




# Our Elusive Here

Jeannie Ho,  
ren zi  
& SZTO



3 - 29 April 2014

VOLVO ART LOFT  
249 Alexandra Rd

# Tangibly Present

By Tan Shir Ee

Some of us may feel we belong to a different world, a different place or a different time. When one considers that the Eastern conception of time is not linear but cyclical, it is not difficult then, to imagine that some periods of our lives may indeed overlap or repeat themselves. So, when Jeannie Ho, ren zi & SZTO were reassessing their respective careers, they found themselves back where they first started – the love for unbridled creativity. Working in a range of media, their works in this show depict their search for that elusive sense of place in a rapidly-changing environment.

ren zi's work is simultaneously an explosion & amalgamation of tales, real & fabricated. Bursting forth from an intense desire to express as much as possible in any given frame, he compresses time & synthesises his influences & imaginings in a wonderland of psychic landscapes (which the artists have collectively dubbed psy-scapes). This peek into his inner world of saccharine



AWESTRUCK WITHIN LIFE'S  
CONCATENATED HELICES  
2014  
Archival UV Ink on Dichroic Film & Acrylic  
240 X 80 CM



OURBORBOROUS  
2014  
HD Video

hues & not-so-anodyne characters reveal the curious fantastical world that is the artist's mind.

The celebration of prevailing memories eclipses the loss of those unremembered & necessitates a certain mythologising to fill the gaps. ren zi's avatar, an airborne jellyfish, sensuously morphs from one psy-scape to the next, representing the tenacity of the human imagination & one's ability to accommodate natural deficits in memory & to adapt to situations, real or invented. "topographies of loss" reflects their creator's crafting of fractal moments – episodic candy-coloured fragments of a half-remembered, half-inspired, yet fully-lived life, if only in his mind. The artist-author draws you into his narrative world of psy-scapes like a circus master entrancing you into a travelling fair of seductive oddities, beguiling in their strangely familiar peculiarities.

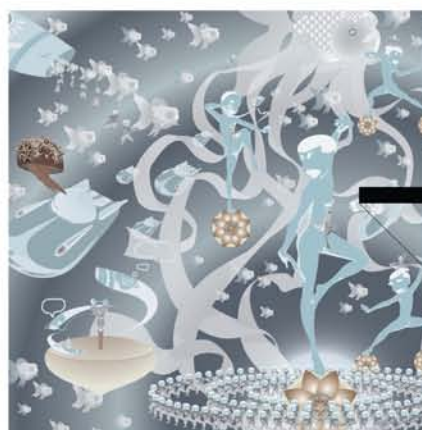
The thrill ride of the amusement park that is his idiosyncratic universe is the short film "ouroborous". His version of Alice's trip down the rabbit hole is a fractured memoir that does not seek to be understood logically but provokes a visceral reaction throughout the ride. As a virtual time warp of the artist's self-mythologised autobiography, you realise by now that it is ultimately needless to cling to time, memories & logic.



TRUNCATED HYPERSPACE OF  
THE MAGUS TWISTED UPON ITSELF  
2012  
Archival UV Ink on Photographic Paper  
& Acrylic  
80 X 80 CM



FROZEN ON THE TUNDRA  
OF FEAR & FOLLY  
2014  
Archival UV Ink on Photographic Paper  
80 X 80CM



THROUGH THE DARK GLASS OF  
DUPLICITY'S WONDERLAND  
2014  
Archival UV Ink on Photographic Paper  
80 X 80 CM



LOST IN THE INFINITE PLAYING  
FIELD OF EROS  
2014  
Archival UV Ink on Photographic Paper  
80 X 80 CM



STOP BY ON YOUR WAY OUT  
2012  
Archival Pigment Ink Print  
50.8 X 76.2 CM

If following ren zi's narrative feels like chasing a leprechaun on LSD, Jeannie Ho's work provides a meditative respite with their subjective yet comfortingly familiar urban-scapes of itinerant experiences, impressions & associations. The temporal connections between residents & strangers, insiders & outsiders, the settler & the wanderer reveal how precious & fluid these dichotomies are. The journey here is more collaborative. The artist invites you to question notions of identity, culture, mindsets & inclusive/exclusive societies. Can one feel displaced where one is native, & at home where one is a stranger? If transposing oneself out of one's culture & familiarity broadens our perceptions & enables us to be much more than what we once were, does returning to where we started mean we are once again reduced & confined? Do our widened perspectives & mindsets then become useless and invalidated?

As an immigrant New Yorker, Jeannie fully embraced the freedom & joy of the unexpected. These unregulated experiences are tellingly captured in the series "All In Between". Through the lens of wonderment & reception, warmth is given to history-laden places, to varied diverse people & to encounters of spontaneous creativity. Life & diversity are celebrated with respect & tenderness. "All In Between" portrays treasured memories of people, spaces & places; it represents a time of belonging & inclusion, where freedoms of thought, action & expression were most deeply experienced. These enlightened moments capture the essence of unfettered imagination & living. It seems as if she were contemplating if this vigour can be sustained & transported to different environments.

