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Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia,
Volume 2, Number 2, October 2018, pp. 33-62 (Article)

Published by NUS Press Pte Ltd

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/sen.2018.0014>



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Relocating Kim Lim:

A Cosmopolitan Perspective

JOLEEN LOH

Abstract

The task of re-evaluating Kim Lim's practice is challenged by the difficulty of tracking the artistic and generational impact of an artist that is largely absent from institutionalised histories of post-war art in both Britain and Singapore. A fuller account of Lim's practice must relocate it within an artistic milieu out of which diasporic and immigrant artists in Britain engaged with various critical modernisms. This article addresses Lim's significance to the discourse of modern sculpture, why she was forgotten, and the communities to which her practice should be assigned to. It also gives prospects for alternate ways to re-historicise Lim's contributions to sculpture by examining the aesthetic strategies and philosophies of Rasheed Araeen, Li Yuan-Chia and David Medalla. In doing so, Lim becomes more central to the internationalising community that produced London's cosmopolitan atmosphere, shaped by the back-and-forth travelling of ideas and peoples.

Kim Lim (b. 1936; d. 1997) has received the distinction of being a Singapore-born Chinese artist who was often included in important surveys of modern British sculpture. However, whether this “inclusion” in exhibitions ensured that her works enjoyed adequate, interpretive readings proper to the artistic debates around post-war sculpture is a separate matter. Lim established her

[Southeast of Now
Vol. 2 No. 2 (October 2018), pp. 33–62]

practice as part of a generation of British artists who were proclaiming a new territory for sculpture in the wake of Anthony Caro. She was included in notable survey exhibitions such as *British Sculpture out of the Sixties* (1970) and *Hayward Annual* (1977) alongside predominantly male, white artists whose legacies are now secured in the story of post-war British sculpture: this includes artists like Caro, John Latham, Philip King, William Tucker and her husband William Turnbull. However, like many artists from the former Commonwealth territories and British colonies who arrived in London after the Second World War to pursue an art education, Lim was perceived as an outsider, and was subsequently squeezed out of ethno-nationalist constructions of British art history. Despite the considerable acclaim she received in the 1960s and 1970s, her practice remains absent from academic literature on minimalism and sculpture in post-war Britain.¹

Lim's practice nonetheless gained visibility in other contexts beyond the academy, through exhibitions, commissions, institutional acquisitions and various art markets, during her lifetime and after her passing.² Almost two decades since her death in 1997, Lim's works have "suddenly" surfaced in the national histories of modern art both in Britain and Singapore, and have made appearances at prominent venues for modern and contemporary art.³ While the different curatorial labours to recuperate Lim's works within these exhibitionary settings have been necessary interventions and starting points for a more inclusive and complex account of modern art, the whys and wherefores around the past indifferences towards her practice and subsequent appearance in national art histories still need to be addressed and publicly discussed.

This article is primarily concerned with two questions pertaining to the recuperation of Lim's practice in art history. First, what was Lim's significance in the discourse of modern sculpture? Lim's sculptural philosophy developed in tandem with her lifelong travels across Europe and Asia, enabling her to prospect transcultural sources for her sculptural interests, beyond the exclusivity of Euro-American art. Configuring a retrospective view of Lim's practice through works from the 1960s and 1970s that crystallise the more salient aspects of her sculptural philosophy, I will begin by elucidating how Lim redefined an approach to "minimalism" on her own terms, one which insisted upon sculpture's cosmopolitan coordinates.

Second, to what communities should Lim's sculptural practice be assigned today? Nationalist frameworks for understanding art within the context of contemporary globalisation—often accused of parochialism and perpetuating East-West binaries—seem inadequate in valuing the multiple cross-cultural encounters and affiliations that are central to understanding Lim's practice.

This task of retrospectively reappraising Lim's legacy is also troubled by the challenge of tracking the artistic and generational impact of an artist who has been left out of institutionalised accounts of art history in both Britain and Singapore.⁴ Although Lim distanced herself from racially or ideologically defined collectivities during her lifetime, I argue that a fuller account of Lim's contributions to the discourse of sculpture requires multivalent readings. Such an account must be historically relocated within a cosmopolitan artistic milieu out of which African, Caribbean and Asian artists in Britain engaged with various critical modernisms. In doing so, Lim becomes much more central to the internationalising community that produced London's cosmopolitan atmosphere, which was shaped by the back-and-forth travelling of ideas and peoples.

While previous literature on Lim has laid the ground for ascertaining the influences and biases that informed her work,⁵ this article is aimed at relocating Lim's practice in expanded contextual fields. The project, then, is not to make Lim a "British artist", nor a "Singaporean artist" for that matter; rather, this article seeks to offer other ways to perceive and value Lim's cosmopolitanism beyond the centre-periphery binaries prevalent in much current scholarship. This requires attending to the differentiated forms of encounters and affiliations that entangle the art histories of Britain and Singapore, rather than the appraising of cultural difference. In this regard, these are initial explorations for prospecting alternate ways of narrating Lim's position in art history.

Kim Lim: Sculpture's Cosmopolitan Attachments

Lim spent her early life in Singapore, Penang and Malacca. In the summer of 1954, at the age of 18, Lim moved to London to pursue an arts education at the St Martin's School of Art. After studying at the St Martin's from 1954 to 1956, where she felt stifled by curricular emphasis on life drawing, Lim transferred to the Slade School of Art and graduated in 1960.⁶ Since the formative years of her practice, Lim was far more interested in the possibilities of abstract form than she was with naturalism, a major tenet of sculpture in British art schools in her day. Nevertheless, she independently pursued her own language for abstraction outside of classrooms and, in 1966, held her first solo exhibition at London's Axiom Gallery, where she showed several painted wood and steel sculptures, articulating a vocabulary of flat abstract forms. Her sculptures from the mid-1960s were characterised by an exploration of flatness and stress on profile through the use of industrial materials and paints, as seen in *Echo* (1967, Figure 1).



