



NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL  
SINGAPORE

## MEDIA RELEASE

### NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL APPOINTS ARTISTIC TEAM TO REPRESENT SINGAPORE AT THE 58TH VENICE BIENNALE

*Artist Song-Ming Ang and curator Michelle Ho explore the societal aspects of music at premier contemporary art event*



*Artist Song-Ming Ang and curator Michelle Ho (photo courtesy of National Arts Council)*

**Singapore, 18 July 2018** – The National Arts Council (NAC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Singaporean artist Song-Ming Ang and curator Michelle Ho, as the artistic team representing Singapore at the 58th Venice Biennale from 11 May to 24 November 2019.

2 Marking Singapore's ninth participation in the Biennale since 2001, the duo will present an exhibition titled *Music for Everyone: Variations on a Theme* for the Singapore Pavilion, located at the Sale d'Armi building in the Arsenale in Venice. The work extends Ang's practice of using music as a platform to explore ideas of public involvement and the various ways people relate to music, both individually and as a society.

3 *Music for Everyone: Variations on a Theme* derives its title from a series of concerts organised by Singapore's then-Ministry of Culture in the 1970s and 80s to encourage public appreciation of the arts. Ang's presentation will span various media, drawing from experimental music practices and the spirit of amateurism to establish a counterpoint to the state-driven vision of Music for Everyone. A major component of his presentation is *Recorder Rewrite*, a new work based on the recorder, a music instrument that has been part of Singapore's music education in schools since the 1970s. Other components include developments of his earlier works such as *You and I*, in which Ang compiled and mailed out personalised CD-R mix-tapes as a response to anyone who wrote him a letter.



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4 Ang's multi-disciplinary art practice often examines the contexts in which music is produced, disseminated and consumed. Ang is a recipient of the Young Artist Award in 2011, conferred by the National Arts Council, and one of five contemporary artists selected for the 2015 edition of the *President's Young Talents* exhibition at the Singapore Art Museum. His works have been presented by numerous overseas institutions, biennials, and festivals including Camden Arts Centre (London), Witte de With (Rotterdam), Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin), Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney), the 14th Istanbul Biennial (Turkey), and Festival of Live Art (Melbourne). Ang has also presented his works locally with NTU ADM Gallery, NUS Museum, Institute of Contemporary Arts, the 3rd Singapore Biennale, Singapore Arts Festival, Singapore Fringe Festival, the Substation, and the Esplanade. In addition, Ang has participated in residencies with NTU Centre for Contemporary Art (Singapore), Gertrude Contemporary (Melbourne), Hospitalfield (Scotland) and Arcus Project (Japan).

5 By drawing on the dialogues that can exist between experimental music and conceptual art, a recurrent aspect of Ang's practice is the meaningful involvement of members of the public in the creation of his works. This element of participation is evident in *Yesterday (Mobile Karaoke)*, presented at the 2011 Singapore Arts Festival, where a truck installed with a stage and karaoke system travelled around Singapore for the public to sing their favourite songs; and *Guilty Pleasures*, a listening party where audience members play and speak about songs they love but are embarrassed to reveal.

6 Ang and curator Michelle Ho – who is also Gallery Director of the ADM Gallery at the School of Art, Design and Media, Nanyang Technological University – most recently worked together in February 2018 on the group exhibition *Exceptions of Rule*, exhibited at the ADM Gallery.

7 Ang said of his appointment, "I'm very honoured and excited to be representing Singapore at the 58th Venice Biennale. Having seen many of our previous presentations in Venice, all of which have been complex and meaningful in their own ways, I hope to present an exhibition of similar depth and nuance."

8 Curator Michelle Ho elaborated, "Previous presentations at the Singapore Pavilion have dealt with the themes of identity, historical memory, and the complexities of land and coastal geographies. I'm glad that public participation as a critical force in art-making will be highlighted in the upcoming presentation, through Song-Ming's practice that investigates our encounters with music, and music-making."

9 Mrs Rosa Daniel, CEO of NAC and Co-Chair of the Singapore Pavilion Commissioning Panel, said, "Singapore's participation in the Venice Biennale remains an important platform for us, as it provides our artists with significant opportunities to showcase the best of Singapore art on the global stage and to develop critical international connections. Our visual arts sector and visual artists have much to offer in the areas of artistic production and research."

10 She added, "*Music for Everyone: Variations on a Theme* stood out as a conceptual and reflective work that uses music as a subject to spotlight arts appreciation in Singapore. The appeal of his work is that it is both cutting-edge yet nostalgic, and international yet personal all at the same time, offering audiences unusual insights into Singaporean life on a variety of levels, through the universal concepts of music and sound. We look forward to presenting Ang's work to local and international audiences, a depiction of our unique Singapore story told through his perspectives in a multi-disciplinary approach."



