

depth

of

surface

HEMAN CHONG
PHI PHI OANH
DONNA ONG

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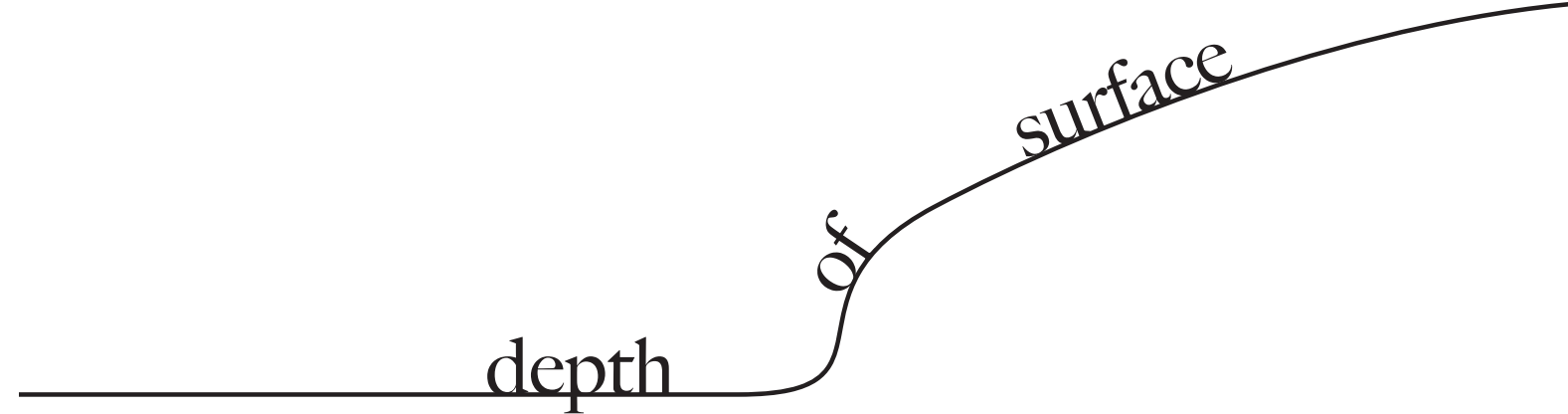
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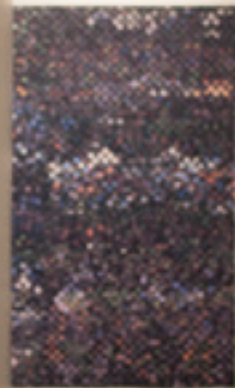
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In Western art history, the concept of the surface is Modernism's firm subjugation of subject matter to form. As the paradoxical title suggests, the concept of the surface is contingent on its depth; what lies beneath the superficial; the text and subtext. The immediacy of aesthetic is confronted with the process of understanding the creator and the contexts that shaped its making.

DONNA ONG

TROPICAL SHADES (I): RAINFOREST NARRATIVES FROM THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC (1980-2018)

Installation artist Donna Ong is well known for her evocative and thought-provoking installations. Ong debuts *Tropical Shades (I): Rainforest Narratives from the National Geographic (1980-2018)* at this exhibition, covering the largest wall in the room with 12,800 magnets.

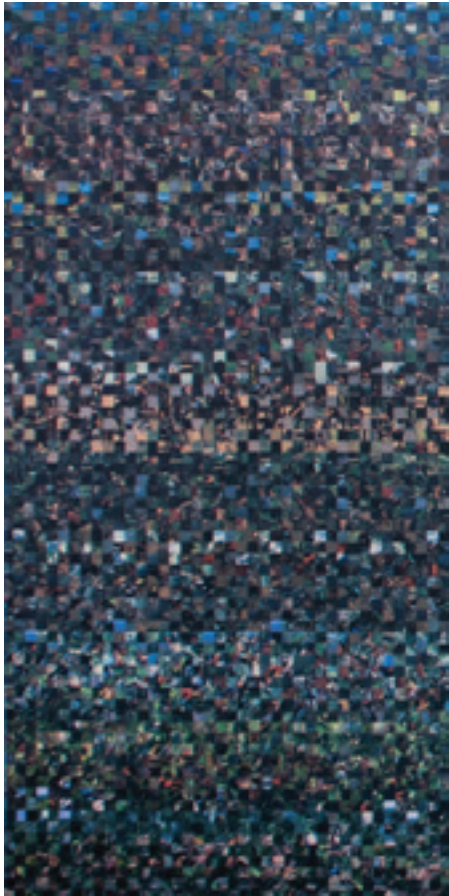
From afar, the pixelated wall of green squares resemble an overwhelming camouflage pattern, itself a method of disguise in the forest. Yet each magnet is a printed image of the tropical rainforest, taken from over four decades of National Geographic magazines. The magnets are not arranged in the original layouts and are instead, mixed with other images creating a pixelated dynamic quality that reminds the viewers of their printed origins as well as highlights the fact that for most of us, our first encounters and memories of different cultures and geographies are mediated ones, and for many, from reading National Geographic magazines.

