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REF 2021

Erika Tan

The 'Forgotten' Weaver

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Name:

Erika Tan

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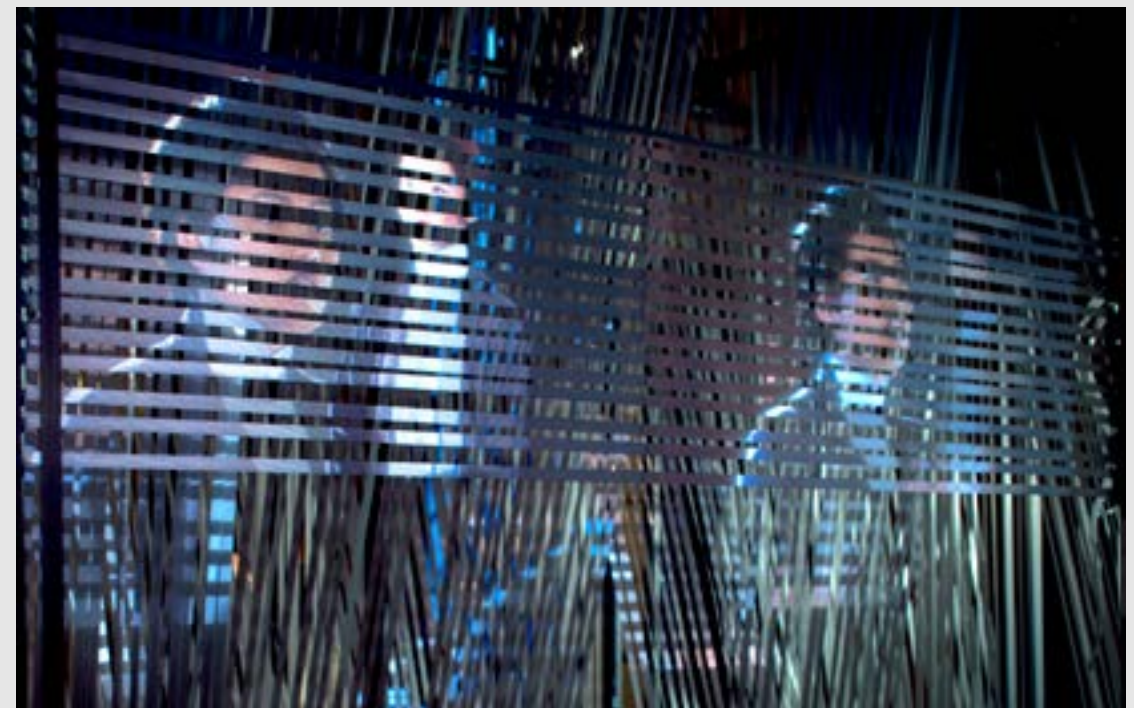
Artefact

Output Title:

The 'Forgotten' Weaver

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Project Overview

Halimah the Empire Exhibition Weaver is the overarching title for a series of outcomes and multi-component artworks that combine moving image works, installation structures, collected objects, artefacts and digitally reproduced textiles arising from the research project *Halimah-the-Empire-Exhibition-weaver-who-died-whilst-performing-her-craft*, which took place over a five-year period starting in 2014.

The combined works relate the story of Halimah Binti Abdullah (the ‘forgotten’ weaver) and are used to bring to attention the forgotten, over-looked, marginalised, and eclipsed subjects of empire. As an expert weaver from Malaya, Halimah was a participant in The Malayan Pavilion at the Empire Exhibition held in London in 1924, where she demonstrated her craft to visitors, sold items of the work produced, and in the evenings lived behind the displays in the makeshift quarters made for the Malayan contributors. Within months she had contracted pneumonia and died; her body was never returned to Malaya but given a Muslim burial in Brookwood Cemetery,

Woking. The project was initiated as a way to think through how Halimah might be repatriated or ‘returned’, and what this act might involve and invoke. In its final form the project brought together a series of video pieces that responded to the global context of the work as presented within the Venice Biennale and in the national context of its inclusion in The (British) Diaspora Pavilion. The collected works include (most recent first):

The ‘Forgotten’ Weaver is a video installation that combines elements of prior moving image aspects of the project, but reconfigures and re-edits them within a physical installation consisting of a series of ‘woven-strapping screens’ supported by a structure that echoes an expanded loom. The video is projected within an encasing, enabling an experience of the work from both interior and exterior. A bench invites the audience to sit, taking the place of the weaver in a manner that dually situates viewers as audiences and subjects of the work. For example, there is a moment in the film that references the position of the

weaver, sitting with feet raised off the ground, which is mirrored in the installation when the audience sits with their feet raised from the floor. The use of the loom structure provides a fragmented surface onto which the video work is projected, producing an incomplete picture, disrupting the viewer’s understanding of the image and literally pointing to the on-going need for further research on pre-colonial art histories.