FIGURE 1: Kim Lim, *Echo*, 1967, stainless steel, enamel paint and zinc coating, 77 × 80 × 80 cm. Collection of National Gallery Singapore. Gift of William Turnbull. Image courtesy of National Heritage Board

Lim received considerable, albeit brief, recognition in London through the aforementioned survey exhibitions and other solo presentations. Given her solo exhibitions were at prominent venues such as the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford (1975) and the Tate Gallery (1977), which were considerable affirmations of her practice during a period when presentation opportunities for non-white artists in the United Kingdom were few and far between.⁷ Critics often considered her works in parity to influential sculptors of the time too. For instance, one reviewer for *The Guardian* drew the connections between her work with the sculptures of William Tucker and Philip King.⁸

Despite gaining a reputation as a sculptor in Britain, Lim's name barely featured in any subsequent narrating of post-war British or international art. The artist-curator Rasheed Araeen once remarked that many "Afro-Asian artists", to use his term, who were institutionally welcomed in the late 1950s and 1960s were often pigeonholed by their ethnicity, or contained under the rubric of the Commonwealth.⁹ As such, their works did not receive the theoretical and material analysis adequate to visual arts of the time. As will be discussed later, ethnicity was just one of several reasons for their disqualification from the canon. It is important to note that the "West", for instance, also remains asymmetrically organised within itself, with its metropolitan centres overshadowing the artistic activities and discourses emerging out of other locales.

In the case of Lim, there have been attempts by many critics to draw connections between her art and her Chinese ethnicity, despite Lim's efforts to deflect racialised readings of her work.¹⁰ A glance at Lim's exhibition reviews reveal the many instances in which reviewers have foregrounded her ethnicity and gender. In one instance, a reviewer of Lim's first solo exhibition felt the need to highlight that she was "tiny, pretty, relaxed, [...] exactly what one expects of a sophisticated Oriental woman".¹¹

What distinguished Lim's practice were the several cultural coordinates that she would declare as sources for her sculptural formation. As will be discussed, these became sustained as grounds for her own approach to "minimalism" beyond its originations and burgeoning developments in Euro-American contexts. Particularly, she engaged in a sustained study of archaic sculpture as well as what she loosely termed "Eastern art of the past" and its philosophies.¹² From Zen philosophy to Chinese art, and from the ancient architecture of various civilisations in Asia to Japanese rock gardens, Lim prospected broad frames of reference for her own language for abstraction, which were wide-ranging but never, in her opinion, competing with one another. This was a sensibility that she developed from seeing a range of international art in the collections of British museums, and also from her extensive travels across East and Southeast Asia. Together with Turnbull, Lim frequently visited historic and architectural sites across Cambodia, China, Indonesia, India, Japan and Malaysia, to name some examples. All throughout her life, she maintained that the experiences of these travels were her "real visual education", outlasting the impact of the formal art education she received in London.¹³

Lim's sculptural philosophy did not fit tidily with emerging ideas of modern sculpture that were gaining traction during the 1960s, particularly the kind driven by the American critic Clement Greenberg and his followers, which allowed no room for cross-cultural inflections into its universalist models of "pure" abstraction. Many of the debates in modern British sculpture in the 1960s had centred around Caro and, subsequently, his students, the so-named New Generation of sculptors, which included King, Tucker, Isaac Witkin and David Annesley.¹⁴ Caro offered a radically new order for sculpture that could transact with the international trend towards abstraction.¹⁵ By and large, this was an approach that was unburdened by the history of 20th-century British sculpture and its heavy, monolithic forms created through the intricacies of carving and modelling.

Works like *Early One Morning* (1962, Figure 2) demonstrate how Caro substituted monolithic mass and the conventions of carving and modelling for industrially-produced components. His sculptures were usually welded



FIGURE 2: Anthony Caro, *Early One Morning*, 1962, steel and aluminium, painted red, 290 × 620 × 333 cm. Collection of Tate. Photo: John Riddy. Image courtesy of Barford Sculptures Ltd

and bolted, brightly painted and placed directly on the ground. Caro's proposals for sculpture, canonised by critics like Greenberg and Michael Fried, crystallised many ideas current among a generation of sculptors in Britain looking to re-envision new possibilities for modern art fitting of their time, outside of the officially sanctioned, humanist sculptures of Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth.

Even as Lim de-articulated her works from the masculinised rhetoric of sculpture surrounding Caro and his disciples, we can see how the radically new syntax for sculpture that Caro offered in the early 1960s shared similar formal concerns as those of the quasi-architectonic, welded and painted structures produced by Lim in the mid-1960s such as *Echo* (Figure 1).¹⁶ The steel, shell-like structure defines a spherical content of space in the negative, and demonstrates Lim's interests in finding formal solutions to rendering mass tenuous.¹⁷ Lim and Caro shared a commitment to the modernist conception of sculpture as an autonomous entity, displacing its earlier associations with the idyllic, figurative and organic. However, it is worth noting that Lim's works would soon extend beyond the sculptural syntax proposed by Caro, in search of other sources of visual languages for her sculptures.

