



LITERARY ARTS SPECIALIST PANEL CITATION

He Yingshu is a distinctive literary voice, characterised by strong technique and a nimble narrative style which reflects a command of diverse expressions. Showcasing a keen interest in uncovering hidden urban stories, she engages with themes of gender, climate change and culture. Her acclaimed works establish her as a significant voice for a new generation. In her

story 'Fish Birth' included in her eponymous debut collection, she employs the mermaid, which exists as a fluid form that blurs the boundaries between human and fish, as a metaphor for female fertility against the context of human existence. Playing an active role in the community, she fosters dialogue and nurtures appreciation of Chinese literature.

YOUNG ARTIST AWARD 2025

HE YINGSHU



The artist reading an excerpt from her book 'Fish Birth' at the launch at City Book Room in 2019.

HE YINGSHU (PEN NAME: SUI TING 随庭) (b.1990) is a writer, educator, and literary critic. She holds Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees in Chinese Studies from National University of Singapore.

Her creative work focuses on fiction, especially narratives that examine gender, class, migration, and environmental issues. Through a female lens, her stories explore the complexities of contemporary life and human existence, blending psychological depth with innovation in language and form. Her writing has developed into a distinctive voice, rooted in Singapore yet open to a broader trans-regional vision.

Her fiction has received multiple accolades, including the Golden Point Award, the Singapore Tertiary Chinese Literature Awards, and the Lianhe Zaobao Gold Award. Her debut collection 'Fish Birth' was shortlisted for the 2020 Singapore Literature Prize. Beyond fiction, she writes essays and criticism. Her essay, reflecting on her grandfather's death, received a Gold Award at the Singapore Youth Chinese Literature Award, and she contributes theatre reviews to 'Lianhe Zaobao' and The Re-Viewers, a collective founded by Chinese-language theatre practitioners. Her works have also shown their resonance across languages: 'Makeover Day', translated by Jazel Koh, won the Golden Point Award in Translation, and an English edition of 'Fish Birth', translated by Christina Ng, is in progress with support from the National Centre for Writing's Residency.

Sui Ting is equally committed to fostering literary talent. She teaches Chinese creative writing at the National University of Singapore and mentors young writers in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Singapore Book Council, and the Author-in-Residence scheme by the Committee to Promote Chinese Language Learning (CPCLL). She is also active in the Singapore Association of Writers, where she guides students, serves on judging panels, and conducts workshops in schools and literary festivals.

In 2022, she founded the Read Write Island Project, building a dynamic community of readers and writers across Singapore and the region through themed courses, public lectures, and literary talks. Many participants have since published works or won literary awards, and Sui Ting continues to support their journeys through mentorship and feedback.

She is currently developing a Singapore-based novel on the climate crisis, supported by the National Arts Council's Creation Grant. She also continues to collaborate with local literary organisations to create new literary initiatives that promote local voices.



A CONVERSATION WITH HE YINGSHU

Tell us about your earliest memories encountering the arts. Who or what were your key influences in literary arts?

My earliest memory of literature goes back to when I was seven. My mother’s office was inside the school library, and I would hide in the last row, flipping through books until I fell asleep, the stories continuing in my dreams. I still remember the distinctive cool scent of that library.

Throughout my journey, I was fortunate to meet excellent Chinese teachers who supported my early creative attempts. At National Junior College, teachers like Chow Teck Seng and Yang Shu Hung encouraged me to submit for literary awards. At National University of Singapore, Professor Xu Lanjun taught me close reading and literary analysis, and even allowed me to submit a short story for term paper. Their guidance not only shaped my path as a writer but also inspired me to pursue teaching myself.



The artist sharing her writing with a passenger at ‘Hitch a Read’, an initiative by BuySingLit in 2019.

Please share what a typical day in your life as a writer is like.

I usually start writing around nine in the morning, sometimes in a quiet library, other times in a school canteen or cafe. I like places with some movement but not too much, as it helps me stay focused. I write until lunch, take a short break, and, if I can, continue into the afternoon. When my mind slows down, I might take a walk or change my surroundings, sometimes even switch from typing to writing by hand.

These changes help me stay refreshed. Having a whole day without other interruptions is rare, but whenever I get it, I try to make the most of that time to write.

What are some of the biggest challenges you faced in your artistic journey and what motivates you to continue in spite of these challenges?

Anxiety and self-doubt have been my biggest challenges. I always want to create something different, and every new experiment carries the risk of failure. To grow as a writer, I believe I must take on difficult challenges, yet it is human nature to fear them.

My way of coping is simply to keep writing. Through daily practice, I’ve learned to live with anxiety instead of avoiding it. And whenever I feel discouraged, reading great works of literature gives me conviction again. The beauty of storytelling reminds me why I want to write and motivates me to continue.

What do you want the audience to experience through your works?

I hope readers can feel that I am being sincere. Sincerity is the heart of my writing, and if readers sense that, I believe they will bring their own honesty in return. That is when literature resonates most deeply.

I also hope readers may discover something hidden within themselves, secrets they do not even know they carry. Once these hidden truths are written out through my work, they may change, even renew, the way readers see themselves and the world.

What advice would you give the younger generation who would like to pursue a career in your field?

Don’t try to become some imagined “ideal writer.” Focus on what writing means to you. Just start, and keep going. If you have the time and energy, write more. If not, write what matters most to you, not what others say is important. As long as you don’t give up, the work will come. And once it is written, it will last.



In this 2025 Lianhe Zaobao interview, the artist is in a dialogue with Cultural Medallion recipient Lin Gao about the art of teaching creative writing.

Photo courtesy of Lianhe Zaobao.

What are your hopes and vision for Singapore’s literary arts scene?

I hope Singaporean Chinese writers can work together to grow the literary landscape. I envision a healthy, vibrant ecosystem where many voices flourish, and where we create both local and international channels for publishing, reaching readers, and exchange. I also hope younger writers can step into a scene that feels hopeful, with less burden and more freedom to create. Strong literary criticism is vital too, as it helps good writing find its readers. I believe readers are discovered, nurtured, and even awakened by powerful work.

How does receiving the Young Artist Award change things for you?

Receiving the Young Artist Award is an immense encouragement. Writing in Chinese in Singapore often feels like a lonely journey, so this recognition carries special meaning. It encourages me to keep writing and to support a more vibrant literary community, especially for younger writers. I also plan to use the grant to work on a bilingual short story collection and to explore opportunities for translation and cross-cultural exchange.

Tell us more about how you would like to further grow and contribute to the arts scene.

I hope my writing can continue to be a distinct voice in Singaporean Chinese literature, one that carries sensitivity, originality, and boldness. I have in mind two full-length novels, a short story collection, and a bilingual collection of fiction, each seeking to open new narrative possibilities rather than repeat myself.

Beyond writing, I am committed to creative writing education and to working with literary organisations on new initiatives such as Writer’s Open Mic and Women Writers’ Dialogue, which give writers more chances to connect with readers. I hope my peers and younger writers will see that Chinese literature in Singapore still has many paths ahead, and that we can walk together with confidence.



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