



Art Porters presents  
**Singapore Twilight**  
**Ren Zi**  
3 July – 1 September 2019

64 Spottiswoode Park Road  
Singapore 088652  
Opens 10.30am - 7pm, Daily  
except Mondays (by appointment) &  
Public Holidays

Supported by



“I’m off to the Arctic Circle.”

That’s how Ren Zi saluted us shortly after *Binary*, his *magnifique* first exhibition with Art Porters, back in 2017. Little did I know he would come back with a magnetic vision of a post-apocalyptic Singapore.

With *Singapore Twilight* we invite you, for a second time in our space, to be mesmerised by Ren Zi’s fascinating universe. The exhibition depicts the raw beauty of a mysterious future world yet is an exorcism for some of humanity’s self-destructive demons. The fire of climate change fuels the artist’s fertile mental-scapes.

This exhibition is the culmination of years of research, planning and work by a myth-builder, who sees what could be in all its raw drama. An artist is someone who shares his or her unique perception, and Ren Zi does that with a rare intensity.

~ Guillaume Levy-Lambert  
Artologist



On the cover  
to the cardinal gods : central axial consecration (site 6)  
2017/18  
Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print on gloss white  
aluminium 84.1 x 59.4cm

## Singapore Dreaming

The dim gloom of twilight is the prelude to the dissolution of consciousness into the oneiric stasis of slumber. The oft-quoted Walter Benjamin remarks, in *The Arcades Project*, that

Boredom is a warm gray fabric lined on the inside with the most lustrous and colourful of silks. In his fabric we wrap ourselves when we dream. We are at home then in the arabesques of its lining. But the sleeper looks bored and gray within his sheath. And when he later wakes and wants to tell of what he dreamed, he communicates by and large only this boredom. For who would be able at one stroke to turn the lining of time to the outside?

Ren Zi's images are full of lustrous, kaleidoscopic arabesques, swathes of polychromatic patterns – that distinctly recognizable textile dubbed batik, so redolent of a sense of Southeast Asian-ness that it functions almost deliberately these days as a signifier of too much significance – draped around rocks, icebergs, a totemic arrangement of wooden twigs and sticks. The landscape is a barren one, a clear, pristine expanse of white and grey, of snow and ice and water and dirt, in equal parts mirthless and elegiac, and against which the chromatic explosions of fabric, like Benjamin's sartorial bifurcation, lie like wreaths and crowns of some fugacious realm now lost to the whims of Morpheus.

These images tell a story, according to the artist. He weaves a

dystopian tale emplotted with tropes familiar to science fiction, a futurological fantasy full of figments, fragments and fancies for somnambulists and other sleep-trapped souls ... Yet, these photodocumentary images must have their originary moment in experiential reality, in the waking world, somewhere. The “where” perhaps matters less here, since it is those complexes of disquiet and poetry conjured by the chimerical instability of the collision between fantasy and real-world referent, between fictionality and facticity, that are instructive. An apocalyptic imaginary, then, narratively imbricated in the amorphous determinism inscribed into the experience of the everyday, may be best characterized as the antidote to Benjamin-ian boredom?

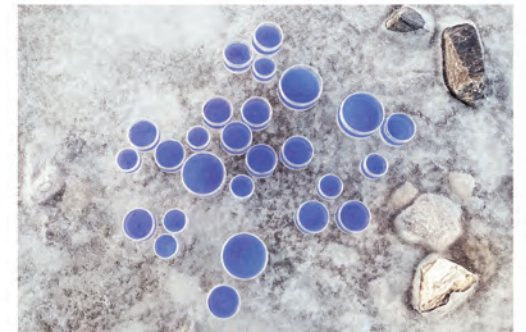
~ Louis Ho

Louis Ho is a curator at the Singapore Art Museum.



asleep under the mountain of ages : what becomes of  
 our chimeras  
 2019  
 UV-resistant ink on acrylic & Ilford photopaper, oil pastel  
 & polyamide cord  
 240 x 120cm

all the land we'll never be : bodies broke  
 across parsecs  
 2017/18  
 Duratrans on powdered-coated aluminium  
 LED lightbox  
 60 x 40 x 5cm





