the international Curators Academy. He was the Founding Festival Director of the Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA) from 2013 to 2017, and co-founded the Young Curators Academy at the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin in 2019. In 2021, he was the Artistic Director of the Amsterdam-based Prince Claus Funds' 25-hour Festival to commemorate its 25 years of existence.

Ong was the first Singapore artist to be awarded both the Cultural Medallion 2003 and the Young Artist Award 1992. He was awarded the prestigious Fukuoka Asian Arts and Culture Prize in 2010 for his creations in Asian contemporary performance. He graduated with a Ph.D. in Performance Studies from New York University Tisch School of the Arts in 2019, and was conferred an Honorary Doctorate from University of the Arts London in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the field of Theatre Direction in 2022.

### About *A Land Imagined* (2018)

*A Land Imagined*, written and directed by Yeo Siew Hua, tells the story of a police investigator who uncovers the truth behind the disappearance of a Chinese migrant worker working at a land reclamation site. The investigation leads him to the disappearance of another Bengali worker, who was on good terms with the missing construction worker. As he retraces the steps of the missing workers, Lok gets a sensing of their plight working for an unscrupulous employer. The film has won multiple awards such as the Golden Leopard from the 71<sup>st</sup> Locarno Film Festival 2018, securing Best Asian Feature at the 29<sup>th</sup> Singapore International Film Festival 2018, Best Original Screenplay and Best Original Film Score at Taipei's 56 Golden Horse Awards 2019 and was Singapore's entry for the Academy Awards Best International Feature Film category. The film is currently available for streaming on Netflix.

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### On writings by Saidiya Hartman

#### Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America (Race and American Culture)

In this provocative and original exploration of racial subjugation during slavery and its aftermath, Saidiya Hartman illumines the forms of terror and resistance that shaped black identity. Scenes of Subjection examines the forms of domination that usually go undetected; in particular, the encroachments of power that take place through notions of humanity, enjoyment, protection, rights, and consent.

### On writings by Lisa Lowe

#### The Intimacies of Four Continents

In this uniquely interdisciplinary work, Lisa Lowe examines the relationships between Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth- centuries, exploring the links between colonialism, slavery, imperial trades and Western liberalism. Reading across archives, canons, and continents, Lowe connects the liberal narrative of freedom overcoming slavery to the expansion of Anglo-American empire, observing that abstract promises of freedom often obscure their embeddedness within colonial conditions. Race and social difference, Lowe contends, are enduring remainders of colonial processes through which “the human” is universalized and “freed” by liberal forms, while the peoples who create the conditions of possibility for that freedom are assimilated or forgotten.

### About PerForm

Led by Artistic Director [Dr Ong Keng Sen](#), T:>Works continues to expand its mission of pioneering thought leadership in the arts, and providing educational perspectives through situated research and discourse. Moving beyond the art world and collaborating with Arts Network Asia, T:>Works introduces a fellowship platform from 2021 to 2024 that cuts across silos, disciplines, and fields, to support contextualised research, situated practices, and translocal knowledge production as a shared resource for the future. T:>Works has named this fellowship platform, PerForm, which is centred around the idea of leaving nobody and nothing behind.

PerForm harnesses the contexts of multiple ‘locals’, such as situated knowledge, local practices, or a fellow’s sustained engagement with local communities around the world. It honours a local which is simultaneous and interdependent on other locals, and emphasises that all localities are dependent on each other, even though they may be physically very distant, to collaborate together. The Fellow may be based in another localised context, and knowledge and research produced there will be digitally shared with publics in Singapore and internationally. The fellowship is open to collaborative ventures between artists, scientists, writers, curators, activators, creative communities, amongst others. PerForm brings the audience of this fellowship programme back to the basics of acting in our personal capacities and performing our personal responsibilities to create liveable societies.

In this new decade and over the next three years, T:>Works seeks to develop knowledge production in hopes of sustaining futures on a planetary level, beyond cultural, geographical,

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ideological and national borders. To this end, T:>Works is particularly attuned to the making of potential futures that speak to the ethical interconnections between cultures, humans, species, and other forces that animate our physical world.

The first group of fellows of PerForm 2021/2022 are: Ho Rui An, Dr Jerrine Tan, Nurul Huda Rashid, Shubigi Rao, and Wong Bing Hao. Earlier PerForm events include the inaugural digital lecture by Shubigi Rao, a digital keynote: From Crisis to Value\* by Ho Rui An, and an exhibition featuring the works of Ho Rui An & Shubigi Rao. The digital lecture series featuring fellows, Shubigi Rao, Ho Rui An, and Nurul Huda Rashid are now available in the T:>Digital Library, which houses T:>Works' hybrid and digital creations.

More information on [PerForm](#) and [T:>Digital](#) can be found on our website.

### 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.

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