

# The Architecture Society Yearbook

(45<sup>th</sup>) Executive Committee  
AY 2024-2025



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## 01.1 // *Thresholds* Presidents Message

Reflecting on the past academic year prompts consideration beyond constructed projects and exhibitions. What stands out are moments shared outside formal curriculum: conversations during meals, mutual encouragement before presentations, and thoughtful pauses amidst rigorous schedules.

Throughout this year, collaboration extended beyond academic requirements. Studio peers became supportive networks, committees evolved into communities, and architectural discussions expanded to include sustainability, equity, care, and spatial politics. While solutions were not always evident, our questions became increasingly critical and reflective.

Whether coping with unexpected disruptions, managing installations under resource constraints, or facing

challenges during internships and exchanges, students demonstrated adaptability. These experiences emphasized essential qualities within our discipline: flexibility, empathy, and determination.

*With appreciation,*  
Alison

**TAS President, 2024/2025**

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## 01.2 // *Thresholds* Editors Note

When we first conceptualized this yearbook, our intention was to expand its scope beyond architectural coursework. We sought to showcase student achievements across diverse modules, emphasizing interdisciplinary engagement and academic breadth.

This edition includes selected student works from courses outside architecture, reflecting the varied intellectual interests of our cohort. The yearbook presents reflections on, exchange programs, firm visits, exhibitions, and influential dialogues.

We appreciate all students who contributed their work, experiences, and insights, demonstrating the multifaceted nature of our academic community. We hope this publication serves as a

valuable record of the year, illustrating the growth and range of our students.

*Sincerely,*  
Sarvesh, Chantelle & Publications  
Subcommittee

**Editors, TAS Yearbook 2024/2025**

**01.3 // Thresholds**  
TAS Committee Directory

The Architecture Society (TAS) is the official student body representing the interests of all Architecture and Landscape Architecture students at the National University of Singapore. The TAS Executive Committee is formed by students from Year 1 to Year 4. TAS is the main point of contact between the student body and the school administration, facilitating student feedback. TAS also facilitates communication between the students, the industry and the Singapore Institute of Architects (SIA), helping in

administering SIA student membership and other initiatives.

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The mission of TAS is to promote architectural education and practice relevant to the needs of society. We also aim to promote and safeguard the interests of NUS Architecture students, while fostering links to the local and global Architecture industry so as to establish a better dialogue with local, regional and international architectural institutions.





## // Office

The Office functions as the executive core of TAS, led by the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and supporting members. It oversees the strategic direction, organizational management, and financial administration of the society. By coordinating closely with departmental committees, the Office ensures operational coherence, accountability, and governance across all activities.

## // Events

Responsible for planning and executing significant TAS functions, the Events committee coordinates academic ceremonies, community-building gatherings, and celebratory occasions. Its activities require meticulous logistical management and strategic planning, facilitating student engagement and enriching the collective experience within the faculty.

## // Education

The Education committee leads initiatives aimed at extending learning beyond the formal curriculum. It organizes academic dialogues, workshops, peer-led discussions, and forums that critically engage architectural theory and practice. Through these scholarly endeavors, the committee encourages intellectual exchange and continuous discourse.

## // Communications

Communications serves as the liaison between the society and its stakeholders, managing the public image and informational dissemination of TAS. This committee is responsible for designing, curating, and distributing content across various platforms. It operates through clear, articulate messaging that reflects the academic integrity and ethos of the society.

## // Welfare

The Welfare committee is dedicated to fostering student well-being through structured support and initiatives. It focuses on mental health, personal development, and creating inclusive spaces. The committee responds to student concerns proactively, implementing programs designed to sustain a balanced and supportive academic community.



## // Architours

The Architours committee is specifically responsible for organizing educational architectural tours and guided site visits. These curated experiences provide direct exposure to significant architectural projects and urban environments, facilitating experiential learning, professional engagement, and critical spatial discourse among participants.



## // Exhibitions

Tasked with presenting student works and academic outputs, the Exhibitions committee manages the curation, design, and execution of displays. It emphasizes scholarly rigour and creative excellence, employing thoughtful spatial strategies to effectively showcase the processes, outcomes, and theoretical explorations produced within the student body.



## // Special Projects

The Special Projects committee undertakes exploratory and innovative activities that transcend conventional departmental responsibilities. It investigates emerging opportunities, pilot programs, and collaborative ventures, acting as an incubator for ideas that challenge conventional disciplinary and institutional boundaries.



## 02.1 // Moments

### Welfare Pack Distribution // Welfare



## 02.2 // Moments

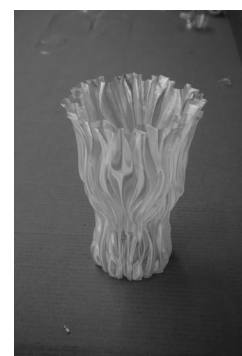
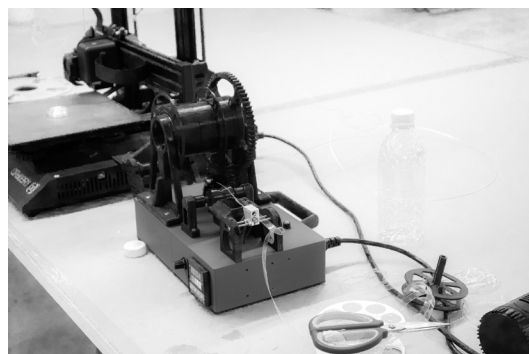
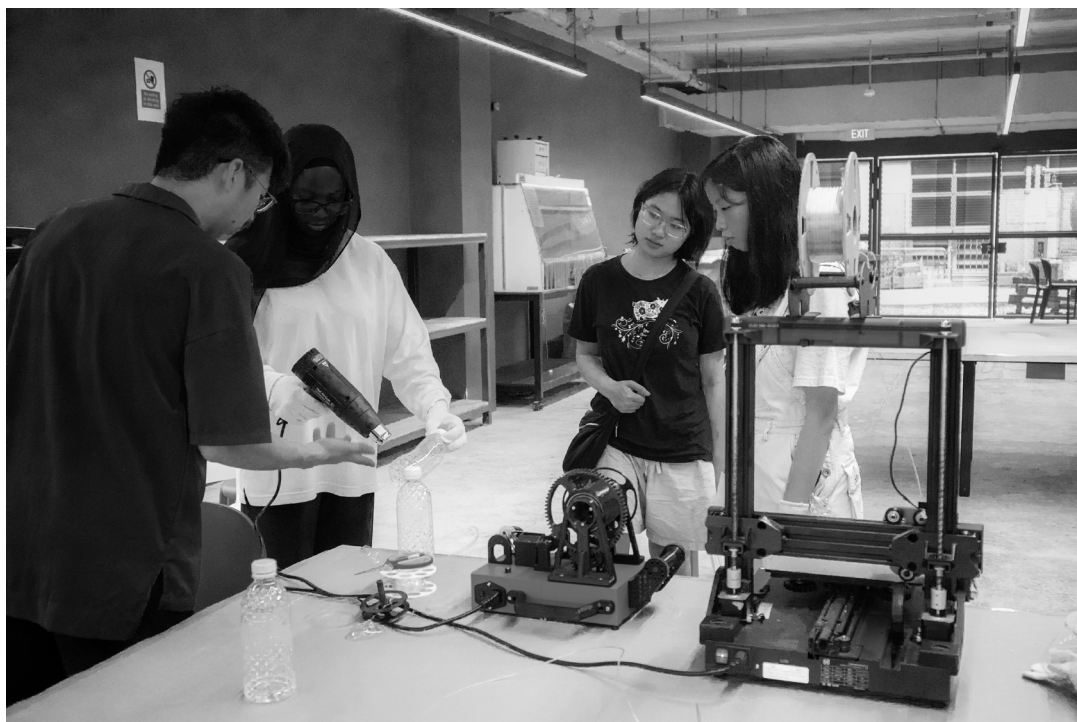
### TAS Green Corner // Special Projects



The Green Corner is an initiative that aims to establish a space for upcycling unused materials within the architecture community. It encourages the donation and sharing of surplus materials among architects, fostering a culture of sharing, understanding, and sustainability to reduce material wastage. By reupposing unused materials, The Green Corner transforms them into treasures for the next person, cultivating a community focused on resourcefulness and environmental responsibility.

