

Team Loose
The Mermaids







E-PUBLISHED FOR THE EXHIBITION

Turn Loose The Mermaids

A group exhibition co-created by Luke Heng, Jeremy Sharma & Warren Khong
16 September – 1 October 2016

E-PUBLISHED AND EDITED BY

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ISBN: 978-981-11-1014-6

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A GROUP EXHIBITION BY
LUKE HENG, JEREMY SHARMA & WARREN KHONG

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Foreword

Helina Chan

Some works and exhibitions ask more questions than provide answers or artists' statements and expressions. A single question can beget a rich field of discussions, and this exhibition is the result of this simple question 'What is a Painting?'. The works are experimental, exploratory, experiential and unexpected. Instead of showcasing works within neat frames and pre-cut painting canvases as one would expect of a painting, these works, or rather, experiments, examine and re-explore ideas of painting, definitions of painting, as well as notions of classification and categorization.

Without questioning the status quo, this world would never have become what it is today. And this world would certainly be a duller place. But to question the norm, raise alternatives and throw up new ideas and perspectives take boldness. This show is about encouraging such boldness and these 3 artists' ideas and experimentations actively provoke new thoughts and challenge preconceived notions and definitions of what is a painting.

Whilst playful, the 3 artists are serious about making challenging, experimental art. The title 'Turn Loose The Mermaids' for this exhibition reflects that journey they have taken into the unknown, the fantastical and perhaps even the seemingly ridiculously, but certainly journeys out of the norm and traditional. Yet the lessons they have learnt about painting comes into fruitful play here. Jeremy Sharma's (b.1977) installation and mixed media work deals with the activity of painting, visualizing and constructing things in space. Luke Heng (b.1987) takes an unusual approach of looking at what frames a painting and possibilities of such compositions. Warren Khong (b. 1984) visits this with another reading of the question instead, 'What is not a Painting?', continuing his work on notions of materiality and physicality of white.

We hope you will enjoy this experimental art exhibition, and participate in the questions it asks.

Beyond the Frame: Painting Post Painting

Michelle Ho

“There is no painting as such: Delimiting its realm is indeed impossible since painting expanded in the 1960s, when it embraced ready-made objects, linguistic propositions, and performative elements in the pictorial sphere. But despite losing its specificity in a way typical for the often-invoked post-medium condition, painting still appears to be notorious and omnipresent...”

Isabelle Graw, Daniel Birnbaum and Nikolaus Hirsch in *Thinking Through Painting: Reflexivity and Agency Beyond the Canvas*¹

Propositions of the end of painting have been with us for over a century. The advent of photography and digital technology has afforded new forms of representation and image-making that have surpassed painting’s role to present reality. Successive movements in modern art have sought to dissolve pictorial inclinations and figurative possibilities in painting. The expansion of inter-medium artistic practices, and artists engaging with new media devices, to supplement (or substitute), conventional media like paint and canvas, progressively called into question the status of the “traditional” painting.

While these art historical developments, and the ensuing theoretical debates and discourses surrounding the provocation of Painting’s demise did not occur in Singapore as pointedly, the past decade of contemporary painting has witnessed artists whose practices occur within this inter-medium milieu, or what critic Rosalind Krauss described as, the “post-medium condition”. For Krauss, what was vital were artistic practices that examined the constraints of a medium, and the complications surrounding its characteristics and technical peculiarities in manners that may not necessarily seek to profess a medium’s purity, but employ them as a “supporting structure” for new artistic creation.²

It is within this context of looking at the painting medium as a “supporting structure” rather than an end product that we locate the works of the artists in this exhibition. *Turn Loose The Mermaids* features three Singapore artists Luke Heng,

1 Isabelle Graw, Daniel Birnbaum and Nikolaus Hirsch in *Thinking Through Painting: Reflexivity and Agency Beyond the Canvas*, Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2012, p.4

2 Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage in the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post Medium Condition*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2000, p. 5,35

Warren Khong and Jeremy Sharma whose practices have been rooted in a critical examination of painting as such. A survey of their earlier works will reveal that the three are less interested in making paintings than in working with painting's attendant contexts and the consequences of its mechanisms. While they engage with processes of art-making that are antecedent to painting, viewers may find that they may not be encountering the work of painting, in this exhibition.

Through a deep examination of materials, Luke Heng creates paintings that reveal materiality, rather than use materials to make paintings. The subtle difference lies in Heng's resistance to engage with referential subject matter, preferring to let materiality and methodology lead his work. Over the past five years, the artist's mode of enquiry has been one of a continuous subtraction of what is considered a fundamental process of painting. His early works in 2012 began to forgo the palette, in favour of mixing paint in a pot. He later abandoned the brush, rendering paint with squeegee, syringe and pour techniques. Subsequently, materials like beeswax and charcoal were privileged over oils, leading to the eventual removal of the painting's canvas entirely in this current presentation.

Heng's 6 series of works are a result of the artist's reductive endeavor in painting, where painting has relinquished the canvas. Seen in his works is the central dilemma of how to strip them of the identity of being a painting, while being aware of its ostensible status as one, because of his methodology that is based on its very foundations. *Composition No. 7* and *8* follow from his earlier 2016 *Blue on White* oil on linen paintings featuring lines. In the present piece, Heng sought to retain the essence of his line paintings by removing the canvas. The result is a new series of "surface-less" paintings, made of applied blue pigment on mild steel that relies on the wall as a substitute for canvas, providing the artist a means of expression beyond the parameters of the rectangular frame.

Composition No. 10 and *13* feature a diptych and triptych of diagonal lines on frame. While the pieces can be seen as individual works on their own, the spatial dynamics between them create the perception of a larger composition. Each series has been applied with a different blue pigment to engage with colour as a force of segregating pictorial space. In a further effort to reduce painting, *Composition*

No. 11 and 12 surrender the notion of painting as a rectangular one. To Heng, the prior *Compositions* exist as paintings, based on the principle that paint (in the form of the pigment lines) depends on the four-sided frame to retain its status as such. Taking on circular forms, *Composition No. 11* and *12* seek to transcend this barrier of painting as necessarily required to be governed by a frame. While this gesture can be read as a painting's crossover into a sculptural object, Heng makes the distinction between the un-pigmented raw frames that hold a painting's form, and the pigment forms within, that represent the work of painting. In pointing this out, he alerts us to the fact that in the eyes of the artist, the works remain inherently paintings.

Warren Khong's presentation follows from his enquiry into the constituents of painting, and the contexts in which it occurs. #101 and #102 comprise of aluminium plates white washed on the surface, and mounted on the wall. These minimalist wall installations emanate a subtle hue that appears to be composed by light, but are in fact executed through concealed paint. Painted yellow on their undersides, the interplay of reflection and shadow manifests a striking physicality in each work, magnifying the presence of the quadrant and rectangular wall pieces. Shadow becomes form, and paint transforms into light. The strength of this illusion stems in part, from how colour and light have the power to alter the perception of a work's status. As the artist expressed, once the gallery lights are switched off, the artworks cease to exist, becoming white washed objects instead. Taken in such light, the bias of colour as a legitimising factor to what makes a work a piece of art, is being raised.

Still, he challenges such a conjecture, by making white a subject matter in his work #100. #100 appears on the gallery's bare white walls, executed through applying another layer of white paint on a 6-by-30-foot space over three adjacent walls. It is a development from his solo exhibition, *Whitewash*, at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (ICAS) in June 2016, whereby the conditions of an empty gallery were heightened when the artist painted the gallery's floors white. Seen in the two presentations is the artist's engagement with the colour white, both in the form of white wash paint that presides upon gallery walls to prepare the space for so-called actual paintings, and the paint colour white, used specifically for a work of art, although Khong does not distinguish the value between the two. Yet critical differences remain. While the ICAS presentation sought to mitigate the idea of painting as a reified object on the wall, #100 is insistent of its status as a painting proper. Devoid of a framed presence, Khong's painting in *Mermaids* asserts its existence, by contrasting this white-on-white presentation with the use of a glossier white paint. It is in the difference between the matte white walls and

the polished surface of the painting, that the work of art makes itself known. #100, which measures 180 square foot in area, will be sold at \$500 per square feet, and collectors acquire the right to show the work by reproducing the work through the number of square feet purchased. The concept of the piece however, allows collectors to have a unique artwork, in what is paradoxically a work with multiple editions. The artist's condition for the sale of the work is that when a particular number of square feet of #100 is bought, no further pieces in this configuration can be sold.

#97, #98 and #99 are a series of cement pieces attempting to show the origins of a painted surface, on sculpture. Each work is surfaced with raw cement, the primary material that concrete walls are made of. They show a different degree of raw cement on one side, as subsequent pieces are layered variations of screed surface, white wash and water-based gloss paint, highlighting the textural and reflective qualities of each application. For Khong, this gesture is meant to reveal what lies beneath a painting's surface, for #97, #98 and #99 are in actuality, a reprising of the stages of an exhibition wall being painted, before artworks are mounted.

Heng and Khong's works can be seen as instances of how of painters have been approaching the medium, enquiring its ontological status, as well as "situational status". As art historian Craig Staff described, artists practicing in such a mode investigate how painting becomes located, either within exhibition walls or outside of it, as well as what situations it further encounters.³ Embedded in Khong's processes is the question of the artistic strategies adopted without the involvement of the hand of the artist, which open further dimensions of consideration regarding labour in artistic production.

Jeremy Sharma's presentation utilises digital processes as a way of re-imagining the experience of images. Known for his earlier body of works that deal with both terrestrial and extraterrestrial landscapes, his two new works in *Mermaids* move into a new terrain of inquiry. *The Castle* comprises 32 photographs of end games in chess, including some seminal matches of chess grandmasters, as well as other renown historical figures. Here, the photographs have been assembled into a singular composition of game grids within an overarching pictorial grid. The artist documented and reenacted the final moves of the selected games to create a collection of game outcomes, ending in a checkmate or a stalemate. Devoid of knowledge of the preceding moves, one would not be able to determine the circumstances leading to the conclusive endgame. Instead, Sharma's presentation

3 Craig Staff, "Situating Painting" in *After Modernist Painting*, I.B. Taurus, London, 2013, p. 131

directs the viewer to glean, from the composition of pieces left at the end of the game, the possible strategies adopted and the inevitable sacrifices that have been made. The title of the work references the 1926 unfinished novel of the same name by Franz Kafka. Sharma's *Castle* parallels the novel, where the lives of the surrounding inhabitants of Kafka's *Castle* revolve around a mysterious castle run by a bureaucratic system in which they do not comprehend, nor do they have a way of opting out of. The work can be read as a metaphor of contemporary society, an exercise of intersecting the domains of literature and game history, or for its pictorial characteristics that bring the conceptual into the formal, and the artist does not privilege one meaning over the other.