Here a further element is articulated in respect of how historical re-visioning is always informed by the contingencies of the present, site and context. The presentation of the work within the format of a large-scale international exhibition in Venice questions the reductive nationalist tropes that such displays gesture to, bringing into tension Tan’s position as a post-colonial subject, and on-going exhibition modes of othering, difference and representational power dynamics. As a response to this, additional text elements (in video format) are incorporated in the various iterations of the work responding to the new situations it is shown in. In Venice for example, Italian →

texts responding to the concept of diaspora were included in the video, exploring the Biennale as a continuity of historic colonial exhibitions, where the ‘other’ is on display, or in the case of the Diaspora Pavilion, the diverse, marginal, minority, and extra/intra/trans-national.

Balik Kampung–Return by Proxy appears as short interludes (approximately 1 min) between the other videos in *Apa Jika, The Mis-Placed Comma*, and functions as a supplementary thread (known in Malay as ‘Songket’, a form of golden embroidered material) connecting the work. Here a different approach to voicing Halimah takes place through a mediated dialogue (both text and computer speech) that highlights Tan’s reliance on, and use of Halimah as a tool for the artist’s own recovery and ‘return’. Here, Tan—who originates from Singapore—raises questions around canonisation and how national boundaries operate forms of exclusion that differently affect bi-racial, minority ethnicities and female gendered subjects (in both Singapore and Britain).

Apa Jika, The Mis-Placed Comma (I,II,III), a three-part video commission by The National Gallery Singapore, filmed within its exhibition spaces during the final stages of its transition from colonial law courts to National Gallery in 2015. The work brings together a displaced, deconstructed and orphaned loom, a performer of ‘Malay’ dance, and a group of young Chinese female amateur debaters who deliberate variously on the legacy of Empire; the provenance of exhibition histories; notions of representation; indigeneity; the position of craft in relation to modernism; and the validity of archival returns. The work calls into question the place of the artist and that of grand exhibitions, using the form of debate to instigate a discussion around Halimah’s relevance in the postcolonial reframing of modernism.

The Weavers Lament was commissioned by The National Gallery Singapore as part of Tate Britain’s show *Artist & Empire* (2016, Singapore iteration). The work consisted of a video and series of hanging canvases with digitally re-created textiles from the Victoria

& Albert Museum’s collection of 1924 Empire Exhibition Malayan textiles; video work that records the printing of these digital textiles amidst flashing images of female weavers; and a collection of 64 black and white magic lantern glass slides of (other invisible) women weavers, from handloom industries in Southeast Asia, to mechanised textile production in Britain and more recent mass production in East Asia. The video draws various relationships between visibility and power, representation and decline, records and their access. In particular, the work focuses on the invisibility of the central figure in a once thriving Asian handloom industry, and the relative and continued absence of its producers in colonial records.

Output

Artefact

Halimah the Empire Exhibition Weaver

A multiple component research project (2014–2019) consisting of a series of connected videos, installations, performance debates, collected objects and artefacts and digitally reproduced textiles.

The 'Forgotten' Weaver (2017)

A multi-channel/multi-screen video installation with physical components
HD video, duration variable.

This project includes segments from *Apa Jika, The Mis-Placed Comma (I, II, III)*, *Balik Kampung – Return By Proxy* and *The Weavers Lament* but recast in this new installation format.

Materials and dimensions: Key Clamp metal structure, polyester strapping, various fixtures, video projection with sound.
Installation structure: 3m × 2m × 4m, later versions variable.

Exhibited at

Diaspora Pavilion, 57th Venice Biennale,
3 May–26 November 2017

Commissioned by ICF International Curators Forum as part of the Diaspora Pavilion, 57th [Venice Biennale, 2017](#). Commissioning Curators: David A. Bailey and Jessica Taylor.

[Video of exterior projection onto structure](#)

(19.40 mins):

[Video of effect of exterior projection](#)

(37 seconds): (password: watchvideo)

[And physical strapping illuminated](#)

(27 seconds):

(password: watchvideo)

[Video of projection onto interior screen](#)

(6 seconds): (password: watchvideo)

[Video of 'strapping screen:](#)

password: watchvideo)

Individual works

APA JIKA, The Mis-Placed Comma
(I, II, III) (2017)

three episodes of a two-channel video work:

Apa Jika, The Mis-Placed Comma (I),
(duration 8.32)

Apa Jika, The Mis-Placed Comma (II),
(duration 7.18)

Apa Jika, The Mis-Placed Comma (III),
(duration 9.54)

Links to original Apa Jika video works:

[Video Link 1](#)

[Video Link 2](#)

[Video Link 3](#)

Apa Jika, The Mis-Placed Comma

was first exhibited at:

[“Unrealised”](#) at The National Gallery

Singapore, 15 August 2017–1 January 2020.