Clockwise from top left

to the cardinal gods : western consecration (site 4; view towards moraine)

2017/18

Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print on gloss white aluminium

84.1 x 59.4cm

to the cardinal gods : eastern consecration (site 1)

2017/18

Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print on gloss white aluminium

84.1 x 84.1cm

to the cardinal gods : full consecrational configuration (site 5; view from south-eastern quadrant)

2017/18

Duratrans on powdered-coated aluminium LED lightbox

90 x 60 x 5cm



all the land we'll never be : the limit of ambition  
2017/18  
Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print on gloss white  
aluminium  
90 x 60cm



From left to right  
to the cardinal gods : full consecrational configuration  
(site 5; view of western consecration) 2017/18  
Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print on gloss white aluminium  
50 x 38.2cm



to the cardinal gods : full consecrational configuration  
(site 5; view of central axial consecration) 2017/18  
Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print on gloss white aluminium  
50 x 38.2cm

to the cardinal gods : full consecrational configuration  
(site 5; view of southern consecration) 2017/18  
Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print on gloss white aluminium  
50 x 38.2cm



Left  
to the cardinal gods : full consecrational configuration  
(site 5; view from north-western quadrant) 2017/18  
Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print on gloss white aluminium  
120 x 80cm

Lower left & right  
to the cardinal gods : northern consecration (site 3)  
2017/18  
Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print on gloss white aluminium  
84.1 x 59.4cm

to the cardinal gods : western consecration (site 4)  
2017/18  
Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print on gloss white aluminium  
84.1 x 59.4cm