The work is a further development of her exploration into humankind's fascination with the tropical forest through time, and how our perception and interest in it can tracked through "documentary" photographs in these magazines. The use of magnets as a modern day holiday souvenir, references her earlier works which try to imagine and recreates the gifts colonial traders and explorers sent home to their family and friends or kept as ways of remembering and recreating their memories and experiences elsewhere. In doing so, Ong hopes to challenge our understanding and perception of the forest – how that affects the way we think and deal with it, including the decisions we make about it ecologically, politically, socially and economically.

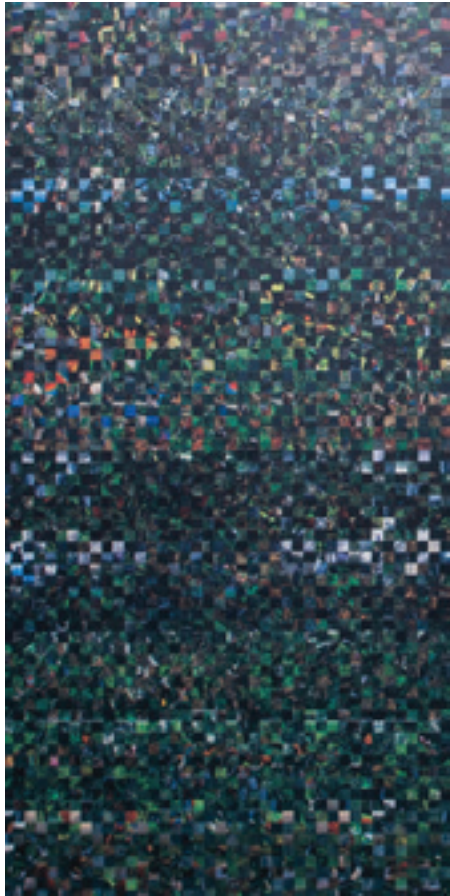


DONNA ONG

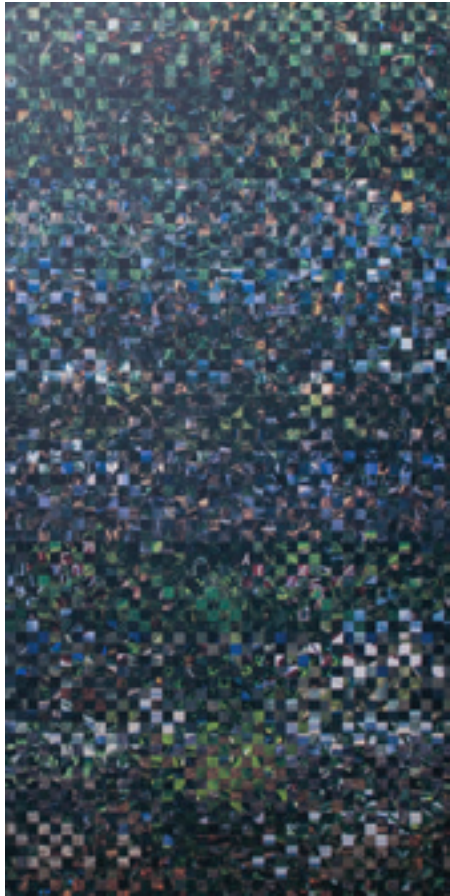
*Tropical Shades (I)- Rainforest narratives from the
National Geographic (2010-2018), 2018*
UV print on rubber magnets
94.49h x 47.24w x 0.12d in
(240h x 120w x 0.30d cm) each



