

Loo Zihan (b. 1983) is a performance and moving-image artist. Known for actively contributing a body of keen, thought-provoking and interrogative art, Zihan graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2009 from Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) School of Art, Design and Media (ADM). He attained his Masters in 2011 from the School of Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), USA, with the support of the Trustee Full-Tuition Merit Scholarship and James Nelson Raymond Graduate Fellowship.

Zihan pursued his passion for collaboration across artistic disciplines, producing multi-media works for The Necessary Stage's productions such as *Gemuk Girls* (2008), *Past Carin'* (2009) and *Crossings* (2012). His notable works have been described as having strong performative use of space and narrative. His performance works, in particular, are often informed by comprehensive processes of excavation and investigative archiving, studying tensions and multiple perspectives on Singapore's history and society. This is evident in his body of work such as *Names, Texts & Trouble: Education & Emancipation* (2014) and *Artists' General Assembly: The Langenbach Archives* (2013) which was part of the group show *Ghost: The Body at the Turn of the Century* - a collaborative project of the Singapore Biennale 2013. These works present unconventional narratives on performance art, including its impact on art history and arts education.

In 2013, Zihan was invited to participate in the Associate Artist Research Programme at The Substation and in 2015, he was selected to be part of the XXIX<sup>e</sup> Ateliers Internationaux du FRAC des Pays de la Loire residency in conjunction with the Singapour en France - le Festival in France. Recently, he completed an artist residency at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, Australia under the University of Melbourne's Asialink programme in collaboration with Arts Incubator, Singapore.

As an actor, Zihan has appeared in local productions such as *A Language of Our Own* at the Singapore Arts Festival 2012 and Xavier Le Roy's *Retrospective* (2014). He acted in Ekachai Uekrongtham's *Pleasure Factory* (2007), an independent feature film which premiered at the 60th Cannes Film Festival. His accolades include Best Script for *Threshold* at the first Singapore Short Film Awards (2010) and Special Mention for *Frozen Angels* at *The Straits Times Life!* Theatre Awards (2010).

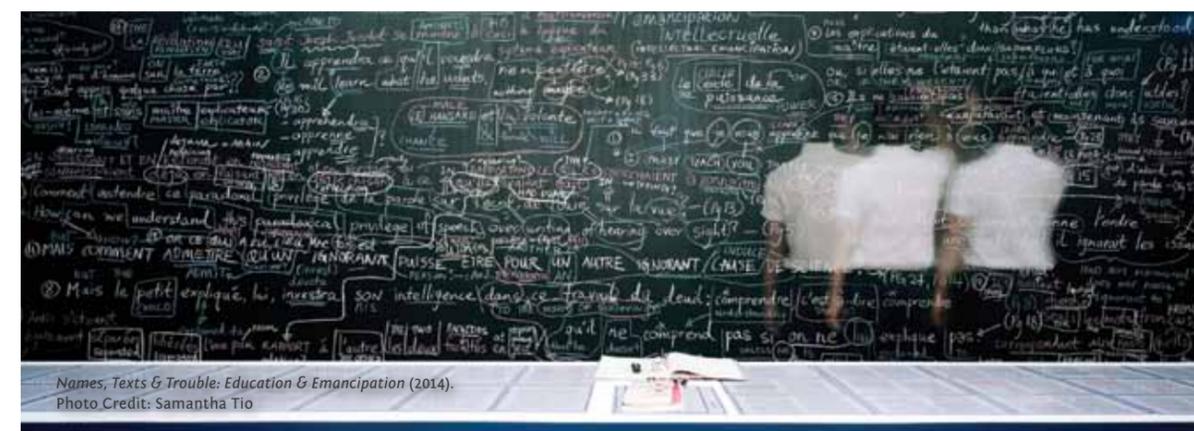
Zihan engages with the development of the next generation of creative minds as an educator at institutions such as the School of The Arts (2012-2014) and NTU's ADM (2011-2013).



*With/Out* (2015).  
Photo Credit: Samantha Tio



*Autopsy* (2008).  
Photo Credit: Loo Zihan



*Names, Texts & Trouble: Education & Emancipation* (2014).  
Photo Credit: Samantha Tio

YOUNG ARTIST  
AWARD  
— 2015 —

LOO ZIHAN





## A CONVERSATION WITH LOO ZIHAN

*What are some of the biggest challenges as a performance and multi-disciplinary artist?*

The biggest challenge would be demystifying the art form and clarifying misunderstandings the public might have of performance and inter-disciplinary art. I view the body as my tool and medium in performance, and I also treat knowledge and information as malleable objects to be shaped and sculpted to alter the way the public look at things. In a largely conservative society people are still rather hesitant to come in contact with the human form and its various non-normative representations.

*What motivated you to continue in spite of these challenges?*

The burden of representing histories that have been overlooked or misunderstood has been the biggest motivation. I see my work as the provision of information for people to understand these histories in a multi-faceted way, there is never one singular authoritative account of history and my role is to unpack these multivalent narrative strands for the viewer. Despite the challenges, I owe it to the source material I am referencing, and the artists that have come before me to see the project through to its fruition.

*Your works adopt comprehensive research and re-enactment elements. What do you want the audience to experience through your final product/showcase?*

I hope that through my work the audience will not only learn more about the specific incidents I am researching on, but most importantly on how they view and engage with information and art. Within the art, they should discover that there is no one single absolute narrative or authoritative experience that I am creating, but I am roping them in as co-creators. Beyond the aesthetic experience, I hope they will extend this critical eye to their everyday environment and recognise that the world is made up of multiple perspectives and opinions. I hope to encourage them to respect difference and be tolerant of opinions that might not align with theirs.

*What advice would you give to students who want to pursue a career in the arts?*

I would advise them to expand their world-view and experiences beyond the confines of art, they should be curious about life and have a strong desire to collect experiences. As an art educator, I have discovered that beautiful art is empty without the corresponding concept or life experience to support it.

I will also encourage them to transform what they might not view conventionally as aesthetic skills into art and reconfigure how you might view and relate to the art-making process. Over the years I have seen people adopt alternative practices, all it requires is sheer determination. Consider what are your existing skills and inclinations and draw them into the processes of making and thinking about art.

*How does receiving the Young Artist Award change things for you? Tell us more about how you intend to further grow and contribute in the arts scene.*

Receiving the award is an honour, to be recognised for the work that I do is a form of validation, especially since my work can be difficult and challenging at times. This award would not have been possible without the support of my peers and mentors in the arts community and this award is really dedicated to them.

I view art education as the most tangible way to grow and nurture the arts community in Singapore. For long term and sustainable change to happen, perceptions towards the arts and its value in the local educational system will have to evolve.



*Tout ou Rien (All or Nothing) (2015).  
Photo Credit: Loo Zihan*

### WORDS OF APPRECIATION

*I would like to thank my mentors, peers, friends and family who have supported my evolving practice. Thank you for having faith in my work and speaking up for it when necessary.*

*I would like to dedicate this award to my late mentor Professor Shellie Fleming at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, USA. Thank you Shellie for allowing me to understand that a fundamental change in the production and appreciation of art can only be brought about through a shift in the way art is being taught.*