## 02.3 // Moments

### Plastic Filament Workshop // Special Projects



This workshop explored how plastic waste can be turned into filament for 3D printing. Participants used extruders and printers to convert discarded bottles into printed forms.

The process—collecting, shredding, extruding, and printing—offered a direct look at how waste materials can be re-used.

## 02.4 // Moments

### Academic Feedback // Education



Held at the end of the academic year, this feedback session created space for students to voice their thoughts on the curriculum, studio environment, and overall learning experience.

Led by student representatives, the session gathered comments and suggestions from across the cohort. Topics ranged from workload distribution to module structure and studio culture. Faculty members were present to listen, respond, and take note of key concerns.

The session aimed to foster transparency and improve communication between students and staff. It highlighted the importance of collective reflection in shaping a more thoughtful, inclusive, and responsive architectural education.

02.5 // Moments  
Career Fair // Education



02.1 // Moments  
Akival 2025 // Exhibitions







## **02.1 // Moments** **AkiVAL 2025 // Exhibitions**

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AkiVAL is an exhibition series presented by National University of Singapore (NUS) Department of Architecture (DoA) and The Architecture Society (TAS). Formally known as Archival, AkiVAL celebrates the work of our Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Master in Arts in Architectural Conservation, Master of Science, Integrated Sustainable Design and Master of Arts in Urban Design and Master of Urban Planning Students.





02.2 // Moments  
AKILA 2025 // Events



02.2 // Moments  
AKILA 2025 // Events



TAS supports the annual Freshmen Orientation Programme held for Architecture and Landscape Architecture students. AKILA was organised with design objectives in mind to give a preview of student life with guest lecturers sharing their student and industry experience.



**03.1 // Fieldwork**  
**Archi-Tours**



Eclipse  
By Aedas



Artyzen Hotel Singapore  
By Ong & Ong



Woodlands Health Campus  
By SAA





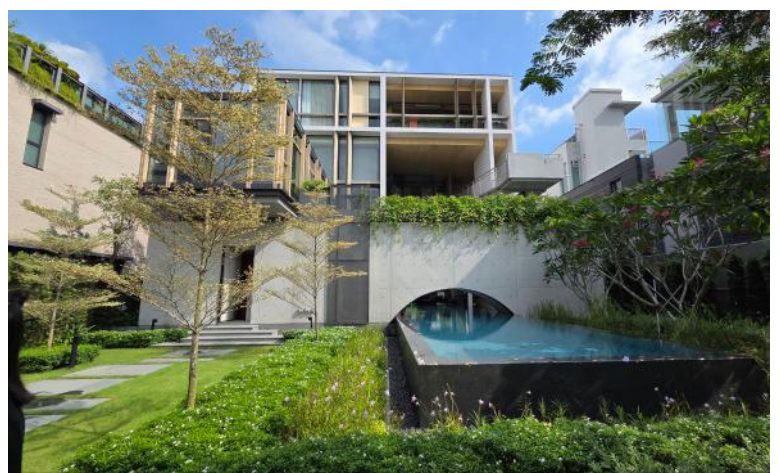
Punggol Digital District SIT Campus Heart  
By **WOHA**



Kong Meng San Meditation Centre  
By **Forum Architects**



Kampung House  
By **RT+Q Architects**



03.1 // Fieldwork  
Firm Visits // Education



Benoy ▶



This event offers students a valuable opportunity to interact with these firms, gain insights into their work culture, experiences, and potential prospects. An architecture portfolio workshop is held to further aid students in career pursue. At the fair, each firm held dedicated booth, delivering presentations about their work and engage in discussions with other participating firms. By attending this event, students can access opportunities of securing job or internship opportunities within the industry.

◀ Park + Associates



Ernesto Bedmar Architects ▶



DP Architects ▶



# Get-To-Know: *CJ Lim*

Should I tell the sad story of it? I wasn't good at any subject apart from drawing I think I daydream a lot so that sort of led me to possibly engage in something creative and I probably would have preferred to do some fine arts program or subject. Knowing my Asian parents they wouldn't have it. So the things that, you know, they said, you know the nearest thing we will compromise and agree to is to do architecture so that's what I've done and it has been fun so far. I wouldn't have done anything else.

What influenced you to pursue architecture?

I wouldn't say it's my calling that's like you know that's serious stuff calling. I really love having speculative conversations with my students. I really cherish those moments they are very very special for me. I've been doing it for over 32 years and I want to contribute to the whole cultivation of imagination in the broader sense not just within teaching but also within the profession and so forth but yeah my students are very important to me they are probably most important to me, they're like my family

Do you think teaching is your calling?

I think at first I would like to read a little quote from Roland Barthes to you and I think that probably would be much more eloquent than my description of imagination and storytelling and narratives. He says "Narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere has been people without narrative... Carrying nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, trans-historical, trans-cultural: it is simply there, like life itself." Roland Barthes (1966) and I think Roland Barthes put it very eloquently of how narrative is part of our human being, humanity and if it's the case architecture, landscapes, cities, urban design, interior design, product design, furniture they are all vessels to celebrate humankind and humanity so they should contain narratives I mean that's quite logical I would thought.

How can imagination play a role in storytelling within the field of architecture?

I think it's changed a great deal because through storytelling I start to appreciate the key element of the built environment which is us human, and humanity for that matter and so storytelling reminds me also of the emotion of spaces. Spaces could be sad, spaces could be happy, spaces could be, you know, reflective and all these emotions need to be present in spaces that we create. It doesn't matter if it's a small interior design piece or a landscape piece or a big city, it needs to have emotions. And I think a lot of times my, sort of, review of designs are that we, and that involves me, we all forget that it's for human beings. We're not just drawing diagrams for diagram sake and I think that's really really important part of it and I think, you know, in the age where we need to be smart, we need to be resilient and sustainable at the same time, you know we need to go back to first principles. the human being, you know, at the end of the day that's what we're serving.

That's a great achievement. My next question would be how has your design process and methods changed over the years especially when incorporating elements such as storytelling in your design?

I think there's no hard and fast way of approaching design or design narrative. I think one has to start from what is given, the brief, of course, the site, the economic condition, the social political condition of the site, the brief itself that actually stipulates certain compulsory requirements of the building or the city and then one has to consider the wider implications that comes with designing and then from these ingredients you start to patch up a story just like any storytelling and I think you know that's really really key to any design approach I take or my students take, my office takes and we really really believe in not with starting with forms but with how human being would actually start to engage in these sort of spatial stories.

On that note how do you start or approach a design idea? What elements or ideas prompt you to start exploring an architectural narrative?

The principles of Smart Cities, I think we have over the years developed and grown and cultivated. I think the way that best sums it up is we're trying to recalibrate the relationship between human beings and nature, that's first, by participating in what we call the three Ps. Protect, Provide and Participate. and I think that's really really key. We, human beings, have been greedy. We have been unkind to nature and now with the imminent climate change, sea level rise and so forth, we are still sort of making infrastructure, we are creating things to block it out, to stop it. I think let's be frank, nature is much bigger than all of us put together and the thing is that the only way to deal with it, within what I call a 'Smart City', is to embrace climate, climate change and all the kind of values of protection, participation and provision and I think that's really something that we need to or at least I and my students bear in mind as basic principles, otherwise we will always be fighting nature which is not possible.

I have a question on your book Smart Cities and Eco-Warriors. You introduced smart cities as an ecological symbiosis between nature, society and built form. Do you believe these distinctions help address the root causes of sustainability and climate change or do they risk creating conflicts of interest?

I think architecture is good fun, it's challenging, it's creative but it also has also and one has to be aware that it's also a lot of hard work and heartbreak as well. Because we all as architects and planners and any designers would know that, you know, we create and create but not every single design gets realised and a lot of times we just... it would end up in the kind of archive of what I call 'the unbuilt', you know albeit amazing ideas and so the things that, you know, there's lots of joy and also possible heartbreaks and I think, you know, it's not glamorous just to be clear but it's great great fun. I mean you feel a sense of great achievement, you know even though it might be a project with just ideas and unbuilt you know when you finish it, you feel wow that you have recorded the moment - a creative moment in time on a piece of paper, in your computer, or have fabricated as a model so it's really really quite amazing that feeling.

