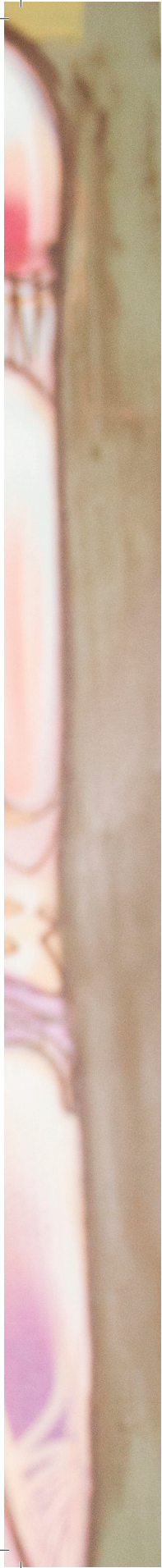


YOUNG ARTIST
AWARD
2013

ZUL OTHMAN
(ZERO)



Zero!



Born in 1979 in Singapore, Zul holds a diploma in Visual Communications from Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (2000) as well as a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours (Painting) from LASALLE College of the Arts (2008). Also known by his artist moniker ZERO, Zul is a visual artist with a 'graffiti-esque' aesthetic. He is the founder of RSCLS, an artist collective that seeks to evolve and develop urban art. The collective received the National Arts Council 2013 Seed Grant.

Governed by notions of street art as a pseudo documentation of contemporary urban life, Zul's body of works often negotiates the oddity of street and graffiti art in a regulated space while creating social commentaries on the issues of society and space. His artistic practice is concerned with breaking down barriers to urban art by creating an understanding of and exposure to creative processes through engagement of the public, as both a participant and co-creator. Zul is actively involved in public talks, workshops and mentorship programmes. He has also been a part-time lecturer at LASALLE College of the Arts since 2009.

Zul has been identified as one of the leading street artists who catalysed the second wave of graffiti art in Singapore. Grounded by a vision and belief that urban and graffiti art is coming into its own as a field, Zul is a passionate advocate of research, archiving and documentation of the movement, particularly through his work with RSCLS. One such initiative is the SOLIDARITY 21 movement, which was launched in 2013, that creates networks between practitioners of street and graffiti art in 21 countries in East

and Southeast Asia through urban cultural exchanges and symposiums.

As an artist, Zul has exhibited at numerous public and private institutions, such as in the recent *Panorama: Recent Art from Contemporary Asia* (2012) at the Singapore Art Museum. Internationally, Zul has exhibited in cities such as New York, Istanbul, Shanghai and Kuala Lumpur. Notably, Zul was the first urban artist to participate in The Substation Associate Artist Research Programme, where his participation culminated in a showcase entitled *The Spectacular Spectacular* (2010), where selected works were acquired by the Singapore Art Museum.





A CONVERSATION WITH ZUL OTHMAN (ZERO)

Describe how you knew you would become an artist, how you chose your ultimate medium of practice.

Since I was in primary school, I have always wanted to be an artist. Back then, it was my uncle who drew really good portraits who inspired me. Later, I moved on to being influenced by my favourite Saturday morning cartoons and comics. My influences and inspirations change with time and experience, and this is apparent in my artistic practice as well. Though I work predominantly with spray paint, I have learnt over the years that a mural or a painting is not the only medium that allows me to express my works. I enjoy making installation works as well. An artistic medium should not restrict the way I want to express myself as an artist.

What are the biggest challenges you face as an artist?

The biggest challenge I always face is myself. I am my worst enemy. The long drawn out thought processes, procrastination, continuously trying to re-ignite one's own passion after periods of feeling burnt out following years of practice, self-doubt, artist's block, not having a stable income.

What motivates you to continue despite these challenges?

My environment and my surroundings motivate me. Sharing my experiences, talking and listening to fellow artists and people alike, making new friends. Learning new things, like skills and techniques, and gaining new knowledge. Flipping through my old sketchbooks for unrealised ideas, travelling. Looking at more art, bad or good. Knowing that my artwork, in one way or another, moves or inspires somebody.

When you set about creating a new work, what inspires you?

Everything and nothing. The absence of something creates a space for nothingness and the presence of nothing creates an opportunity for something.





What do you hope your audience gets out of your work?

It differs every time I create a different body of work. For example, when I am painting a mural in a public space, what I hope is for the audience is to understand the process of creating the artwork, from every stroke of the brush or spray can to every movement or gesture that I make. I want the audience to experience something that they rarely get to feel when they walk into a gallery or an exhibition where more often than not,

all they see are finished works of art. Through my practice, I want them to be able to observe and partake in the creation of an artwork.

What advice would you give if approached by an up and coming artist who wanted to learn from your experience?

Learn continuously, never stop encountering, enjoy processes. Nothing comes easy, humility goes a long way, never let people push you around, be open to criticisms, always be in the company of interesting people. Understand that no matter how big or successful one becomes, we are but a tiny fragment in the larger scheme of things.

What are your hopes for the arts scene in Singapore?

Hopes always have a tendency to get dashed or crushed. I think as a community we should envisage goals for the betterment of the arts in Singapore. This should be created through healthy discourse and education in the arts and through the arts.

What does the Young Artist Award mean to you?

Receiving this award is an opportunity for me to inspire younger artists, or people who aspire to be artists. Though art has existed throughout the history of mankind, it is not regarded a norm in mainstream society. My practice fringes out of the norm of contemporary art, my choice of medium and the movement I represent are certainly not something you learn in art school. I am indeed within the fringe of a fringe. My artistic background sprang from the streets and not in the studio of an art institution. I hope that this diversity is continuously celebrated and serves as an inspiration to those who choose this path.

WORDS OF APPRECIATION

“ I would like to thank Allah first and foremost; all that I have comes from Him.

Then I would like to thank my parents, Ibu, who always inspire me, and allows me that space to be myself and showers me with unconditional love. My late Ayah for always being the silent strength and provider and providing me that opportunity for an education in spite of our humble belongings. My wonderful stepdad Cik Aim who took it upon himself to care for my mum and family. To my siblings Rina, Jojo, Mahsuri and Ayu thank you for always supporting me along with my beautiful nieces Tia and Tisha and my nephew Zeeshan. To my son Rezqy Aduka, you are a gift from God that I cannot be without.

I wouldn't be who I am or where I am today without ARTVSTS, Wak OneTwoDelta, Im Mae2ro, Zack PinkDevil, The Killer

Gerbil, Orkibal, Man Phuek and Hazni, Nurfithry Restusari, Jay Hammond, the guys from PDI and all those who I have crossed paths with.

Especially to my collective RSCLS, ANTZ, CLOGTWO, TRASEONE, SPAZ, SKLO, INKTEN, SHEEP, MIM and NEO, thank you for being part of this family. Keep it real yo!

Last but not least I would like to thank Nur Iman Alaia for the love and support, may we embark on this journey as partners both in arts and life.

Without a past, there won't be a present, without the present there is no future to look forth to. ”

Zul Othman (ZERO)