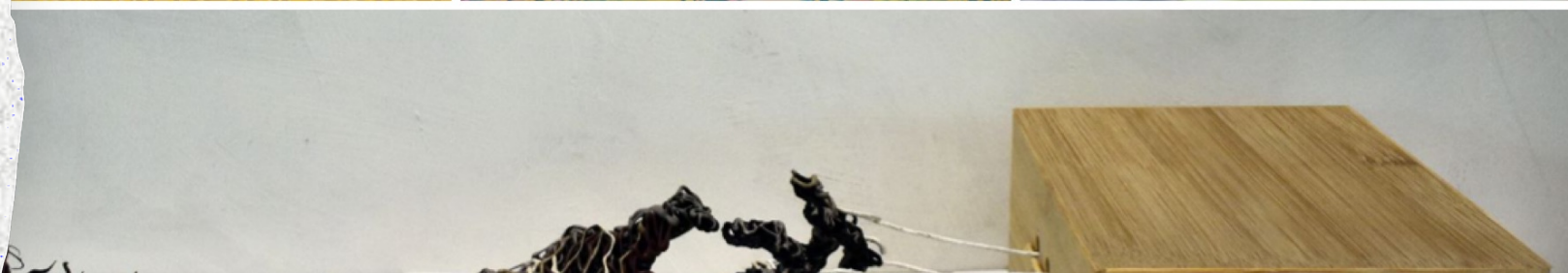
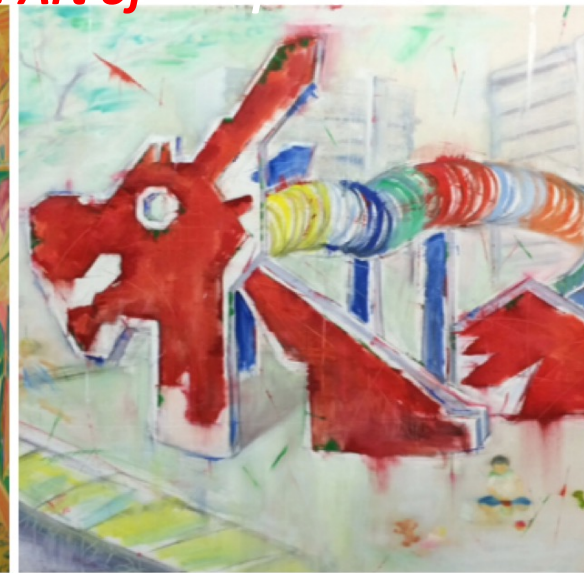
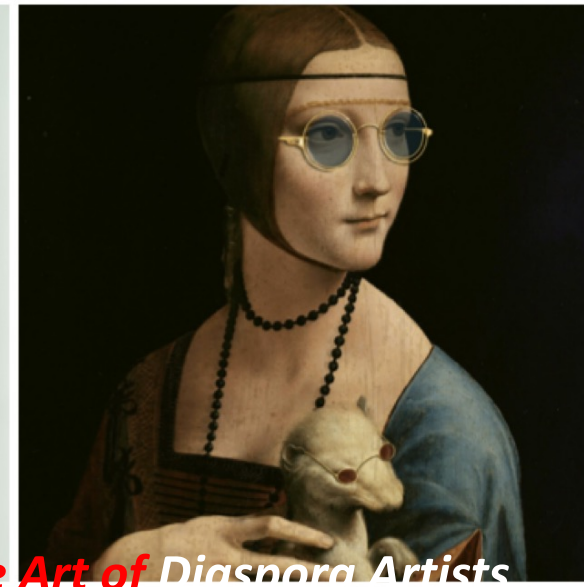


DiaS'pora



Exploring Singapore's Diasporic Ethos in the Art of Diaspora Artists



DiaS'pora - Exploring Singapore's Diasporic Ethos in the Art of Diaspora Artists

"Diaspora artist" refers to an artist who belongs to a population dispersed from its original homeland (diaspora). Diaspora artists often create art that reflects their experiences, cultural identity, and the impact of displacement on their lives. These artists may explore themes such as migration, identity, belonging, and the complexities of living between different cultures.