So to close our interview, would you like to give any advice or words of encouragement to give to students or people who want to pursue architecture in future?

**Tee Kai Jie Forbes & Bryan Lee Jia En**  
TU Delft | AY 24/25 Semester 1  
**The Why Factory + Building Engineering Studio**

Our exchange at TU Delft offered a rare glimpse into architectural education beyond the boundaries we had grown familiar with. The school's dual emphasis on sustainability and technical rigour was immediately visible but paradoxically, we found ourselves in The Why Factory, a studio that championed speculative futures over conventional buildability. Within this vibrant space, we worked with a 29-member team to produce a collective vision of Biotopia, a future where cities and nature coexist seamlessly.

We took the leap to join the film team, motivated by the desire to experiment with new storytelling mediums while on exchange. Learning a new software (blender) from scratch, especially in such a collaborative environment, was daunting but that challenge was precisely what made the experience so valuable. In the process, we encountered different working styles, personalities, and visions. At times, navigating creative differences tested our patience and adaptability, but it also taught us how to communicate better, listen actively, and find consensus amid contrasting opinions. These were lessons in leadership, not just animation.

One gesture that left a deep impression came from our tutor in the Building Engineering Studio. Upon hearing we were traveling over the weekend, she responded with enthusiasm instead of disapproval, encouraging us to explore architecture firsthand. It was a small moment, but it encapsulated the broader academic culture we observed in the Netherlands: one that embraces balance, trusts students with autonomy, and sees travel not as a distraction, but as part of

an architectural education.

Reflecting on both studios, we began to notice a shift in how we understood control, collaboration, and care. In a highly speculative studio, we had expected absolute freedom, but learned that structure and dialogue were necessary to keep ideas coherent. In a technically rigorous studio, we had anticipated strictness, but instead encountered flexibility and warmth. These experiences challenged our assumptions about creativity, about leadership, and about the kinds of environments that allow people to grow.

Following the exchange, we had the opportunity to continue our involvement with The Why Factory through a collaborative project for the Venice Architecture Biennale. What began as a studio investigation in Delft grew into a chance to contribute meaningfully to a broader ongoing research. This shift from participants to collaborators was a humbling experience.

In many ways, the Biennale became a mirror to our time abroad. It wasn't about showcasing a finished product, but about continuing the process of questioning, imagining, and building with others. We left with a deeper understanding that architectural learning isn't defined by location or achievement. It's shaped by the people we meet, the questions we ask, and the willingness to step into the unknown. The exchange reminded us that growth happens not in moments of certainty, but when we allow ourselves to be shaped by what we don't yet know.

# Inbound

Hi! I'm Lily Oehm from Munich, Germany. I spent my Year 3, Semester 1 and 2 on exchange at NUS, and joined Studio Francois Blanciak for Design 5 Unit 2, Interfaces for Connective-Disconnection.

Was there a specific encounter, gesture, or space that stayed with you?

Honestly, just being in Singapore felt like a huge opportunity to expand my perspective on architecture. The way buildings respond to the climate and how spaces are used so differently really opened my eyes. There are so many places I loved—Punggol Design District, New Bahru, Chinatown, and The Pinnacle definitely stood out and left a strong impression on me.

But more than the places, it was the people I met at school who really made an impact. At my home university, the curriculum tends to be a bit more technical. At NUS, I was pushed to think more creatively and more experimentally. It was refreshing, and a little scary at first, but in a good way. Seeing how passionate and skilled everyone around me was really inspired me to level up my own work.

Also, the campus itself made life so enjoyable. The architecture department had everything from big open studios to modern workshops and it was just such a nice place to be (even when the lights turned off late at night while we were still working!). Since we don't really have a central campus back at my home university in Germany, I loved spending time at UTown, swimming to cool off, grabbing food with friends, or just meeting new people all the time. It

felt like home so quickly.

## **What did it reveal about your own frameworks or limits?**

Coming from a pretty Eurocentric education, it was really interesting to dive into Southeast Asian history and architecture. Learning about how cultures mixed and influenced each other here really made me rethink how I understand design and its roots. I wrote my final paper about Borobudur and Prambanan, and it felt surreal to actually travel there afterwards and see the temples in real life. Being based in Singapore made traveling around the region super easy too, so I got to see more of Southeast Asia than I ever expected.

This exchange year really helped me grow—not just in school, but personally too. The projects challenged me, but they were always exciting. I met amazing people from all over, fell in love with the culture and food, and even now I really miss my go-to Kopi C Kosong and fish soup from Techno Edge. Singapore will always have a special place in my heart.

## **Lily Oehm**

National University of Singapore | AY24/25  
**Design 5, Unit 2, Connective-Disconnection**

# Enlightenment Aesthetics and the Challenge of Speculative Taxidermy — By: Joel Tan Kai Siang

The Enlightenment was a paradigm shift in philosophy which brought upon confidence in the human intellect, to create new rational knowledge of nature. The natural sciences therefore became a poignant area of epistemology which defined representational aesthetics in respect to the observed world. These manifested in the form of classifications, taxonomies and catalogues all philosophically anthropocentric in narrative and rationale. The endeavour of taxidermy was then a form of representational aesthetics which was defined not only by the objective rational order of an idealised nature visually or materially, but systematically as well.

This essay will analyse Baumgarten's invention of aesthetics with regards to taxidermy as an example, referencing Linnaean systems of nature. Furthermore, the discourse will examine avant-garde views of aesthetics, referencing *Speculative Taxidermy* by Giovanni Aloi and his subversion of Enlightenment era aesthetics. Through the lens of taxidermy, the essay aims to critique contemporary representations of nature and its anthropocentric orders of classifications. Laurent Bochet's Nile Crocodile, the main image of reference, challenges existing constructions of taxidermy as static order. The work further questions the permanence of taxonomy and

aestheticisation of nature. Henceforth, this essay through the lens of the taxidermy, critiques Enlightenment era aesthetics and existing representations of nature, challenging anthropocentrism. Perhaps then, we may then recognise the uncontrollable, disorderly and capricious characters of nature, a new way of seeing and creating aesthetics of the natural world. Henceforth, this essay aims to work through the lens of Bochet's Nile Crocodile to critically rethink Enlightenment aesthetics of order, advocating for a reordering of natural representation that embraces impermanence, disorder, and interconnectivity.



The paradigm shift of the Enlightenment brought upon confidence in the human intellect, to create systematic knowledge of nature acting as a new doctrine in pragmatism in life. Specifically, it was the concept of systematic aesthetics that flourished during the era, treating our way of seeing the beautiful as a science. In the context of the era, aesthetics was focused on the ideal nature, to them, this was to create universal principles for objective affirmations of aesthetics. Consequently, nature then became understood, catalogued and controlled through visually and materially manifested practices. These specifically included taxonomy, cataloguing and significantly, taxidermy in the realm of the natural sciences. Representational aesthetics of the era were predominantly anthropocentric, with the imposition of human idealisation onto the realities of nature. This essay aims to critically analyse the emergence of taxidermy within the Enlightenment epistemology, referencing Giovanni Aloi's *Speculative Taxidermy* as a means to critique existing representational systems. *Speculative Taxidermy* in congruence with Bochet's Nile Crocodile

frames this critique as quintessential philosophical ideas challenging the static and human-centric construction of taxidermy. Henceforth, this essay aims to work through the lens of Bochet's Nile Crocodile to critically rethink Enlightenment aesthetics of order, advocating for a reordering of natural representation that embraces impermanence,

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## I. THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE AESTHETICS OF ORDER

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The tenets of the Enlightenment still influence and resonate with representational aesthetics in the natural sciences today, embodied through systemic reasoning and empirical observation. Key figures such as Carl Linnaeus crafted entire notions of order with respect to the natural world, through classifications of living organisms structured by taxonomies. This paved the way for nature to be understood as having definitive, measurable and ordered structures.<sup>1</sup> It was through

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<sup>4</sup> Giovanni Aloi, *Speculative Taxidermy: Natural History, Animal Surfaces, and Art in the Anthropocene* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 4–8.

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<sup>5</sup> Aloi, *Speculative Taxidermy*, 110–115.

