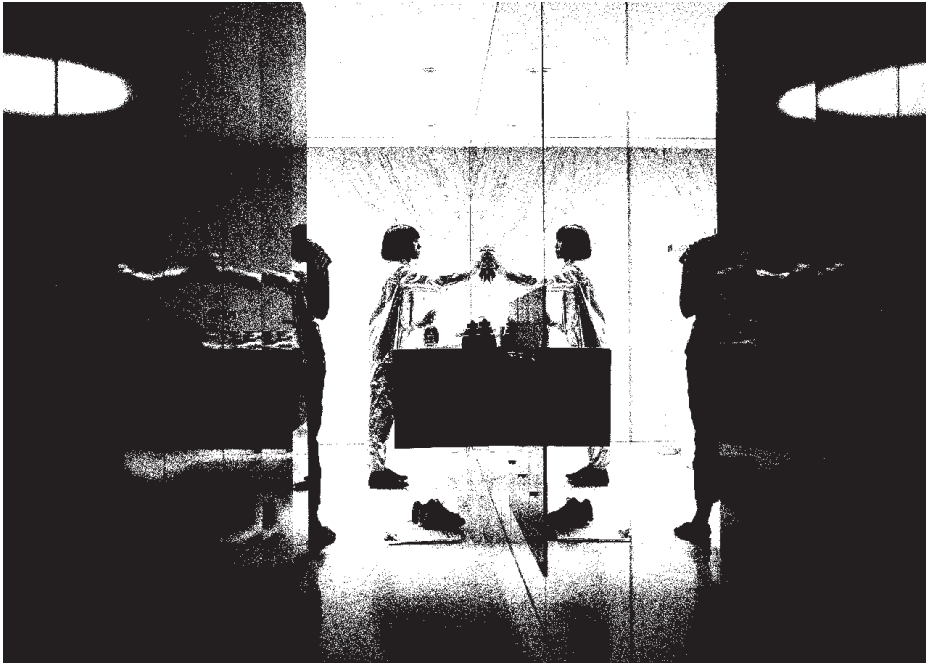


Eugenia Lim
and Yaya Sung,
'Crossroads/
Titik Temu'



Mar. 11 – Apr. 11, 2020

Eugenia Lim and Yaya Sung,
Curated by Bianca Winataputri,
'Crossroads/Titik Temu'

Crossroads/Titik Temu is an experimental and collaborative curatorial series that brings together contemporary visual artists from Indonesia and Australia. This project aims to create an on-going dialogue between the two countries, focusing on developing room for artists to research, collaborate and develop their practice beyond the thematic demands of cultural institutions.

For the first of its series, Crossroads/Titik Temu brings together the cross-art forms and performative practices of Melbourne-based artist Eugenia Lim and Jakarta-based artist Yaya Sung. Together their works reflect on the complexities of individual, collective and national identities, and the spaces in between. Each artist explores notions of the self in a globalised society, both facing different challenges and conditions in their local contexts and communities.

This exhibition acknowledges these cross-overs in their practices but focuses particularly on their process as artists. The works displayed are carefully selected to reveal and reflect on the often overlooked position of process in an artist's practice. There is perhaps a rather obvious progression across Eugenia's works that may not be as apparent compared to Yaya's. But both artists' practice lives through the idea that process is a never-ending cycle of questions and answers and more questions. Each work starts with a question which opens out into a conversation with the audience; lines of enquiry extend out for years, into future artworks.

From Peter Weir’s ‘Picnic at hanging rock’ to Robin Boyd’s ‘The Australian Ugliness’, from the bush and suburbs to monuments and high-rise buildings, Eugenia’s ‘Australian Landscapes’ (2010) and ‘Australian Ugliness’ (2018) illustrate her ongoing exploration of sense of place and belonging. Performing as the white-haired ‘Miranda’ in Australian Landscapes, Lim later morphs into the shiny-gold persona (with reference to Tseng Kwong Chi) of ‘The Ambassador’ by The Australian Ugliness. In both works we are invited to follow the landscapes yet can’t help but focus on the displaced artis. These evident similarities between the two works demonstrate the artist’s immersion in research, site-responsive and performance-driven practice, following the changes in her thought-process, technology, and the world more broadly. Eugenia shares that her artistic process is quite cyclical: “I often have more questions through the making of a work than before.”¹ By the time the artist starts creating Australian Ugliness her questions expand: Who holds the right to design our spaces and who are they designed for? Who shapes our built environment and in turn, how do these forces shape us?² It’s been a 15-year history of the artist pursuing questions of identity and displacement, unpacking cultural stereotypes and understanding what belonging and in turn alienation means in a globalised world. This long process of research, collaboration and featuring herself in most of her works has helped Eugenia “work through a lot about my own identity and the history of Chinese and Asian presence in Australia from my perspective.”³