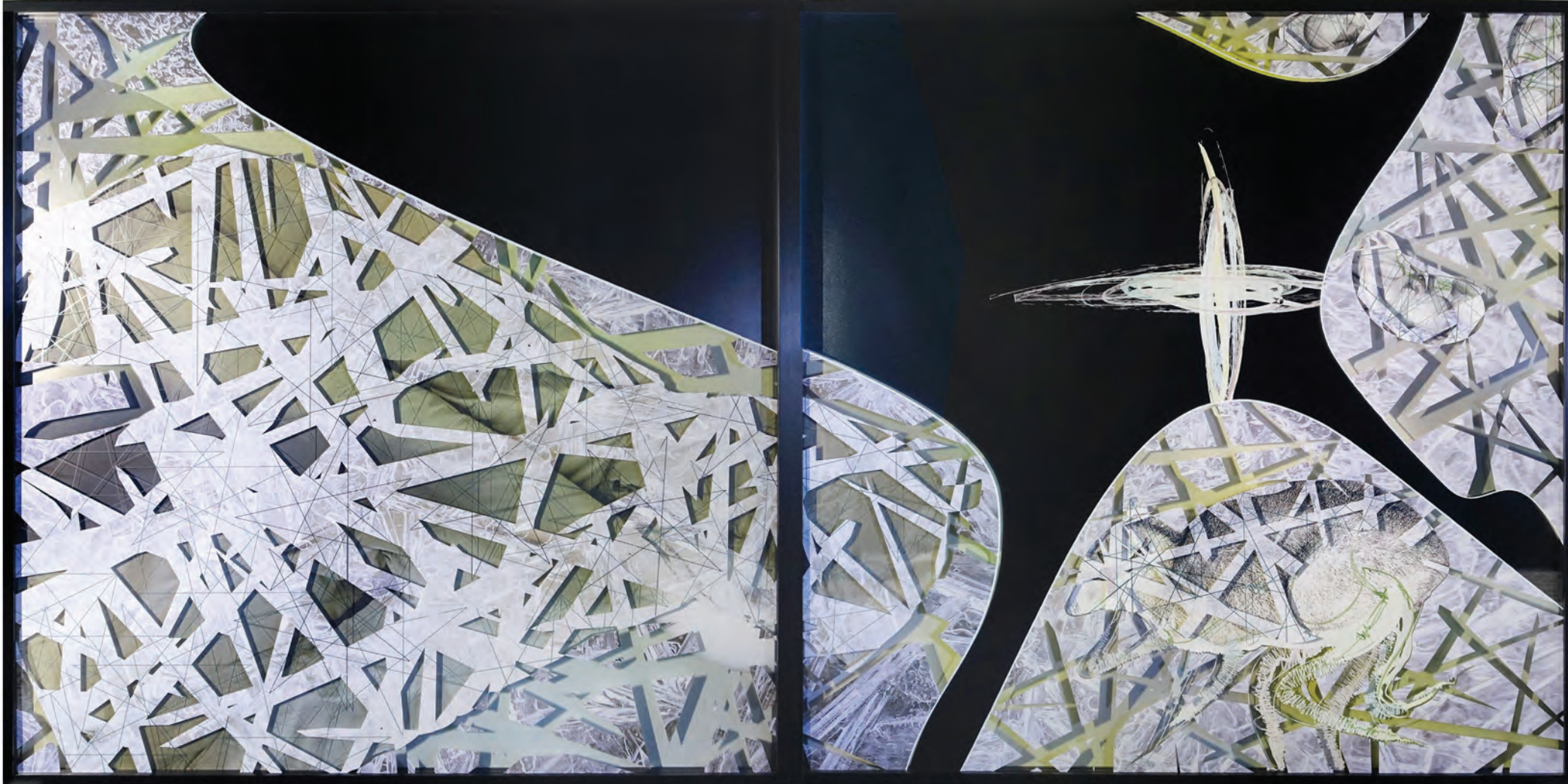


Upper & lower left  
to the cardinal gods : full consecrational configuration (site 5; view of eastern consecration)  
2017/18  
Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print on gloss white aluminium  
85 x 85cm

to the cardinal gods : full consecrational configuration (site 5; view from north-eastern quadrant)  
2017/18  
Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print on gloss white aluminium  
85 x 85cm

Below  
to the cardinal gods : southern consecration (site 2) 2017/18  
Duratrans on powdered-coated aluminium LED lightbox  
85 x 65 x 5cm





Above  
 asleep under the mountain of ages : stories told & yet to be 2019  
 UV-resistant ink on clear acrylic & Ilford photopaper & oil pastel  
 240 x 120cm

Right  
 intimation of a quasi-sacred visitation (or colloidal deliriums in suspended spacetime)  
 2019  
 UV-resistant ink on clear acrylic & Ilford photopaper & oil pastel  
 90 x 90cm

& the solid whammo of all we've lost (or colloidal deliriums in suspended spacetime 2)  
 2019  
 UV-resistant ink on clear acrylic & Ilford photopaper & oil pastel  
 90 x 90cm





long after we are dust (perhaps)

2019

UV-resistant ink on clear acrylic, Chromaluxe dye-sublimation print  
on gloss white aluminium, oil pastel & polyamide cord  
270 x 90cm