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11 Interested parties can join the conversation with the Singapore Pavilion via Facebook and Instagram **@NACSingapore**, and hashtag **#SingaporeInVenice** and **#VeniceBiennale2019**. [www.nac.gov.sg/SingaporeinVenice](http://www.nac.gov.sg/SingaporeinVenice)

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For hi-res images of the artistic team and past works, please click [here](#). Please note caption conventions in the attached Annex C and credit all images to the National Arts Council.

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### **About the National Arts Council**

The National Arts Council champions the arts in Singapore. By nurturing creative excellence and supporting broad audience engagement, our diverse and distinctive arts inspire our people, connect communities and profile Singapore internationally. We preserve our rich, cultural traditions as we cultivate accomplished artists and vibrant companies for the future. Our support for the arts is comprehensive – from grants and partnerships to industry facilitation and arts housing. The Council welcomes greater private and corporate giving to and through the arts so that together we can make the arts an integral part of everyone's lives. For more information on the Council's mission and plans, visit [www.nac.gov.sg](http://www.nac.gov.sg)



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## **ANNEX A**

### **About the Artist Song-Ming Ang**

Song-Ming Ang makes art focusing on how we relate to music individually and as a society, often examining the contexts in which music is produced, disseminated and consumed. Drawing from the everyday and popular culture, Ang's multi-disciplinary art practice revolves around 'thinking about music' as he adopts different approaches to create objects and encounters in various formats.

Previous works by Ang include *Backwards Bach* (2013), for which Ang composed, performed and filmed a backwards version of the C Major Prelude from Book I of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* by J. S. Bach. *Unsung Heroes* (2015) features record shop owners and workers talking about and playing their favourite music in the setting of a listening party hosted by Ang, while *The Book of Guilty Pleasures* (2011) brings together 100 responses by artists, musicians and writers about their favourite embarrassing sounds. For *Something Old, Something New* (2015), Ang remade an intricate wooden music stand from the 19th century in glass, combining manual and industrial glass-making techniques.

Ang's work has been presented at Camden Arts Centre (London, UK, 2015), Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin, DE, 2011), Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin, DE, 2012, 2013), Witte de With (Rotterdam, NL, 2014), Hong Kong Arts Centre (Hong Kong, CN, 2014), Museum Voorlinden (Wassenaar, NL, 2017), Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney, AU, 2014), Suwon iPark Museum of Art (Suwon, KR, 2016), Festival of Live Art (Melbourne, AU, 2018), Kenpoku Art Festival (Ibaraki, JP, 2016), the 14th Istanbul Biennial (Istanbul, TR, 2015), Singapore Arts Festival (2011), the 3rd Singapore Biennale (2011), and Singapore Art Museum (2012, 2015). He holds an M.A. in Aural & Visual Cultures from Goldsmiths University of London and a B.A. in English Literature from the National University of Singapore.

Apart from his individual art practice, Ang is also involved in long-term collaborative projects – *Dusk to Dawn Choruses* with Julien Grossmann and *A Song to Change the World* with Jason Maling – as platforms for experimentation and improvisation.



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### **About the Curator Michelle Ho**

Michelle Ho is Gallery Director of the ADM Gallery at the School of Art, Design and Media, Nanyang Technological University. She has over 10 years' experience in curating Singapore, Southeast Asian and international contemporary art, including shows like *In Praise of Shadows*, *The Art of Conflict: Video Works from the Asia Society Museum Collection* (2017) and *The Collectors Show: Weight of History* (2013). She was also co-curator for *Time of Others* (2015 – 2016), a collaborative exhibition with Queensland Art Gallery (QAGOMA), Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (MOT) and National Museum of Art, Osaka (NMAO), and was also co-curator of the Singapore Biennale 2013. Formerly a curator at the Singapore Art Museum, she has led the acquisition strategies of its contemporary art collection, and was in charge of its Thailand collection.



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## **ANNEX B**

### **Venice Biennale 2019 Singapore Pavilion Commissioning Panel**

#### Co-Chairs

- Mrs Rosa Daniel, CEO, National Arts Council
- Mr Ahmad Bin Mashadi, Head, NUS Museum

#### Members

- Ms Emi Eu, Director, Singapore Tyler Print Institute
- Ms Honor Harger, Executive Director, ArtScience Museum
- Mr Jason Lim, Artist
- Ms Mae Anderson, Chairperson, Art Outreach
- Mr Randy Chan, Principal, Zarch Collaboratives