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.

**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).
**ANNEX B: IMAGE AND CAPTION LIST**

**IMAGES FOR MEDIA USE**
For hi-resolution images, kindly download from the following link:
https://app.box.com/s/ep1em62jmpxzy0jmymyzuf2lb09vff6h

**Opening of the Singapore Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale**

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Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
| 2        | ![Image 2](image2.jpg) | Artist Zai Kuning represents Singapore at the 57th Venice Biennale  
Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
| 3        | ![Image 3](image3.jpg) | Artist Zai Kuning represents Singapore at the 57th Venice Biennale  
Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
| 4        | ![Image 4](image4.jpg) | Ms Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, opening the Singapore Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale  
Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
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Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
| 6    | ![Image](image6) | Ms Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, with artist Zai Kuning  
Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
| 7    | ![Image](image7) | Professor Chan Heng Chee, Chairman NAC; Tamares Goh, Producer; Ms. Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth; Zai Kuning, artist; Firusaffian Kamal, Production Assistant; Hafiz Osman, Technical Manager; Ms. Yeoh Chee Yan, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth; Wichai Juntavaro, Photographer and collaborator; at the opening of the Singapore Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale  
Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
| 8    | ![Image](image8) | Zai Kuning and his team performing a ritual at the opening of the Singapore Pavilion  
Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
Zai Kuning and his team performing a ritual at the opening of the Singapore Pavilion

Photo courtesy of National Arts Council

Presentation at the Singapore Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale

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| A1      | ![Image](image1.png) | *Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge* by Zai Kuning at the Singapore Pavilion in the Arsenale.  
Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
| A2      | ![Image](image2.png) | Part of the installation *Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge* by Zai Kuning, at the Singapore Pavilion in the Arsenale.  
Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
| A3 | A close-up of the 17-metres long ship, constructed using rattan, beeswax and strings.  
    Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
| A4 | A closer look at the books sealed in beeswax that form part of the exhibition titled *Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge* by Zai Kuning.  
    Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
| A5 | A map of the Srivijayan empire and its influence over the region.  
    Photo courtesy of National Arts Council |
| A6 | Visitor to the Singapore Pavilion looking at the 17-metres long ship central to the exhibition titled *Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge* by Zai Kuning.  
    Courtesy of National Arts Council |
| A7 | Inspired by tombstones found on the sacred hill, Bukit Seguntang (Palembang), Zai Kuning carves boat-shaped motifs into books sealed in beeswax. Dapunta Hyang Jayanasa is written in Sanskrit on the cover.  
    Artist studio, Singapore 2017  
    Photo courtesy of Ken Cheong |
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| A8  | ![Image](image1.png) | Zainah Binti Makusen, *mak yong* performer  
Mantang Island, Riau 2016  
Photo courtesy of Wichai Juntavaro |
| A9  | ![Image](image2.png) | Portrait of Zainah Binti Makusen, a *mak yong* performer. Twenty four portraits of living *mak yong* performers are featured in the exhibition at the Venice Biennale  
Mantang Island, Riau, 2016.  
Photo courtesy of Wichai Juntavaro |
| A10 | ![Image](image3.png) | A typical house, *rumah laut* (stilt house).  
Mantang Island, Riau, 2016.  
Photo courtesy of the artist |
| A11 | ![Image](image4.png) | Candi Tinggi, a stupa built during Srivijaya rule between the 11th - 13th centuries. It was found in a temple complex, Muaro Jambi, in Sumatra. The stupa’s stacked design is meant to echo that of a mountain.  
Jambi, central Sumatra, 2016  
Photo courtesy of Wichai Juntavaro |
| A12 | A stone statue of the Hindu god Vishnu found in a Buddhist temple.  

Wat Phra Boromathat Chaiya, Surat Thani 2017  
Photo courtesy of Wichai Juntavaro |
| A13 | Performance scene of mak yong. Inang, a comic character, meets seven maidens.  

Mantang Island, Riau, 2013  
Photo courtesy of Wichai Juntavaro |
| A14 | Mask of menora dance in southern Thailand, looking almost identical as those used in mak yong performed on Mantang Island, Bintan.  