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Linnaeus, *Systema Naturae*, 10th ed. (Stockholm: Laurentii Salvii, 1758).

this philosophical understanding and perception of nature that reinforced the ideals of order, symmetry and harmony. These characteristics then created the belief that the natural world was intrinsically as such, harmony in the eyes of Man. The greatest proponent of the invention of aesthetics, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten ignited a pivotal shift in the concept of the sensorial.<sup>2</sup> His philosophy discussed the endeavour for perfect sensory knowledge, generating rational order from the perception of the senses. With regards to taxidermy, the practice became a physical construction of visual representation and Enlightenment epistemology. The process of taxidermy, involving the meticulous preservation and reconstruction of nature into static and idealised symbols of nature, is a disjointed and arduous attempt at representational aesthetics. Taxidermy itself then is an example of ineffable contradiction, eliminating the entropic and capricious qualities of reality. The practice itself, fundamentally claims to preserve life, however is only possible in

<sup>2</sup>Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry*, trans. Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954).

death. The product of taxidermy then, is formed into a disjointed and contorted shell of life, devoid of their ecological

## **I. GIOVANNI ALOI'S CRITIQUE: THE DISORDERLI- NESS OF NATURE**

Speculative Taxidermy critiques the tradition of taxidermy, reprimanding the aesthetic violence which the practice violates onto nature as an entity, disfiguring it to conform to our human ideals.<sup>4</sup> Aloï argues against such traditions, to subvert the recreation of the idealised animal form. He emphasises the significance of the acknowledgement and embrace of the spatial, the ecological context, the temporal, the history, of the animal. This approach desensitises the mind of human constructed systems of seeing, and creates an awareness of the individuality of a creature. Aloï further discusses the importance of material processes of an animal, the dynamic transformation over time, the entanglement between

<sup>3</sup>Rachel Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012).

an animal and its context. Speculative Taxidermy confronts the artifice of taxidermy, deconstructing the traditional and exposing philosophical tensions between human perception and reality. Furthermore, Aloï creates the connection between representational aesthetics and the ethical, subverting superficial symbolism of taxidermy. Aloï argues for the concept of agency in an animal, against the extent to which current human intervention encapsulates not only the physical alteration of an animal, but also its order within the structure of nature. He advocates, therefore, that the avant-garde practice of speculative taxidermy frames the ecological complexities and transformations integral to the life and death of an animal. Processes such as decay and entropy should hence not be controlled or contained, but be made apparent as intrinsic qualities of nature.<sup>5</sup> Aloï's work suggests the creation of a relational perspective, such that nature is not controlled and instead embraced for its capricious, fluid and interconnected qualities.



*Nile Crocodile, Crocodilus niloticus, 4 feet long from 1000°C Deyrolle – 1er février 2008.*

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### III. CASE STUDY: LAURENT BOCHET'S NILE CROCODILE

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Laurent Bochet's Nile Crocodile exhibits riveting qualities of transformation and capriciousness, accentuating the subversion of fundamental Enlightenment epistemology. The work itself, once an exhibit in a traditional taxidermy curation, is retransformed through natural processes. Bochet's purposeful attempt to leave the animal as

is, illustrates the extent of fire damage, a deformed and disfigured object. Yet, it is this very form which no longer resembles the idealised creature. Though perhaps described as disfigured by conventional perception, the animal now manifests as a natural material reality.<sup>6</sup>

The subject of the work itself, the crocodile, is recognised for its ancient past as a resilient species. The work in its current state underscores the enduring yet fragile qualities of the animal, signifying the tensions of entropy and continuity of nature. Further beyond the crocodile is its taxidermy state, by experiencing the fire, the process reveals the impermanence of life and futility of anthropocentric orders of nature. The fire, as a collaborator, became the ultimate symbol of capriciousness, challenging the essence of preservation of nature. Bochet's work captures the philosophy of Aloi's work by displaying the temporal, spatial and material contexts of the animal at its existing state. The crocodile then becomes no longer controlled or ordered according to the 'truest' nature, but rather is shown to resemble the dynamic and incomprehensible aspects of nature. The work therefore epitomises

the unpredictability of reality, questioning the permanence of not only the physical form but also the taxonomies and aestheticization of the Enlightenment. As the taxidermy works and the curated exhibition itself burnt, so then was there a literal and symbolic deconstruction of the traditional order.

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#### **IV. Towards a New Aesthetic: De-Anthropocentrism in Taxidermy and Beyond**

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Enlightenment epistemology still resonates and influences the natural sciences today, both in our understanding of reality as well as our physical representation of it. Speculative taxidermy, exemplified by Bochet's work, attempts to challenge and subvert anthropocentric rational order and pursue avant-garde understandings of aesthetics. These new aesthetics require a recognition of nature's reality, its autonomous and complex qualities. This then may spark a new contemporary paradigm shift in aesthetics, aligning with philosophical discourse very relevant today. These include posthumanism and the advocacy of ecological awareness

and sensitivity, a rejection and subversion against existing hierarchies of human exceptionalism.<sup>7</sup>

Implications of this new order are the reworkings of existing institutional methods of representational aesthetics, from exhibitions, curations and natural history collections, these physical manifestations will then foreground spatial and temporal contexts. These may exist in the form of decay, multispecies relationships and the role of entropy in nature. Hence, these processes are represented as material transformations, encouraging discourse of human-nature relationships over time.<sup>8</sup>

Examples of these extend not only within the realm of the sciences but also in the arts, with artists and curators experimenting with different ways of showcasing life forms and organic materials. A methodology for these representations could be in the form of polyphonic narratives, a way in which nature can be presented in its multiplicity of existing tensions, conflicts and coexisting perspectives. These are developed and nuanced compared to static and singular taxonomic truths present today. An example of such theories is exemplified by Donna Haraway's pluralistic frameworks. This advocates for the acknowledgement of cultural, temporal and ecological specificity of each organism and or the organisms involved in natural processes. <sup>9</sup> Furthermore, speculative taxidermy suggests a deconstruction, a rejection of completion, perfection and wholeness. Instead, one is encouraged to engage with fragmentation and ambiguity of reality, perhaps a deeper perspective into aesthetics where the human is no longer the only collaborator. Rather, organic processes, animal behaviours and the tensions between life and death are explored, deconstructing human agency and

**I**n conclusion, the Enlightenment epistemology's imposition of order onto nature through anthropocentric rational systems led to practices like taxidermy, which became a physical manifestation of human representation of nature. Aloi and Bochet's work explore the shift towards speculative taxidermy, challenging traditional aesthetics whilst embracing the disorder of nature. In summary, speculative taxidermy is not only a new way of art but also a philosophical intervention. This essay suggests an awareness of the realities of nature, not to perceive it linearly or taxonomically, but rather to see the beauty in its dynamism, fragility, capriciousness and impermanence. Perhaps then, this may lead to a greater more meaningful connection between human and nature, a new way in which our senses understand, and our hands create representations of reality around us.

# Eternal Beauty: *Ruins, Estrangement, and the Spectral* *Decay in Rome*

## Abstract:

Rome, as portrayed in Sorrentino's *The Great Beauty*, emerges as a living palimpsest where memory, time, and decay converge in an enigmatic aesthetic experience. Architectural remnants linger not as relics, but as vital actors in modern urban fabric and contemporary life. As Piranesi's etches evoke, ruins inhabit a state of liminality in the Eternal City, suspended between past and present, impermanence and permanence. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Latour's Actor-Network Theory and Jonathan Hill's *Weather Architecture*, the essay positions decay as an active, co-authored process shaped by nature and time forming a dynamic landscape of aesthetic encounters. Where Sorrentino's protagonist drifts through Rome's spectral surfaces – between celebration

and decay, the essay delves into the estranged gaze of the modern subject to investigate a perception of beauty emergent through the existential search of what has weathered and endured.

This essay argues that ruins evoke beauty precisely because they resist closure, where entropic transformation and incompleteness are sources of affect, imagination, and cultural reflection. A contemporary meditation on transience and politics of power asymmetries of ruins, the essay aims to address the research question: "How do the aesthetics of decay and fragmentation in Rome's ruins evoke beauty?"