Overleaf top  
hang nadim rides in on the wave of the departed

2019

UV-resistant ink on clear acrylic & Ilford photopaper & oil pastel  
90 x 90cm

Lower left  
hang nadim laments

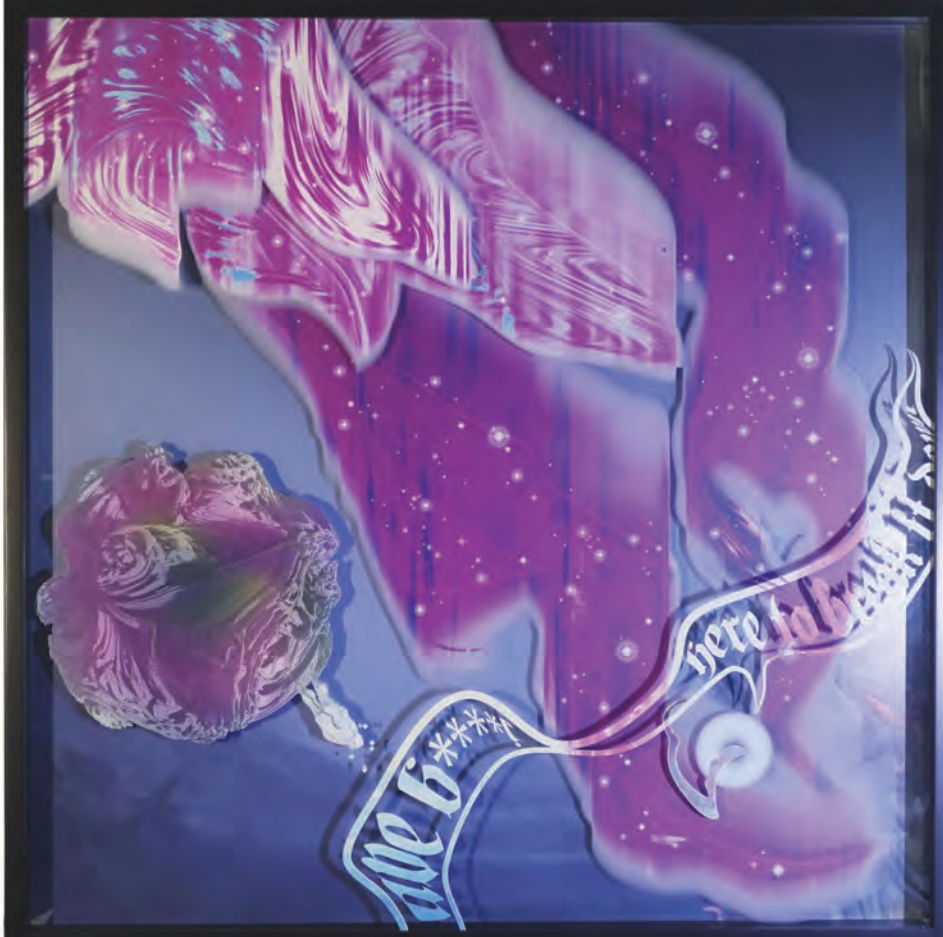
2019

UV-resistant ink on clear acrylic & Ilford photopaper  
40 x 55cm

Lower right  
hang nadim foretells

2019

UV-resistant ink on clear acrylic & Ilford photopaper & oil pastel  
40 x 55cm



2078 CE. The Arctic Archipelago. The discovery of several locations bearing traces of what appears to be a syncretic South-East Asian shamanistic ritual. How did this find its way into a land so alien? By whom? Why?

Fragments of an account found at one of the sites point to a Singapore lost to the waves and a myth of its own making. And the attempt by the last survivor of this drowned country to turn back time and regain their lost homeland.

Through means unknown (and probably dubious), the artist have acquired photographic documentation taken by the geologic survey team that had purportedly found the sites as well as some of the ritual relics from that alternate reality future, from which spring-board their own works – including *5 ways to forgiveness*, an attempt to reimagine the original ritual in a time and place so removed yet inextricably entangled with the here of our equatorial nation-state.

We should, however, raise the caveat that given the artist's mythopoeic practice, all that they present should be taken with more than a grain of the proverbial salt.





~ we were golden. now we'r atlantean

Previous & subsequent pages

5 ways to forgiveness 2019

African mahogany, granite, sedimentary rock, batik, extreme cold weather attire, steel wire suspension, kris, polyamide cord, pencil text on clitoria bluepea-infused rice paper

Dimensions variable

... so u drift. be it fate or subconscious intent that led to where the end of us began. from hitched passage to hitched passage daisy chained up the pacific. for all your uselessness smart shippers set greater store in these volatile climes by anyone with a slight gift for divining spiritwalking than skysats or meteor'ims. stealthed thru the minefield that's the east china sea of japan cross the okhotsk thru the bering chukchi beaufort admunsen prince of wales perry —where at resolute most your memories were bartered for a winter up north— lancaster baffin landfall. the edge of the world where the moon & sun meet

... we've cycled through enough of death & rebirth to think our thrice fallen land may yet rise again. this time growing into grace wisdom. not some uberplastic drag lipsynching regardless of race language & suchsuch ...