Singapore is a hub for the artistic diaspora both into and out of Singapore. Singapore's numerous galleries, exhibitions, government grants, and public art projects attract artists from various cultural backgrounds to migrate to Singapore for international collaboration and exposure opportunities, and to connect with the global art scene. Singapore's multicultural environment, comprising diverse traditions, languages, and art forms, also provides a rich source of inspiration for artists. For aspiring artists, Singapore offers opportunities for artistic education, with institutions providing specialised foundational courses in various art forms.

Simultaneously, there are artists migrating out of Singapore for different work-life environments, to participate in international artists' residencies, or to pursue advanced studies in art disciplines not readily available in Singapore. Some artists may be attracted to cities known for avant-garde or experimental art scenes, liberating themselves to explore unconventional and boundary-pushing artistic expressions.

The art produced by diaspora artists often serves as a means of expressing the unique challenges and opportunities associated with living outside one's origin homeland. Diaspora artists frequently grapple with questions of identity and belonging. Their art may explore the tension between maintaining a connection to their cultural roots and adapting to the new environment.

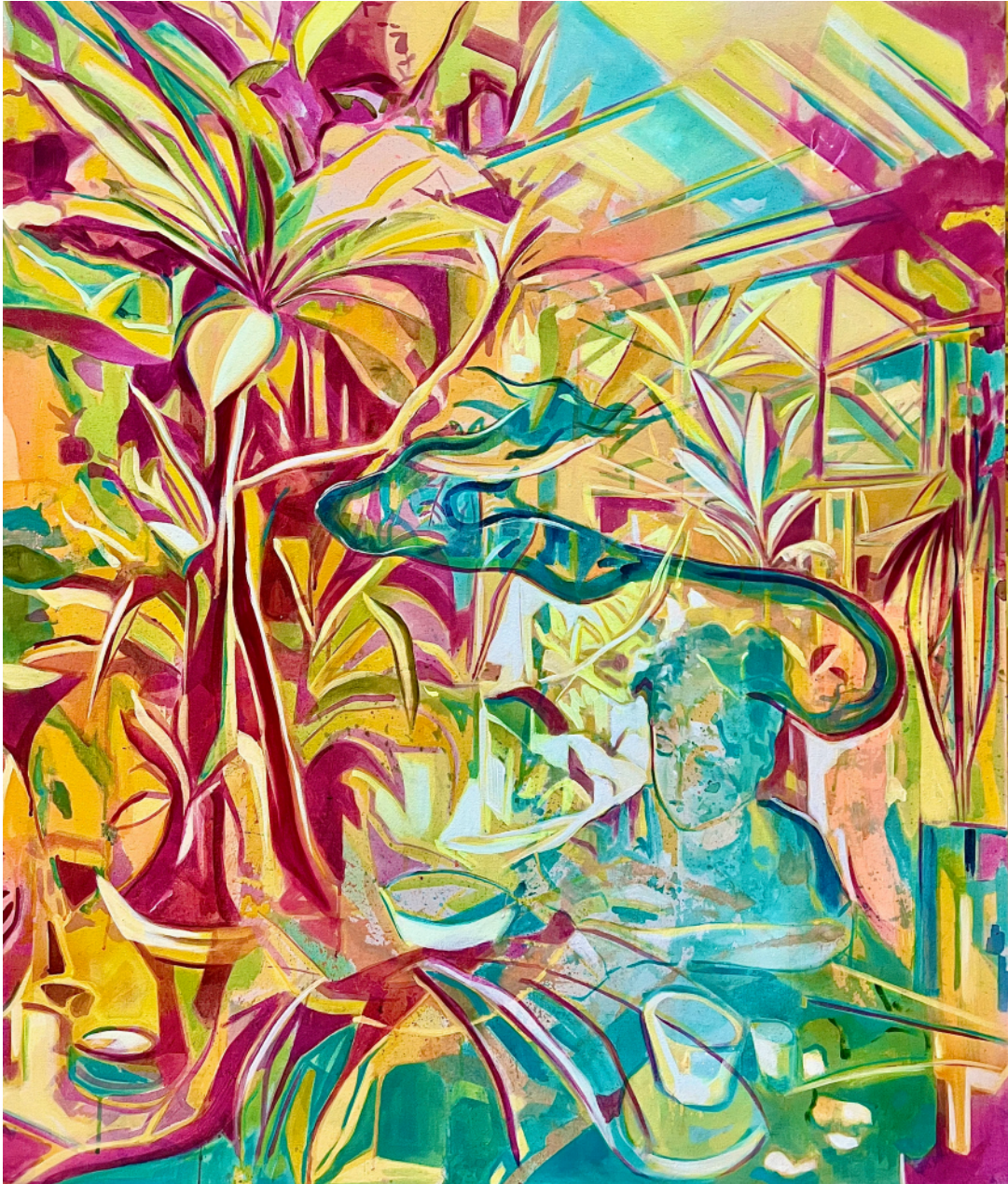
Diaspora artists contribute significantly to Singapore multi-cultural landscape by sharing their unique perspectives, experiences, and creativity, offering audiences a deeper understanding of the complexities of identity and migration.