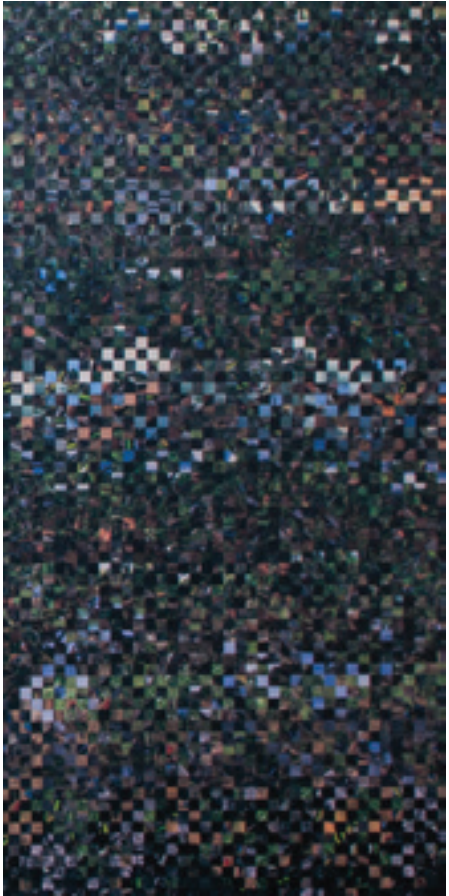
SPI_DO005



SPI_DO006



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SPI_DO008



DONNA ONG

HEMAN CHONG

COVER (VERSIONS)

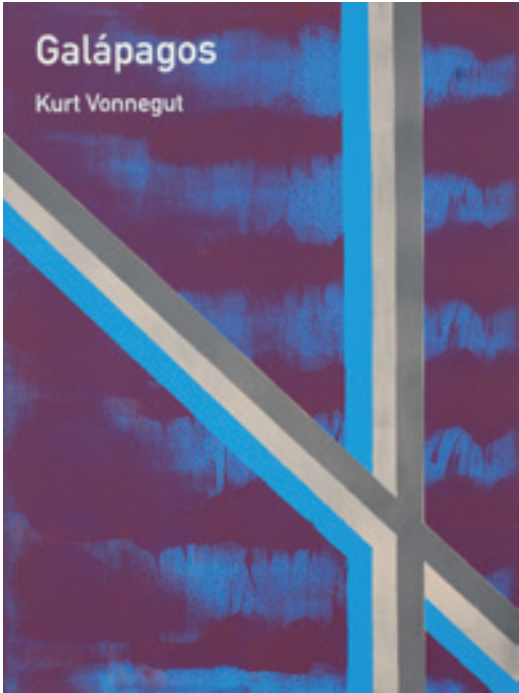
Cover (Versions) is an on-going series of book covers imagined as paintings. The book titles are taken from an extensive bibliography of 400 and more books that Chong uses as reference material for his fiction writing.

Each painting maintains the same exact dimensions of 46 x 61 centimeters. Each painting is conceived within the act of painting; there has never been a sketch, or a pre-assumption of what the painting will be. Each painting borrows freely from the history of painting without consideration, hesitation or restraint. The words on each painting are set in DIN 1451, the definitive font used by Germany for traffic signs, chosen for its legibility, betraying Chong's formal education in graphic design.

This series is emblematic of Chong's practice whose work is located at the intersection between image, performance, situations and writing. His work continuously interrogates the many functions of the production of narratives in our everyday lives.



HEMAN CHONG



(from left to right)

Rogue Male / Geoffery Household, 2014
acrylic on canvas
24.02h x 18.11w x 1.38d in
(61h x 46w x 3.50d cm)

Galápagos / Kurt Vonnegut, 2012
acrylic on canvas
24.02h x 18.11w x 1.38d in
(61h x 46w x 3.50d cm)

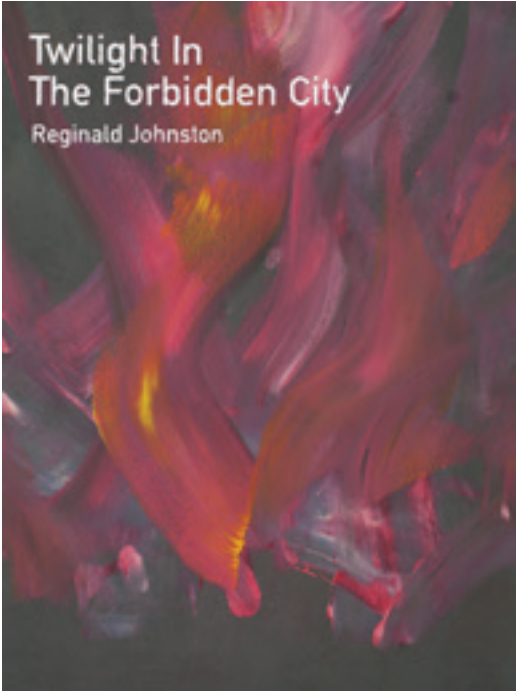
Vanishing Point / Felix Cheong, 2015
acrylic on canvas
24.02h x 18.11w x 1.38d in
(61h x 46w x 3.50d cm)

(from left to right)