Instead, Sharma's interest is felt more keenly in the shifting of frames of references from one work to another, and the transferring of contexts and symbolic meanings that can manifest in an unexpected form elsewhere. As such, the underlying theme of systemic structures in his photographs, overlapping into the mix media installation *ILOUAUB* becomes apparent. Situated next to *The Castle*, viewers are introduced to a fortress-like wall made of 36 wedged-shape polystyrene modules, each measuring $\frac{1}{6}$ of a sector of circle. This arrangement is not by carpentry conventions, but derived from the Babylonian system of construction, informed by the ancient Base 60 numerical system that is formulated around principles of the natural number of 60 and its sub-divided fractions. In *ILOUAUB*, sounds of low bass frequencies envelope the space. They are recordings of the vibrational drone of underground piling near the artist's work place, documented over 20 days and compressed into data for the installation.

Further to opening up the world of sound through the hint of an underlying subterranean dimension, the work also explores the worlds of synthetic and natural colours. A third component of the installation features a light box emanating colours which have been programmed for 7 minutes to reveal the RGB spectrum of 256 colours. Once again, digital code plays an instrumental role in this work, of which acronyms translate to "in light of understanding an unfathomable brilliance". Here, coded mechanisms of the computer replace the application of tactile materials to exhibit the full components of an entire colour spectrum. It is also a process that has no physicality to grasp. For Sharma, working with the digital is a process of mixing signals, and one that is akin to mixing paint, except that the procedure is invisible. Whether or not this is consciously done as a comparison of the capabilities and capacities of digital and traditional media, it presents the dialectic between the two, testing the extents of the former's ability to reproduce colour. An accompanying video charts Sharma's journey in search of the *mahi-mahi*

fish known for its luminescent changing colours which the artist first encountered in *Life of Pi*, the 2001 Yann Martel book. The project has in part been described by the artist as a personal journey to match the fiction of a literary work with the reality of his expedition to Malaysia in search of the fish.

While *ILOUAUB*'s multiple components gives the impression that it is made up of disparate topics, we can detect a consistent artistic strategy which is one of pairing and transference. Sharma takes seemingly contrasting themes and contexts and puts them together, or moves one into another: from concept to form, fiction to reality, the invisible into the visible, the digital into the pictorial, and the impersonal into the personal.

Heng, Khong and Sharma's works can be said to emerge from the expanded field of painting where practitioners have been moving beyond the dependence upon its historical conventions, yet rooted in concerns fundamental to the practice. The title of the exhibition *Turn Loose The Mermaids*, is drawn from a song by the Finnish metal band Nightwish, themselves espousing a brand of symphonic rock that departs from the structures of the metal genre. For the artists, naming their show as such, can be read as a desire to unleash critical impulses that underpin their work as practitioners of painting, as they unravel the possibilities of what else their work could become. It is when artists choose not to convey representation but to confront its limitations, that they eventually create new potentialities for artistic production.

Michelle Ho is a curator and writer. Formerly a curator at the Singapore Art Museum, she has led the acquisition strategies of its contemporary art collection, and was in charge of its Thailand collection. She was co-curator in exhibitions such as *Time of Others* (2015), *Image & Illusion: Video Works from the Yokohama Museum of Art* (2014) and was also a co-curator of the 2013 Singapore Biennale. She also curated *The Collectors Show: Weight of History* (2013), *Amanda Heng: Speak to Me, Walk with Me* (2011) and *Natee Utarit: After Painting* (2010), amongst others. Michelle currently heads the ADM Gallery at the School of Art, Design and Media, Nanyang Technological University.

Jeremy Sharma

Jeremy Sharma (b 1977 Singapore) works across all media around ideas of aesthetics and production. His practice investigates various modes of enquiry in the information age, addressing our present relationship to modernity and interconnectivity in the everyday and our place in an increasingly fragmented and artificial reality.

Over the past decade, he has had a number of solo presentations that includes *Orbiter and Sonata* with Michael Janssen Gallery Berlin/Singapore, *Terra Sensa* at the Singapore Biennale (2013), *Exposition* (2013) at Grey Projects and *Apropos* (2012) at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore. He has also done projects with the NTU Centre of Contemporary Arts Singapore, ifa Gallery Berlin (2015), Fundación Sebastián Mexico (2015), Busan Biennale (2014), Osage Art Foundation and City University Hong Kong (2014), Tokyo Art Book Fair (2011), 14th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh (2010), Bangkok Experimental Film Festival (2008) and the ICA London (2005). His work has also been shown in numerous group exhibitions in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, France, England, Mexico and the United States.

His work has been the subject of critical discussion in various print and online publications including Asian Art News, Asia Art Pacific and Wall Street International and is part of a number of public and private collections.

He also teaches with the Faculty of Fine Arts at the LASALLE College of the Arts.

www.jeremysharma.com

The works presented here comprises of two installations. The first installation *The Castle* comprises of various endgames of chess games in history spanned across geographical locations and nationalities and features personalities such as Garry Kasparov, Marcel Duchamp, Che Guevara, Deep Blue and Fahim Mohammad.

The second installation, *ILOUAUB*, is an amalgamation of parts from previous and current works put together through various media such as sound, video, sculpture and light. The durational low rumblings triggered are a condensed version of data recordings of localized vibrations caused by construction work in a building where I work. The light box of mutating colours and an extract of a film I am making called *Mahi Mahi* - based on a fishing expedition - is part of a larger project called *Spectrum Version 2.0*. The polystyrene construction was originally conceived during my time at the NTU CCA residency last year and had been moved through various sites to be reused and re-sanded for this presentation.



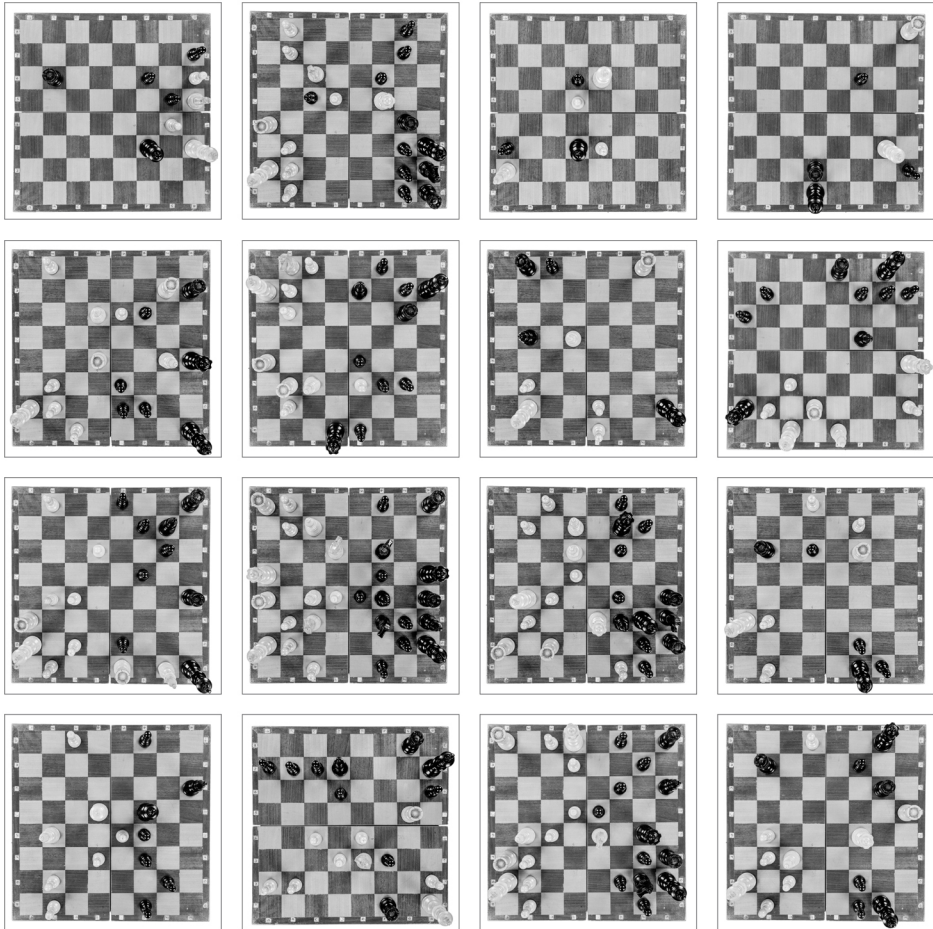
The Castle

2016

32 digital archival prints, custom framed and mounted on wall (Edition of 3 + AP)