Migration and Displacement

Experience of migration and displacement is a common theme in diaspora art. Artists may depict the challenges, struggles, and triumphs associated with leaving one's homeland and establishing a new life elsewhere.

Emi Avora was born in Greece, educated in the UK, and is now settled in Singapore. Instead of highlighting the differences between one's homeland and the new environment, Avora seeks to emphasize the commonality that food and water sustain life. In her work *"Trivial Pursuits of Immortality"*, tables and plastic chairs, reminiscent of a local coffeeshop with a floral motif flooring, are arranged in the greenery of a garden ('garden city'). The absence of living humans is made more obvious by the lone (Greek) statue. The jar of water (representing life) at his foot draws parallels to the food and water set on the table.





Emi Avora (1979)

Dragon Dreams

2023

Acrylic on Canvas

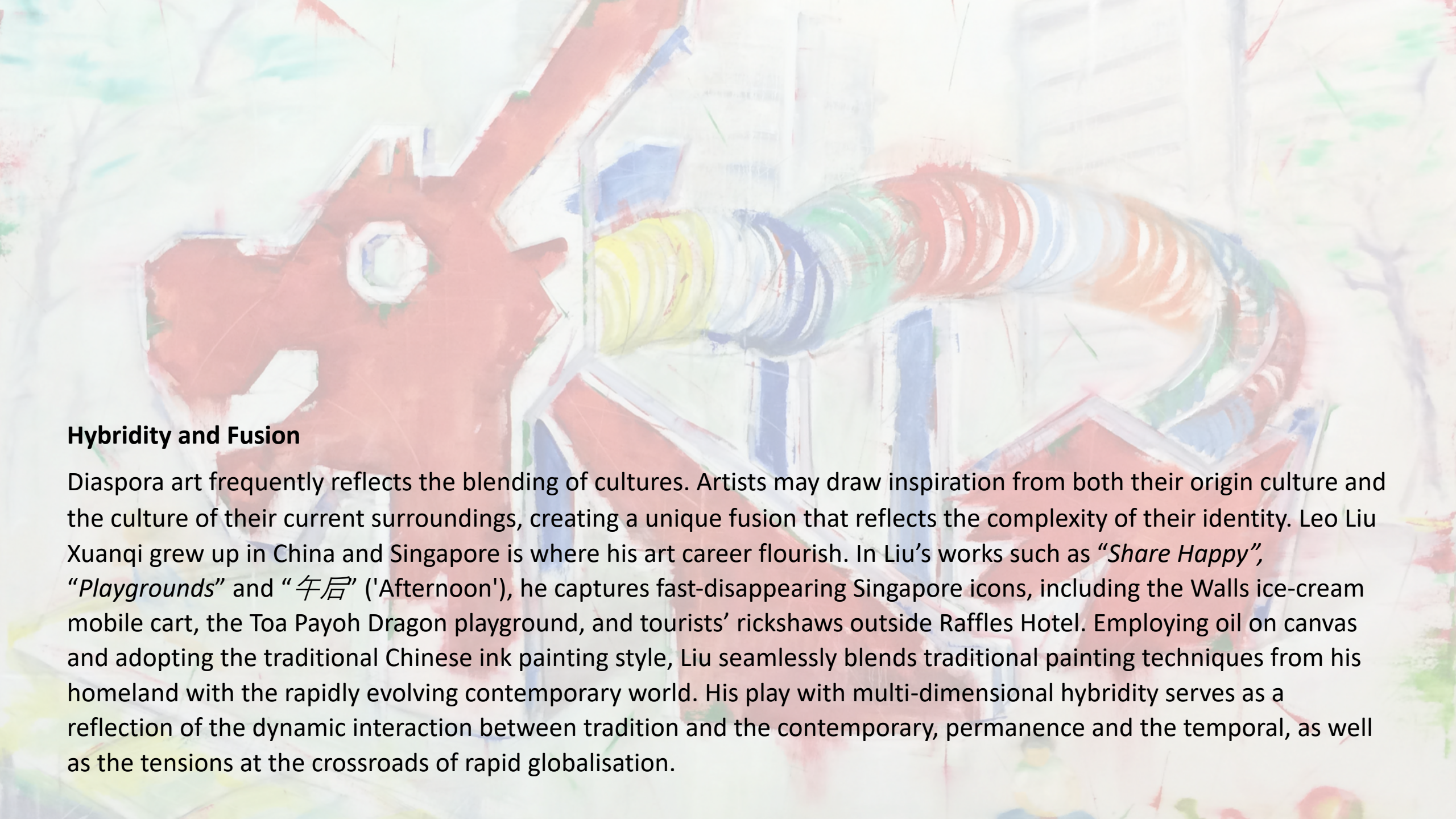
140 x 120 cm



Emi Avora (1979)
Trivial Pursuits of Immortality
2023
Acrylic on Canvas
135 x 135 cm

Emi Avora (1979)
What Will Become?
2023
Acrylic on Canvas
140 x 160 cm





Hybridity and Fusion

