For Immediate Release

Beyond the archives:
Artists navigate new ways of collaboration in the digital realm

Singapore, 16 Jun 2020 — The Substation kicks off the first programme of its 2020/21 programme season—Coming Home online! Under the new directorship of Raka Maitra and Woon Tien Wei—both who started their artistic careers or benefitted from the programmes at The Substation—the Co-Artistic Directors are now inviting artists, creatives, and allies whose lives have been touched by The Substation to ‘come home’.

Says Woon Tien Wei, “Beyond the physicality of the idea, which is a conscious effort to use every inch of space at Substation to allow meaningful projects to take place, Coming Home is about reminding everyone that ‘home’ is here and still relevant. Coming Home is about bringing The Substation "values" to the world at large. We need to remember that art is more than commodities and spectacles. Art, in its diversity, has agency and potency to affect the world.”

Adapting to digital platforms

However, with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the new directors of Singapore's longest standing arts centre are immediately faced with the challenge of creating meaningful engagements and collaborations in the digital realm.
Raka Maitra comments, “All our plans came to a halt as the world is now faced with a serious pandemic. There was immense pressure to go digital, but how can digital art replace the magic of watching a show in an intimate black box? How about the fervent discussions that follow a show, and conversations which themselves ignite new ideas? We must adapt. We will go online too, but continue to think about how to present it meaningfully, and at the same time, giving the work and art-making process its due respect.”

Initially planned as a 3-day weekend programme, Coming Home will now take the form of an online festival. The line-up features artists of the Associate Artist Programme who are selected based on their engagements in collaborative practices and practitioners who are working with The Substation to develop new commissioned works in the later half of the year, such as Lina Yu and Ramith Ramesh who will be developing a piece that explores the notion of stereotypes and fluidity of culture in a globalised world.

In the last weekend of June, Coming Home will feature (1) a virtual exhibition showcasing the works by artists of the Associate Artist Programme; (2) a series of short films, directed and produced by Singaporean filmmaker Russell Morton, that are adapted from three theatre works; and (3) a film industry roundtable where independent players of the Singapore film industry come together to discuss sustainable solutions on how each sector can support independent filmmakers to relieve some of the challenges faced.

Navigating new ways of collaboration

One of the highlights of Coming Home is the adaptation of three theatre works into short films. The three works were originally intended to be a theatrical production. However, due to the measures in place for the circuit breaker and the need for arts venues to remain close, rehearsals had to shut down prematurely and The Substation had to find new ways of presenting the works.

Directed through the cinematic lens of Russell Morton, the writing, direction, design and performance of the three productions are now reinterpreted and presented in three distinct ways: Lina Yu’s The Ecosystem’s script and narrative arc being adapted for the screen, a documentation of a cross-border Kutiyattam performance by Ramith Ramesh in a blackbox and lastly, a collaborative post-production, which will see Russell Morton creating a conceptual piece based on the pre-recorded footages featuring actor Wendy Toh and sound bites provided by Zelda Tatiana Ng.

The interdisciplinary collaboration not only demands a certain openness and flexibility from the artists, but also requires the adaptability of the artists to reconfigure their performance from stage to screen. During the filming process, Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI) alumnus Lina Yu mentions, “The biggest
challenge in the adaptation of the script is to visualise the story-telling through the lens. In the theatre space, we get to breathe and vibe with the audience. On film, we get to play with a mix of images, which adds a different dimension to the piece.”

The event will take place over a Zoom Webinar. Admission is free and open only to registered guests.

Interested attendees can register at: bit.ly/cominghome-theatretriplebill. To learn more about Coming Home, please visit: http://www.substation.org/programmes/2020/coming-home

For media enquiries, please contact:

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Programme Manager
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About The Substation

The Substation is Singapore’s first independent contemporary arts centre. Established in 1990 by the late Kuo Pao Kun, it is known for its pioneering and experimental arts programming. Over the years, The Substation has worked with some of Singapore’s most critically acclaimed artists, writers and intellectuals including Alvin Tan, Goh Boon Teck, Amanda Heng, Lee Wen and Kok Heng Leun. The Substation is a recipient of the National Arts Council’s Major Company Scheme from April 2020–March 2023.

Website: substation.org/coming-home
Facebook: @thesubstation
Instagram: @the_substation

About Coming Home

Coming Home marks the beginning of The Substation's 2020/21 programme season and invites everyone whose lives have been touched by The Substation to 'come home'. Initially planned as a 3-day physical weekend programme, Coming Home now takes the form of an online festival and offers a sneak peek into The Substation’s new programming initiatives: from multi-disciplinary performances by veteran artists in their own fields to an exhibition featuring works which offers snapshots of ideas and projects that a cohort of artists are exploring or developing at present.