256 x 376cm



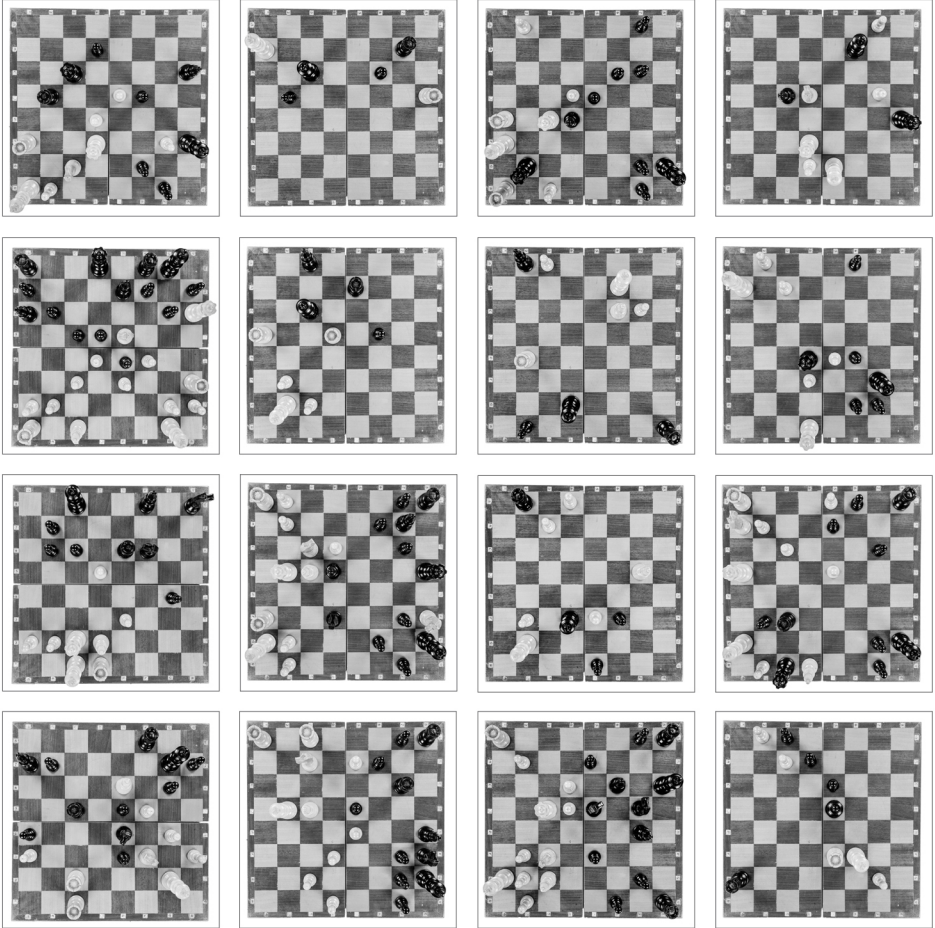


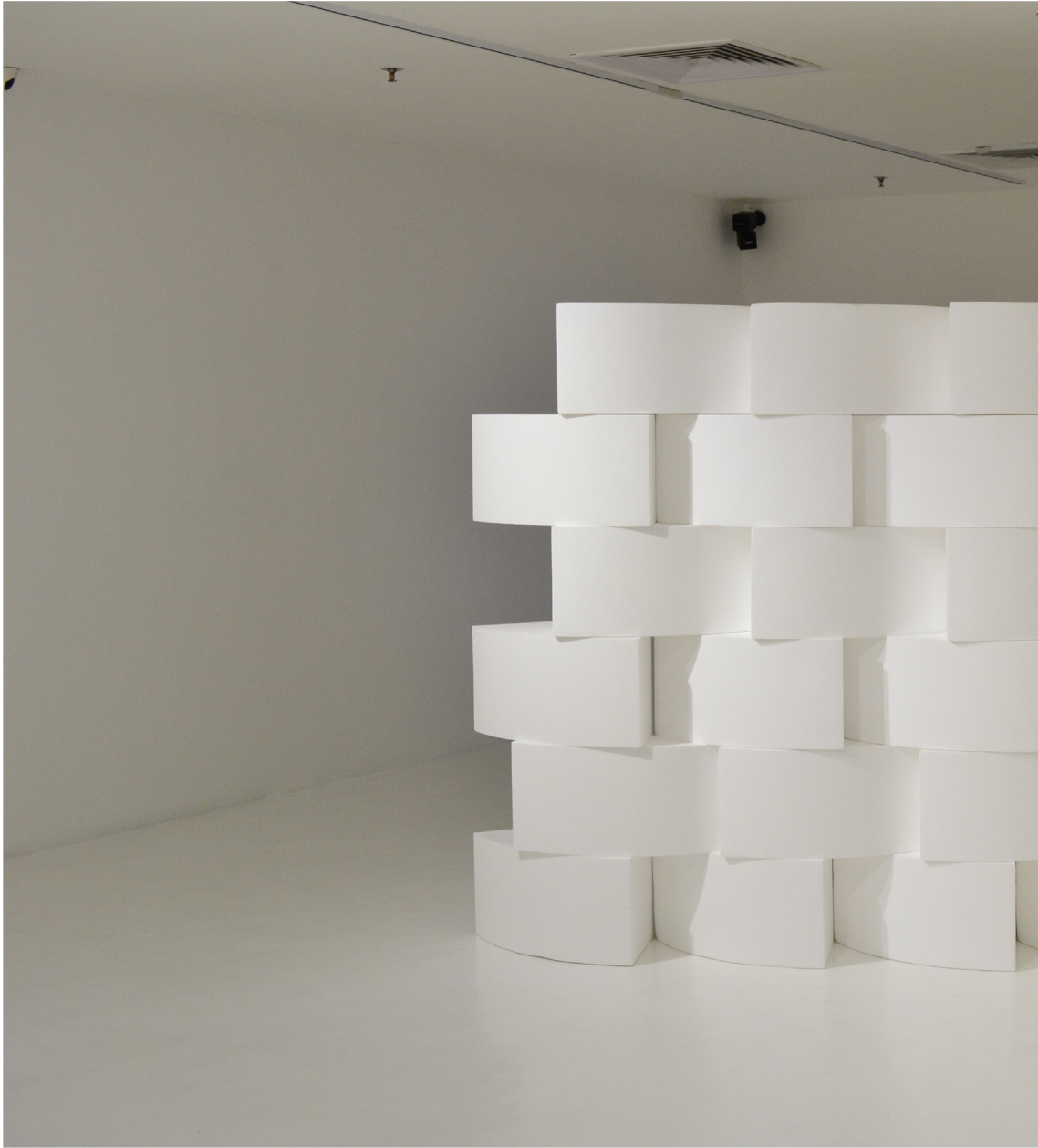
The Castle

2016

32 digital archival prints, custom framed and mounted on wall (Edition of 3 + AP)

256 x 376cm

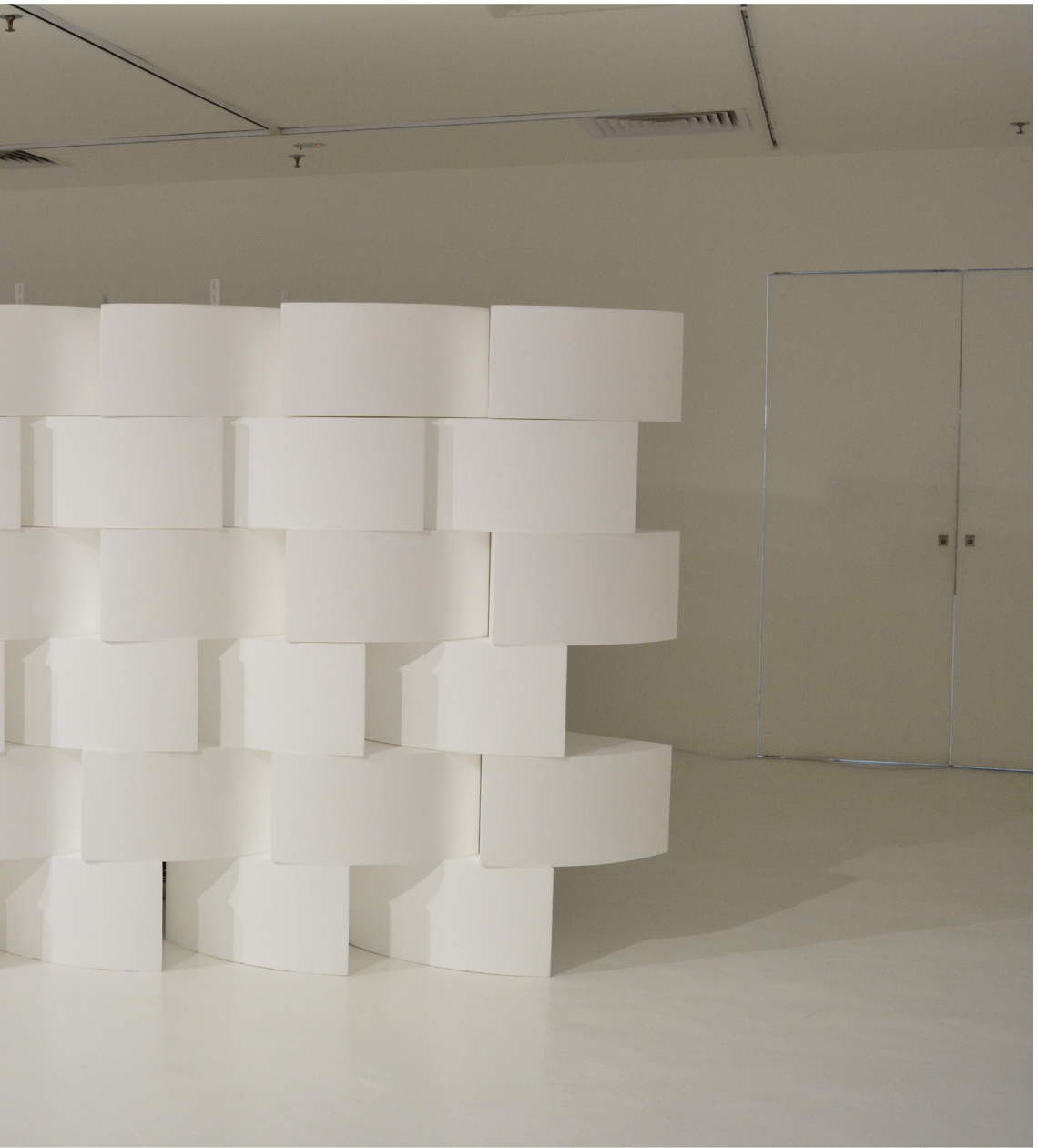




ILOUAUB

2016

36 wedge-shaped polystyrene modules, nylon rods; metal rack, custom light panel, LED monitor with video, laptop, sub-woofer speaker, text printed on paper.
2 parts, dimensions variable





ILOUAUB

2016

36 wedge-shaped polystyrene modules, nylon rods; metal rack, custom light panel, LED monitor with video, laptop, sub-woofer speaker, text printed on paper.
2 parts, dimensions variable





ILOUAUB

2016

36 wedge-shaped polystyrene modules, nylon rods; metal rack, custom light panel, LED monitor with video, laptop, sub-woofer speaker, text printed on paper.
2 parts, dimensions variable



Interview with Jeremy Sharma

Which artists, locally and globally, across history, do you identify with?

Hmmmm...Identify with is tough but let's say among many artists, I admire the works of Ian Woo as he's one of the finest abstract painters of any generation anywhere, Ho Tzu Nyen for having such a strong, unique voice and vision atypical of a Singaporean artist yet a product of a Singaporean psyche. I think Eva Hesse and Sol Lewitt are artists of the heart and mind respectively. I love Duchamp for his wit and mystery and how he changed the course of art making, John Cage for his philosophy, Gerhard Richter, Francis Alys, Gabriel Orozco, the Mono-ha artists, Agnes Martin, Nasreen Mohamedi for their brand of modernism, Rachel Whiteread for her materiality. Olafur Eliason for bringing works out of the gallery. I'm looking at Haroon Mirza, Anri Sala and Susan Philipsz and how they fuse music and culture, sculpture, video and sound to create intriguing works of art. Giacometti and On Kawara on time, existing and space. And Bruce Nauman, yeah he's great. I generally look at a lot of post-conceptual practices but am also trying to avoid even looking at artists altogether to think of art in a more original way.

How do you work?

Very fluidly, sometimes in the studio, sometimes out. These days I work from life experiences and encounters and recordings and I try to create work. I make lots of notes on notepads or my iPhone. And I work with people, I depend on collaboration if not none of my works can exist.

What's integral to your work as an artist?

That it's honest enough, that it has a presence that need not have my explanation attached. That it has some rigour, thought and making that can only be developed with or across time. That it allows the viewer some partaking in his or her reading of the work.