again u dreamt the reefs of our drowned. no prayers guiding them into afterlife. no offerings sate their ravaging. refuse to give over their sockets to night. never to regain glimpse of day their neutrino sight turn to pierce the depths the dark the farside of the world past the wavering sun fickle stars. knit all spacetime within a single eye. could this bitter purchase of belated wisdom enlighten those locked in the now when they lapse even with hindsight. had u called upon it then would u've dare heed its augury nor anyone believe we'd ever lose our place in the sun ...

dream: from the depths sangkancil retrieves the crown the prince offered the waves for safe passage to temasek. its crescent turning into the moon wax waning ad infinitum within the hour the bones rise to the surface to become the land the sand like stars covering the world in a forest of coral through which walk crawl soar fantastic beasts beneath a red giant on the verge of collapse

once we thought it good to be modern progressive of the future. along with superstitions charlatans darkarts out swept much wisdom & a cord to our past. it'd have been beautiful to retain a little chaos. necessary from what we now know for some magic. yet when all was dire what else would u have?

u'd think our pragmatism genetic. hard coded from ancestors starving desperate or pure mercantile. whatever it takes. before & then. what's changed. especially for those governed by no authority but survival ...

call us what u will. mutant afterbirth. ejaculate from the malayan peninsular. pastiche of a country dreamt up by the tourist board half merlion half singapore girl. chimeras all. in every case an impossibility. how does the impossible come to be but through magic

so what remains of our chimeras asleep under the mountain of ages. wrong. not sleep. a break in time. to resume stories told & yet to be? or explode in a conflagration of awesome monstrous otherness?



~ what do u call upon when all breaks down? god? science? no. magic. we return to magic

where the moon & sun meet is where life passes into shadows & death bleeds back into life. here points in spacetime come unyoked from their coordinates. quantum potentialities surge. & the cardinal gods the nameless things that answer to no other power may yet turn to the clink of the right coin

... from glacial sleep atlantis arise submerging in its place countless lands prosaically named & with them the eyes heart perhaps some vital organ of the world

he was taken in sleep. bundled up & off. tossed from the promontory. all for being too smart by half. that tinybody barely hit the surface when the sea churned with raveninghosts of the todak he'd vanquished

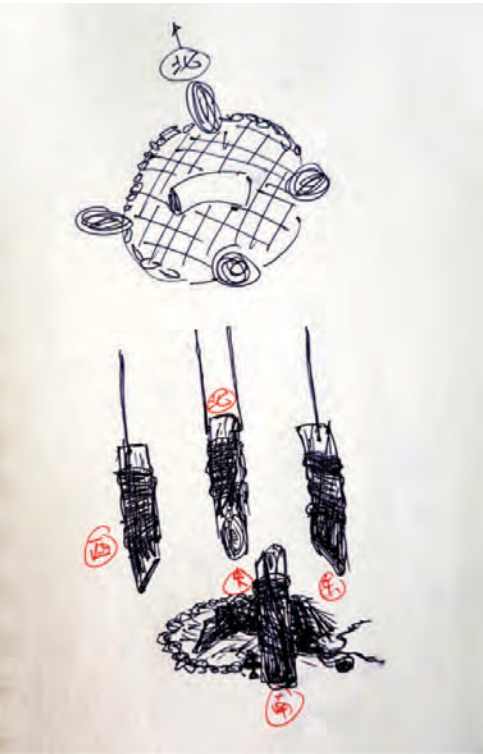
kings disregard better counsel for fear of losing their crowns more than their heads. convince themselves that by necessity a land has to be built on the blood of the innocent the wise. so were our sages silenced like hangnadim centuries before

bukitmerah never turned red. tho his curse lingered. now a nation sleeps with salt in its belly & lungs

riding the wave of the departed hangnadim drops in from a future u'll never see. against a banzaisunrise his hologram splendour superimposed with anitasarawaklips proclaims all is futilefulfilled



dream: sangnilautama sees not a creature but a vision of a scifi future in that mythological past where an impossibly (read magically) large wormhole opens to where a goldmaned beast wanders by u whisper to him the impossibility of higher dimensional transgression but for lack of a babelfish u might as well be speaking in tongues



u can never rely on the kindness of strangers  
 friends family anyone. malaysia was reeling from  
 another debt crisis. then jb & surrounding  
 districts inundated when our walls fell. indonesia  
 thailand philippines stung by rekindled  
 separatism. everyone grappling with the fallout of  
 territories livelihoods lost to the seas. but us ...