Learn more: http://www.substation.org/programmes/2020/coming-home

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Type of Event/Description</th>
<th>Ticketing/ Website</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26 June</td>
<td>12pm onwards</td>
<td>Associate Artist Programme Exhibition</td>
<td>Link to virtual exhibition will be released on 26 June:</td>
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<td>A virtual exhibition showcasing the works by artists of the Associate Artist Programme</td>
<td><a href="http://www.substation.org/programmes/2020/coming-home">http://www.substation.org/programmes/2020/coming-home</a></td>
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<td>27 June</td>
<td>7.30 - 9.30pm</td>
<td><strong>Theatre Triple Bill + Post-screening Dialogue</strong></td>
<td>A series of short films, directed and produced by Singaporean filmmaker Russell Morton, that are adapted from three theatre works by Lina Yu, Ramith Ramesh and Zelda Tatiana Ng.</td>
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<td>28 June</td>
<td>3pm - 4.30pm</td>
<td><strong>Film Roundtable</strong></td>
<td>The common path for the independent film typically passes through 4 distinct stages: production; festival/sales; distributor; exhibitor. Each stage functions as a cog in the wheel of the industry, working in tandem while facing strained pressures of each other's roles in an interdependent film ecology.</td>
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<td>In this roundtable, The Substation invites various key players in the industry to share strategies they have applied in their own sectors in hopes of sparking an optimistic shift towards sustainable film practices.</td>
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<td><strong>Moderator:</strong> Vincent Quek (Anticipate Pictures)</td>
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<td><strong>Speakers:</strong></td>
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<td>- Junxiang Huang (Zhao Wei Films)</td>
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<td>- Thong Kay Wee (Asian Film Archive)</td>
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<td><img src="https://bit.ly/cominghome-reelroundtable" alt="Link" /></td>
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Title: The Ecosystem

Playwright: Lina Yu
Actor: Lina Yu
Language: English, Mandarin, Hokkien, Japanese

Perhaps they say it all
Perhaps they say nothing at all
Perhaps everything lies in the beholder
Who knows what lies on the other shore

Maybe they have never met
Maybe they knew each other before
So when were they born?
No one ever knows for sure

Perhaps you’ll recognise some of them
Perhaps you’ll meet them for the first time
Find your way into this ecosystem
Where they thrive, or maybe...

The Ecosystem is the continuation of an original piece created by Lina during her training at the Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI), exploring identity through culture and the world we live in. Due to the current climate, the piece has now taken on a new breath through film. What is the “present” in which we live?

Lina Yu 余莉那

Lina Yu graduated from the Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI) in 2014 where she experienced Asian traditional art forms together with contemporary and western theatre training. She is involved in theatre productions by various companies, and is currently exploring acting in film and TV. She also does translation work in English, Mandarin and Japanese. As a participant of The Substation’s Associate Artist Programme, Lina hopes to explore more about form and culture, as well as diaspora in the region. She looks forward to collaborating with fellow practitioners from different disciplines, while continuing to hone her craft as an actor and creator.
A form of traditional Indian theatre that dates back to two millennia, and declared as one of the 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' by UNESCO, Kutiyattam draws on the plays of eminent Sanskrit dramatists of India. Kutiyattam is traditionally performed in theatres called Kuttampalams, which are located in Hindu temples. Access to such performances was originally restricted owing to their sacred nature, but the plays have progressively opened up to larger audiences. Kutiyattam is usually performed by a community of male actors called Chakyars and female performers called Nangiars, assisted by drummers called Nambiars.

Ramith will be performing “Pakshi sthobham” and the conversation between Ravana and Jadayu, one of the most iconic performances of Kutiyattam adapted from Jatayu Vadha (The Killing of Jatayu), an excerpt from the Hindu epic Ramayana.

Jatayu Vadha is a story where the evil king Ravana kidnaps Sita, the virtuous wife of Prince Rama. Prince Rama and Sita were in exile from their own country. On his flying magical chariot, Ravana attempts to kidnap Sita in order to bring her to his capital, Lanka (his capital).

Jatayu was a wise vulture, a demigod that could speak the human language and an old friend of Rama’s father. He bears his own legend of competing with his brother for flying nearest to the sun. Unfortunately, his powers have weakened due to old age. Still, he tried to rescue Sita from Ravana. Being a strong knight, Ravana cut off Jatayu’s wings, and the old Jatayu fell on the ground, bruised and battered. Jatayu lived to tell Rama about Sita’s kidnapping.

Kalamandalam Ramith Ramesh

Kalamandalam Ramith Ramesh is a Kutiyattam practitioner, theatre actor, drummer and poet from Kerala. Ramith completed his training in Sanskrit, Kutiyattam and Chakyakoothu at Kerala Kalamandalam Deemed University for Arts and Culture, where he trained under the renowned great masters such as
Padmasree Sivan namboodiri, Guru Ramachakyar etc. As an active arts practitioner for the past 17 years, he has performed Kutiyattam and Chakyarkooth at almost 254 stage performances all over India, France and Singapore and performed in national festivals such as Nila Festival, Shimoga Festival, Kerala Sangeetha Nadaka Academy Festival, Parinithy festival, Yoga Parv. He had also participated in numerous theatre productions and worked with acclaimed French stage director, Ariane Mnouchkine in 2016. He produced two short films as an Assistant Director. Ramith taught Kutiyattam in several theatre companies in India and was a judge on the panel for the state art festivals for 5 years. He is currently completing his Professional Diploma in Intercultural Acting at the Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI) Singapore.