Phatthalung, southern Thailand, 2016  
Photo courtesy of Wichai Juntavaro |
| A15 | A map drawn by Zai Kuning in 2003, depicting his route across the Riau Archipelago in search of the orang laut.  

2003  
Image courtesy of the artist |
The Srivijaya empire stretched across modern-day Southeast Asia. Map by Zai Kuning.
2017
Image courtesy of the artist

The various places mak yong has travelled to and taken root. Map drawn by Zai Kuning.
2017
Image courtesy of the artist

Artist's portraits

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| B1      | ![Image](image_url) | Zai Kuning on a sampan (boat) to Mantang Island  
          |               | Riau 2016  
          |               | Photo courtesy of Wichai Juntavaro |
Past presentations of the Dapunta Hyang series

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| C1       | ![Image](image1) | First installation of Zai Kuning's “Dapunta Hyang” series, “Dapunta Mapping the Melayu”  
Ota Fine Arts, Singapore 2014  
Photo courtesy of Ota Fine Arts |
| C1a      | ![Image](image2) | Close-up of “Dapunta Mapping the Melayu”  
Ota Fine Arts, Singapore 2014  
Photo courtesy of Ota Fine Arts |
| C2 | Second installation of Zai Kuning’s “Dapunta Hyang” series, “The Fleeting World of Dapunta Hyang”  
Institute of Contemporary Arts, Singapore 2014  
Photo courtesy of the artist |
|---|---|
| C3 | Third installation of Zai Kuning’s “Dapunta Hyang” series, “The Fleeting World of Dapunta Hyang”  
Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay, Singapore 2015  
Photo courtesy of Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay, Singapore |
| C4 | Fourth installation of Zai Kuning’s “Dapunta Hyang” series, “Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge”  
“Encounters”, Hong Kong Art Basel, Hong Kong 2015  
Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts  
Photo courtesy of Danny Yeo@Pure Talents |
Fifth installation of Zai Kuning's “Dapunta Hyang” series, “Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge”

“Secret Archipelago”, Palais de Tokyo, Paris 2015

Photo courtesy of the artist
ANNEX C:

A TIMELINE – THE GENESIS OF DAPUNTA HYANG: TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE

1999
Zai disbanded Metabolic Theatre Laboratory, a physical theatre group that explored physical language and methodology inspired by Southeast Asian rituals, to go solo.

2001
Zai started a six-month artist residency with TheatreWorks (Singapore), with a proposal to go in search of the orang laut (sea people) around Bintan Island in the Riau Archipelago (Indonesia).

After nine months of waiting, Zai finally met one of the orang laut communities when they rested at Tanjung Pinang, the capital of Riau Islands, south of Bintan. This encounter led to a six-month long ‘research residency’ resulting in a short film titled *Riau* (2005), which documented his search for, and experience living with, the orang laut.

Head of the National University of Singapore Museum, Ahmad Mashadi describes the work as "a sensitive elegy, painfully aware of its provisionality to the broader arc of his personal inquiry, of the people whose situations he could not reconcile to an indeterminate artistic project, and of the very nature of a relationship between artist and a source community that makes access possible." (*Before Riau: A Conversation with Zai Kuning*, 2017)

Zai followed this community for two years. During this time, he was adopted as a son by an island chief on Dendun Island, a small island 15 minutes by boat away from Mantang Island, where a troupe performing mak yong, the ancient Malay opera, resides.
2003
Zai stopped following the *orang laut* as witnessing their plight was too much for him to bear. He recalls the experience:

‘Being a sensitive person, I was mentally tortured by their predicament and I kept having nightmares. After three years of witnessing their helpless situation, I knew I had to stop visiting them before I killed myself since I could do very little to help them besides bringing them some basic necessities. I gave up visiting them by 2003.’