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# *he Aesthetics of*

— By: Tan Wan Theng



## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In Sorrentino's *The Great Beauty* (2013), through the estranged gaze of Jep Gambardella, a disillusioned writer adrift in the city's ephemeral glamour, viewers are introduced to Rome as an atmospheric protagonist shaped by time, weather memory and decay. As Jep seeks

meaning amidst artifice, the city's worn facades and atmospheric decay become poignant counterpoints to classical ideals of beauty, framing ruins not as endpoints, but as generative, affective spaces. Sorrentino's mise-en-scene of ruins and ephemeral atmospheres offers a contemporary

reflection on the emergent aesthetics of decay, temporality, and affect.

The essay investigates the aesthetics of ruins, where beauty emerges through processes of erosion, fragmentation, and weathering imbuing form with affective and imaginative depth. Drawing on Piranesi's 18th-century etchings and

Sorrentino's cinematic Rome, ruins are understood beyond passive historical artefacts as imaginative interfaces between past and present, material and immaterial, human and non-human. First, the essay contextualizes the Enlightenment era's fascination with ruins, tracing the shift from classical reverence to the sublime. Second, ruins are explored as aesthetic objects shaped by the agencies of nature and time, through the theoretical frameworks of Latour's Actor-Network Theory (2005) and Jonathan Hill's *Weather Architecture* (2012). Third, the essay considers the estranged gaze of the modern subject, drawing on Walter Benjamin's concept of "aura" (1968) and Simmel's figure of the "stranger" (1950) to understand how ruins evoke beauty through temporal disjuncture. Through a historical and contemporary lens, the essay argues that beauty emerges not as a fixed ideal, but an aesthetic condition shaped by the agency of nature, decay and time, and the imagination of the estranged viewer.

## II. RUINS IN THE ENLIGHTENMENT: FROM CLASSICAL IDEAL TO SUBLIME FRAGMENTS

The Enlightenment era's fascination with ruins reflected a deepening historical consciousness and growing ambivalence toward the classical ideal. While the Renaissance had rediscovered antiquity as a model of order and harmony, the 18th century saw ruins not merely as historical remnants but as symbols of temporality, transformation, and the sublime.<sup>1</sup> This period reinterpreted classical antiquity through a lens of affect and imagination, characterized by nostalgic desire of past, present and future.<sup>2</sup> The rise of the picturesque and the sublime as aesthetic categories played a crucial role in this shift.<sup>3</sup> Ruins, in the aesthetic reevaluation became an open-ended space for contemplation and narrative projection.

Piranesi's etchings are emblematic of this duality through his archaeological and imaginative renderings of Roman ruins. In works such as *Vedute di Roma* and *Il Campo Marzio dell'antica Roma*, he traces real topographies with imagined structures, layering history with poeticism<sup>4</sup>. Overgrown vegetation and collapsing arches depict ruins as living palimpsests shaped by both cultural memory and natural reclamation. Ruins reflect a hybridized aesthetic logic. Zucker (1961) explicates the intersection of natural and human-made beauty in ruins, embodying a paradoxical hybridity that resists yet extends classical ideals. Piranesi's engravings are significant in this perpetual tension: ruins as stages where human aspiration and natural entropy coalesce.

## III. RUINS AS AESTHETIC OBJECTS: THE AGENCY OF TIME AND NATURE

Ruins exist as material assemblages co-authored by atmospheric forces of wind, rain, humidity, plant growth and light. Decay

becomes a medium through which modern sensibilities of the sublime emerge. Ruin aesthetics, as co-produced by human and non-human agencies in an entropic process of becoming, dismantles architectural constructs as forms of continuous material negotiation<sup>5</sup>. As Hetzler (1988) expands, in a ruin "the beauty of nature intersects with man-made beauty in a unique manner", when intersecting they create synergistic potentials and "integrity" over time.<sup>6</sup>

Nature operates as an active aesthetic force in both Piranesi's compositions and Sorrentino's cinematography.

Piranesi renders surfaces stained by age, where cracks, overgrowth and water stains blue architectural geometry, with time engraving new histories onto stone. Processes of erosion and decay suggest the impermanence of antiquity and monuments, set in a state of open-endedness. Sorrentino similarly portrays Rome through atmospheric mise-en-scenes, lingering on fading frescos and overgrowth of nature in classical forms. As a ruin itself through the contemporary medium of film, fragments of stories, gestures, spaces coalesce into a poetic, decaying totality. Qualities of time adopt its own aesthetic value through weathering, decay and light,

alluding to Hill's theoretical discourse of *Weather Architecture* (2012), where weather exists as an active participant inscribing time onto form, blurring the boundaries of man and nature. Weather participates in the becoming of architecture, understood as a porous system of exchange, subverting traditional architectural ideals of permanence and order.

Latour's Actor-Network Theory (2005) extends Hill's discourse, positioning ruins as relational networks and urban assemblages co-produced by human and non-human actors. The entanglement of architecture and nature foregrounds ruins as collaborative authored by weather and nature across temporalities and agencies. The aesthetic object is not the monument in completion, but the ruin in its becoming. Beauty in

ruins emerges through a vulnerability to natural processes, underscoring a dimension of affect theory through its ability to generate intimate and emotional experiences.<sup>7</sup> As Morton (2013) expands on the significance of establishing bonds of intimacy between beings, ruins emerge beyond nostalgic historical remnants, but as affective sites of becoming. Ruins



Fig. 1 (top) Fig. 2 (bottom) : Stills of the protagonist wandering Rome's ruins in *La Grande Bellaza* (2013)

exist as interfaces between material process and human imagination.

Piranesi's compositions elucidate a growing self-critical aesthetic consciousness in the early enlightenment era.<sup>8</sup> In the experimental image, fragments from Piranesi's etchings are collaged into a composite

ruin - an emergent landscape evoking the layered accretion of time. This new visual syntax echoes the contemporary argument: ruins are not fixed representations of the past, but spaces of speculative and sensory becoming. As a subversion of classical aesthetic discourse, beauty in ruins emerges on a more philosophical dimension in the imaginative quality and vitality embodying historical and entropic transformation.

## IV. THE ESTRANGED GAZE: SUBJECTIVE ENCOUNTERS WITH FRAGMENTATION

To gaze upon a ruin is to occupy a position of estrangement, paradoxically

<sup>1</sup>Danto, Arthur C. "From Aesthetics to Art Criticism and Back." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54, no. 2 (1996): 114. <https://doi.org/10.2307/431083>.

<sup>2</sup>Andreas Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins," *Grey Room*, no. 23 (2006): 7, <http://www>.

<sup>3</sup>Lang, Karen. "The Dialectics of Decay: Rereading the Kantian Subject." *The Art Bulletin* 79, no. 3 (1997): 416

<sup>5</sup>Hetzler, Florence M. "The Aesthetics of Ruins: A New Category of Being." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 16, no. 2 (1982): 108.

<sup>6</sup>Hetzler, Florence M. "Causality: Ruin Time and Ruins." *Leonardo* 21, no. 1 (1988): 51-55.

<sup>4</sup>Allen, Stanley, and G. B. Piranesi. "Piranesi's 'Campo Marzio': An Experimental Design." *Assemblage*, no. 10 (1989): 90

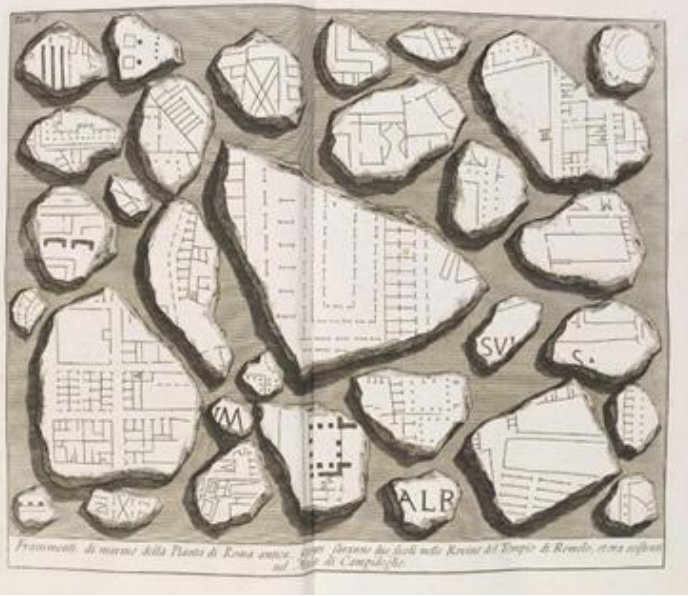


Figure 3. Fragments of the Marble Plan of ancient Rome, from the Severan Marble Plan (1756; first published)



Figure 4: Emergent Ruins; experimental collage & assemblage from Piranesi's etchings

disconnected and intimate.