... we had it coming  
 should've seen it coming  
 when the seawalls came  
 crumbling down

~ hc svnt dracones

Sketch for  
 5 ways to forgiveness



## CV

### Exhibitions

- 2018 I.D. (The Body's Still Warm), Displacements @ 42 Cambridge Rd, Singapore
- 2017 Binary, Art Porters Gallery/Jada Art, Singapore
- 2016 The Peony & The Raven, Displacements: Lorong 24A Shophouse Series, Singapore  
 Repurposing Nostalgia, Displacements: Lorong 24A Shophouse Series, Singapore
- 2015 ∞Δ∅∫∞ : Invisible Frequencies, OCBC ArtSpace, Singapore  
 naming the bright & dark stars, Galerie Sogan/Jada Art, Singapore\*  
 Reality Override, Charles B Wang Center, Stonybrook University, New York, USA\*  
 Open Door Discourse, NARS Foundation, New York, USA
- 2014 Art Taipei 2014, Taiwan  
 Büffel Art Project, Ion Art Gallery, Singapore  
 Bring Your Own Beamer, Instinc Gallery, Singapore  
 Our Elusive Here, Volvo Art Loft, Singapore
- 2013 The Affordable Art Fair 2013, Singapore  
 The Art of Shopping, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore  
 between earth & void, The Factory, Singapore\*

\*Solo show

### Residencies

- 2020 NPE Art Residency, Singapore (*upcoming*)
- 2017/18 Gwangju Museum of Art International Residency Studio Programme, Gwangju, South Korea
- 2017 The Arctic Circle, Svalbard, Norway
- 2015 New York Art Residency & Studios (NARS) Foundation, New York, USA

## Talks

- 2018 Queer Art From Different Perspectives, Art Porters Gallery, Singapore  
2016 ARTtalk Summer Edition @ Riciotti, Singapore  
2015 Ren Zi: A Contemporary Art Practice from a Trans-Asian Perspective, Charles B Wang Center, Stonybrook University, New York, USA

## Grants

- 2019 Presentation & Participation Grant, National Arts Council, Singapore  
2015 Presentation & Participation Grant, National Arts Council, Singapore  
Singapore Internationale, Singapore International Foundation  
2014 Capability Development Grant, National Arts Council, Singapore  
Presentation & Participation Grant, National Arts Council, Singapore

## Media mentions

- 2 Feb 2018 광남일보 KwangNam IlBo, South Korea  
14 Dec 2017 광남일보 KwangNam IlBo, South Korea  
March 2016 ArtAsiaPacific Almanac 2016  
26 Oct 2015 ArtHop.co  
22 Oct 2015 Artitute.com  
22 Oct 2015 联合早报 LianHe ZaoBao  
9 June 2013 The New Paper  
19 April 2013 The Business Times  
4 April 2013 Imagine Network  
15 March 2013 The Business Times

## Institutional collections

Kadist Foundation

3 July – 1 September 2019

Art Porters presents **Singapore Twilight**  
A solo exhibition by **Ren Zi**

## Programme

**3 July 2019**  
Opening with Guest-of-Honour  
**Dr Victor R Savage**  
Visiting Senior Fellow  
S. Rajaratnam School of  
International Studies,  
Nanyang Technological University

**27 July 2019**  
In conversation with  
**Louis Ho**  
Curator  
Singapore Art Museum

The artist extends their deep appreciation to the National Arts Council, The Arctic Circle residency, Gwangju Museum of Art International Artist Residency Program, the Art Porters team, Valerie Cheah, Barbara London, Louis, Helmi, HP, Mish, Michael, Jim, everyone who spared a moment to view & critique the works, M&D who imbued in them time & the sea

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