Balik Kampung – Return By Proxy
(2017–2019)

A series of single-channel HD Video,
including text and computerised voice
(duration varies 1 to 1.30 mins).

Links to original video works:

(Example of two interludes)

[Interlude 1](#)

[Interlude 2](#)

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Balik Kampung – Return By Proxy was first exhibited as part of *The ‘Forgotten’ Weaver* in The Diaspora Pavilion, Venice 2017.

The Weavers Lament (2016)

Installation of reproduced textiles and glass slide collection with single-channel HD video, (duration 10 mins).

Link to original video works (12.24 mins):

[Vimeo link](#) (password: watchvideo).

The Weavers Lament was first exhibited at: *Artist and Empire: (En)Countering Colonial Legacies*, National Gallery Singapore, 6 October 2016–26 March 2017.

All works were first shown together in *The ‘Forgotten’ Weaver* at The Diaspora Pavilion, Venice 2017.

Production

The project was conceived, designed and produced by Erika Tan including video editing; all archival and museum research, text elements, direction for live action, and

camera work (with additional help from a camera crew for filming *Apa Jika, the Mis-Placed Comma*, further details given at the end of the Methods section).

Finished work

Apa Jika, the Mis-Placed Comma (I,II,III)
two-channel video work, image stills.



Here Som Said the Cultural Medallion holder for Malay Dance is seen performing within the Singapore Art History Galleries prior to their inaugural exhibition install, National Gallery Singapore, 2015



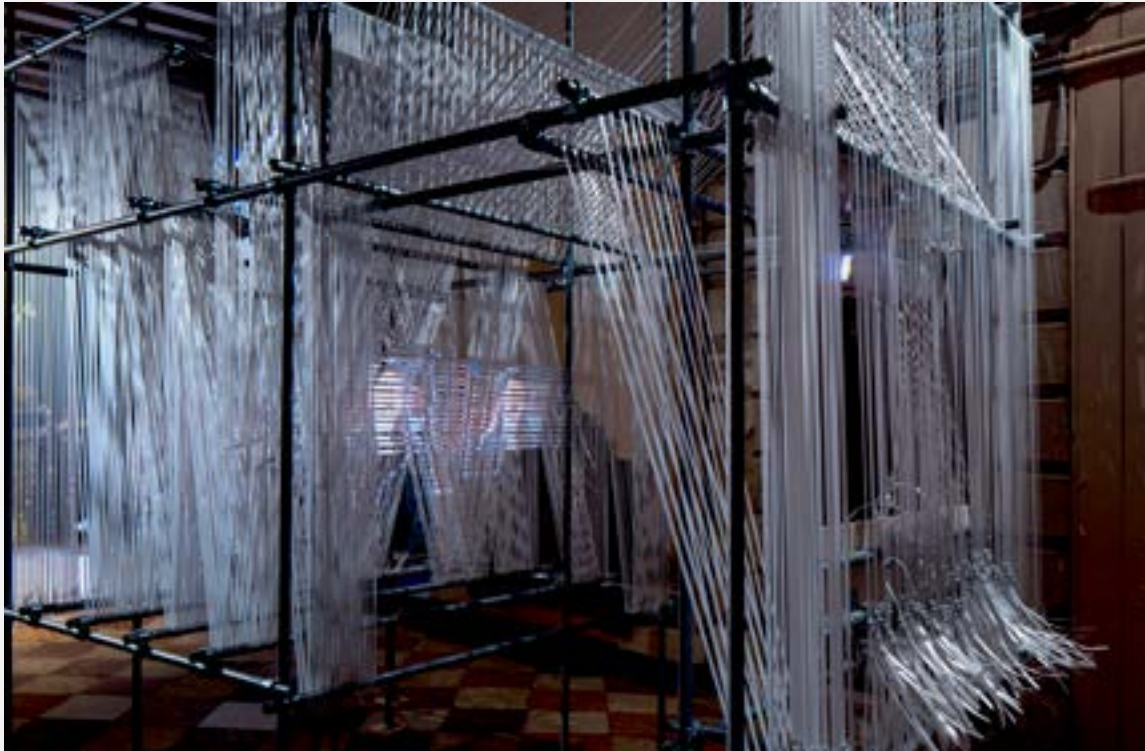
The debaters carry out a live debate around Halimah Binti Abdullah's on-going relevance to the developing Singapore national canon