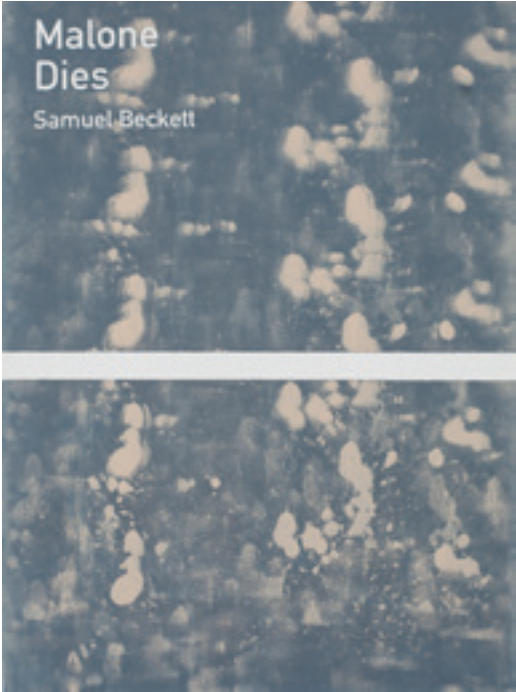
The Elementary Particles / Michel Houellebecq, 2013
acrylic on canvas
24.02h x 18.11w x 1.38d in
(61h x 46w x 3.50d cm)

Still Building / Haresh Sharma, 2015
acrylic on canvas
24.02h x 18.11w x 1.38d in
(61h x 46w x 3.50d cm)

Twilight In The Forbidden City / Reginald Johnston, 2013
acrylic on canvas
24.02h x 18.11w x 1.38d in
(61h x 46w x 3.50d cm)



HEMAN CHONG

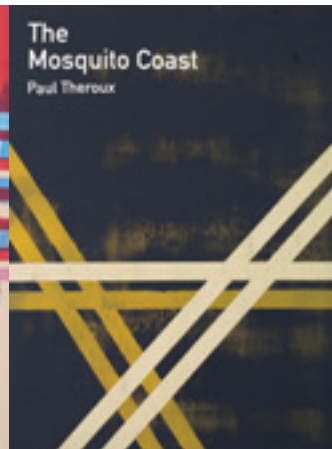
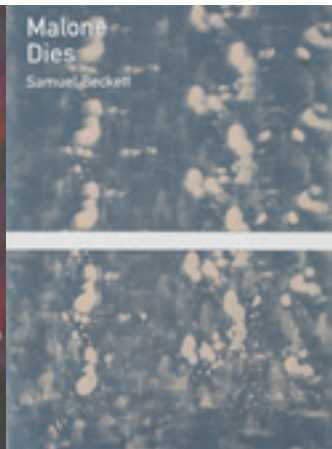
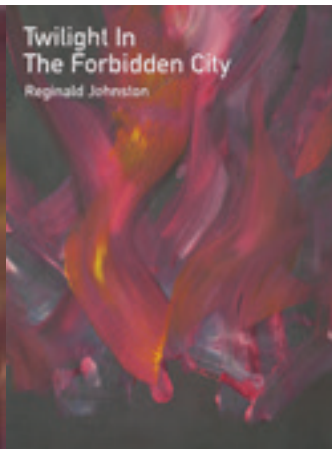
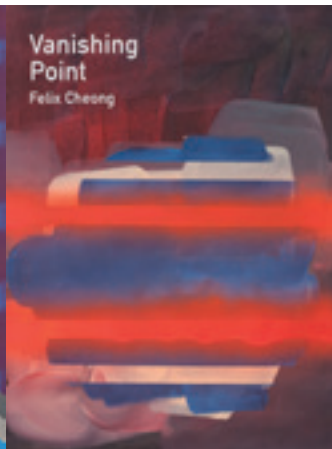


(from left to right)

Malone Dies / Samuel Beckett, 2012
acrylic on canvas
24.02h x 18.11w x 1.38d in
(61h x 46w x 3.50d cm)

Jail Bird / Kurt Vonnegut, 2014
acrylic on canvas
24.02h x 18.11w x 1.38d in
(61h x 46w x 3.50d cm)

The Mosquito Coast / Paul Theroux, 2013
acrylic on canvas
24.02h x 18.11w x 1.38d in
(61h x 46w x 3.50d cm)



PHI PHI OANH

PRO SE

Oanh's experimental approach to Vietnamese lacquer painting has pushed boundaries with this traditional material. Lacquer in Vietnam was originally used as a natural varnish to protect the surfaces of furniture until it was reinvented as a painting medium under the French colony in late 1920s Hanoi. The peculiarities of this medium require layers of lacquer to be built up on a base surface and then sanded down, revealing the underlayers and lacquer's trademark luminous depth and sheen.