The ruin, decontextualized from its original function, invites projection, reflection, and narrativization. Ruins are experienced as a “past” and

living entity imbued with aesthetic and emotional resonance.

Walter Benjamin's concept of “aura” (1968), “a strange weave of space and time”, foregrounds the aura of ruin through its distance, temporal remoteness and resistance to full appropriation.

The modern subject, suspended in a state of liminality between past and present, encounters ruins through Simmel's metaphor of a “stranger” (1950), someone “near and far at the same time”. In Piranesi's etchings, the viewer is placed at impossible perspectives looking upon fragments evoking a past grandeur juxtaposed with decay and weathering, stirring a sense of melancholic beauty.<sup>9</sup> In Sorrentino's film, Jep drifts through palazzos and courtyards as a stranger and flâneur of decline, finding beauty

of decay beyond decorative superficiality to probe at a deeper emotional connection.<sup>10</sup> The estranged gaze transforms the ruin from object to interface, between past and present, material and emotion, absence and presence. It reflects modernity's temporal dislocation, where beauty emerges as an act of co-creation between the viewer and ruin.

### V. POWER, PRESERVATION, AND THE POLITICS OF RUIN AESTHETICS

The power to aestheticize decay reveals deeply embedded hierarchical inequalities. Who may perceive ruins as beautiful? Does the process of aestheticizing ruins romanticize decline? Discovering beauty in ruins reflects a paradoxical tension between preservation and transformation.

In *The Great Beauty*, Jep's access to aristocratic palaces is mediated by privilege. These private spaces reflect a consumption of decay, where the film becomes a metaphor for the curation of ruins. Piranesi's vivid etchings conceal the violences that produces ruin—colonial extraction, war, gentrification, or cultural erasure. Contemporary preservation for touristic consumption often suspends ruins in artificial states of incompleteness, ironically fetishizing collapse while ignoring the very material conditions—economic neglect, climate change, displacement—that produce it.<sup>11</sup> In aestheticizing ruins, are we romanticizing decline at risk of ignoring entrenched socio-political and environmental inequalities? It is imperative that a modern subject must possess criticality in interrogating the ethics of viewing,

feeling and framing decay.

### VI. CONCLUSION: TOWARD AN OPEN AESTHETIC OF RUINS

Ruins reflect a complex and layered temporality of beauty—emerging through decay, time, and atmospheric transformation. From Piranesi's visionary etchings to Sorrentino's cinematic meditations, ruins emerge as co-produced ecologies and aesthetic interfaces of matter, time, and affect informed by Latour and Hill's theoretical frameworks. Ruins as entropic systems are further shaped by affective encounters where beauty emerges through distance and imagination.

Yet, the perception of beauty in ruins must be contextualised and historicized. Ruins compel us as modern subjects to dwell not just in the poetics of time, but in the responsibilities of our gaze to be more politically and culturally informed. Perhaps the beauty of ruins endure precisely in their embodiment of time—weathering histories, desires, and dreams on a more intrinsic dimension as a dynamic, open-ended aesthetic encounter. Ruins dialectically project history while celebrating what emerges: the possibility of imagining beauty as ephemeral, partial, and perpetually in a mode of becoming.

<sup>7</sup>Chee, L. (2023). *Architecture and affect: Precarious spaces*. Routledge.

<sup>9</sup>Terry Kirk. “Piranesi's Poetic License: His Influence on Modern Italian Architecture.” *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volumes 4* (2006): 240

<sup>8</sup>Davidson, Cynthia. “The Architectural Imagination.” *Log*, no. 37 (2016): 28

<sup>10</sup>Rosenfeld, Myra Nan. “Picturesque to Sublime: Piranesi's Stylistic and Technical Development from 1740 to 1761.” *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volumes 4* (2006): 82.

# The Paradox of Urban Erasure: *How LGBTQ Spaces Evolved in Singapore*

— By: Alvin Kwek Guan Ting

This essay explores the emergence and erasure of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) public spaces in Singapore, focusing on the redevelopment of Old Bugis Street and the subsequent rise of decentralised spaces. Once a vibrant cultural hub for the transgender and broader LGBTQ community, Bugis Street underwent significant urban renewal in the 1980s as part of government efforts to sanitise and commercialise the area, effectively removing LGBTQ presence (Chan, 2015). Drawing on Lefebvre's

(1991) framework of conceived, perceived, and lived spaces, the essay examines the dynamics of this erasure and the pragmatic resistance of the LGBTQ community. Although the eradication of LGBTQ identity at Bugis Street was largely effective, the community responded by decentralising to spaces such as Hong Lim Park, with events like Pink Dot, and Neil Road, now a hub for nightlife and social gatherings. These spaces have become critical sites for LGBTQ identity, demonstrating the adaptability of marginalised

communities in reclaiming agency despite exclusionary urban policies. The essay argues that the redevelopment of Old Bugis Street not only erased a significant LGBTQ space but also paradoxically catalysed the emergence of decentralised spaces, highlighting the intricate relationship between spatial erasure, resistance, and cultural resilience. It offers critical insights into the interaction between urban spaces and marginalised communities.

## [2.1] From Erasure to Resistance

In this essay, I will explore the marginalised LGBTQ community in the public sphere, focusing on their resistance and adaptation within Singapore's evolving urban fabric. Despite the continued stigmatisation of the LGBTQ community in Singapore, compounded by family-centric policies and societal norms, the community has demonstrated remarkable resilience through its pragmatic resistance (Chua, 2014, p. 37). By applying Lefebvre's (1991) framework of conceived, perceived, and lived spaces, this essay examines how LGBTQ spaces have been erased, socially produced, and shaped by power structures, cultural norms, and practices.

The analysis will centre on the emergence and erasure of the Old Bugis Street, Singapore's first prominent LGBTQ scene, an exotic icon of the Far East that thrived from the 1950s to the 1980s. Following its erasure during urban renewal efforts in the 1980s, the LGBTQ community demonstrated resilience by decentralising into new urban spaces. Today, Hong Lim Park has emerged as a focal point for events such as Pink Dot, advocating for visibility and activism, while Neil Road has become a hub for

LGBTQ nightlife, with numerous bars establishing themselves within Singapore's urban landscape (Choomgrant, 2009).

This transition from Old Bugis Street, a singular, centralised place of identity, to decentralised spaces like Hong Lim Park and Neil Road reflects the profound impact of urban renewal on the marginalised. By contrasting the old and current LGBTQ spaces, this essay provides valuable insights into how urban space is socially contested and redefined. Through Lefebvre's triad of conceived, perceived, and lived spaces, the analysis highlights the cultural resilience of the LGBTQ community within the public sphere, demonstrating why the Old Bugis Street's erasure and its subsequent decentralisation remain critical and worthy subjects of study, thereby establishing the central argument of this study.

## [2.2] A Paradox: Erasure as Catalyst

While the redevelopment of Old Bugis Street erased a significant LGBTQ urban space, its exclusion paradoxically catalysed the emergence of decentralised LGBTQ spaces. The LGBTQ community exemplified pragmatic resistance—not through open defiance but by creative-

ly reclaiming agency in new spaces like Hong Lim Park and Neil Road. This paradox underscores the dual effects of exclusionary urban policies: although designed to erase the LGBTQ community in favour of state-sanctioned norms, these policies inadvertently spurred the community's cultural resilience and adaptation within the urban landscape.

## [2.3] Conceived, Perceived and Lived Space

According to Tan (2015b), scholars have long recognised the intricate connection between spatiality, sociality, and sexuality. Knopp (1995, p. 149) observes that "Cities and sexualities both shape and are shaped by the dynamics of human social life. They reflect the ways in which social life is organised, the ways in which it is represented, perceived, and understood, and the ways in which various groups cope with and react to these conditions." This observation underscores the reciprocal and dynamic relationship between urban spaces and the marginalised LGBTQ community.