Title: At the End of the World…(在世界的尽头。。。

Director/Playwright: Zelda Tatiana Ng 顏橦
Produced by: GroundZ-0 原。空間
Voice Actor/Sound: Zelda Tatiana Ng 顏橦
Actor: Wendy Toh 卓慧玲
Original Script: Kok Heng Leun 郭慶亮
Language: English

Written by Kok Heng Leun in the 90’s and performed by Zelda, she rewrote it in 2003 as part of her graduation piece at ITI. This was a piece inspired by a real-life story. ‘At the End of the World…’ is a poetic presentation about a woman’s yearning and search for the meaning of love and her existence. Her reality and memories entwined with the exophysical realm, creating layered and multiple realities in a surrealistic world.

She feels the world is constantly ending. She thought she was happily married, only to find her reality was nothing of what she perceived... She was lost. She went on a journey of pilgrimage and found refuge in a surrealistic realm - having a conversation with the supreme spiritual power. She did the radical act of seducing the power... She just needed an outlet - A way to feel alive again! But her act was against all morals and social values. So, is her existence valid?

Zelda Tatiana Ng 顏橦

Zelda Tatiana Ng 顏橦 has been working in the arts/theatre scene for more than 20 years and involved in various aspects of theatre with almost all major established local theatre companies. In 2003, she graduated from the Theatre Training & Research Programme (currently known as Intercultural Theatre
Recent work includes – Prism of Truth《眾相》(Huayi Festival 2020, Director/Co-playwright), Shadows IN the Walls《壁中影》(Light to Night Festival 2019, the Bicentennial Edition, Director/Co-Playwright), Reunification of Two Koreas (Singapore/France Collaboration, TheatreWorks, Cast), Legends of the Islands《岛屿传奇》(Late Night Texting, Creator/Director), One Metre Square《结霜》(Singapore theatre Festival, W!ldrice, Director), 0600 (SIFA 2018, Creator/Director), MaMa White Snake (W!ldrice, Cast), Sometime Moon《有时月光》(Toy Factory, Cast), Inheritance《承传》(The Finger Players, Director), Afar《远角》(The Finger Players – Watch This Space, Director), Three Children & Titoudao (Esplanade The Studios – fifty, Director), 100 Years of Solitude-Cultural Revolution (Zuni Icosahedron & Drama Box, Cast) and movies Wet Season, Ilo Ilo & Taxi Taxi (Featured Actor).

**Wendy Toh 卓慧玲**

Wendy Toh is a Singapore-based freelance performer with numerous credits in TV, Film and Theatre. She has acted in prominent dramas series such as HBO Asia’s Serangoon Road, The Love Machine as well as award-winning feature films such as Red Dragonflies. Most recently, she was the main lead for 15 Shorts - "The T(h)ree Lives". Wendy is a member of Tapestry Playback Theatre, and has trained and worked with Jinen Butoh School under Atsushi Takenouchi. Aside from acting, Wendy also dabbles with documentary filmmaking. Her short docu Vios premiered at the Singapore Chinese Film Festival 2019. During her free time, Wendy likes being with animals, creating mask work and drawing. A proud graduate of Singapore’s Intercultural Theatre Institute, Wendy hopes to continue her journey as a multi-disciplinary performer and deepening her Butoh practice.

**GroundZ-0 原。空間**

GroundZ-0 原。空間 is a Singapore-based, multilingual, intercultural and interdisciplinary space initiated by Zelda Tatiana Ng, which aims to explore, research, promote and produce cross-genres / cultural / nationalities / disciplines works. GroundZ-0 原。空間 is interested in the experimentation of traditional arts forms (especially Chinese Opera & Japanese Noh) in contemporary theatre, surrounding its aesthetics, history, principle, philosophy, form and training. GroundZ-0 原。空間 also seeks collaborations with various international artists in order to share research and learn knowledge across nationalities / races / cultures. Through explorations and experiments, GroundZ-0 原。空間 aspires to find / define / re-define
Russell Morton

Russell Adam Morton is a Singaporean filmmaker and visual artist. He is a graduate from The Puttnam School of Film, LASALLE College of the Arts (2010) and obtained an MA in Fine Arts from Camberwell College of the Arts, UAL (2012).

His films have been part of the Athens Video Art Festival 2012 and participated in several group shows in London. The film, The Silent Dialogue of All Artworks was screened at the National Museum of Singapore’s 10th Singapore Short Cuts, The Substation’s 4th Experimental Film Forum and the Thai Short Film & Video Festival 2014. The film later went on to win Best Experimental Film at the 5th Singapore Short Film Awards. His second film, The Forest of Copper Columns, has won the Cinematic Achievement Award at the Thessaloniki Short Film Festival 2016 and has been selected at several festivals including the Thai Short Film & Video Festival, Jogja Netpac Asian Film Festival, SEASHorts and Short Shorts Film Festival (2017). He was also the Director of Photography for Ang Song Ming’s Recorder Rewrite, Singapore’s entry to the 58th Venice Biennale in 2019.