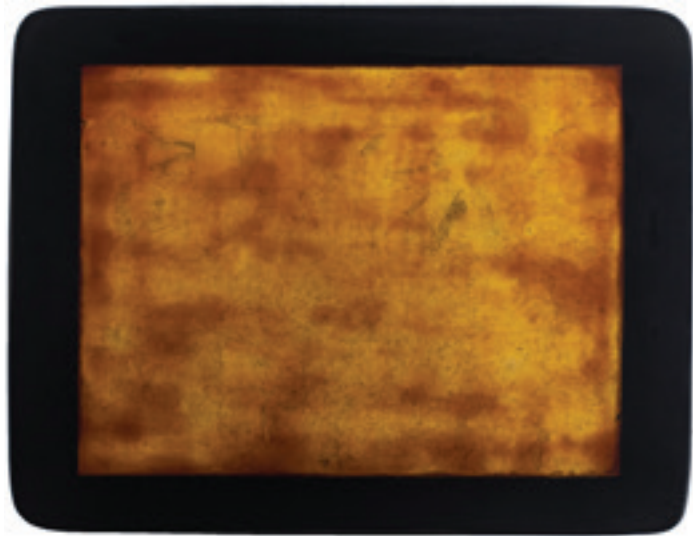
Oanh treats the process as an area of artistic research to explore the critical possibilities of lacquer.

The paintings in this exhibition are selected from *Pro Se*, a series of lacquer paintings reflecting digital media. The dimensions of the paintings allude to the portable digital tablet with the glossy lacquered surfaces mimicking the touch sensitive glass of these ubiquitous devices. Always by our side like an extension of our being, these digital devices entertain us, help record our memories, plan our lives, and connect us. Ultimately they express how we mediate the world and represent a window into our collective imagination. Although the painting image is static, Oanh relies on the materiality of the lacquer medium and ever shifting light against the gold and silver leaf to suggest movement and the flickering screen.

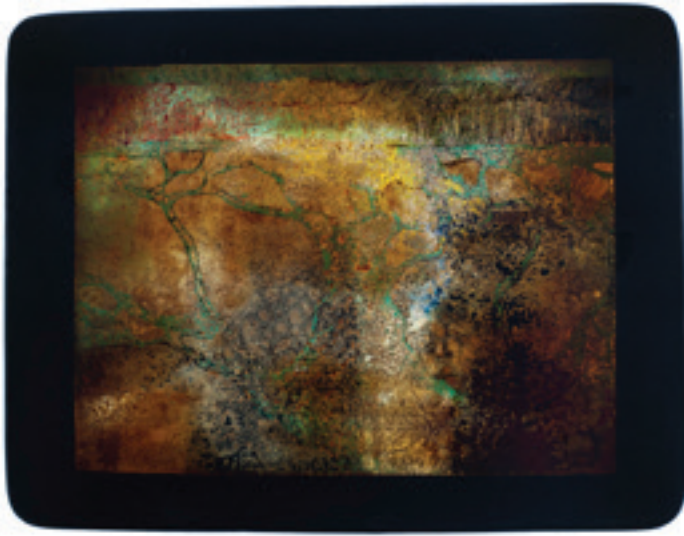
The first iteration of *Pro Se* was exhibited at *Radiant Material*, at the National Gallery Singapore in 2017 and was created as a response to the seminal 1936 Vietnamese lacquer painting *Les Fées* [*The Fairies*] by Nguyen Gia Tri. For this installation, the selected Pro Se paintings are arranged like a vertical scroll corresponding to the way we experience images in social media. Taking her cue from the consumption of images in the 1930s, *Pro Se* reflects on the inundation of digital images in the 21st century, and the contrasting use of a labor and time intensive medium to illustrate fleeting, virtual images.