Diaspora art frequently reflects the blending of cultures. Artists may draw inspiration from both their origin culture and the culture of their current surroundings, creating a unique fusion that reflects the complexity of their identity. Leo Liu Xuanqi grew up in China and Singapore is where his art career flourish. In Liu's works such as *"Share Happy"*, *"Playgrounds"* and *"午后"* ('Afternoon'), he captures fast-disappearing Singapore icons, including the Walls ice-cream mobile cart, the Toa Payoh Dragon playground, and tourists' rickshaws outside Raffles Hotel. Employing oil on canvas and adopting the traditional Chinese ink painting style, Liu seamlessly blends traditional painting techniques from his homeland with the rapidly evolving contemporary world. His play with multi-dimensional hybridity serves as a reflection of the dynamic interaction between tradition and the contemporary, permanence and the temporal, as well as the tensions at the crossroads of rapid globalisation.



Leo Liu Xuanqi (1977), *Playgrounds*, 2015, Oil on Canvas, 120 cm x 150 cm



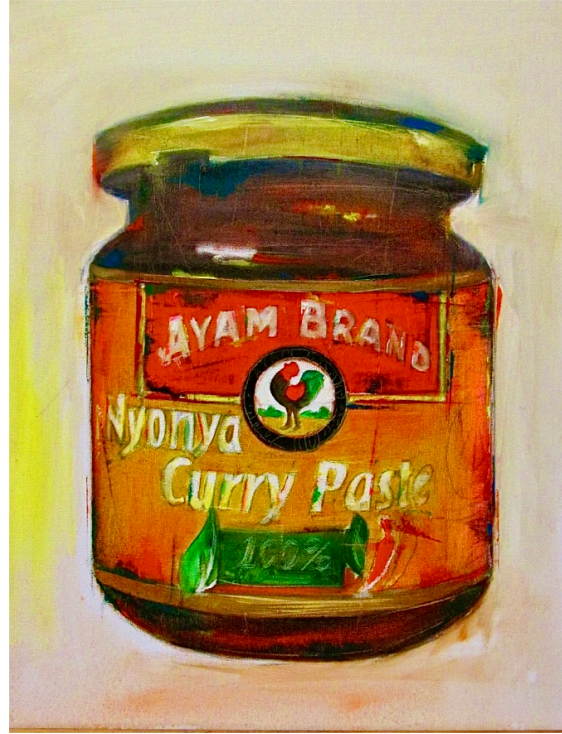
Leo Liu Xuanqi (1977)
Share Happy
2014
Oil on Canvas
120 cm x 120 cm