FIGURE 3: Kim Lim, *Intervals I plus II*, 1973, pine, each section 182.8 cm (h). Collection of National Gallery Singapore. Image courtesy of the estate of Kim Lim



From the late 1960s and 1970s, Lim's sculptures became characterised by modular forms, intervalled spaces and the rejection of formal composition, suggesting a different internal logic from those underlying Caro's carefully composed structures.¹⁸ For instance, *Intervals I plus II* (1973) (Figure 3), comprising four wood ladder-like units leaning against a wall, was installed according to one of several arrangements to delineate a regular succession of spaces in between. The repeated units, which could be installed in several permutations prescribed by Lim, adhered to the austere, conceptual rule-following grammar common in American minimalism, demonstrating her interest in sculpture across the Atlantic, in addition to the Asian geographies mentioned above.

Further consideration of Lim's sculptural philosophy prompts us to dislodge the rational frames through which minimalism is conventionally framed, such as the methodical aesthetic categories developed by artists and critics to assess or define minimalism, from Donald Judd's "specific objects" to Mel Bochner's systems and serial methods, and John Perreault's "minimal abstracts".¹⁹ Lim never appeared to have been interested in these impersonal tones or in pursuing serious aesthetic rigour, let alone in being considered a minimalist with a capital "M". Instead, she deviated from the



FIGURE 4: Kim Lim, *Column I*, 1960, wood, 94 cm (h). Photograph: Kim Lim. Image courtesy of the estate of Kim Lim

dominant discourses of sculpture in circulation during the 1960s and 1970s in Europe and North America, and replaced it with her own expressive vision for minimalism.

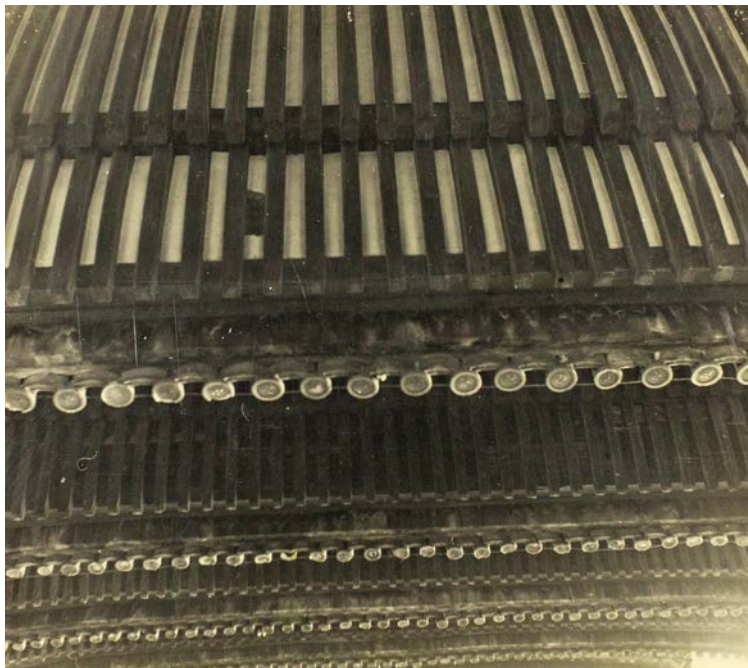
Speaking about the usage of space in her modular structures, Lim said: “It is a feeling for space that I want to express while being aware of the pulses and rhythms in nature.”²⁰ Lim often described her work in terms activating the “spaces in between”²¹ instead of the syntactical structures themselves, choosing to elect space, rhythm and light as important sculptural materials. These modular structures were, in Lim’s words, created to “sustain a certain rhythm, where space is not emptiness but a palpable reality.”²² Her exploration of rhythm emerged in 1960 through the use of repeated modular wood blocks as seen in *Column I* (Figure 4), before minimalism’s fascination with the serial, repetitive and cellular gained currency in Britain.²³ Unlike what Gregory Battcock has described as Minimalism’s obvious step towards “a more rigid spatial structuralisation,” Lim’s interests in repetition, rhythm and space were explored for their metaphorical potential.²⁴ She wrote: “The use of repeated forms, elements to delineate, to trap space, [were] all in the effort to find the

apt metaphor to make visual certain aspects of the physical world experienced through the senses other than sight.”²⁵

Lim’s sculptures offered a metaphorical and organic understanding of repetition and seriality, which referenced a world outside of the white cube gallery. At this level, she offered a critique of the position arrived at by minimalist sculpture, particularly in its cultivation of various orderly systems of serialisation, repetition and uniformity. While she was not the first to take sculpture beyond the horizon of minimalism,²⁶ her works signalled the artist’s agency in defining her own sculptural syntax outside of what was proposed by Caro and his followers, and which was neither outside the laws of minimalism nor entirely within its clutch. Lim’s differentiated position on minimalism was also noted by critics. For instance, the critic Mel Gooding astutely observed that though her works in the 1970s “showed an affinity with American and European minimal abstraction, its play with atmospherics of shadow and its frequently diagonal dispositions suggested other impulses than to the cool and undemonstrative”.²⁷

Another aspect of Lim’s practice which set her apart from her peers was her lifelong interest in archaic sculpture and “Eastern philosophies and religion”, which was reinforced through her travels.²⁸ For instance, Lim’s emphasis on the “in-between spaces” was informed by her interpretations of the notions of space observed across Chinese aesthetic principles, Zen gardens and ancient monuments, where space is not emptied out, but used to open a horizon towards which our visual, aesthetic and spiritual attention is directed.²⁹ During her travels, Lim photographed what she saw extensively and in great detail, and developed these images in a makeshift darkroom at home.³⁰ She documented historic monuments, roof structures, friezes, sculptures and nature, often in close-up and from several angles (Figures 5–10). The artist’s studio pin-board was plastered with images of architecture, the rhythmic structures of monuments and landscapes alike; each expressing the interaction between surface, space and natural light to startling effect. These photographs, I contend, functioned as studies for the artist, wherein her interests in the interaction between space, light and object were explored using a photographic syntax. They were not empirical studies, but constitute her observations of the temporally evolving morphologies found in the material culture of various locales and times, which informed her sculptural language.