1 Eugenia Lim in conversation with Bianca Winataputri, March 2020

2 Eugenia Lim ‘The Australian Ugliness’ statement,
<https://www.eugenialim.com/portfolio/the-australian-ugliness-2/>

3 Eugenia Lim in conversation with Bianca Winataputri, March 2020

For Yaya, process is her way of making connections: to the world, to the people around her, and to herself. Her questions, similar to Eugenia, revolve around her identity and belonging against Jakarta's contrasting cultural landscape. As Chinese-Indonesian, Yaya struggled to understand why it was difficult for her to be accepted or considered as equal. After many explorations into historical books, archives and numerous interviews with friends, family members and local communities, she found herself continuing to make connections to the stories and people around her, but most of all herself. In 'Study of sanity: Flexuous (2015 & 2019)' the artist explores her body through a series of yoga poses. Captured through the malleable texture of fabric, pulled across sideways and under, we can almost feel the invigorating stretch and sense of balance that the artist experiences. Yaya recalled "Never have I imagined that this process of familiarising myself with my own body [through yoga], opening joints and stretching muscles, would rejuvenate my soul. I felt a process that is very personal ... there is a similarity between the process of making art and this process of exercising."⁴ The artist draws this connection from the tendency of assessing process by its end result: a work of art displayed in the gallery and a good-looking body. But it is feelings of uncertainty, fear, disappointment or happiness that is central to the process of making art, just like the pain, weary and often fatigue feelings during an exercise.

One experience that was significant to Yaya's artistic process was during her residency at Treasure Hill Artist

4 Yaya Sung 'Study of sanity: Flexuous (2015 & 2019)' statement

Village, Taipei, in 2016. She recalled struggling to connect with the local community in the area particularly with language barriers and the history of the area almost being demolished and recently turned into an Artist Village. With this tension in the background and seeking connection with the community, Yaya sensed a feeling of being ‘unwanted’ that was somewhat familiar to her as she often felt the same at home. She explored this ‘unwanted’ feeling and in response wrote a letter to members of the community, introducing herself and sharing her intentions as an artist in residence. From her research and limited conversations with the community, she painted a series of banners that captures her thoughts, struggles and experience during her residency, which was displayed around every inch and corner of her studio/space at the Artist Village. These banners illustrate Yaya’s connection and response to the Artist Village, combining her personal experience as an artist in residence as well as her research on Taipei’s artistic/visual cues that use flowers, elements of nature and big bold texts. This endurance and often conflicting journey of Yaya’s process is best captured in a scribble she shared from one of her notebooks: “Which one is more important, the audience to understand the thought process [of the artist] or understanding the final outcome?”

Thank you for reading. As Bus Projects greets a new space, this exhibition can also be read as an introduction to Crossroads/Titik Temu as we continue our conversation.

(Bianca Winataputri, 2020)

I would like to thank the artists, Eugenia Lim and Yaya Sung, for their generous contribution to the exhibition and for sharing their stories; Bus Projects, especially Channon Goodwin and Kathryne Honey for their continuous support and hospitality; THIRDS Fine Art Printing and Neo Framers for supporting the delivery and installation of the works; Reagan Kurniadwiputra Susanto for his unwavering support throughout the project and its development.

On Process:

Eugenia Lim & Yaya Sung in conversation
with Bianca Winataputri

BW How do you value process as an artist?

EL Well ... my process is very slow. There is around a ten year gap between Australian Landscapes and Australian Ugliness. Process for me begins with a work that's just been presented, and there's often questions in the making of that work that becomes a starting point for the next phase of research and making. It's quite a cyclical process. I often have more questions through the making of a work than before. I think for me, I heavily focus on research but not in an academic way. While I'm teaching at university, I haven't been in academia for a long time. My process is driven by research and big, difficult questions. I'm always looking at other disciplines but it's only through art that I can put them together. I work with people who are experts in other fields that I can learn from. So it's really about gathering a lot of information. Then it's about figuring out the form; how the work will manifest. I almost feel like there's a lot of unknowns. Often I feel like I have no idea how to make a particular idea or question into an artwork. But the work eventually begins at some point to take its own shape, have its own way of becoming. I think at a certain point you become a conduit for the work itself.

The process is thinking a lot with my brain and realising how little I know. Usually there will be a deadline that I have to meet from a public or presentation point of view, but it doesn't mean that the question is over.

YS My process involves readings on history, interviews and even casual conversations. The purpose of every process is to seek answers over a certain set of questions. However oddly enough every process that I've gone through always leads me to a whole bunch of other questions. It leads to more questions than answers. This is why I appreciate the journey of a process in making artwork because it can spark new enthusiasm, curiosity, and encouragement to seek new knowledge.