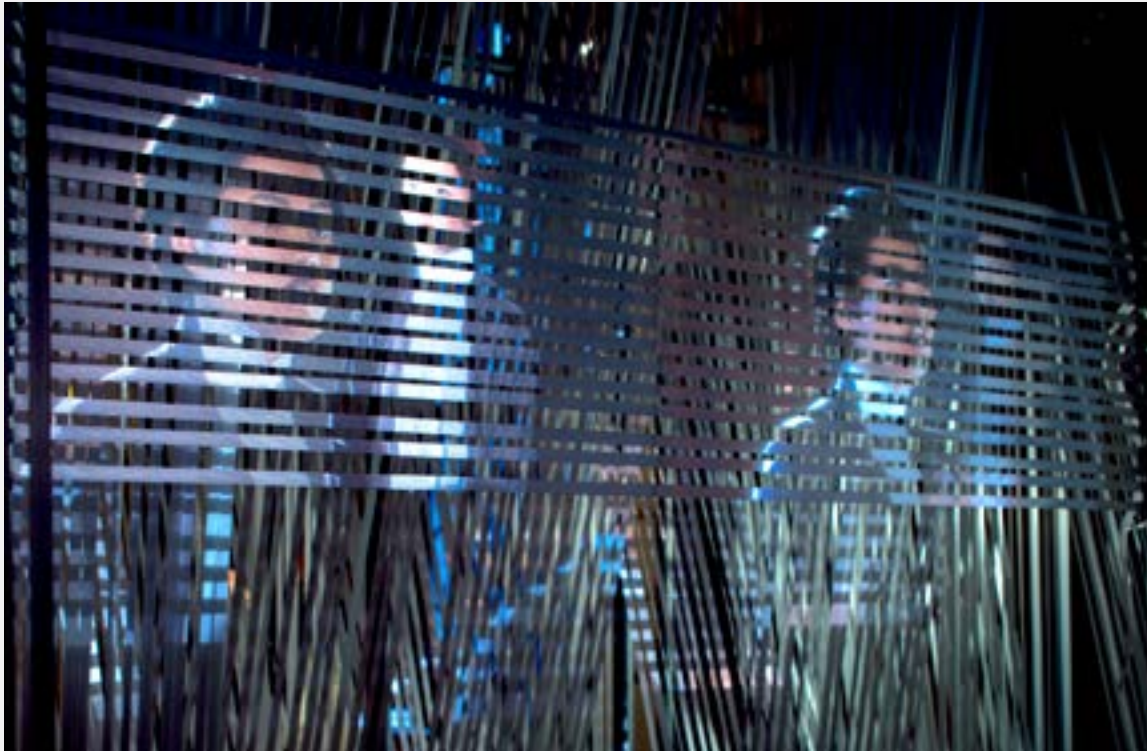
Som Said performs in front of a canvas with a scene of Malay village life. In the sound track she describes the scene and attempts to perform the gestures found within the painting depicting Malay women



The debaters walk through the galleries, former City Hall and courtrooms



Apa Jika, The Mis-Placed Comma, as part of
The 'Forgotten' Weaver, The Diaspora
Pavilion, 57th Venice Biennale 2017, Palazzo
Pisani a Santa Marina, Venice, Italy, 10 May–
26 November 2017, Video installation
(image credit Erika Tan)



Close up of the strapping screen

Context & Questions

Context

The research is set broadly within the fields of post-colonial, transnational and decolonial art and art histories. There are two particular foci, the first: Southeast Asia, that include discourses developing in the region as well as the way it is engaged with in the UK and Europe transnationally (e.g. Pamela Corey, Vong Phaophanit and Claire Oboussier, May Adadol Ingawani). The second is the field of Black Arts, diversity, diaspora within the context of Britain and its art histories (e.g. John Akomfrah, Keith Piper, Susan Pui San Lok, Hammad Nasar, The Otolith Group). Continuing from this, there is a focus on how institutional structures, such as museums and archives, shape the production of knowledge and histories (as seen in the work of Sonia Boyce, Renee Green, Hew Locke). Another component of the work explores canonisation in art histories and the exclusions that occur (Simon Soon, Roger Nelson, Shabbir Hussain Mustafa, David Teh, Black Artists and Modernism group).

The work also relates to feminist use of weaving to explore hidden labour (Judy

Chicago); intersectionality and the black experience (Diedrick Brackens); specifically within Southeast Asia, the status of weaving in the work of Yee I-Lann (Malaysia); Marian Pasta Rocces (Philippines) and regional feminist art practices and their representations in museum contexts and art history, as seen in the work of curators such as Judy Freya Sibayan (Philippines), Adele Tan (National Gallery Singapore), Joleen Loh (National Gallery Singapore).

Research builds out from these contexts of practice but is differentiated through its specific focus on an indigenous Malay female maker-through which it investigates representations of gender and race. In this context a line of inquiry positions Malay cultural production within modernist and contemporary Sinocentric Singaporean art histories. In the UK context this is elaborated through continuities of 'display' in relation to minority representation, but also the relatively under-researched and engaged with arena of Southeast Asia within the arts.

Questions

How can artists' moving image practices be employed to narrate hidden stories that counter received narratives, or dominant histories of race, nationality and gender?

What role does context, site and location play in articulating the above?