Here, it is important to ascertain how exactly these multiple references play out for Lim. It would be difficult, if not futile, to identify every reference that impacted Lim’s works, which were unwavering in their refusal of visual verisimilitude. Yet, regardless of how little her works disclose of their sources,





FIGURES 5–10: Travel photographs taken at the Panch Mahal in Fatehpur Sikri, India (undated); Hōryū-ji Temple in Nara and Kiyomizu-dera Temple in Kyoto, Japan (c. 1962) and Angkor Wat, Cambodia (1962). Photographs: Kim Lim. Images courtesy of the estate of Kim Lim

Lim insisted that the sources for her sculpture came from her self-initiated travels, which reinforced an “empathy” for eastern art and philosophy.³¹ She cited her cross-cultural references, for instance, in an interview published in the 1968 *Studio International* journal, which featured across its pages nine of Lim’s constructive sculptures in steel, aluminium and fibreglass as exemplary of her practice.³²

In re-examining Lim’s practice, it is important to move away from formalist readings around *what* these cross-cultural references are, and instead ask *how* they were used. Turning to other sources beyond what was readily available in her art history curriculum allowed Lim to move beyond the Eurocentric core of western art discourse. This is evidenced not only in formal analysis of the artist’s works, but also in her own accounts. Recalling her encounter with western art historical pedagogy, Lim said:

when I went to the Slade there was art history where you learnt that, you know, there were the primitive art [sic], leading up to the kind of epitome of Western art, which is the Renaissance, and, I still don’t feel that way [...] there were other things equally good which you can’t kind of equate it that way. So, in the end you just have to go according to your instincts [...]³³

Struggling with the teleological and insular account of artistic development she faced in art schools in London, Lim turned to travelling and visiting the international collections of museums for her “main art education”.³⁴ Turning to a wide range of cross-cultural sources for her work allowed Lim to propose multiple spatio-temporal coordinates for sculpture—that is, the complex historical precedents for her sculpture in many cultures across time, beyond the telos of western art history.

Apart from being resources for her art-making, the archaic and traditional functioned as frames through which the artist could avoid the limitations of locality and facilitate a cosmopolitan visuality. For Lim, the archaic as a category was not only lodged in the chronological past, as pure past, denied of simultaneity, but one that does not cease to operate contemporaneously in the present.³⁵ It problematises existing conceptions of modernity that are governed by teleological time and space. If Lim was interested in the archaic and traditional across cultures and time, this was because it provided her with multiple spatio-temporal sources for her sculptures. This is, as Kobena Mercer pointed out, how the concept of cosmopolitanism has been redefined “as an elective choice to be in dialogue with alterity so as to prevent any one strand of identity from assuming a self-insulating monopoly”.³⁶

While it is possible that Lim conflated these distinct aesthetic traditions into a construction she categorised as “eastern”, they nonetheless remained central to her art-making. When asked by art critic Gene Baro about the influence of “art of the Orient” and “Western art” on her work, Lim articulated a philosophical position on sculpture that she would sustain all throughout her practice:

[...] sculpture of all times and societies deals with many of the same basic issues and shared attitudes or declares quite opposite positions about such matters as the relationship of space and mass. The obvious differences, subject matter and superficial treatment, often hide important similarities and sympathies. For me, the experience of sculpture, West and East, taught me what sculpture is about. Experience gave me the motive to go on.³⁷

Even as the artist invoked a range of universalist ideals, this statement brings into focus two matters that preoccupied her: first, a fundamental belief that there were “transhistorical” continuities to be found in sculpture across cultures; and, second, a conviction that any regard for sculpture must consider a broader horizon of aesthetic developments and parameters, beyond the unevenness of what has been captured by classificatory western art historical models. This also highlights the necessity Lim felt to unmoor her work from any framework that privileged the nation or the West as singularly authentic. Both these factors have shaped her *practice* of sculpture.

While the invocations of the archaic might recall quasi-anthropological forays into the “primitive” in search of lost origins, I would argue that what was at stake, for Lim, was never the aestheticisation of cultures, but rather an approach to time. This was not the kind of archaism that returns us to the fetish of lost origins, but about “refusing to be trapped by chronology”.³⁸ While Lim engaged with some tenets of minimalism, she was not interested in the same pursuit of a next threshold for art, but in an admixture of different forms that have surfaced across cultures and histories. They recur all throughout her oeuvre in ways that offer a cyclical, rather than the evolutionist conception of time inherent in the western traditions of high modernism.

In referring to multiple sources, Lim’s practice put pressure on the sculptural syntax promoted by Caro and his followers without conforming to the burgeoning discourse around minimalism. It held open the possibilities for sculpture to be reconfigured by cross-cultural encounters, and experienced from different vantage points. This sculptural formation did not emerge as a concerted effort to oppose Caro or the dominance of American minimalism,

but out of an unhurried, lifelong process of understanding the multiple historical precedents for sculpture. This mode of working reflects the artist's own cosmopolitanism. It embodies what Nikos Papastergiadis describes as a "cosmopolitan imaginary" that proposes for the "[rethinking of] possible lines of connection and the spheres of belonging".³⁹ Papastergiadis evokes an *imaginary* premised upon the principle of openness, and is used to describe the enlargement of perspective or consciousness that occurs from the encounter of the "other".⁴⁰ While there was no outwardly defined goal to which Lim's cosmopolitanism was directed towards, to read Lim's artistic practice under its aegis allows us to place emphasis on her artistic agency and disposition, as well as the processes of cross-cultural interactions that have informed her sculpture making. However, despite her contributions to the discourse of sculpture, Lim's practice did not enter the art historical narratives of Singapore or Britain. Why was Lim forgotten, and to what communities do we assign her practice to today? It is to these questions that I will now turn.