BW How do you see or approach the self in your works? Why did you decide to feature yourself in your works?

EL Maybe I should start with how I first started. I think it was really during art school, when I was doing my undergrad. I realised that I was always there and that I could use myself as material, it wouldn't be something that I would have to explain or make someone else do. And it made sense to perform; as I was trying to unpack cultural stereotypes especially through the image or the screen or the photograph. It became quite important for me to start framing myself, making the decisions on how I wanted to be seen and to subvert expectations using myself as the image. I've been performing in various ways, whether through live performances or through photos or videos, I guess probably for the last 15 years; a lot has happened. This long process helped me work through a lot about my own identity and the history of Chinese and Asian presence in Australia from my perspective. There's a lot that I've learnt and I've attempted to offer the audience ways of seeing Australia from a very different perspective. I feel that history is always written by the victors, but there are many other stories that need to be heard. I'm using myself to try and reflect even a slice of that much larger history for the wider public. It's taken me to a point where I'm now interested identity in a more global context, shifting from Australia

to the world. I might not appear in my works anymore, let's see. It's been a 15-year process and I'm now entering a different unknown space ... and that's exciting.

YS I also question it. Why do I often feature myself and utilise self-portrait in my works? Am I actually, actualising myself here? Growing up in a political regime where your identity, your race, your beings are considered a threat, a weakness, and disadvantages will make you feel small and insignificant. And those feelings suck to the core. I guess that is one of the biggest reasons why I put myself out there, to make a statement to the world that I am here, I am alive, I have a story to tell, and I matter.

BW Eugenia perhaps this question is more relevant to you, although the self is very central in your works it is often developed in collaboration with others. How do you navigate between the self and the collective/collaborative in your works? How is this significant in your process?

EL I've worked collaboratively since about 2005 and I guess it all started at university when a lot of us realised that we were making works that don't sit within the white cube gallery setting. We were starting to think of ways to support each other's works, particularly for artists working more experimentally, working with sound and in a temporal way. I became quite used to this idea and liked working towards something bigger than I could do on my own. Bigger than the sum of its parts. I guess when I started focusing on my own work, I learnt my strengths and weaknesses – there's so much that I can't do. And so I work with people that have other skills and perspectives, and allow for that in the development of my works. I love working with people who have their own vision and input that they can bring to the work. Knowing acutely that I don't know everything, I feel like I learn everytime I collaborate with people.

It's been an interesting collaboration working with APHIDS, a collective that I co-direct. There are a lot of questions that we

grapple with: how does authorship and co-authorship manifest? How do you work through an artist's vision that can't work without the many? It's a constant negotiation that I work through with APHIDS and my own work. Acknowledging people's contributions is so crucial. It's always about taking in and bringing people in, but talking about process, it's also about allowing time for the development of the idea and the way of working instead of the end result. Allowing time for the relationship to grow. I think also coming from a visual art context, that modernist perspective of the single author, the genius solo artist, can be frustrating. And I try to break that apart as much as possible.

BW Yaya in your case, your research involves a lot of conversations or interview with your family members and local communities. How do you combine or I guess negotiate their stories and your own personal stories/feelings when developing your works?

YS Oh this process of having casual conversations or interviews really came out of my interest in hearing their stories/perspectives/personal experiences. I also question it myself, why am I always looking or collecting stories from the people around me? "When you're an outsider, you're always working to see different people's point of view because the world is never yours." I came to a realization that the reason to search and collect other people's stories is an effort to find similarities, a sense of belonging, an emotion or personal stories that I can connect or relate to. In terms of combining or negotiating these stories in my work, usually after these conversations that I have with other people I will raise a few things that I can relate to, or understand. It's an instinct play, really. You find what moves you, what triggers you inside, and then you proceed.

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Yaya Sung is an interdisciplinary artist, born in Jakarta, Indonesia. She is keen to explore cross-disciplinary collaborations, experimenting with limits and boundaries of being an artist. Yaya is determined to use fear and trauma as the metaphor to understand the meaning of her existence. Her media varies from photography, installation, video, performance, to text and design. She is one of the recipients of 16th Invisible Photographer Asia (IPA) grant.

Eugenia Lim is an Australian artist who works across video, performance and installation. Interested in how nationalism and stereotypes are formed, Lim invents personas to explore the tensions of an individual within society – the alienation and belonging in a globalised world. Conflations between authenticity, mimicry, natural, man-made, historical and anachronistic are important to the work. To this end, Lim finds inspiration in sites and objects that are both ‘contemporary’ and ‘out of time’, embodied and virtual. This dialogue between place and performance reflects the push-pull between Australian and Asian, the mono and the multicultural.

Bus Projects acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate: the Wurundjeri people and Elders past and present of the Kulin nations.

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