Give us your interpretation of the title "Turn Loose The Mermaids" in relation to your works for this show.

It's a title that throws you off balance and I think that's what we are trying to do here, have a little fun but we are serious in making challenging, experimental art. The mermaid is a fantasy, fictional element which I like very much, something that moves beyond form.

In your own way, please define what is a “Painting”.

Its paint on canvas stretched over a wooden frame. But what I learn from painting is invaluable, like my attention to space and sensitivity to colour, form and material. But I like to deal with the activity of painting which to me is basically trying to record, construct and re-present something in space.

Your new work explores sound, photography and sculptural modules. What have you discovered or realized?

That’s what I’m trying to find out. I’m just excited by it. I’m excited by the ontology of things and going beyond the visual field.

Why did you make this group of works? Have you explored the possibilities with painting using the traditional painting medium?

Because I wanted to do something new but something that was always in me, because I wanted to connect my life to art and I wasn’t happy that they were separated. Because I feel like I’m transiting. I wanted to work with media that is already embedded in the fabric of life. I have explored painting more ‘traditionally’ for many years trying to find my ‘style’ or ‘language’ in the studio, at some point I just thought that wasn’t what I wanted. Not that I can’t do it, I won’t do it now because there’s no need to. I’d like to take some risks.

How do you like the group of work?

It looks good in theory but reality is another thing, I would have to wait for feedback. I’m still working on it.

Where are you going next?

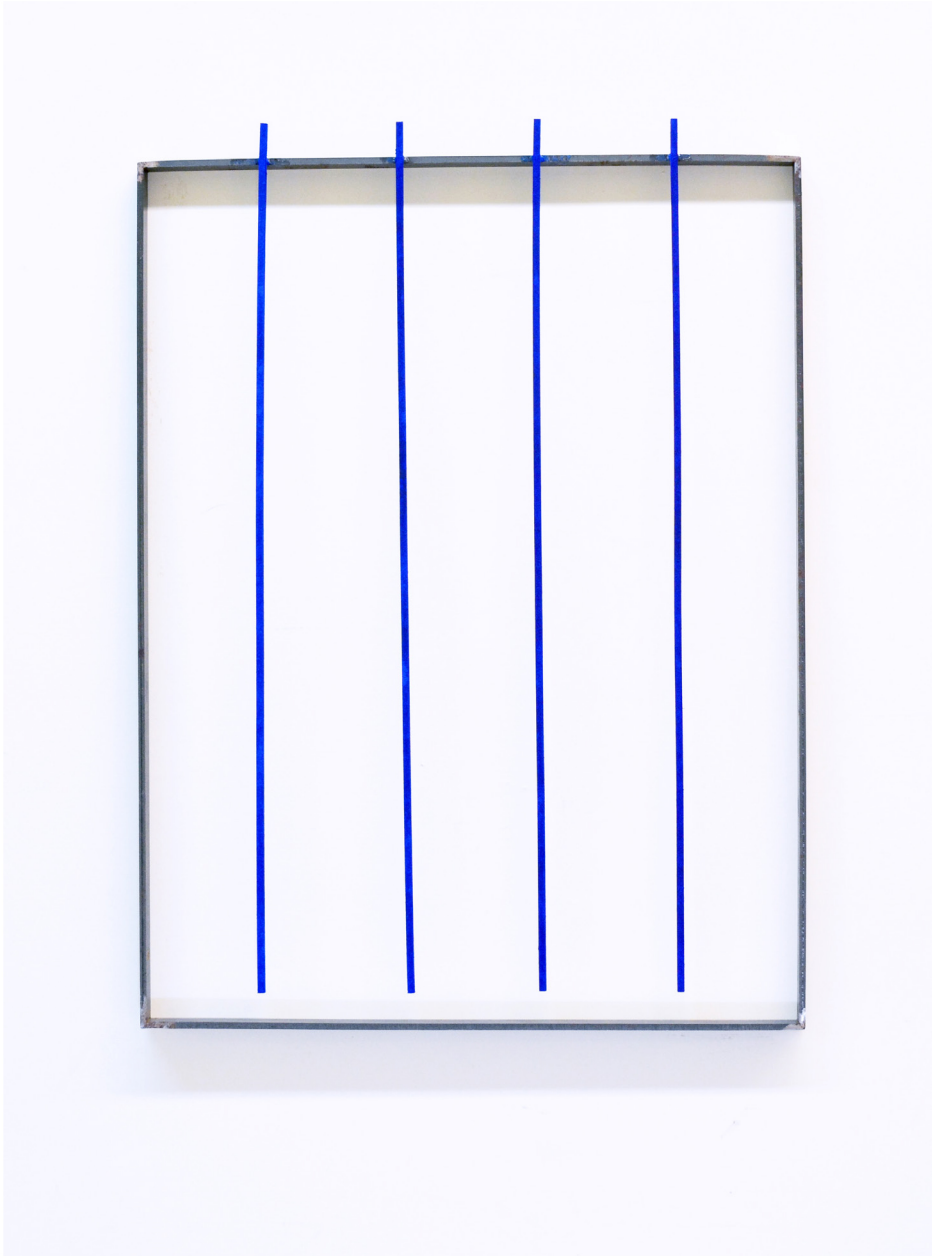
I want to be everywhere and that’s the problem. Key projects and residencies will be nice if not I’d like to take it easy and take stock of things. I’d like to even stop art and maybe make films, not that it’s easy to do, it’s hard. But I’m a sucker for things that are harder to do.

Luke Heng

Luke Heng (b.1987, Singapore) is a visual artist based in Singapore. Heng's practice revolves around the conceptualization and manifestation of painting. He is interested in the dialectics between painting, picture making and object. His works focuses on materiality, the process of materializing, and the perception of painting. Heng has had two solo presentations, *Royal Stanza* with Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris, and *The Waiting Room* with FOST Gallery, Singapore. Selected group exhibitions include *Turn Loose The Mermaids*, iPreiation, Singapore, *Constituent Concreteness*, Mizuma Gallery, Singapore, *Peculiar Textures*, Galerie Steph, Singapore. Heng was a recipient of the Dena Foundation Artist Residency Program in 2014.

This body of works were built upon the idea of taking apart an object, which in this situation is that of an oil painting and reconstructing it with its fundamental materials and language.

When looking at the “Composition” series, one notices a black rectangular frame hung on the wall. It might recall one to mind certain familiarities such as a window, a bathroom mirror, or a portrait painting. Then there are lines, running across the face of the frame. The lines appear slightly different. Different material? Different directions? Different distance? What are these lines resting on? It appears that the lines are sitting on top of the metal frame, as there are visible shadows being cast onto the white wall underneath it. Does this means that the lines and the frame are in two disparate spaces? It seems like the lines are not restricted by the constraints regulated by the frame, as they are so ever slightly protruding beyond the parameters and spotting contrasting colours. This leads to wonder, where is the surface? Has it shrunk, or did it disappear?