Britain's "'Lost' Cosmopolitan Moment"⁴¹

It is worth noting that Lim declined an invitation from the London-based artist, critic and curator Rasheed Araeen to participate in *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-war Britain* at the Hayward Gallery in 1989. The exhibition was a historically important showcase of works by artists of Asian, African or Caribbean cultural heritage who were practising artists in post-war Britain. It was conceived by Araeen as a necessary intervention into the insular canon of Euro-American modern art being constructed and officialised by institutions at the time.⁴² However, Lim was wary of enfolded herself into a rhetoric of essentialism. She wrote: "[...] to participate would be to self-consciously place myself in a situation of 'otherness'".⁴³

Lim's response was symptomatic of widespread anxieties felt by artists in Britain towards bureaucratic models of multiculturalism, which claimed inclusiveness but pigeonholed their practices according to "race" and cultural heritage. However, the presence of artists from the Commonwealth countries and from Britain's former colonies had long been a feature in London's artistic sphere, laying the ground for the cosmopolitan environment the city had become known for. To finesse our perspective of Lim's artistic contributions, I will argue that the re-evaluation of her practice must be historically situated within a multifocal circuit that considers the critical relationship engendered by diasporic and immigrant artists in Britain, through their encounters and negotiations with prevailing discourses of modern art.

Lim belonged to what Stuart Hall has described as the “first wave” of black diaspora artists. (“Black”, in its British usage in the 1970s and 1980s, was a politically and culturally constructed category and not a phenotypical one, intended to evoke alliances across all minority migrant communities based on shared histories of colonial repression.)⁴⁴ They were the last “colonials” to be born in the colonies of the British Empire, who arrived in London in the 1950s and 1960s, after the Second World War. Hall nominated artists such as Frank Bowling, Ibrahim El Salahi, Anwar Jalal Shemza as part of this first generation, and included those who were not from former Commonwealth countries but who practised in London, such as Li Yuan-Chia and David Medalla.⁴⁵ Many from the “first wave”, like Lim, had moved to London to attend art school, to fulfil their ambitions to become artists. They arrived in search of a better life, with the same optimism as the rest of the “Windrush” generation of immigrants who were eager to participate in the post-war reconstruction of Britain’s economy and infrastructures.

The “first wave” of black artists was distinguished by their shared belief in artistic modernism as a universal pursuit of progressive ideas and forms, in keeping with the early optimism towards Britain’s post-war modernisation.⁴⁶ Hall noted that modern art was seen as “an international creed, fully consistent with anti-colonialism which was regarded as intrinsic to a modern consciousness”.⁴⁷ These artists believed in the project of artistic modernism because of the perception that it was tied to change, freedom and progression—the basis for a new postcolonial subjectivity.⁴⁸ If these artists remained committed to artistic modernism despite its limited systems of representation and hegemonic machinations, it was because they sought to engage with it as “modern artists” and recalibrate it on their own terms. As Jean Fisher argues, if

the art work was rarely overtly confrontational in content [...] this may well be because this generation saw itself as belonging and contributing to what it anticipated as a non-partisan, international modernism underlined by universalist principles of a common humanity.⁴⁹

We can see how Lim shared in this universalist vision, for instance, when she emphasised the “important similarities and sympathies” in sculpture across societies and times.⁵⁰

But while Lim was singular in her vision for sculpture, her experience of being a so-called ethnic minority artist operating in post-war Britain was not. By and large, many black diasporic artists were subjected to similar forms of indifferences and alienations from canonising institutions and critics

alike, as they were perceived as outsiders.⁵¹ However, to say that they were relegated to the side lines of British art history because of race would be a simplification. The exclusion of the black diasporic artists was entangled in and complicit with the construction of post-war modernism under the long shadow of America's cultural ascendancy.⁵² After World War II, many artists internationally began to shift their focus from Paris to New York as the new artistic centre, mirroring a broader national desire for American popular culture.⁵³ By the 1970s, the London art world began to witness the exclusive promotion of art from countries aligned with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As a result, Araeen argued, the influence of American art has been given central place in the debates around British post-war modernism, taking precedence over ideas that were developed independently by non-white artists in Britain, who were historically central to the development of British minimalism and post-minimalism.⁵⁴ Instead, the works of these artists, like Lim's, were either subjected to biographically or geographically determined readings, or perceived as "derivative" of Euro-American art.⁵⁵ As the discrimination against their practices became increasingly apparent, many black artists either returned home or relocated to New York to benefit from its artistic environment.⁵⁶

Araeen had once described the "first wave" of diaspora as "psychically caught between the place of departure as a lost belonging and a hostile place of arrival to which they could not fully belong".⁵⁷ But to position Lim within a rhetoric of diaspora takes us to vulnerable terrain. It would be inappropriate, for instance, to make commensurate her voluntary nomadism with the kind of cosmopolitanism that is defined by exilic alienation. Hers was not a narrative of enforced displacement: Lim's arrival in London was paved by her liberal, upper-middle class family. Her relationship to her "homeland" was not one characterised by loss and melancholy. Lim stayed in London by choice and never felt compelled to return to Singapore, apart from visits to her family.⁵⁸ The idea of the "homeland" seems to have had no place for Lim or in her works, which pointed to a much wider set of spatial and temporal coordinates beyond the inside-outside divide between diaspora and homeland.