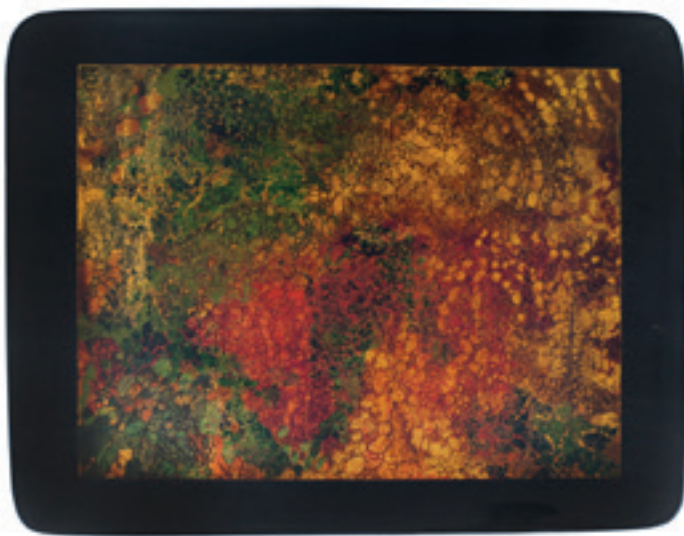
PHI PHI OANH



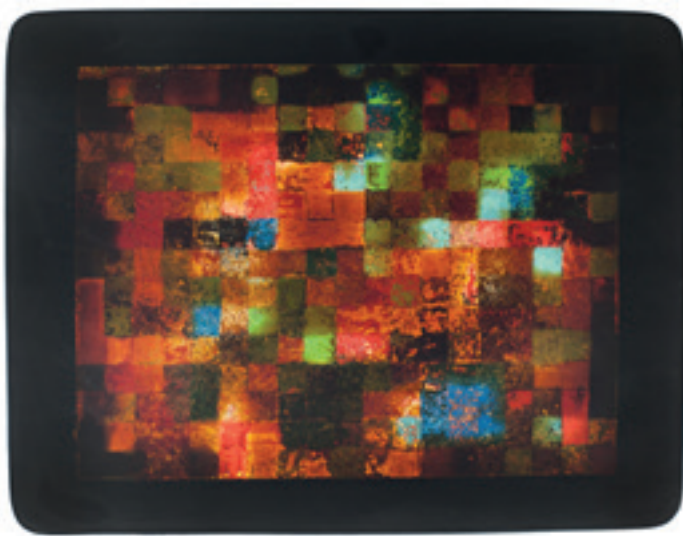
Pro Se 1, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 2, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)

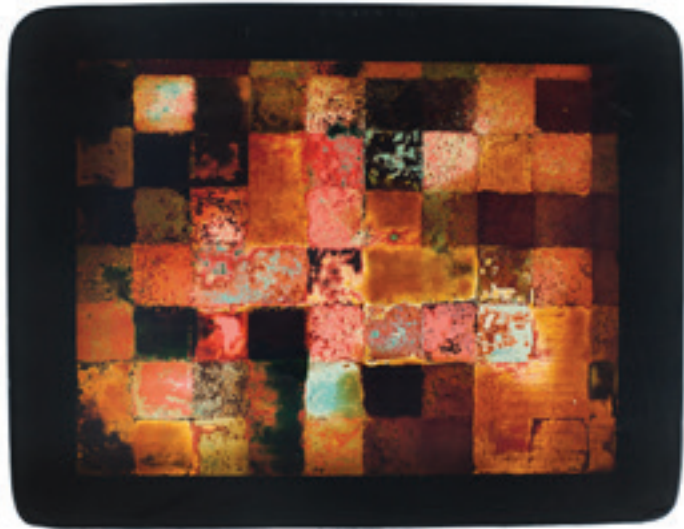


Pro Se 3, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 4, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)

PHI PHI OANH



Pro Se 5, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 6, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 7, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 8, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)

PHI PHI OANH



Pro Se 9, 2017

Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 10, 2017

Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 11, 2017

Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 12, 2017

Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)

PHI PHI OANH



Pro Se 13, 2017

Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 14, 2017

Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 15, 2017

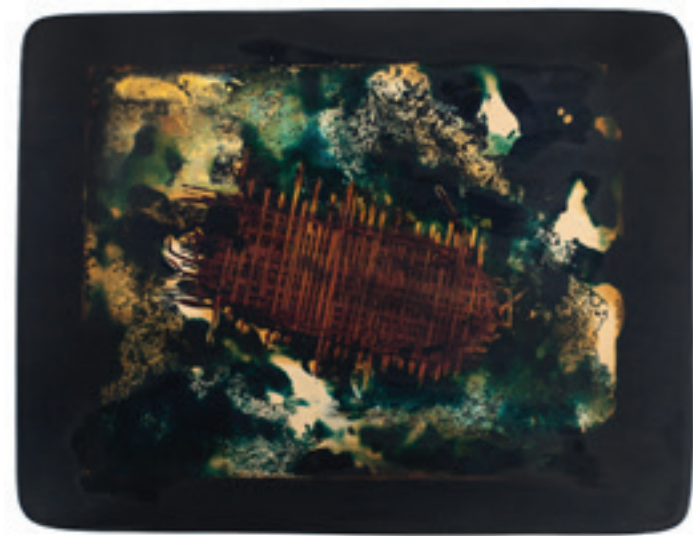
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 16, 2017

Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)

PHI PHI OANH



Pro Se 17, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 18, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 19, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)