Leo Liu Xuanqi (1977)
Afternoon
2015
Oil on Canvas
120 cm x 120 cm



Leo Liu Xuanqi (1977)
Tingkat
2014
Oil on Board
61 x 30 cm



Leo Liu Xuanqi (1977)
Nyonya Curry Paste
2014
Oil on Board
70 x 70 cm



Leo Liu Xuanqi (1977)
Loh-Hey
2014
Oil on Board
70 x 70 cm

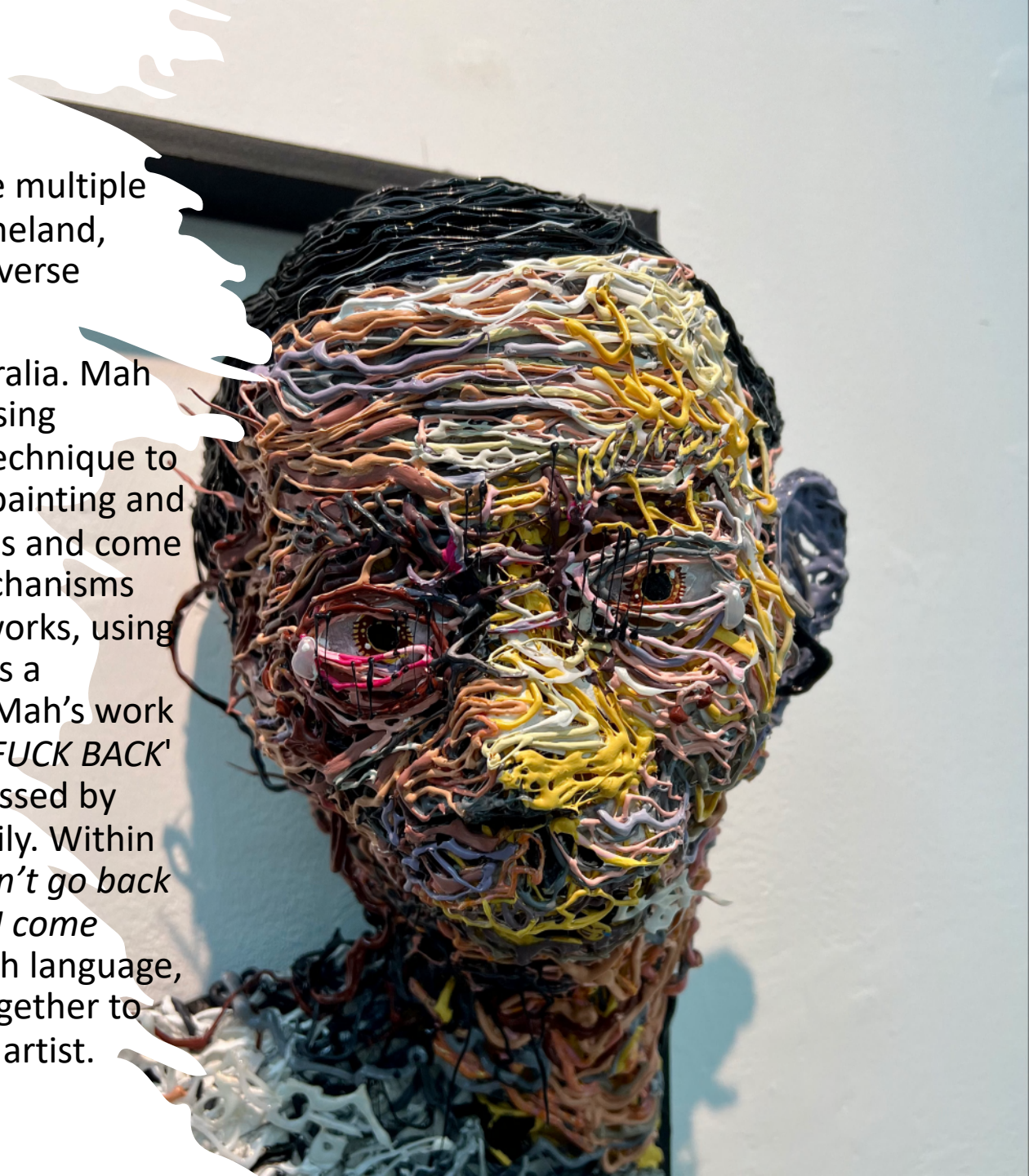


Leo Liu Xuanqi (1977)
Red Coin Telephone
2014
Oil on Board
61 x 31cm

Language and Expression

Language plays a crucial role in diaspora art. Artists may use multiple languages or incorporate linguistic elements from their homeland, creating a rich tapestry of expression that resonates with diverse audiences.