Building on this foundation, Lefebvre (1991) theorises that space is neither neutral nor static but a product of complex social processes and power dynamics. Space emerged through the interaction of three spatial dimensions: conceived space refers to the abstract plans imposed by authorities, planners, and architects; perceived space encompasses how space is experienced and utilised in everyday life; and lived space embodies the symbolic and emotional meanings imbued by its inhabitants. This triadic framework offers a compelling lens for analysing how the marginalisation and resilience of the LGBTQ community are expressed within urban landscapes, revealing the intricate interplay between power, lived experience, and social meaning in shaping their spaces.



**Figure 1:** A Karayuki-san seated at a corner on Malay Street, adjacent to Old Bugis Street.



**Figure 2:** Old Bugis Street during the day in 1966.



**Figure 3:** Transvestites parading along Old Bugis Street at night.

### [3.1] The Bugis

Bugis Street derives its name from the Bugis, a Malay subgroup native to Celebes, now known as Sulawesi, in Indonesia (Chan, 2015, p. 8). While it is difficult to associate the later infamous reputation of Old Bugis Street with the ethnic community that once inhabited the area, intriguing cultural parallels are evident. In Bugis culture, a third gender category exists, comprising male transvestites—males who dress as women—known as calabai (Chan, 2015, p. 10). Historically, they played significant roles as ritual specialists, referred to as bissu, in weddings and other ceremonial events. They were also widely recognised and even employed in royal households to care for young women (The Straits Times, 1992).

This cultural acceptance of transvestites may have contributed to Old Bugis Street emerging as a congregation point for transgender individuals in the 1950s. It gradually evolved into a rare safe space within the city for the queer community and became synonymous with 'queer' identity in Singapore's urban fabric.

### [3.2] The Conceived Prostitution

Long before the queer presence became prominent, Old Bugis Street was part of a red-light district centered around Malay Street as early as the 1860s (Warren, 2003). European prostitutes initially dominated the area, but they were removed in 1864. Still, prostitution persisted, seen as a "necessary evil" by colonial authorities due to gender imbalances in the migrant population (Lee, 2015). For example, in 1884, there were only 6,600 Chinese women compared to 60,000 Chinese men (Turnbull, 2009).

This imbalance also encouraged homosexual prostitution, regulated under the 1870 Contagious Diseases Ordinance. Japanese prostitutes, known as karayuki-san, entered the scene in the 1870s, and by the early 20th century, the red-light district included Malay, Bugis, Hylam, and Malabar Streets. The colonial government's zoning of these districts exemplifies Lefebvre's concept of conceived space, laying the groundwork for Bugis Street's transformation into a queer cultural marker.

### [3.3] The Perceived Queer Space

After the departure of Japanese prostitutes, Bugis Street transformed. By the 1930s, Chinese shopkeepers filled the area, and hawker stalls created a lively night market. In the late 1950s, transvestites migrated from other red-light areas to Bugis Street, likely drawn by the area's late-night vibrancy (The Straits Times, 1992).

What began as casual late-night suppers with clients evolved into a thriving nightlife scene. Drag queens and transvestites performed, beauty pageants were held, and the area became a draw for locals and Western servicemen. This informal urbanism exemplified Lefebvre's perceived space, as the area took on new meaning beyond its original design—becoming Singapore's first recognisable LGBTQ enclave.

### [3.4] A Global Queer Reception

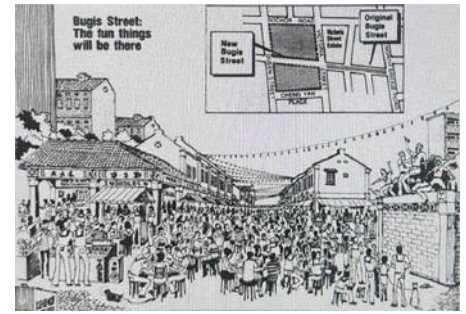
By the 1960s and 1970s, Bugis Street was known internationally. Tourists flocked to see the vibrant queer nightlife. Media outlets, including The Singapore Free Press (1957), compared it to Montmartre in Paris. It even featured in Western films like *Saint Jack* (1979), further linking Singapore with queer culture on the global stage (Chan, 2015). However, this attention conflicted with the state's conservative, family-centric image. *Saint Jack* was banned in 1980,



**Figure 4:** Map of 1984 showing Old Bugis Street prior to its erasure.



**Figure 5:** Map of 1995 after the construction of Bugis Junction, highlighting the glass-covered pedestrian streets.



**Figure 6:** Artist's impression of the proposed New Bugis Street, accompanied by a map showing the original and new locations.



**Figure 7:** The current state of New Bugis Street, which bears little resemblance to the proposed design.

foreshadowing state actions to suppress the street's LGBTQ associations and leading to its demolition in 1985.

### [3.5] The Erasure of a Queer Space

In 1985, Old Bugis Street was demolished for MRT construction, under the Urban Redevelopment Authority's (URA) development plans (Loke, 1987). This was a calculated move to sanitise the area. Though there were public appeals to preserve it, the state cited health risks, development needs, and AIDS-related moral panic to justify the decision (Chan, 2015).

In its place, Bugis Junction was built: a hotel, mall, and office complex that erased the area's past. Streets like Malay and Hylam were converted into climate-controlled shopping walkways. This redevelopment exemplifies Lefebvre's conceived space, actively overwriting the lived memories of a once-vibrant queer district.

### [3.6] The New Conceived Bugis Street

Eventually, the state recreated a "New Bugis Street" across the road, complete with narrow alleys and food stalls to simulate the original. However, its at-

tempt to revive the past excluded the queer community that once defined it. Despite hiring queer individuals as customer relations officers, they were heavily monitored, restricted from socialising with patrons, and dismissed for non-compliance (Kwan, 1992).

While architecture and aesthetic details were replicated, the absence of the queer presence hollowed out its cultural identity. Lefebvre's lived space was replaced by a sanitised conceived space, one that catered to tourists and consumers but lacked the authenticity and meaning of the original.

## 05.3 //

### Selected Works - Alvin Kwek Guan Ting, *B.Arch Yr. 4*

#### [4.1] Pragmatic Resistance

The erasure of Old Bugis Street and its attempted recreation demonstrate the state's power to displace the LGBTQ community in Singapore. In response, the community avoided overt resistance such as street protests, which would have directly challenged the state (Chua, 2014, p. 5). Instead, they engaged in pragmatic resistance—creatively adapting to the constraints of the urban environment to maintain visibility and social networks. This led to a decentralisation of LGBTQ presence into new, dispersed spaces, particularly Hong Lim Park and Neil Road.

#### [4.2] Hong Lim Park

##### [4.2.1] *A Cruising History*

In the 1960s, Hong Lim Park became known as a cruising ground, a place where gay men sought discreet sexual encounters. The park's layout—thick shrubbery, overhanging foliage, and dim lighting—offered concealment and facilitated casual interactions at night (Yue & Zubillaga-Pow, 2012, p. 120). This was an early form of lived space in Lefebvre's terms, shaped by covert, spontaneous social use.

However, this visibility also brought backlash. In 1983, media reports sparked public outcry when male youths were seen holding hands in the park, leading to police intervention (Fong, 1983). Later, during the 1990s, the government responded by pruning bushes and installing bright lighting, eroding the space's use for cruising.

##### [4.2.2] *A Conceived Free Speech Zone*

In 2000, the government rebranded Hong Lim Park as the Speakers' Corner, Singapore's designated space for protest. Inspired by London's Hyde Park, it became a conceived space, tightly regulated and surveilled (Luger, 2015). Despite its constraints, this redefinition opened new possibilities for LGBTQ expression within legal boundaries—enabling a shift from underground presence to organised advocacy.

##### [4.2.3] *Pink Dot*

Pink Dot emerged in 2009 as a major

LGBTQ advocacy event at Hong Lim Park. Participants, dressed in pink, formed a large pink dot on the field to promote inclusivity and freedom to love (Tan, 2015b). It symbolised a positive reoccupation of space, transforming Hong Lim from a place of secrecy into one of empowerment and community solidarity.

Attendance at Pink Dot grew from 2,500 in 2009 to 26,000 in 2014, showing its growing influence. Over time, the park's lived space evolved—from marginal, hidden encounters to public displays of unity and activism. The park also hosted a candlelight vigil in 2016 following the Orlando nightclub shooting, attended by over 700 people, further cementing its role as a safe, symbolic gathering place.