Yet there are alternative ways to narrate Lim's practice outside of the rhetoric of exile, given that the diaspora is increasingly being redefined not through essentialisms but rather as a multi-locational space of travel, where differential perspectives criss-cross and produce what Kobena Mercer describes as "cosmopolitan modernisms".⁵⁹ Mercer argues that it is inadequate to "add in", as an appendage, artists who were once forgotten or ignored; instead, the cross-culturality engendered by the movements and migrations

of people were so central to the material production of art in the 20th century that it necessitates a redefinition of the historical period as definitive of several cosmopolitan modernisms.⁶⁰

From this vantage point, what is required is the ability to recognise and value the differentiated forms of “encounter, negotiation and multiple affiliation” that arise from such cosmopolitanism, rather than the appraisal of cultural difference.⁶¹ The concept of cosmopolitanism has had several semantic transformations in the 20th century, and has returned as an alternative conceptual tool to the flawed, if not vulnerable, pathways of ethno-nationalism and neoliberal globalisation. It is used not to evoke the mobility of the wealthy elites who exist “everywhere and nowhere” or to revisit the myths of globalisation in which the world’s people are fashioned as being liberated from national belonging.⁶² Rather, the renewed formulations of cosmopolitanism acknowledge a condition of multiple belongings that arise from increased cultural entanglements that develop in metropolitan environments. For Ulrich Beck, cosmopolitanism transcends the “either inside or outside” distinction between the national and international through thinking “both inside and outside”.⁶³ Beck further contends that a cosmopolitan outlook concedes to “multiple spatial, temporal and practical both/and realities to which the national perspective remains blind”.⁶⁴

From this perspective, re-examining Lim’s practice as cosmopolitan is propitious. Lim’s practice may be situated in transaction with a new internationalising community of artists, born of the waves of migration that produced post-war London’s cosmopolitan atmosphere. Such a project is necessarily enfolded in attempts by curators and scholars to recuperate post-war Britain’s “‘lost’ cosmopolitan moment”, beginning with case studies such as *The Other Story*.⁶⁵ However, Lim’s only direct contact with the community of black artists operating in London during her lifetime was in the negative: her refusal to participate in *The Other Story* due to her concerns of being “Othered” within the exhibition’s “Afro-Asian” framing. Lim’s position in the discourse of black cultural production is an uneasy one, too, for she was neither black nor did she identify as politically black. Furthermore, the concept of political blackness no longer has the same currency that it had in 1970s and 1980s Britain: Tariq Modood has demonstrated how the concept has obscured the character of the discrimination faced by British Asians, and did not provide a rich enough public identity for their mode of being other than a primary political identity.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, the attempt here is to read Lim’s practice within a historically situated cultural formation in post-war Britain, rather than to reassert its framing to define a singular, unified movement or claim blackness for her.

One way in which to retrospectively regroup and re-narrate Lim's practice in relation to other artists in Britain is to examine the artistic strategies and philosophies they adopted. In doing so, we attend to the ways their artistic strategies negotiated multiple cultural and aesthetic practices in critical ways that decentred the symbolic authority of the official discourses of modernism that they encountered. For instance, I have discussed how Lim's encounter with western art historical pedagogy at school made her cognisant of the embedded hierarchies in the construction of art historical knowledge. Through her lifelong travels, Lim developed an interest in the temporally evolving morphologies across cultures, all of which enabled her to imagine an extra-national status for her work. This thoughtful and sensitive search for other sources for her sculpture making was Lim's own strategy to remedy the problems of a narrowly defined modernism on her own terms.

Other parallels in artistic strategies and philosophies towards more elastic conceptions of sculpture include those of Araeen, Medalla and Li. For Araeen, whose modular, geometric sculptures were informed by his technical training as a civil engineer before his arrival in London in 1964, there was no question that modernism did not only emerge in the context of America, but had its sources elsewhere, specifically in Pakistan where he was born.⁶⁷ The subsequent move to non-hierarchical principles and serial compositions in his sculptures such as *Second Structure* (1966–67), Courtney J. Martin argues, must be read as both an artistic and politicised response to Caro's dominance in the British art world and the influence of American abstraction in Britain.⁶⁸

For Medalla, once described as an "inveterate cosmopolite in the classical sense",⁶⁹ the study of Buddhism, Indian and Chinese art in the 1960s became the impetus for kinetic sculptures such as the *Cloud Canyons* sculptures that he produced since 1963. Medalla's search for a "movement which is elastic and very still and calm ... without the frenzy such as you find in Baroque art"⁷⁰ would result in his shape-shifting bubble machine sculptures that drew as much from the internationalism of Kinetic Art as it did from distinct cultural traditions, ranging from Indian sculpture to Buddhism and Taoist cosmology, used as "analogies for the modern", in Guy Brett's words.⁷¹ Brett further argued that Medalla's bubble machines were a critique of minimalist conceptions of the cellular, serial and repetitive, which were replaced by the kinetic and organic instead.⁷²

Li Yuan-Chia's pioneering abstract sculptures and kinetic installations developed from a complex of negotiations between his encounters with European abstraction, his prior involvement in the influential group of abstract artists called Ton Fan in Taiwan in the 1950s, and his interests in Chinese calligraphy and the principles of both Zen Buddhism and Taoism.⁷³ The flat

three-dimensional circles that characterise his pioneering kinetic sculptures were derived from a lifelong exploration of the idea of a cosmic point, a minimal and at first calligraphic mark, which was informed by a vast range of traditional Chinese cosmologies.