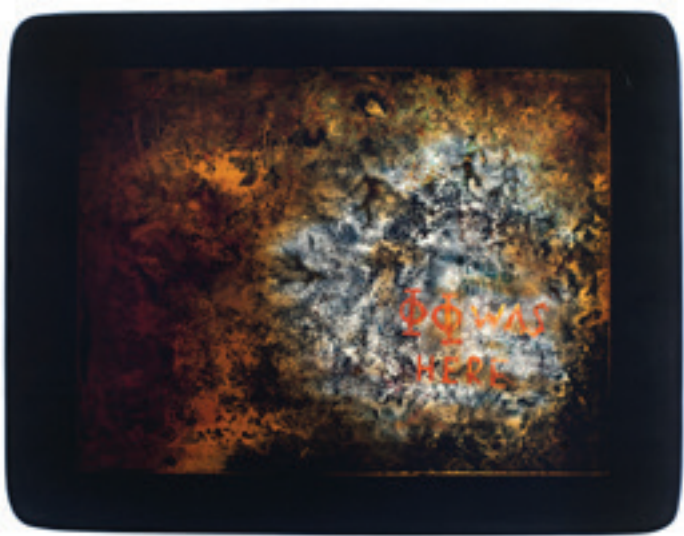


Pro Se 20, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)

PHI PHI OANH



Pro Se 21, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



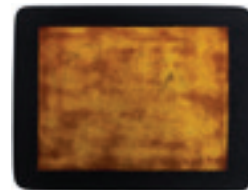
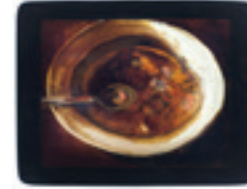
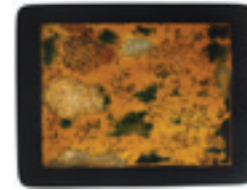
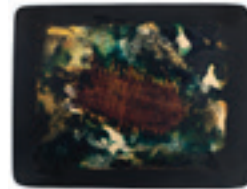
Pro Se 22, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 23, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



Pro Se 24, 2017
Son Ta Vietnamese lacquer on wood panel
9.45h x 7.09w x 0.59d in
(24h x 18w x 1.50d cm)



about the artists

DONNA ONG

b. 1978, Singapore

Donna Ong is an installation artist from Singapore, best known for her evocative and thought-provoking environments made from furniture, found objects and original artwork. She has exhibited at the inaugural Singapore Biennale (2007), Jakarta Biennale (2009), Kwandu Biennale (2008), 2nd Moscow Biennale (2007), and the Moscow Biennale of Young Art (2014).

Her installations have appeared in museums and institutions worldwide, such as the Singapore Art Museum, National Museum of Singapore, Hara Museum (Japan) and the Djanogly Art Gallery in Nottingham University (UK). In 2009, she received the Singapore National Arts Council Young Artist Award. In the same year, she also won the People's Choice award for the President's Young Talent Competition. While pursuing her Bachelor's degrees in Fine Art and Architecture at Goldsmith's College (UK) and University College London (UCL) respectively, she was conferred several awards and prizes such as UCL's Singapore Undergraduate Scholarship, the Shell-NAC Undergraduate Scholarship and the Architectural Theory Prize. She recently completed a Masters degree in Fine Art at Lasalle College (Singapore) where she graduated at the top of her cohort.

She has participated in several prestigious art residencies such as Arts Initiative Tokyo (Japan), Koganecho Bazaar (Yokohama, Japan), Singapore Tyler Print Institute (Singapore), Kunsterhaus Bethanien (Berlin, Germany) and Krinzinger Projekte (Vienna, Austria). She will be presenting a major new work My forest is not your garden (2016-2018), in collaboration with Singapore-based artist Robert Zhao Renhui for the upcoming 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (Australia).

Heman Chong is an artist whose work is located at the intersection between image, performance, situations and writing. He has recently produced a series of interconnected exhibitions located in Art Sonje Center (Never, A Dull Moment, 2015), South London Gallery (An Arm, A Leg and Other Stories, 2015), Rockbund Art Museum (Ifs, Ands, Or Buts, 2016), 72-13 (Because, the Night, 2017) and Swiss Institute (Legal Bookshop (Shanghai), 2018).

He has participated in numerous international biennales including 1st Yichuan Biennale (2016), 20th Sydney Biennale (2016), 10th Gwangju Biennale (2014), Asia Pacific Triennale 7 (2012), Performa 11 (2011), Momentum 6 (2011), Manifesta 8 (2010), 2nd Singapore Biennale (2008), SCAPE Christchurch Biennale (2006), Busan Biennale (2004), 10th India Triennale (2000) and represented Singapore in the 50th Venice Biennale (2003).