How might this approach problematise and scrutinise the role of institutions in constructing and re-visiting national and received narratives? What methods are required and necessary towards this?

Insights

Insights

Halimah the Empire Exhibition Weaver used primary research to reinterpret and translate previously unexplored archival material relating to the colonial experience of Halimah Binti Abdullah. In doing so it elaborated research insights of a thematic, methodological and historical nature for art practices developing work around colonial histories (specifically in the context of Southeast Asia), transnational entanglements, institutional critique, museums and repatriation, and exhibition histories.

The use of a public discursive form (the debates) to explore the relevance of the weaver to current art histories, produces a method for articulating how history is constructed around specific positions that are contestable. Through this research insight, the project sought not to 'tell Halimah's story correctly', but to explore how it could be told at all through the use of an un-scripted but protected space (the debate form) that could be seen to be more widely reflective of the social cultural context. This form of participation, or

collective history making, demonstrates how artworks can operate as instruments to critique current art histories and the role museum collections might play in ongoing decolonising processes. The format of these debates also changed in relation to geographical context, enabling another layer of meaning construction. In having to iterate the work in response to its installation in different locations, the research argues that place operates as a significant contextualising component of artworks that seek to examine colonial histories. Additionally, the development of the physical components of the work (the loom), enabled a formal spatial and plastic language to be developed that situated the audience in the place of Halimah, therefore enabling different kinds of embodied relations and understandings to be generated between viewers of the work, its subject, histories and institutional siting, than a screen-based approach on its own might have.

Finally, research shows that art practices seeking to employ archives and other materials in critiques of colonialism

necessarily will need to engage with structural relations of power. Having identified key photographic images that document the Empire Exhibition (possibly including actual images of Halimah), licensing became an issue that limited their use. In response this material had to be described verbally or via textual forms, that inevitably framed the material and conceptual disposition of the artwork. In such terms, the making of the work itself demonstrated that the power to keep, record, and present is unequally distributed when questioning forgotten and institutionally obscured histories, prompting further questions around who gets to speak, and to what purpose and for whose benefit is material being preserved?

Methods

Methods

Research for *Halimah the Empire Exhibition Weaver* produced an assemblage of works made over the duration of the project. Work proceeded through a series of commissions and exhibition possibilities beginning in late 2014 and culminating at the Diaspora Pavilion in Venice in 2017. While each iteration of the work followed its own logic and operated as individual works, they shared a common subject focus and conceptual, critical and methodological framing. The final version of the project *The 'Forgotten' Weaver* is an amalgamation, made in response to the new historical and geographic context offered by the Biennale setting and further developed with additional installation components.

The initial motivation for the work came from Tan's engagement with research that she had carried out on British Empire exhibitions in the late 1800s and early 1900s, which had led to a series of exhibition events in Singapore and a collaboration with the curator Shabbhir Hussain Mustafa, then at the National University of Singapore. Tan was commissioned by The National Gallery

Singapore in late 2014 to take this research further towards an exhibition and began to explore archives in the UK and Singapore for material, including the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) and The National Archives of Singapore. At the ACM the researcher discovered a loom, used in 2008 by a Cham weaver as part of their educational events along-side an exhibition on Vietnamese art, which intrigued her. The collections of the ACM also held material and references to the first museum in Singapore, consequently, this was one route into finding more contextual information on early collecting and exhibition histories. The National Archives of Singapore were used for identifying documentation of various early exhibitions, maps and reports, and it was here that Tan discovered rich visual photographic material of the Empire Exhibition and its inhabitants. This research was fleshed out through literature and online searches to gather information around international exhibitions on colonial exhibitions, although this produced many dead ends as the material was often fragmentary and poorly documented.

The idea of limitations, dead-ends, gaps and loose threads reoccur in the process of research and making and can ultimately be found embodied in the work itself. Repetition in these occurrences also takes form in the work, as loops, returns, jumps, and collapsing of space and time through editing and layering, which provide ways to incorporate the problematic nature of archival and historical research into subjects with forgotten histories.

During this research Tan discovered the story of Halimah Binti Abdullah when reading up on the 'grand' exhibitions where Malaya was on show in the colonial era. In Tan's eyes, Malaya represented an important early figure in exhibition histories and one that demanded greater exposure, particularly in relation to articulating Singaporean art and its relationship to its own history. However, the researcher found that her attempts to place her and other cultural producers of the time (especially of native or indigenous work) into a Singaporean Art history met with institutional resistance. This arguably