In their distinct ways, the practices of Lim, Araeen, Medalla and Li disclose multiple transnational coordinates that point outside of the binary divide of Britain and “homeland”. None of them identified with national movements of art, or with European-North American alliances, even if they maintained these networks. They presented a cosmopolitan visuality that was as much in dialogue with prevailing discourses of sculpture as it was with a plurality of artistic and discursive traditions and cultures, never settling into one or the other. Positioned alongside these artists, we can understand how Lim was part of a cosmopolitan generation of artists who sought to define their own approaches in negotiation with the limited models of modernism that they encountered in London’s art world.

What makes Lim so intriguing a figure is the way her works unravel a “lack” in nationalist art historical frameworks or those fashioned after national mandates—their hitherto general inability to apprehend the multiple affiliations, negotiations and subjectivities that arise from artists’ cross-cultural traffic. This also spurs us towards a much needed de-articulation of nationalist art historical frameworks used to scaffold discussions on a cosmopolitan, “in-between” and transcultural practice like Lim’s. After all, the either-or binaries of nationalist perspectives have no room to perceive or value the condition of having multiple belongings—or un-belonging—as well as the fluidity of social and cultural connections. This explains why prior literature on Lim has tended to regard her as singular, overlooking her multiple relationships to networks of artists and discourses, as well as the complex of cultural and political formations that she found herself in.

For instance, to position Lim in Singapore would require careful qualifications. On the one hand, Lim began her artistic training abroad, and chose to exhibit largely in London. And while she maintained her links to artists, curators and patrons in Singapore and held two solo exhibitions there during her lifetime, she never remained in Singapore long enough to establish her practice there.⁷⁴ The art historical tools used to track artistic lineage—such as ideational impact, artistic influences and transmissions across generations—become vexed when trying to locate Lim’s place in Singapore. Moreover, the tone and tenor of art historical writing in Singapore was not yet robust enough to interpret and appraise Lim’s practice to ensure sufficient circulation of her work and ideas beyond exhibition reportage.⁷⁵ Hence, the nature in which an elusive figure such as Lim is “lost and found” again in exhibitions inevitably

prompts some questions. How do Lim's works from the 1960s and 1970s appear now to a generation in Singapore who did not see them at the time of their circulation in London? What, if anything, is the relationship of Lim's works to those by artists she exhibited with in Singapore, and to those who also travelled to London to pursue an art education? What currency does Lim's work have with artists practising today? These aforementioned questions that shape the historical reckoning with Lim's practice and its significance have yet to be addressed.

At the same time, Lim's uneasy place in the story of art in Singapore is also entangled with Britain's unresolved official art histories, which has yet to come to terms with its "lost" cosmopolitan reality. Guy Brett wrote: "By the cruel logic of chauvinism, official aspirations to make London an international art centre have only resulted in obliterating London's cosmopolitan reality and the actual ferment of its cultural life."⁷⁶ Despite attempts to redress the exclusion of black British artists across exhibitions and public collections, the myopia towards their contributions—often read through the lenses of biography and difference—continues today.

This leaves Lim's legacy in a kind of limbo, with no place in the dominant narratives of post-war art in Britain in Singapore. This hitherto absence of Lim's practice, and that of the black artists, does not necessarily have to be remedied by generating new master narratives. Rather, it is an opportunity to regroup these histories that exceed the limitations of nationalist frameworks and entrenched Eurocentric paradigms even while they remain tied to them, in order to offer alternative shared stories, or what Reiko Tomii calls "narrative tangents".⁷⁷ What is at stake is an attempt to open up our understanding to the intricacies of encounter—the active reflection, negotiation and refusals through which we can examine the degrees of artistic agency and generate alternative narratives that think "both inside and outside" of the metropolitan centres of modern art.⁷⁸ These are broader methodological questions that must be addressed in future.

Conclusion

The nationalist frameworks used to construct modern art histories have meant that figures like Lim have yet to find a proper place in narratives of art, through which their works could be studied and debated. While Lim received considerable recognition largely through exhibitions during her lifetime, her artistic contributions have not yet made significant inroads in academic literature on art history. In order to prospect alternative ways to re-historicise and re-narrate Lim's position in art history, we need to first examine the

significance of her works, as well as consider why she was largely forgotten by art historians, and determine what communities her practice should be discussed in relation to.

I have argued that what was central to Lim's practice was the way she proposed cosmopolitan coordinates for sculpture, engaging with and extending beyond its developments in Euro-American contexts. Hers was a sculptural philosophy developed through sustained studies of the archaic as well as eastern art and philosophy. These formed the broader frames of reference that informed her sculpture, which put pressure on the discourses of minimalism that were in currency in Euro-America at the time. Thus, Lim both consented to and refused the parameters of minimalism on her own terms.

However, nationalist frameworks for evaluating art, with their "either-or" binaries, have been inadequate in perceiving and representing the systems of meanings that emerged from cross-cultural encounters and negotiations with hegemonic discourses and systems, and survived them. This article has argued that, in order to re-evaluate Lim's practice, the artist must first be resituated within a multifocal circuit that considers the critical relationships engendered by black artists in Britain, through their encounters and negotiations with prevailing discourses of modern art. After all, Lim belonged to the first generation of artists from the former Commonwealth territories and British colonies who arrived in London after World War II to pursue an art education. From this vantage point, we also see that the marginal position Lim occupies in art historical discourse was not unique, but rather places her as part of a community of diasporic artists that was side lined in academic and institutional attempts to construct a unified, national image of British post-war modernism, under the shadow of America's cultural ascendancy.