2004
Zai came to know of the Mantang Arang Lama *mak yong* troupe on Mantang Island. Zai met their chief Pak Khalid. He learnt of their difficulties and invited them to perform on their own island. He recalls of their first meeting:

‘When we sat down to chat I asked Pak Khalid to recall the last occasion the troupe performed. He replied that it was 20 years ago. I was shocked and asked why; he replied that there were no invitations to perform. After a long pause I asked him if he would perform if I were to invite him. He said “yes, but where?” I suggested their island. “And for whom?” he asked. “For the children,” I said, “because it’s important they see it for themselves, not just hear about mak yong.”’

He invited the troupe to rehearse and perform an unabbreviated version of *mak yong* for their own islanders. They also performed later on neighbouring Dendun Island.

This was the first time in 20 years the troupe performed on their own island.

2005
*Riau*, the 30-minute film about Zai’s search for the *orang laut*, with music composition by Tetsu Saitoh, was completed and screened first at TheatreWorks (Singapore), and later at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Busan International Film Festival, and the 3rd Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale. It is now part of the permanent collections of the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Singapore Art Museum and M+ (Hong Kong).

A series of drawings and music compositions inspired by the *orang laut* were also produced, under the titles *Brutality of Fact* and *When I woke up I realise I am Dead* respectively.

2007
Zai invited the Mantang Arang Lama *mak yong* troupe to perform on Dendun island, where Zai’s adoptive family lived.

2010
TheatreWorks approached Zai to invite the troupe to perform at the *Singapore Night Festival: New World* in front of the Singapore Management University.

2013
Zai applied for and was awarded the Creation Grant under Singapore’s National Arts Council (NAC), in which he proposed a three-year research project titled *Dapunta Hyang - Pre-Islamic Arts and Culture of the Malay civilisation*. He was thus able to invite the Mantang Arang Lama *mak yong* troupe to perform again on their own island. The troupe was now headed by Pak Gani (Pak Khalid had passed away) and they performed a three-hour show over two consecutive nights - the original length of *mak yong*, which they had not been able to perform for 40 years. Notably, they revived the character Harimau (Tiger), which has been disallowed in official showcases and kept in the dark for 20 years.
2014
Zai presented the first art work invoking the name of Dapunta Hyang Sri Jayanas at his solo show in Ota Fine Arts (Singapore).

The installation *Dapunta Mapping the Melayu* marked the first time in which Zai used the ship as an emblem.

![Dapunta Mapping the Melayu, 2014. Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts.](image)

The second presentation under the Dapunta Hyang series was commissioned by Institute of Contemporary Arts (Singapore), titled *The Fleeting World of Dapunta Hyang*.

![Fleeting World of Dapunta Hyang, 2014. Presented at Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore.](image)

2015
Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay (Singapore) commissioned the third presentation, titled *Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge*.
The work was then presented by Ota Fine Arts at the *Encounters* section at Art Basel in Hong Kong.

Subsequently, it travelled to Palais de Tokyo in Paris, as part of a group show *Secret Archipelago*.
2016
Zai was selected by NAC to present *Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge* for the Singapore Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale. He and collaborator Wichai Juntavaro began an expedition to trace the route of Dapunta Hyang’s conquests. Places covered are Sumatra (Indonesia), Kedah (Malaysia), and Chaiya (Thailand). Temple complexes bearing similar architectural designs show the extent of the Malay-Srivijaya empire, and the strong Hindu/Buddhist influence it was under.

The Srivijaya empire stretched across modern-day Southeast Asia.
Map by Zai Kuning.

A stupa (Buddhist shrine), Candi Kedaton, found in Muaro Jambi, a temple complex built between 11th to 13th centuries.

The team also went back to Mantang Island to take portraits of each *mak yong* performer, as a tribute to their perseverance in sustaining this art form.

During this research period, Zai chanced upon *menora* in Phatthalung (Thailand). It is a dance-drama which he believes to be the origin of *mak yong*, most tellingly in the masks which are almost identical. This discovery points towards more research on *menora* that Zai intends to further explore in the near future.

2017
*Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge* was presented at the Singapore Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale from 13 May to 26 November 2017.
2018
Dapunta Hyang: Transmission of Knowledge returns to Singapore to be presented by TheatreWorks from 12 April to 13 May 2018.