Desmond Mah was born in Singapore and migrated to Australia. Mah views the body as 'kits' that reflect his identity. Instead of using traditional painting surfaces, he employs an experimental technique to create body parts, forming a blurred intersection between painting and sculpture. These body parts essentially 'replace' his canvases and come to life through the incorporation of technology, such as mechanisms and sensors. Mah infuses dark humour (macabre) into his works, using texts and images derived from memories of his homeland as a response to the challenges he faces in his adopted land. In Mah's work titled *"The more I live, the less I know"*, the words 'GO THE FUCK BACK' traverse from ear to ear, encapsulating the sentiment expressed by strangers in his adopted land towards the artist and his family. Within the same work, he counters this with the words *'Paiseh I can't go back (accompanied by an embarrassed WeChat emoji) to where I come from'*, a blend of the Chinese dialect *Hokkien* and the English language, showcasing his linguistic hybridity. These elements come together to present the intricate complexities of identity for a diasporic artist.

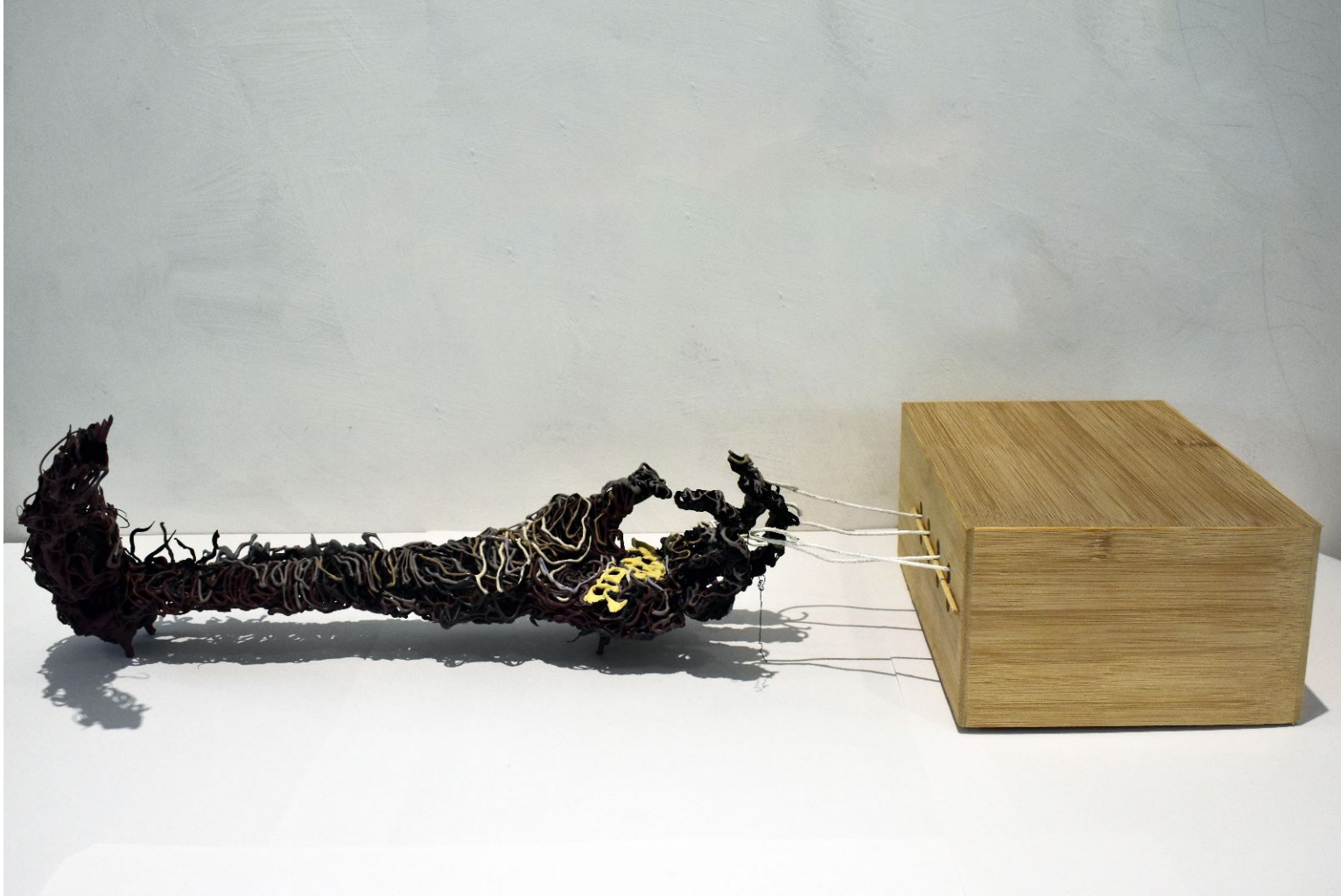


Desmond Mah (1974)
The More I Live, the Less I Know
2022
Acrylic Paint, Arduino, Speakers
38 x 7 x 20 cm
Bamboo Turntable
9 x 29 cm (Dia.)





Rooted Resolve No. 1
2023
Acrylic Paint, Mixed Media,
Xuan Paper
36 x 20 x 15 cm

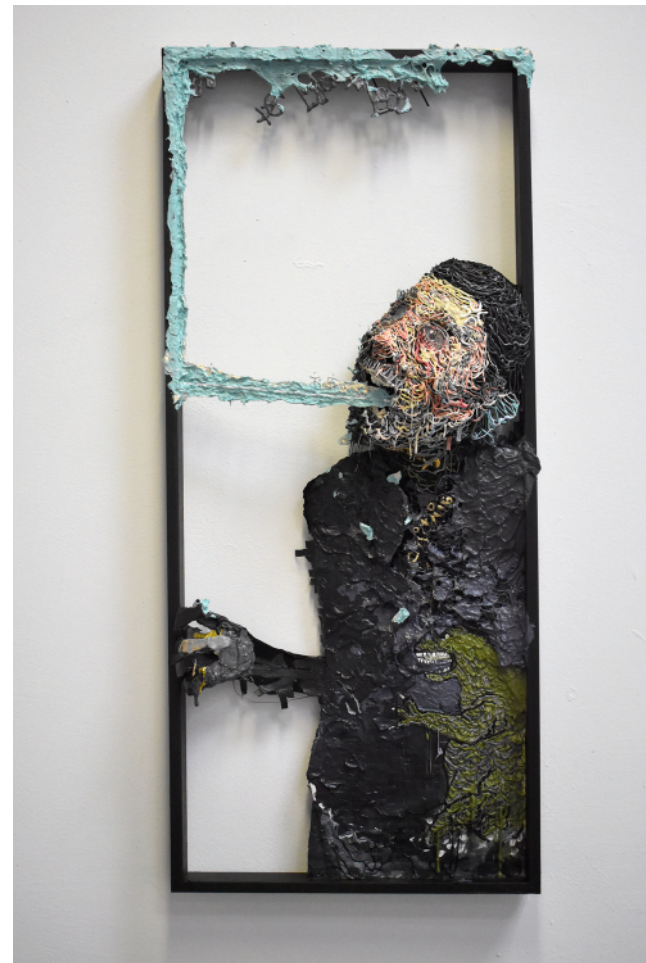


Desmond Mah (1974)
My Left Hand Operates at 25% Capacity
2022
Acrylic Paint, Mixed Media, Luggage
12 x 36 x 24 cm



Desmond Mah (1974)
Enthralled
2023

Acrylic Paint, Mixed Media, Xuan Paper
93 x 40 x 17 cm



Desmond Mah (1974)
Flames Within
2023

Acrylic Paint, Mixed Media, Xuan Paper
87 x 40 x 11 cm



Social and Political Commentary

Diaspora artists often use their work to comment on social and political issues. This may include topics such as immigration policies, discrimination, cultural assimilation, and the impact of globalisation.