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results from a continuity of a colonial taxonomy of cultural production, where pre-colonial work is designated as outside of art production. For the National Gallery, Halimah's work was seen generally as lacking a 'visuality' that the concept of modernism demanded – and was therefore relegated to the form of craft more appropriately displayed within the context of an ethnographic or anthropological exhibition. Through discussion and negotiation with the gallery Tan was able to convince the curators that Halimah's story represented an important opportunity for the institution to re-set these assumptions and began to research her story in the UK through the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) Southeast Asian collections and archives with the curator Sau Fong Chan. Records of acquisition showed that the V&A had purchased Halimah's loom and various textiles at the end of the Empire Exhibition in 1924. The loom was still held in storage and Tan was able to examine it. The original records describe a frame loom, however, on inspection, the four posts or frame

within which the weaver would have sat and the tensions of the warp been tied, were missing, demonstrating further material gaps in Halimah's history. The direction of the project was beginning to be shaped by these limitations as Tan endeavoured to find more information. A search for Halimah's grave, following allotment deed numbers to Brookwood Cemetery did not result in finding her resting place, but instead highlighted the lack of continuity in the cemeteries numerical system, so much so that her grave had been lost. Photographic documentation of the Malayan participants was taken during the exhibition, however, only the European/Caucasian members of The Malayan Pavilion team were noted, the Malayan participants left un-named. The two women in the photographs were captioned as "Malay lady", one of which was highly likely to be Halimah.

Following on from this lack of information, the search for a methodology by which to bring forth the story of her life became central. Gathering what she had found in the archives Tan began to produce work.

Her initial instincts were to develop a formal language that both revealed Halimah as a subject and forgotten history, but which also alluded to her occlusion. A sense of narrative needed to be developed but a straight-forward story form (with a beginning, middle and end) seemed inappropriate, so Tan decided early on to work with the idea of the fragment purposively, to organise the visual and historic material that she had found. The researcher also felt that a critical reflexive component needed to be developed that would enable her to examine Halimah's story through a contemporary lens. This resolved through the idea of contested histories, that led her to the form of the public debate, which seemed an appropriate way to connect the historical aspect of the work to the present day. Working from this concept Tan organised a series of public debates in London and Singapore, to discuss Halimah's relevance and allow for her to be proposed as one of the earliest cultural representatives within colonial exhibition histories. The debaters were invited from overseas Singaporean and Malaysian academics, curators, and cultural →

practitioners. The event was filmed in front of a live audience and all arguments put forth were those of the debaters themselves, fed however with information given to them by Tan in the form of booklets compiled from the archival material that she had found. The debates took various forms and were staged differently dependent on context and venue. For example, at an initial event in London working with Singapore and Malaysia diasporas, debaters developed arguments for and against the idea that Halimah Binti Abdullah should be repatriated to Singapore and be canonised as a cultural ambassador worthy of an inclusion into Singapore's National Gallery. The debate form in Singapore took on another layer of meaning in a society which controls public speaking. Here the format became interesting in its ability to allow for arguments to be put forth that were not necessarily representative of the speaker's actual position – and speaking becomes a kind of ventriloquising.

This work was further developed, and the eventual work *Apa Jika* was filmed in The National Gallery Singapore, debating

Halimah's relevance within the building's former law courts. The National Gallery was developed in 2015 as a celebration of nationhood marking Singapore's 50th year of independence. Tan decided to use the figure of Halimah to take us on a journey through the galleries to examine how the institution had established a Singaporean canon that was excluding aspects of history. Halimah (and by extension other 'forgotten' women artists) was represented by a dancer, who however did not act out or perform a role but rather operated as a form of spatial and conceptual punctuation. In a series of traversals of the organised chronology of the galleries, exhibits, the researcher sought to enact a reversal of history or a 'return'. Halimah's activity in the space fluctuated between two modes: 1. On display, performing, rehearsing; 2. At ease, at home, off camera. In opening the spatial and temporal structures of the film, Tan sought to provoke a sense of oscillation between present, past and future, and first person, third person positions. Halimah's own relationship to the gallery space is an overlay here, as in the actuality of the historical

moment she both lived in and 'performed' in the Empire Exhibition. Living quarters for the Malayan contingent were housed at the back of the Malayan Pavilion exhibits, and Tan sought to replicate this condition in the work.

Throughout the filming process, Tan used an all-female crew. This was important to explore how the making of a work can also speak to issues around representation, both more widely but also within the specific context of the Singaporean art scene, where women artists are trying to establish themselves. Another important process was framed by a desire to shoot within The National Gallery spaces during its construction and prior to its opening. Whilst permission was granted to do so, the building's construction process had not met its deadline and the install of works was delayed. As a replacement, the 3D gallery plans were used instead. Whilst this meant that Tan could not include certain actual physical works in the shoot, it did however contribute to the idea of an exhibition as a form of design. In the actual shoot in the galleries, we see the final phase of the →

gallery's construction, allowing a glimpse into the process by which an institution is made. This behind the scenes view relates to the Empire Exhibition in 1924, as behind the Malayan Pavilion exhibition spaces the living quarters of the participants were found, and daily activities took place.