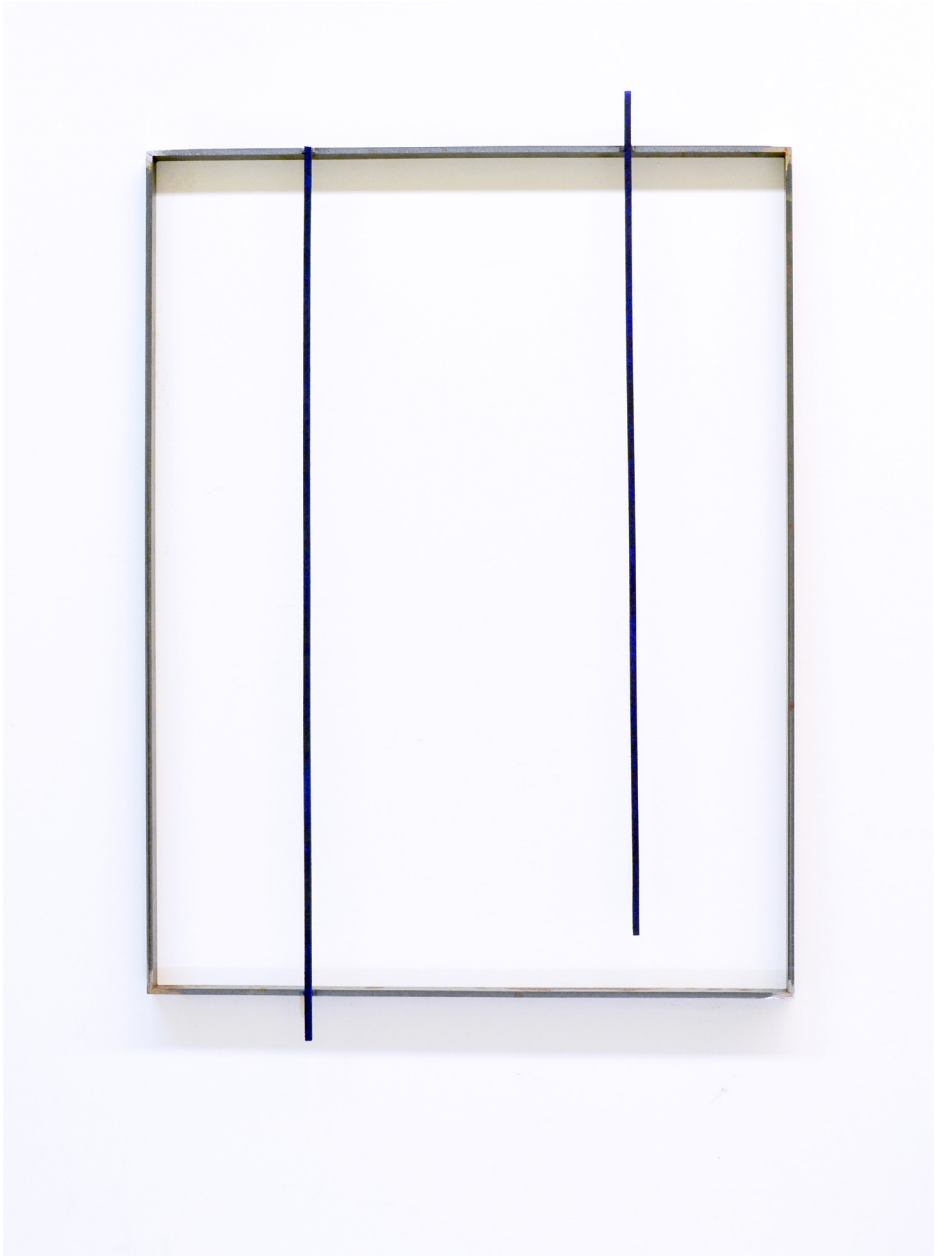


Composition no.7

2016

Colour pigment on mild steel

66 x 48.5 x 2.5cm

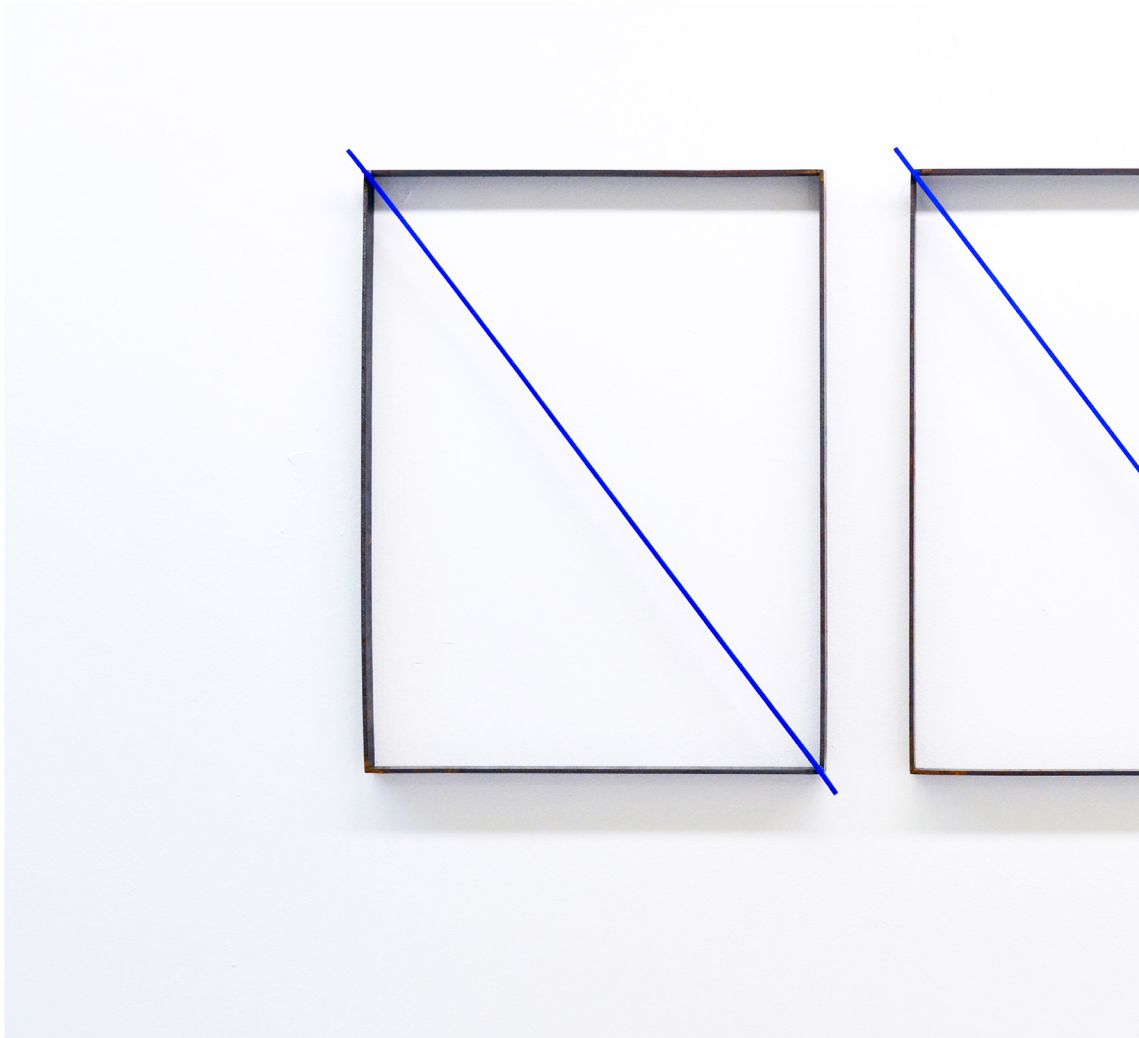


Composition no.8

2016

Colour pigment on mild steel

71.5 x 48.5 x 2.5cm

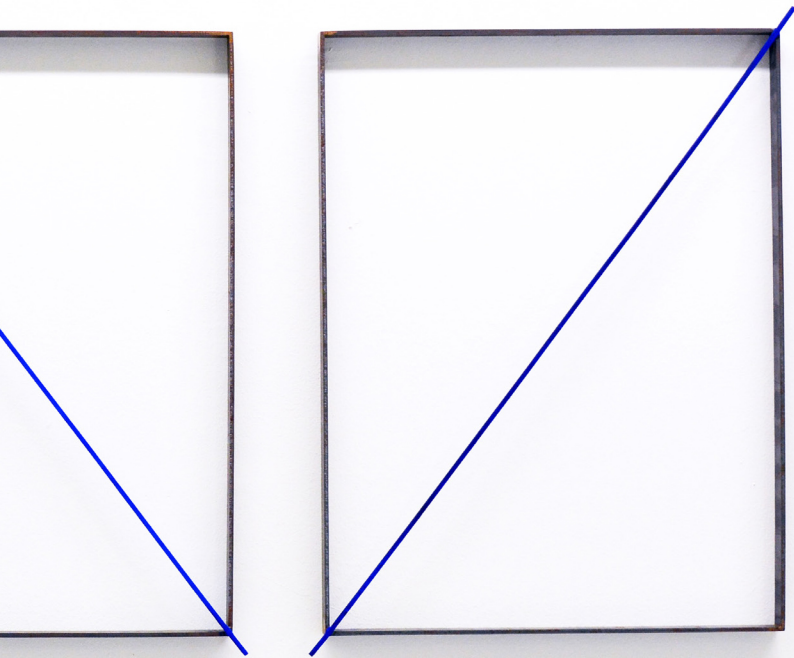


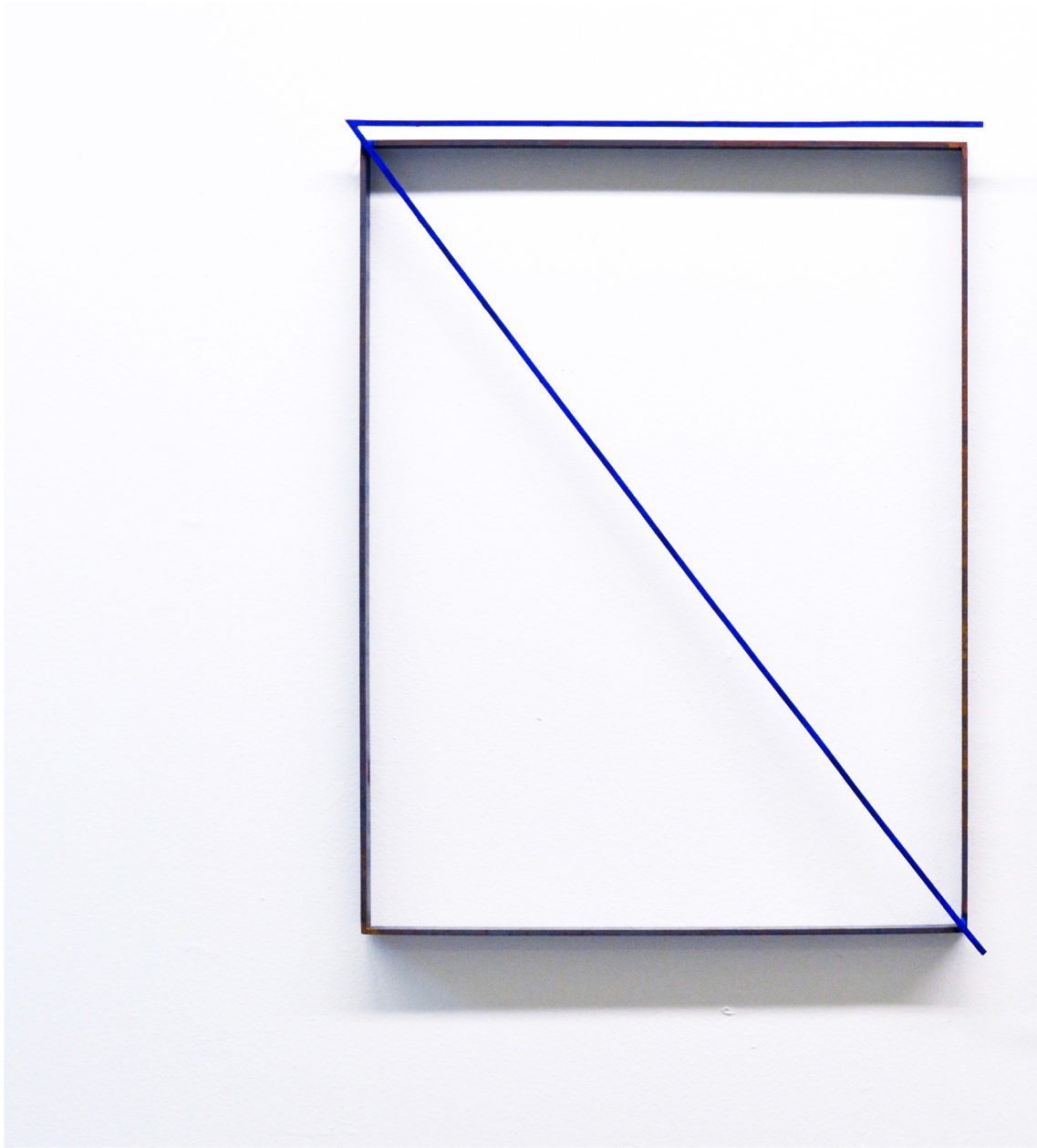
Composition no.10

2016

Colour pigment on mild steel

68.5 x 160 x 2.5cm



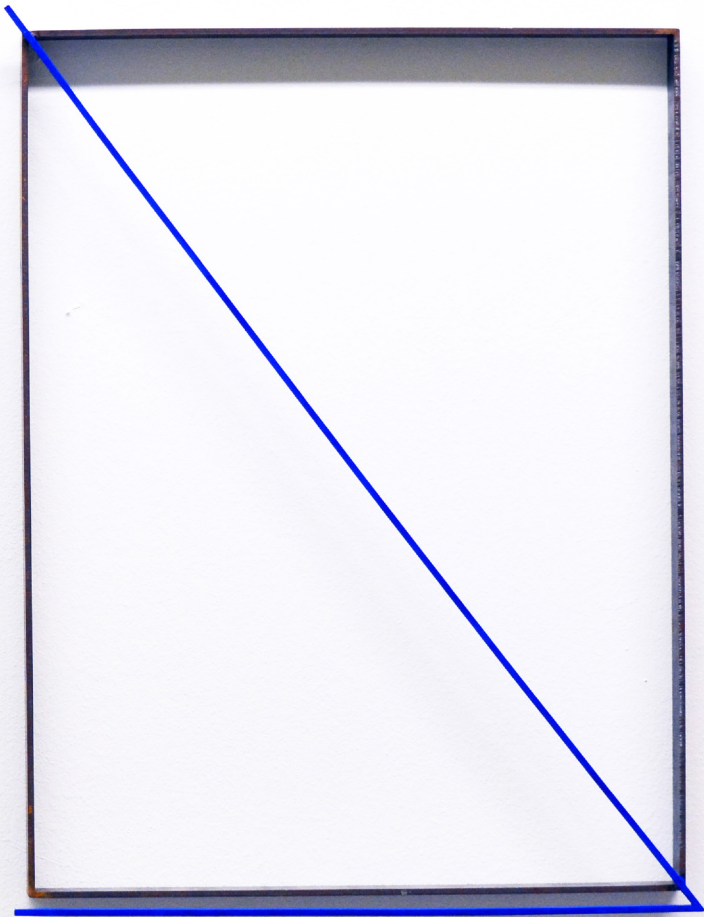