Anne-Kristin Vaudour grew up in former East Germany, studied in China and Italy, and worked in Hong Kong before settling in Singapore. Vaudour's varied experiences enrich the stories she tells in her art, that references mythology, fashion, science fiction and fantasy, in her pop surrealism style. Vaudour uses her "*Imperial Eyewear*" collection to comment on social issues through imagined eyewear for historical fashion icons such as Marie Antoinette, Maria Theresa, Nefertiti, and Giacomo Casanova. She questions, "what if the extravagant aristocracy of the past, who spent an extraordinary amount of money on their dress, hat, or jewellery to underline their status, would have had access to modern day manufacturing of sunglasses? Or better, what if the idea of today's eyewear fashion would have existed?"



Ann-Kristin Vaudour
Lady with Ermine
2022
Digital Print, Hand Embroidery
37.5 x 34 cm
Editions of 11

Ann-Kristin Vaudour
Mona Lisa
13 x 8.8 cm
Digital Print, Hand Embellished
Editions of 11





Ann-Kristin Vaudour
Lady with a Veil
2022
Digital Print, Hand Embroidery
33 x 28 cm
Editions of 11



Ann-Kristin Vaudour
Napoleon Bonaparte
2022
Digital Print, Hand Embellished
44 x 37 cm
Editions of 11



Community and Connection

Diaspora artists may seek to create a sense of community and connection among people who share similar experiences. Their art can serve as a bridge between different communities and foster understanding and empathy.

Artists like Karina D Simon, Huang Zhanwen and Li Chun (originally from Indonesia and China) have made Singapore their home at a young age. Growing up in the community where they now reside, these artists are exploring their identities in styles that easily resonate with the people they connect with e.g. Simon's photorealistic pencil drawing in origami and thick paint blob style, to Huang's deconstruction of artist portraits in pop art style and Li's joyous bunnies in digital print on canvas.



Karina D . Simon (1990)
Walking on Sunshine
2023
Coloured Pencil on Paper
76 x 60 cm

Karina D . Simon (1990)
Tree – Two Lovers
2023
Coloured Pencil on Paper
60 x 60 cm





Huang Zhanwen
Vincent van Gogh
2012
GICIEE Print
60 cm
Editions of 5



Huang Zhanwen
Salvador Dali
2012
GICIEE Print
60 cm
Editions of 5



Huang Zhanwen
Yayoi Kusama
2012
GICIEE Print
60 cm
Editions of 5



Huang Zhanwen
Andy Warhol
2012
GICIEE Print
60 cm
Editions of 5



Huang Zhanwen
Liu Yue
2012
GICIEE Print
60 cm
Editions of 5



Huang Zhanwen
Takashi Murakami
2012
GICIEE Print
60 cm
Editions of 5



Li Chun
Bunny Cupid
2023

Digital Print on Canvas with Gold Leaf
60 x 42 cm
Edition of 20



Li Chun
Bunny Orchard
2023

Digital Print on Canvas with Gold Leaf
60 x 42 cm
Edition of 20



Li Chun
Bunny Perform
2023

Digital Print on Canvas with Gold Leaf
60 x 42 cm
Edition of 20




Exploring the Diaspora Ethos in the Art of Asian Diaspora Artists

The artistic endeavours of Asia Diaspora artists reflect the distinctive ethos of the diaspora experience, marked by their connection to their homeland culture and their role as cultural ambassadors. This show delves into the art of these diaspora artists, examining how their connection to their heritage influences their creative expression and how their exposure to new cultural contexts, digital media, and global platforms shapes their artistic perspectives. The show highlights how the resulting art diverges from traditional norms, utilizing innovative media and presentation formats to reach a global audience. Additionally, it discusses the dynamic of artists working in their adopted cities while maintaining ties to their homeland, leading to the preservation of acquired characteristics in their work.

Participating Artists:



Anne-Kristin Vaudour
Desmond Mah
Emi Avora
Huang Zhanwen
Karina D. Simon
Leo Liu Xuanqi
Li Chun



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