A camera team was used to employ a two-camera shot, an approach used in previous projects that enables a pictorial form of parallel possibilities. Some shots were filmed more than once and then edited together to produce a slight discrepancy in the way a movement or action occurs. The debates were filmed with three cameras, a camera on dolly moving across screen, and two cameras from different angles to pick up both speakers and the group. The debaters were requested to develop their arguments individually around specific themes and to improvise and engage in real debate during the live shoots. For the non-debate sections of the film and where different actors were present, there was some forward preparation but also improvisation on the day. Som Said, the dancer, was

chosen not to 'be' Halimah, but to evoke a presence of a performer in the space, and for her status as a Malay woman; the fact that she too is a celebrated dancer of Malay dance emerged as a significant aspect. In Singapore minority ethnic practitioners are ascribed an 'ethnic' qualification to their achievements, which does not apply to the dominant racial Chinese group. Additional sound was provided by Djaduk Ferianto, an Indonesian musician and composer who had previously worked with Som Said on a production called *Fabric Of A Nation*. In the editing, the film was broken down into parts (I, II and III) representing different aspects of the project, locations in the galleries and points of view developing from the debates. In the final version of the work in Venice these parts are integrated with the installation components of the project alongside the other video works: *The Weavers Lament* and *Balik Kampung - Return by Proxy*.

Turning to *The Weavers Lament*, Tan sought to examine the idea of archive and its accessibility. A reflexive approach is taken,

that exposes the structural relations of working with a state museum and archive. Having identified key photographic images that document the Empire Exhibition and possibly those of Halimah weaving, Tan found that actual public use of these images and their dissemination was controlled by strict licensing processes and costs. In this way, the process of making the work emerged as its subject, demonstrating that the history the project was trying to reveal was still controlled and remained out of sight. Restrictions on copyright have been a constant source of interest in Tan's work and have been engaged with through either facilitating direct use through partnership projects with institutions, which hold the copyright, or through navigating other possible routes. For *The Weaver's Lament* a copyright license was paid for a series of image reproductions. However, for *Apa Jika* this was not possible and other approaches such as verbal descriptions replaced the use of a direct image reproduction in the video. For *The Weaver's Lament*, the researcher wished to use images that she had taken of the Malayan Pavilion textiles now held in the →

Southeast Asian collections in the V&A stores, but again this was stymied by copyright, which led to a process of re-creating the textiles digitally from the research photographs. Part memory, part digital transcription, the textiles are rendered physical through printing onto canvas and their printing filmed and incorporated into the final video work. These practices seek to make visible the issues around access, sharing and dissemination of archival and historical material, especially that which resided with institutions.

The 'Forgotten' Weaver project changed in terms of its physical form and content depending on where and when it was shown. In particular, *Balik Kampung – Return by Proxy*, a text and computerised voice work using an Indonesia text-to-speech programme (this being the nearest available language programme to Malay which was not at the time available) was used to inflect a site or location specific response. Here references to specific contexts, or the incorporation of vernacular language (in Venice greetings in Italian were heard, in

Kuala Lumpur it was in Malay) allowed the project to extend its references and attempt to produce a resonance with its location and audiences. Perhaps the most significant change occurred through the inclusion of the expanded loom structures. At the Asian Civilizations Museum (Singapore) Tan discovered a loom used by a Cham weaver (she was flown in from Vietnam to demonstrate the process of weaving within the museum in 2008), that she employed as an installation element in the debate events in Singapore. Tan felt that the material presence of the loom engendered a different kind of set of relations between the hidden history we were debating and the participants, and one that she wished to explore further. What was particularly resonant was the idea of weaving both as material and as metaphor for ideas of entanglements and cultural interconnections, of threads going forward and backwards in time.

A site visit to the Venice Biennale Pavilion building (Palazzo Pisani a Santa Marina) in November 2016 allowed for certain aspects

of the site to be considered in the work itself. Tan explored ways of extending the work out from the Diaspora Pavilion and gesturing towards a connection with the Singapore Pavilion in the Arsenale, but these were not possible to achieve. She also began to develop a concept of cages that could both support and contain, as ways of thinking about the weaver and her containment within the symbolic structures of empire exhibitions. This involved experimenting with materials, trying out approaches and designing structures. Halimah was known as a weaver, but in the first instance it was unclear to Tan if this was weaving cloth or perhaps matting and basketry. In the region, woven matting is used as walling for Malay village houses. The possibility of producing some kind of housing or trap was flouted and plans were developed to do this within the exhibition space. However, this ultimately was not possible due to space restrictions and health and safety concerns; the structural component became more loom-like instead. The strapping material was used for its translucency and ability to hold a projected image, whilst still letting →

ambient light through. The projected video image was fragmented by the straps, but equally the straps threw further shadows onto the projection, structure and space. This dispersion and fragmentation of the image creates a truncated, disparate viewing, extending already the video works' own drive towards a non-linear telling of Halimah's story, its context and its contemporary relevance. In Venice Tan designed the loom structure to physically situate the viewer of the work in a place analogous to a weaver. This enabled a direct embodied relation to accrue between the viewers and the work extending it beyond a screen space. The video work developed through a process of editing. The first iteration was less complex, however as the show has travelled the edit has become more complex, including other works from the series. A shift in scale and form has allowed the work to respond to its locations and take onboard each new context.