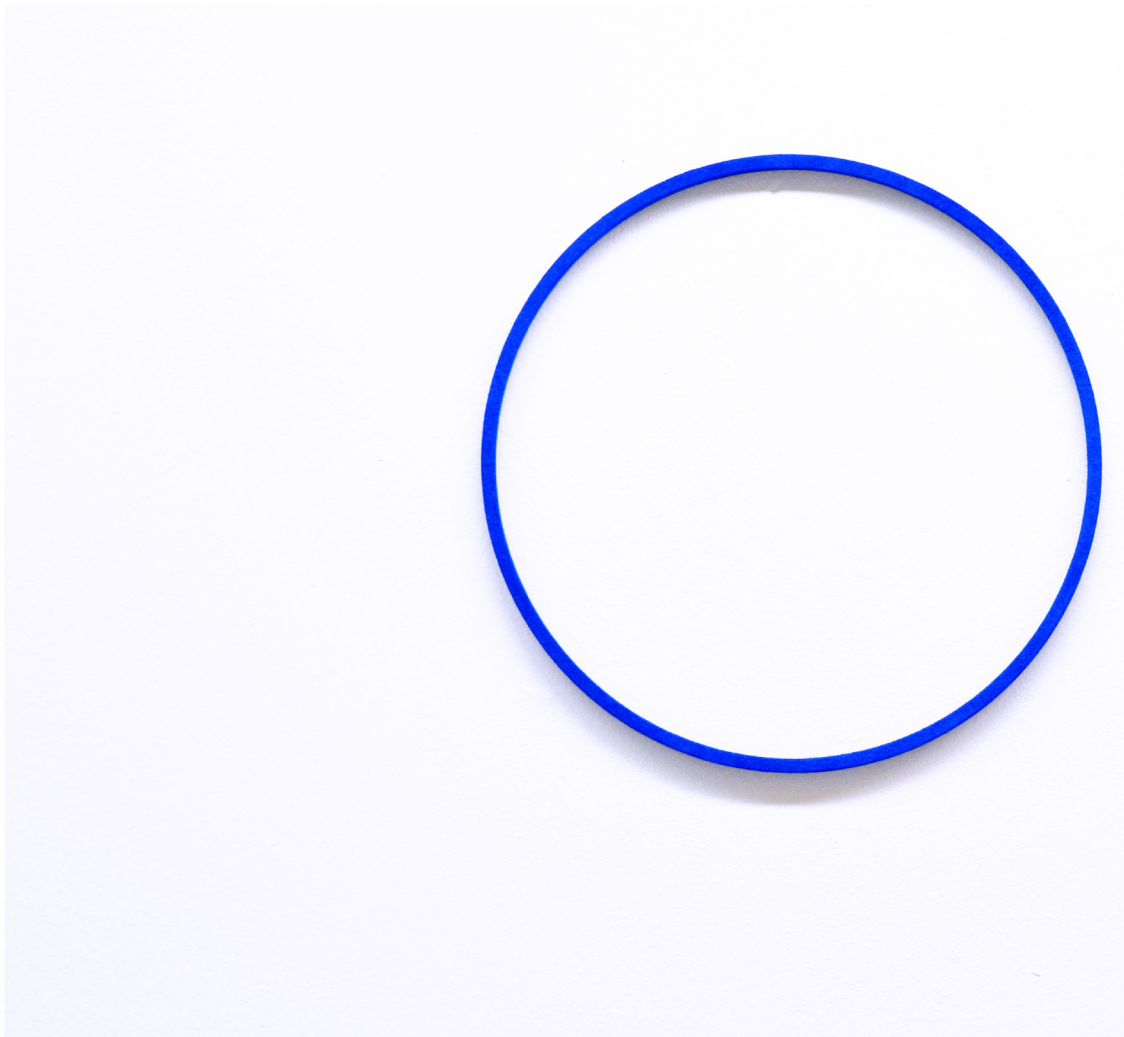
Composition no.13

2016

Colour pigment on mild steel

67.5 x 104 x 2.5cm





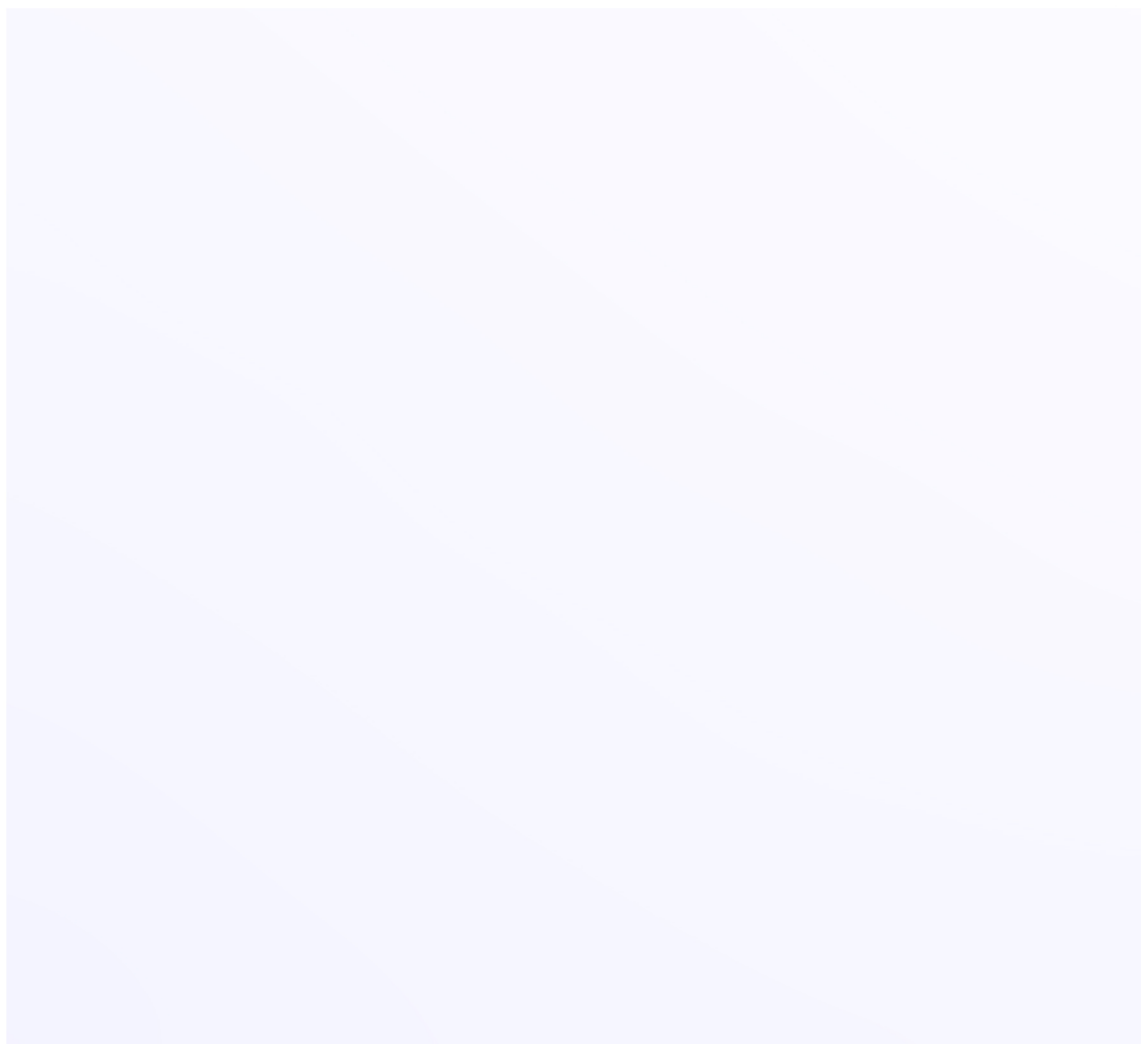
Composition no.11

2016

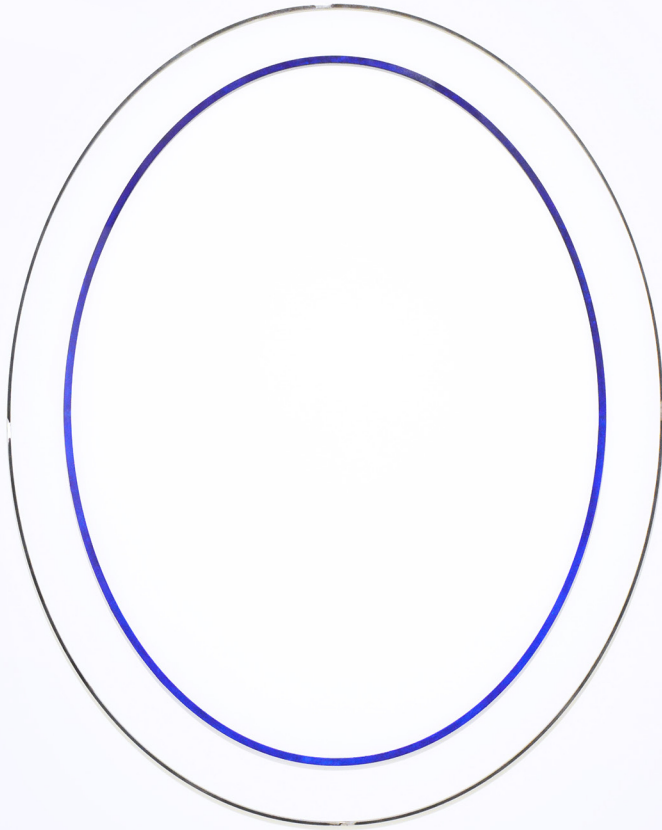
Colour pigment on mild steel

35 x 73 x 0.5cm





Composition no.12
2016
116 x 91 x 0.8cm



Interview with Luke Heng

Which artists, locally and globally, across history, do you identify with?