#### [4.3] Neil Road

##### [4.3.1] *A Commercial Opportunity*

Located in Tanjong Pagar near Chinatown, Neil Road has become a key site for LGBTQ nightlife. Its proximity to Hong Lim Park and conserved shophouses created opportunities for queer-friendly venues to take root. In the 1990s, conservation firms offered discounted rents (20–30% lower), inadvertently allowing LGBTQ entrepreneurs to establish businesses in the area (Low, 1998).

These venues became semi-public safe spaces—neither fully private nor openly political—but vital for community building. Bars along Neil Road often reflected a Chinese 'gayness' shaped by Singapore's majority ethnic demographics rather than exclusion of minorities (Tan, 2015b). The area gradually developed into a queer enclave within a conceived commercial space, hosting drag performances and LGBTQ events.

##### [4.3.2] *An Ironic Commodification*

While the state once sought to erase LGBTQ presence, its post-developmental neoliberal turn now accommodates queer spaces through commercial inclusion. Neil Road was initially envisioned as a buffer against Western "immorality" (Kong & Yeoh, 2003), but the growth of LGBTQ

nightlife there subverted that intention.

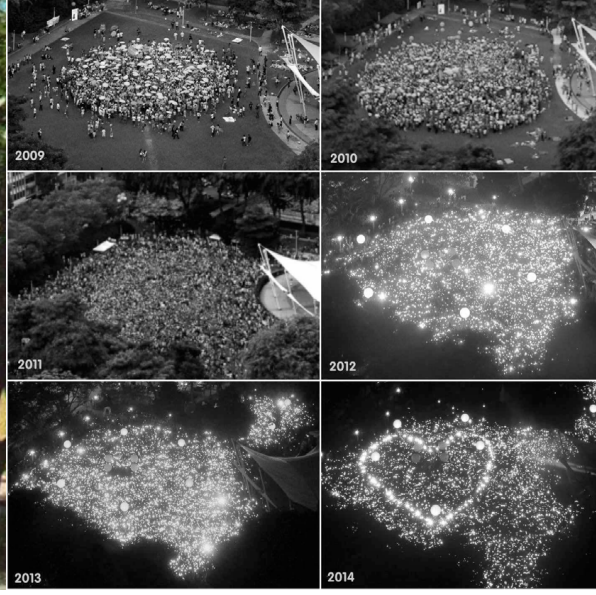
By reclaiming space without overt confrontation, the LGBTQ community engaged in pragmatic resistance—occupying new lived spaces without directly challenging the state's conceived or perceived norms. This transformation reflects the community's ability to navigate power structures and reshape Singapore's urban identity from within.

In essence, this essay examines the emergence, erasure, and re-emergence of LGBTQ spaces in Singapore, using Old Bugis Street as a focal point. Once a perceived and lived space tied to the queer community and prostitution, its erasure reflected the state's attempt to sanitise urban spaces and enforce heteronormative ideals. Paradoxically, this exclusionary act catalysed the pragmatic resistance of the LGBTQ community, prompting the decentralisation of their social presence into spaces like Hong Lim Park and Neil Road. These new spaces, while avoiding the establishment of a conceived space that challenges the societal power structure, allowed the community to reassert its identity within Singapore's urban fabric.

By tracing this evolution, the essay highlights the transition of LGBTQ spaces from centralised and stigmatised locales to dispersed and nuanced forms of presence. It reveals how erasure, rather than obliterating queer identities, reshaped them into more resilient forms in response to societal exclusion. In doing so, the LGBTQ community navigated the complexities of a strongly heteronormative society, reclaiming agency while reshaping social stigma in decentralised spaces. This progression emphasises the relationship between urban development, marginalisation, and community resilience, offering a nuanced understanding of the dynamic between power and place.



▲  
 Figure 8: Hong Lim Park in 1970, prior to the pruning of bushes and the installation of bright lights.



▲  
 Figure 9: Growth of the Pink Dot crowd over the years.

Figure 10: The LGBTQ community gathers at Hong Lim Park for a vigil honoring the Orlando shooting victims.



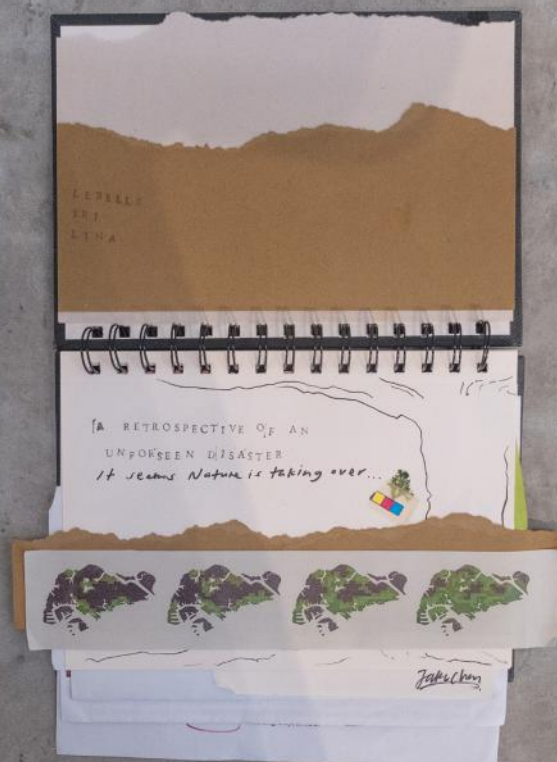
Figure 11: A drag queen performs for the crowd at Tuckshop on Neil Road.



05.4 //

Selected Works - **Altoaimi Lina Walid S, Lebelle Merci Abbeyquaye & Radhakrishnan Sri-varshini, B.LA Year 4**

# A Retrospective of An Unforseen Disaster





Nature of Singapore  
To the Nature Enthusiasts

### Odd Encounters

February 2, 2014 by Administrator · 72 Comments

It's hard enough path-givers have learned to see sightings posted in photos bases, and to catch the odd news at the sight of a birdy garden. However, it's harder when you're outdoors for nature walks and you're not sure if you're seeing a real bird or a man-made bird. It's not just the birds that are odd, but the way they behave. It's not just the birds that are odd, but the way they behave. It's not just the birds that are odd, but the way they behave.

One last way to do it. You're not just a bird-watcher, you're a bird-watcher. You're not just a bird-watcher, you're a bird-watcher. You're not just a bird-watcher, you're a bird-watcher.

Are these birds building nests on evergreen palm trees like the palms are also so weird size? I saw a MASSIVE cocoon on the ground!!

Thanks for posting that all seems like they are. Nature is so cool sometimes!

19.10.2014  
19.10.2014 at 10:07 pm

Butterflies of Singapore

September odd sightings spread of nature?

It's not just the birds that are odd, but the way they behave. It's not just the birds that are odd, but the way they behave. It's not just the birds that are odd, but the way they behave.

other people have noticed it too...? strange...

Jakuchun

### Wildlife seems to be growing at unprecedented rates in Singapore- thoughts?

by MacGyver · 10 Oct 14, 2014

Oct 14, 2014

seeing the amount of greenery that suddenly popped up out of nowhere on my daily bike ride this morning. I agree wildlife and plants are growing at insane rates.

Doesn't seem like something gov't planned for. If u ask me...

BananaTheCat  
Supremacy Member  
Joined: Jan 2, 2007  
Messages: 9,421

the most before this got taken down...

Notice  
You may have seen info the Singapore government has determined to be false. Facebook is required by law to notify you!!

POFMA??

Correction Notice  
There is no "uncontrolled wildlife" in Singapore  
In response to a false statement that wildlife have been growing at "unprecedented rates" in Singapore, HardwareZone.com has received a Direction under Singapore Law to carry a correction notice. For correct facts, click here.

19.10.2014

Something is definitely not right! Everything is the same, yet so different... I'm writing here because I don't think I can tell anyone about this, about my thoughts, observations... I know I might get in trouble but I'm going to keep studying this sudden overgrowth of plants and animals. They seem bigger, stronger, & have increased in numbers. Biscuit seems to be enjoying this, but I'm very, very wary of our future.

DEAR DIARY

Jakuchun



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All events conducted throughout the academic year would not have been possible without our committee members, sub-committee members, student volunteers and helpers. Special thanks to our Staff Advisor, Prof. Ar. Richard Ho for his invaluable guidance and direction.

### **Staff Advisor**

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