At some point, healthy self-reflection may have made us wonder if societal expectations are imposed upon us by others or by ourselves. The struggles with different expectations are universal, though different societies live by different rules & expect differently. & while we do not need to live by societal expectations, adaptation & conforming facilitates assimilation. The layers of readings & misreading in ren zi's work are intentional, encouraged & celebrated; while Jeannie's work brings forth different perspectives of a normally diverse everyday & questions the notion of one's potential when left uninhibited. ren zi's work invites a surrender to the sensorial overload of colours, activity & myths – & for logic to yield to emotion; even as Jeannie's work encourages a leisurely appreciation of multi-layered vernaculars that over time gain in significance & meaning.



YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T FIT  
MUCH MORE THAN A BED,  
RIGHT?  
2012  
Archival Pigment Ink Print  
50.8 X 76.2 CM



SHARE YOUR PANAMA  
2012  
Archival Pigment Ink Print  
50.8 X 76.2 CM



HUNDRED AND FOUR AND  
A TWENTY  
2012  
Archival Pigment Ink Print  
50.8 X 76.2 CM



LOOK AWAY,  
DON'T FOLLOW ME  
2012  
Archival Pigment Ink Print  
50.8 X 76.2 CM



HIGH, LOW, A WALL OF  
GOLD, YOU SURPRISE ME  
2012  
Archival Pigment Ink Print  
50.8 X 76.2 CM

Combining both the fantastical & the familiar in 3D, we then come to SZTO's whimsical & highly idiosyncratic installations, birthed from his dreams & shaped by streams of consciousness. SZTO seeks to transport viewers through a textured world of visual narratives & dreamscapes where stories can develop & take on a life of their own. However, in utilising found objects, SZTO's works are rooted in the everyday, & are largely inspired by the artist's personal experiences & often contradicting emotions. The assemblage of flying lions, for example, is a multi-layered expression of love, destiny & the cycle of power. Majestic, untameable yet gentle, the 7 lions symbolise the powerful elusiveness of unrequited love that has finally reached its conclusion. Framed as the artist's home-coming, the tableau is set in a garden with miniature houses that actually represent the artist's past residences while the red thread represents the string of fate that binds us to one other despite the dividing forces of nature embodied by the river.

Drawing from cultural and religious icons of the East & the West, SZTO's whimsical garden adventures are allegories of his personal encounters. His philosophies of life are woven together with simple symbols & materials, & the humour in his work often belie darker sentiments. Overtly incredulous with their paper wings, the flying pigs express the artist's frustration at the impossibility of forging out a new home, & of achieving something meaningful while rushing through life & paying little attention to the world around. Once again, the numbers observed in the assemblage are personally & culturally significant while the golden thread around the houses & the pearl in a pig's mouth provide visual & metaphorical suggestions of hope. These multi-faceted works express & encourage interpretation while exposing their recycled heritage proudly.

Like Jeannie, SZTO harks back to a time & place beyond the present. He wishes for his stories to travel to & from faraway places he may or may not have ever been or will ever go. In spite of the unknown, his outlook is relentlessly positive. His paper cranes in "Return Senbazuru 01" & "Return Senbazuru 02" carry messages of spirituality, emotional bonds & physical wellness as they return to the mythical place of origin: the "garden". The elephant references the creativity & prosperity as well as ancient wisdom & royalty. The thread & numbers again represent life cycles, transformation & renewal. In its entirety, the series "Return to me & I will return to you" traces one's roots & the journey back to one's beginning. Fittingly, SZTO co-opts ordinary items into his worldview of a fantastical Eden where co-existence prevails.



RETURN KUNI  
2014  
Mixed Media  
27 X 27 X 23 CM



RETURN IE  
2014  
Mixed Media  
27 X 27 X 23 CM



RETURN SENBAZURU 01  
2014  
Mixed Media  
27 X 27 X 23 CM



RETURN SENBAZURU 02  
2014  
Mixed Media  
27 X 27 X 23 CM

The artistic pursuits of Jeannie, ren zi & SZTO have shown them looking beyond their psychological & physical limits. "Our Elusive Here", their first group show together, is a fascinating testament of their efforts to elucidate their ephemeral innerscapes through their work. In their art, there is always a desire to share a narrative – be it personal or universal, real or fictional – & to present it visually in the most delightful of ways. There is nothing elusive here about that intention.

---

*Tan Shir Ee is an independent art curator & lecturer based in Singapore.*

OUR CONTACT:

JEANNIE HO  
jeanniephoto@gmail.com

ren zi  
reach.renzi@gmail.com

SZTO  
contact.szto@gmail.com



THIS SHOW WAS MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE KIND SUPPORT OF:



NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL  
SINGAPORE

---

Gregory Tierney  
Yannick Laviolette  
Stephen Choi  
Leelawati Khalil  
Szeto Chee Leong

---

DESIGN BY

STUDIO M5Z