He is the co-director and founder (with Renée Staal) of 'The Library of Unread Books' which has been installed in NTU Center for Contemporary Art in Singapore, The Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD) in Manila and Casco Projects in Utrecht. Chong's works are in the permanent collections of Art Sonje Center, Kadist Art Foundation, M+ Museum, NUS Museum, Rockbund Art Museum and the Singapore Art Museum. He is currently working on a novel The Book of Drafts which will be published by Polyparenthesis in 2019.

Phi Phi Oanh is a Vietnamese-American artist who constructs pictorial installations of evocative meditative spaces. Drawing from the hybrid nature of her personal history, she reconfigures culturally specific signs and symbols to create familiar yet unusual and distinctive experiential places.

She has exhibited internationally in China, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam. She has shown in solo shows at L'Espace, Alliance Francaise in Hanoi, Artcore in Los Angeles, Art League in Houston as well as El Palacio Nacional de la Cultura in Managua, Nicaragua. Some of her notable exhibitions in Singapore include her monumental installation Specula in the Singapore Biennale (2013), Pro Se, at the National Gallery for the exhibition Radiant Material: A Dialogue in Vietnamese Lacquer Painting (2017) and most recently Palimpsest in the exhibition Trees of Life-Knowledge in Material at the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art (2018).

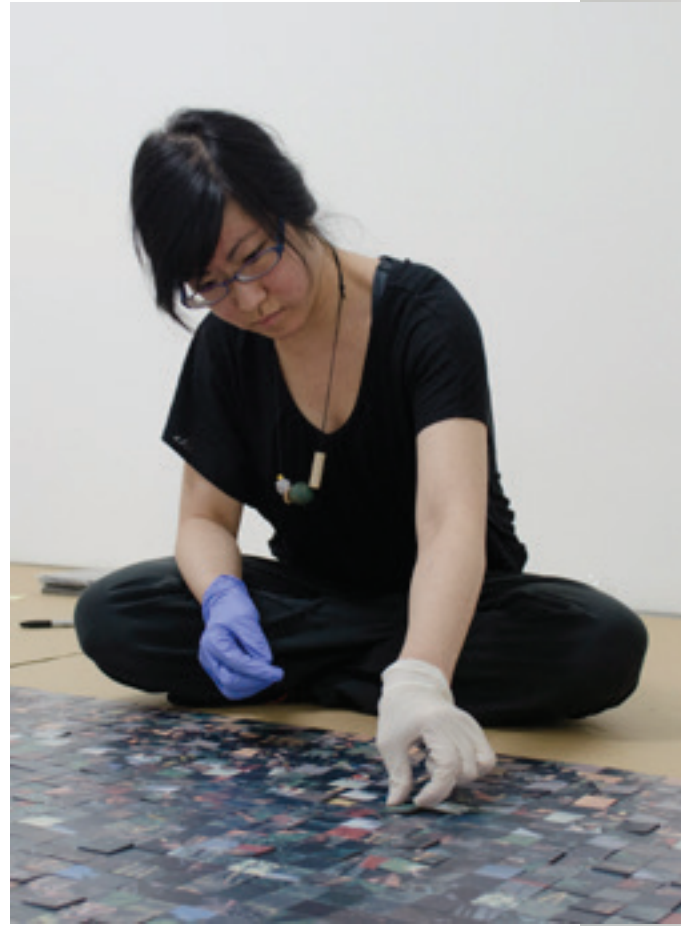
She received her M.A. in Art and Research from the Universidad de Madrid Complutense in Spain and her BFA from Parsons School of Design in New York. She currently works and lives in Hanoi, Vietnam.

HEMAN CHONG

b. 1977, Singapore

PHI PHI OANH

b. 1979, Vietnam





ABOUT SILVERLENS

Through its artist representation, institutional collaborations, art consultancy, and exhibition programming including art fairs and gallery partnerships, **SILVERLENS** aims to place its artists within the broader framework of the contemporary art dialogue. Its continuing efforts to transcend borders across art communities in Asia have earned it recognition from both artists and collectors as one of the leading contemporary art galleries in Southeast Asia. **SILVERLENS** was founded by Isa Lorenzo and Rachel Rillo in 2004.

ABOUT FOST GALLERY

Established in 2006, the eponymous **FOST Gallery** takes its name from its founder, Stephanie Fong, who from the outset made it its mission to show progressive contemporary artists from around the world with a special focus on artists based in Singapore.

FOST Gallery has been acknowledged internationally for its rigorous curatorial outlook and critically acclaimed exhibitions and is recognised as one of the preeminent galleries in Southeast Asia.