



## ANNEX A: ABOUT THE PRESENTATION

### The four components of Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge

#### 1. The ship

- At 17m long and 4m high, it is suspended on trusses and is made of rattan, waxed string, books and stone.
- The ship represents the vessel steered by the first Malay king of the Srivijaya empire, Dapunta Hyang Sri Jayanasa, during his journeys throughout Southeast Asia in the 7th century, to spread Buddhism and acquire spiritual merits. These voyages eventually allowed the empire to become a maritime trade hegemony which lasted up to the 13th century.
- Other iterations of the ship were previously shown from 2014 to early 2016. In 2014, Zai presented his first iteration of the work at Ota Fine Arts, Singapore, and later at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Singapore. In 2015 Zai also presented other iterations at Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Singapore; Palais de Tokyo in Paris; and the Encounters section of Art Basel, in Hong Kong.
- The presentation in the Singapore Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale is the fifth and largest to date.

#### 2. 24 photographs taken by Thai photographer Wichai Juntavaro

- The photographs portray performers of *mak yong*, an ancient form of Southeast Asian dance-drama, taken during research trips to Mantang Island near Bintan, Riau Archipelago.
- The photographs are presented on stands that run parallel to the ship.

#### 3. Hand-drawn map depicting the route which Dapunta Hyang took during his *Siddhayatra* (sacred journey) to acquire spiritual merits.

#### 4. Voice and ambient recordings from the *mak yong* master, telling the mythical story of how *mak yong* travelled from Thailand and arrived at Mantang Island.

### Dapunta Hyang and the Srivijaya empire

- Dapunta Hyang is the earliest documented Malay king of Srivijaya, a powerful empire that existed from the 7th to the 13th centuries. His voyage in the 7th century was a mission to perform a *Siddhayatra* (sacred journey) with 20,000 soldiers, which established an important route for the expansion of Buddhism. These expeditions eventually established the kingdom across much of present-day Southeast Asia – Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia, to the Philippines.
- The Srivijayan rule experienced a decline in the 13th century. Since then, much of its existence, culture and beliefs have been lost in history.



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### Orang laut

- The *orang laut*, sea people of the Riau Archipelago, also believed to be the first people of Singapore, follow a way of life entwined with nature, and their beliefs are informed by animism.
- Their ancestral customs, practices and beliefs were once widespread, but are now deemed incompatible with urbanisation and mainstream beliefs.
- Zai started researching into the *orang laut* in 2001 around Bintan Island.

### Mak yong

- *Mak yong* is an ancient form of Southeast Asian dance-drama that is believed to date back to the Srivijaya empire.
- Combining expressive singing, instrumental music, acting, improvisation, dance and rituals, *mak yong* has a repertoire of twelve stories based on Malay folklore (and a little of Buddhist Jataka tales), featuring the adventures of gods, kings and other mythical characters.
- The primary purpose of the art form, which is rooted in animism, is to connect humans with the natural and spirit world, and for healing. Today, due to reasons such as loss of audience and incompatibility with mainstream beliefs, the future of the art form is precarious.
- *Mak yong* has been found in various forms including *menora* (Thailand), *mak yong* Kelantan/Trengganu (Malaysia), and *mak yong* Mantang Arang Lama (Riau Archipelago, Indonesia). It was also said that *mak yong* Mantang Arang Lama came from Bedok (Singapore).