It's natural that with certain interests, we look at various artists or creatives. Over the few years, I grew to have a reverence for artists from the Abstract Expressionist movement, the likes of Robert Motherwell, Ad Reinhardt, Clyfford Still, etc. Korean's Dansaekhwa, especially Lee Ufan. Yves Klein, Ettore Spalletti, Jean Claude and Christo, Richard Serra, Richard Wilson... Locally, there's Ian Woo, Jeremy Sharma, Milenko Prvacki, Tay Bak Chiang, etc. Probably more specific to this set of new works, artists like Fred Sandback and Robert Mangold are some of the artists that inspire. I love to look at architects, particularly Tadao Ando and Carlo Scarpa.

What's integral to your works as an artist?

I can only make the kind of works that I genuinely feel for and wish to see. Being genuine allows me to eliminate unnecessary doubts and focus on getting the best out there.

How do you work?

The progression of my practice seems extremely logical to me. It is logical in the sense that every following work feeds off the ones that had gone before. They share the same idea of dealing with the concept of painting, but each series takes on different directions.

Give us your interpretation of the title, "Turn Loose The Mermaids" in relation to your works for this show.

'Mermaids', in this context, refers to painting, the painters, and maybe even the site. As artists, we are constantly trying to reinvent certain traditions, introduce a different perspective to a different set of audience. Whether we succeed or not is another question, but it is important we challenge a particular idea or dominance. It's more interesting that way.

In your own way, please define what is a “Painting”.

I’m afraid I can’t give a definite answer to this as I’m still figuring out for myself. It is a lot of things to me and they can manifest in numerous ways. Conditionally, it is on one hand something extremely object-like, tactile and physical. On the other, it is as fleeting as an illusion. Most likely I will change my opinion about painting again, and I hope that I do.

Why did you make this group of works? Have you explored the possibilities with painting using the traditional painting medium?

My practice has now taken on 2 different directions. I enjoy the working process with emotions, I think it’s extremely important to paint with the heart. Besides that, being in a certain state of emotion, it affects important decisions going into the work. However when I was working with the wax series, I felt that I did not need - or rather that side of me wasn’t that much involved in the critical process. It has a lot to do with the cognitive process. At that point, creating a work to me becomes more logical than emotional and I find it rather fascinating. It’s an ‘opposite’ working process and I like to see how I can use it. I suppose the materials and creating process has a lot to do with it too. Previously, it was working with the material of paint and eventually both of us (myself and working with the material of paint) reaches an end point. For this new works, the fixation was on the final outcome and I question, does it convey what I intended to? And as it stands, they are two polarizing types of works.

Your new works explore the structure of painting through the investigation of the wooden stretcher. What have you discovered or realized?

At this point, the stretcher intrigues me as I feel that there is potential in it more than just being a supporting fixture to a painting. I’m not trying to reveal the stretcher but rather to use it as a pictorial element for the work, while still serving its purpose as a supporting apparatus. For now, the works still need the wall, hopefully I could next eradicate that too.

Warren Khong

Born and based in Singapore, Warren Khong situates his practice primarily in the field of painting. Previously dealing with the aesthetics of beauty in the artificiality of its creation, he now contemplates concepts of painting and its relation to surface and materiality – from selected metal surfaces to light, colour and reflection, he also explores spaces as well as the intangible or immaterial, proposing for material as Idea. Notions of/on beauty are never far from his mind however and they still hover.

Khong graduated with a Master of Arts, Fine Arts from the LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore in partnership with Goldsmith's College, University of London, U.K. He has had four solo exhibitions – *Whitewash* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore in 2016, *A Collection of Shapes in Red, Blue, Green, Yellow, Black and White* at Marcuard Asia, Singapore in 2011, *Warren Khong: A Solo Exhibition* at the Hôtel Salomon De Rothschild, Paris in 2011 and *Same Same But Different* at Reading Room, Singapore in 2013. Selected group exhibitions include *Dear Painter* at Sundaram Tagore Gallery, Singapore and *Vernacula_* at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore, both in 2015.

His works have been commissioned by La Maison du Whisky for their *Artist* range and *Karuizawa selected by La Maison du Whisky* limited edition whisky labels. He is a trained draughtsman in the Sol Lewitt foundation and worked on both Sol LeWitt wall drawings at the Marina Bay Sands, Singapore. His works have also been collected by the Singapore Art Museum.

The works presented here continue my research into the notion of materiality as Idea towards painting. #091, #092, #093, #094, #101 and #102 are works that employ light, colour and reflection as material and the wall itself as surface.

#097, #098 and #099 are precursors to #100 and contend with the gallery wall and its painting. Each of the three works in the series represents the stages of the gallery wall, from primed for painting, painted with whitewash as is common for many white cube spaces and finally painted to represent the wall as work in #100.

#100 is a development from #095 (presented at my recent solo earlier this year) and looks at the colour White as material itself. It also examines the notion of the wall and its significance as surface and/or site in both painting and its history. It invites viewers to see, observe and engage with the wall and its presence. The painting happens in the application of gloss White onto the surface. In the subtlety of White on white we too have gloss on matte and a myriad variety of almost-images are allowed, given the setting and frame to occur. Here, the wall is both painting and frame and referencing Lewitt, #100 is painted directly onto the wall by proxy.

Yet in #100, the floor is also brought onto the wall through its dimensions, measured in square footage. Locally, the Per Square Foot (PSF) Unit is the accepted measurement for real estate, referring to its floor area. The value of the property is measured in its price per square foot (\$/PSF) and #100 responds to this as a material. An integral aspect of #100 is in its collection, purchased via \$/PSF. It may be collected at the smallest Unit of 1 Sq Ft up to its maximum dimension of 180 Sq Ft. Yet #100 is a unique piece, having only one amount/Unit of each Sq Ft available. The moment 'X' amount Sq Ft of #100 is collected, that Unit will no longer be available and is removed from the original maximum dimension.



#100
2016
Water-based gloss paint
Dimensions variable



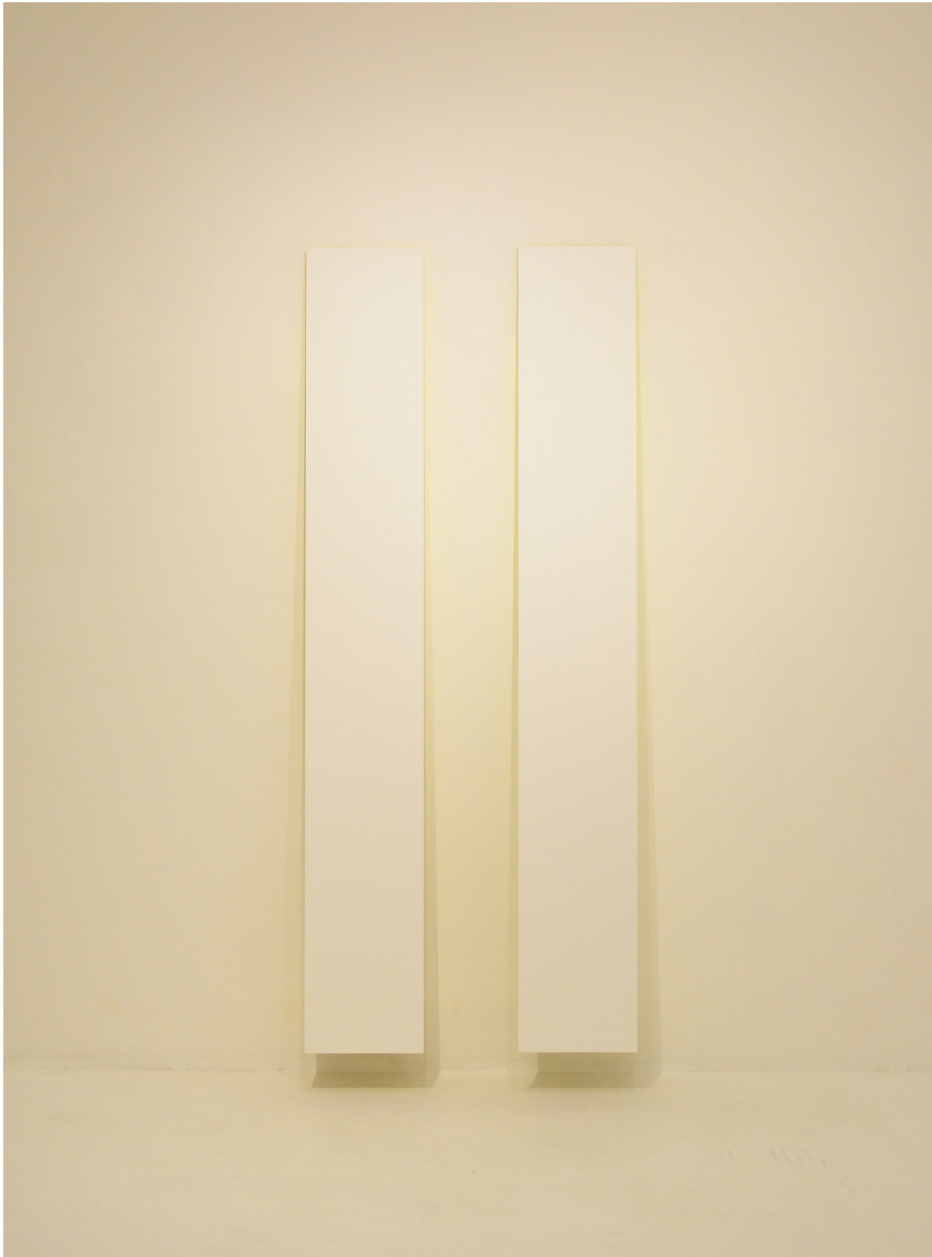


#101

2016

Aluminium panel, Whitewash paint, Industrial paint
65 x 65cm (Set of 2)





#102

2016

Aluminium panel, Whitewash paint, Industrial paint

170 x 25cm (Set of 2)