PRODUCTION CREDITS for The 'Forgotten' Weaver:

Apa Jika, The Mis-Placed Comma:
Director, Producer, and Editor: Erika Tan
Performer: Som Said
Debaters: Meiyi Chan, Geetha Creffield, Loh An Lin, Sara Ng, Annabel Tan, Abigail Wong
Loom Installers: Noor Azlan Bin Misnan, Hossain Shuggal, Alam Gir
Assistant Producer and Camera Operator: Lor Huiyun
Director of Photography: Jolinn Ang
Post-production Assistant: Chiara Bagtas
Dolly Grip: Gui Shan Shan
Grip and Camera Operator: Faith Lim Hwee Yee
Makeup Artist: Chang Ching Yee (Clara)
Costume Designer: Michelline Tham
Sound: Fabric of the Nation, Djaduk Ferianto
NGS Gallery curator: Shabbhir Hussain Mustafa.

The Weavers Lament:
Directing, producing, scripting, filming, sound, editing: Erika Tan

Balik Kampung-Return by Proxy:
Directing, producing, scripting, filming, sound, editing: Erika Tan



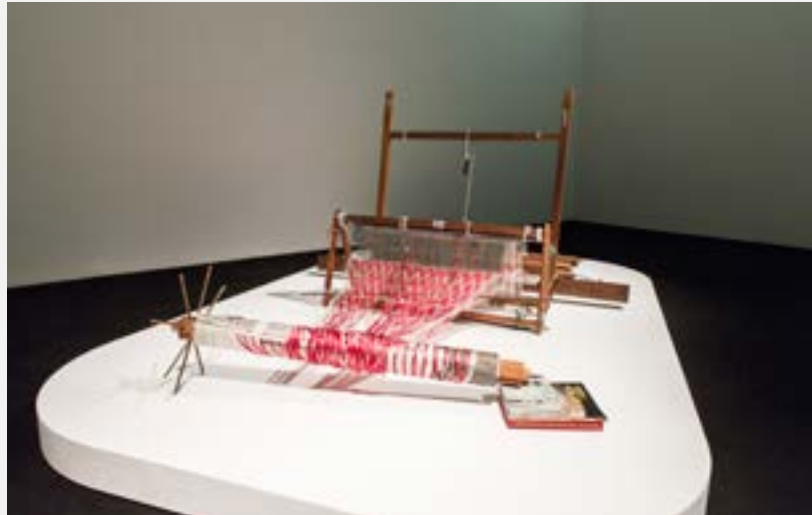
Brookwood cemetery entry book
with Halimah's name



Unmarked graves could include Halimah's



Debaters, London, 20 June 2015. Art Rhetoric: Debating History, Nation, and Art. The Ontological status of the forgotten Malay Weaver. Live debate performance as part of the exhibition "*EX-Parte*", Brick Lane Gallery, London, 17–21 June 2015



Debaters Singapore

The setting for the Singapore live performance debate included a loom, a film production set, and seating for the audience. The loom on display was on loan from the Asian Civilisations Museum. “L.A.B Place.Labour.Captital”, Nanyang Technological University Centre for Contemporary Art (NTU CCA), Singapore, July 2015. The event was performed as part of a one-month research residency *Halimah-the-Empire-Exhibition-weaver-who-died-whilst-performing-her-craft*



Debate and filming in The National Gallery Singapore



Debate, on location National Gallery, Singapore



All woman cast and crew on location National Gallery, Singapore



Installation model, The 'Forgotten' Weaver, The Diaspora Pavilion, 57th Venice Biennale. Michael Forbes, 2017.

Dissemination

Dissemination

Further exhibitions of the project

[*Diaspora Pavilion, Venice to Wolverhampton: A re-staging of the 2017 Diaspora Pavilion*](#)

(2018) [Exhibition]. Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Wolverhampton. 10 February–29 April 2018

[*A Place in The World*](#), (2018) [Exhibition]. East Gallery, Cavendish House, Norwich. 9 March–28 April 2018

UnAuthorised Mediums (2018) [Exhibition] [*FramerFramed*](#), Amsterdam. 15 September–18 November 2018

Paralogical Machines (2019) [Exhibition] [*Wei-Ling Contemporary*](#), Kuala Lumpur. 10 January–17 February 2019

Reviews

Berita (2017) 'Rakyat S'pura selain Zai Kuning turut harumkan nama negara di Venice Biennale 2017', 12 May

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