#097
2016
Wood, Cement
3 x 1 x 1ft



#098
2016
Wood, Cement, Whitewash paint
3 x 1 x 1ft



#099

2016

Wood, Cement, Whitewash paint, Water-based gloss paint

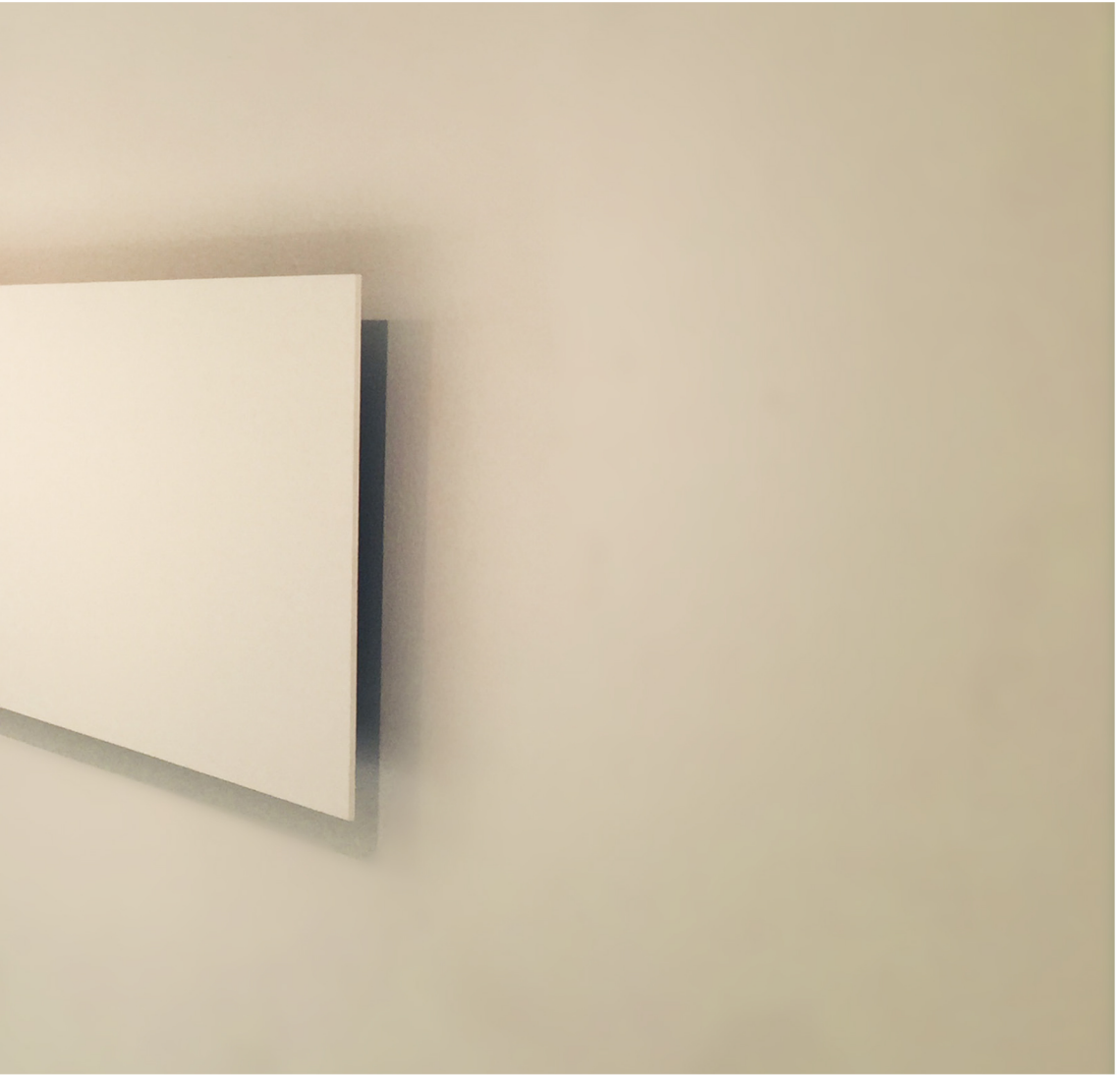
3 x 1 x 1ft



#091, #092, #093, #094

2015

Aluminium panel, Whitewash paint, Acrylic
75 x 30cm each



Interview with Warren Khong

Which artists, locally and globally, across history, do you identify with?

There's a list of them for a variety of reasons but the ones that I immediately identify with or reference are Piet Mondrian, Sol Lewitt, Robert Ryman, James Turrell, Olafur Eliasson, Martin Creed and Anish Kapoor.

How do you work?

Systematically. I've been told that I work more like an engineer than an artist. I conceptualise, then plan for the work until I have the resolved piece fully worked out on paper before executing. The execution phrase is precisely just that – executing towards perfection, without room for accidents, happy or not.

What's integral to your work as an artist?

Beauty and perfection, although we would all respond to those two terms in very different ways I suppose.

Give us your interpretation of the title "Turn Loose The Mermaids" in relation to your works for this show.

The title for the show came from a song by a band that I like. I have no particularly witty interpretation of the title. I simply like it. It sounds quirky and whimsical, yet somewhat poetic at the same time.

In your own way, please define what is a "Painting".

I would ask, 'What is not a painting? Why can't that be read as a painting?' The history of painting brings along with itself a heavy burden but along with all that is a long tradition of questioning, examining, self-examining, and then re-examining. And that leads to pushing, experimenting, failing, succeeding, all of which leads to our reading of painting in the contemporary. I find a large portion of my practice continuing that tradition of always challenging 'why can't this or that be a painting, or read as a painting?'. .

Your new works are a big departure from your previous works. Why? With such changes, there is a loss of consistency, has it been difficult then for you as artist to build your identity?

I don't see my new works as a departure from my previous works at all. Rather, I

see them as a logical, linear continuation of my previous works. The only noticeable difference is that I have conscientiously removed image making from my practice but apart from that, the ideas of removing the artist's hand in the execution of the work towards perfection, of maintaining a certain purity of the colour, of portraying beauty and of reflection has been distilled without the distraction of portraiture. Without the burden of image making, I can examine all of the above points solely in relation to materiality in painting.

Your new work explores ideas of materiality and the colour white. What have you discovered or realized?

That I still have a long way to go, which is good because that means that I haven't run out of steam or of ideas yet. In this presentation I'm looking at the colour White, the wall and the practice of price per square foot as material for painting. Together with the constant question of 'why can't this be a painting?', I keep asking myself 'what is materiality, why can't this be a material?'

Share your thoughts about this work in relation to Sol LeWitt's. How is it similar or different?

I think it would be extremely presumptuous of me to compare my work with Lewitt, an artist whom I greatly admire. Some of my works are made in reference to his practice such as treatment of colors, working directly with the wall as surface and execution of the work by proxy. I think Lewitt opened the doors and allowed such methodologies to enter into a certain consciousness in art. But processes aside, I would like to think that my research concerns and investigations are very different from his.

When did you start working with the colour White?

I started working with white in 2015, starting with #079. My most recent solo exhibition earlier this year that presented #095 was an in depth examination of white and the gallery space. My works here are a development from that.

Where are you going next?

The sea, to join the mermaids. Failing that, the same place that I'm going to every single day. Making art, pushing my practice, becoming better.

Acknowledgements

The artists would like to thank the following for their support in making this exhibition possible – iPreciation Gallery, National Arts Council (Singapore), Poppy Studio and Michelle Ho.

Luke Heng personally thanks Sebastian Low and Leon Lee. Jeremy Sharma personally thanks Corine Chan, Ng Wugang, Ahmad Anwar, Raj Mayuran, Nicholas Lim and Joel Chin. Warren Khong personally thanks Jesus Christ, his family and Fiona Koh.

About iPRECIATION

Established in 1999, iPRECIATION is a fine art company that showcases the best of modern and contemporary Asian Art. As a herald of the arts, iPRECIATION is committed to put forth platforms and propel significant and promising artists to the forefront through successful staging of large-scale exhibitions and publication of outstanding art monographs.

Proficient in contemporary Chinese, South East Asian and Singapore art, iPRECIATION provides professional consultations and services to individual and corporate entities. iPRECIATION has also engaged in various public art projects worldwide.

Artists currently represented include many prominent figures: Nobel Laureate Gao Xingjian, Taiwanese Master Sculptor Ju Ming, Singapore foremost abstract painter Milenko Prvacki and ground-breaking Singaporean performance artist Lee Wen. Over the years, iPRECIATION has been promoting promising emerging talents such as the meticulous China based painter Zhang Jian Jun and Jin Jie, the daring commentator of Hong Kong's contemporary culture, Tse Yim On, and Singapore artists Oh Chai Hoo, Baet Yeok Kuan, Boo Sze Yang, Tay Bak Chiang and Jeremy Sharma.

Since its inception, iPRECIATION has complemented its gallery business with professional art consultancy services to both individuals and corporations. More prominence has been given to contemporary Asian art through the installation of quality artworks in public and commercial spaces not only in Singapore but also in the region.

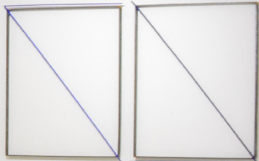
The *Living World Series* by Ju Ming has become a permanent feature at two new modern office buildings, CapitaGreen building at 138 Market Street and The Metropolis business centre at 9 North Buona Vista Drive. At CapitaGreen, a series of 10 painted bronze sculptures depicts the everyday man in their daily urban lives. At The Metropolis, the corporate environment is livened up with a cluster of 12 Gentlemen bronze sculptures. The *Living World Series* portrays a spectrum of social phenomenon departing from his iconic *Taichi Series* since the 1980s. In 2015, Ju Ming's *Taichi Series* enjoyed a four-month long outdoor exhibition at the Singapore Botanic Gardens; and his *Living World Series* completed a travelling exhibition to 4 major Chinese cities of Chengdu, Chongqing, Dalian and Shanghai.

In 2016, iPRECIATION presented the inaugural outdoor exhibition *Envision: Sculptures @ the Garden City 2016*, featuring 14 sets of monumental sculptures by 11 Asian artists from China, Indonesia, Singapore and Taiwan. The exhibition was held in heart of Singapore's historical and cultural centre in the Civic District, Fullerton Hotel and Marina Bay precinct.

Ms Helina Chan, the Managing Director of iPRECIATION, is the recipient of the coveted New Tourism Entrepreneur 2005 by Singapore Tourism Board, which recognizes the entrepreneur whose company has made major contributions to Singapore's tourism industry. iPRECIATION aims to build an artistic foundation through its presentation of a diversity of small to large-scale exhibitions that meets the visual inclinations of its patrons; forming and nurturing a creative focal point in Asia, where individuals can convene and express their artistic sensibilities through art.



Informational plaque on the left wall.



This exhibition highlights the practices of three Singapore artists Luke Heng, Jeremy Sharma and Warren Khong. While they are largely known as practitioners of painting, their works diverge from the conventions of the genre, revealing a preference for exploring, and intertwining medium, materiality, space, acoustics and objects, to present new readings beyond the formal, and ones that are conceptual, experiential and relational.

Taking its cue from a song title by the same name, *Turn Loose The Mermaids*, the exhibition, references not so much fantastical and mythical creatures of the sea, but rather, evokes the imaginary and the unconscious dimensions of an artist's mind, seeking to take hold and form.

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