My aim here is in no way to suggest an ontological merging of this postcolonial black diaspora, but rather to enable alternative readings of Lim's practice, by privileging the impact of their back-and-forth movements and cross-cultural encounters, over an analysis informed solely or primarily by biographical data. I have outlined the aesthetic strategies and philosophies shared by other black artists like Araeen, Medalla and Li. In their own distinct ways, each shared a commitment to a cosmopolitan visuality that conversed as much with prevailing discourses of sculpture as it did with a plurality of artistic and discursive traditions and cultures.

Moving forward, further re-evaluation of Lim's practice alongside Araeen, Medalla and Li and others must entail comparative studies of their artworks to identify the characteristics of their work that might provide further alternative ways to retrospectively re-narrate their contributions to the discourses

of sculpture.⁷⁹ This is an opportunity to regroup the histories that lie both inside and outside the entrenched Eurocentric paradigm, in order to create multiple clusters of alternate stories, or “narrative tangents”.⁸⁰ Such an effort would not be aimed at sectioning these artists off to a specific cultural category or as peripheral to the canonised discourses of art history, but at re-narrating the histories of modernism in multiplicity.⁸¹

BIOGRAPHY

Joleen Loh is an Assistant Curator at National Gallery Singapore. She is part of the curatorial team that is responsible for the DBS Singapore Gallery, a long-term exhibition space that surveys art in Singapore from the 19th century to the present. Her research is currently focused on art in Singapore and Southeast Asia from the 1960s onwards, including the artistic exchanges and art historical entanglements between Britain and Singapore. Loh previously worked at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, where she assisted in developing its exhibitions and public programmes from 2012–14. She graduated with an MA in History of Art from University College London, which was supported by a National Arts Council postgraduate scholarship. She also holds a BA in Art History and Asian Studies from the University of Melbourne, Australia.

NOTES

- ¹ This refers to the absence of critical, art historical evaluation of Lim's works in related academic art journals or research publications published in Britain, such as *British Art Journal*, *British Art Studies* and *Sculpture Journal*. I make a distinction between academic literature and other forms of coverage which Lim received, such as in newspapers and magazines, which were largely triggered by her participation in public and commercial exhibitions, and often offers brief reportage.
- ² Writing about the global canon apparatus, David Teh aptly points out that the asymmetric visibility and circulations of an artist's work across contexts are only temporary, as foreign channels have a way of short-circuiting local ones, just as private channels circumvent public ones. See David Teh, *Misfits: Pages from a Loose-leaf Modernity* (exh. cat.) (Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2017), p. 7.
- ³ For instance, Lim's work was featured in the Minimalism room of the Tate Modern in 2013, alongside figures such as Frank Stella, Donald Judd, Josef Albers and Hans Haacke. In 2017 and 2018, her works also toured in Kaleidoscope: Colour and Sequence in 1960s British Art, a travelling exhibition by the Arts Council England. In Singapore, Lim's works were included in the inaugural permanent exhibition of National Gallery Singapore, *Siapa Nama Kamu? Art in Singapore Since the 19th Century* in 2015 (note: the author started working in this institution from 2015).
- ⁴ Writing in 2008, Rasheed Araeen got to the heart of the matter when he pointed to the ramifications of nationalist accounts of post-war British art that refuse to recognise pioneering non-white artists: "How can one now look at a work which did not exist for more than forty years and recognise its significance when it was prevented from playing any role in the historical knowledge that informed subsequent generations of artists in their move forward?" See Rasheed Araeen, "A Very Special British Issue?", *Third Text* 22, 2 (2008): 133.
- ⁵ For examples, see *Kim Lim* (exh. cat.), ed. Isabelle King (London: Camden Arts Centre, 1999); *Kim Lim: Sculpture and Works on Paper* (exh. cat.) (West Yorkshire: Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 1995); and Gene Baro, "The Work of Kim Lim", *Studio International: Journal of Modern Art* 176, 905 (November 1968): 187.
- ⁶ However, like at the St Martin's, the Slade's Fine Arts curriculum featured life modelling significantly as a foundational pedagogical device for practising sculpture, which Lim found empirical and restrictive. To pursue making sculpture, Lim rented an unused chemistry lab at the back of a house in West Hampstead as a studio. See Kim Lim, *National Life Stories: Artists' Lives* (London: British Library, 1995), C466/51, transcript, p. 97.
- ⁷ During a time when London's art world increasingly oriented itself towards North America, only a few commercial galleries brought non-white artists into its folds in the 1960s and 1970s. This included Gallery One, New Vision Centre, Signals (co-founded by David Medalla), Indica Gallery and Lisson Gallery.

- ⁸ Norbert Lynton, "Out on a Lim", *The Guardian*, Monday, 30 Sept. 1968, p. 6. It is worth noting that both her attendance at prestigious art schools and her marriage with Turnbull, an influential sculptor at the time, meant that the "mainstream" art circles and debates in London's art world were available to Lim.
- ⁹ Araeen, "A Very Special British Issue?", p. 127.
- ¹⁰ When probed by a journalist, Lim said: "I've lived in England a long time and I love London, but I don't feel British. I suppose I don't feel specifically Chinese either." Charles Spencer, "An Honourable Exception", unidentified magazine clipping, 1966, p. 77. Archival collection of the estate of Kim Lim, digitised and accessed at the Resource Centre, National Gallery Singapore.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Quoted in Baro, "The Work of Kim Lim", p. 187.
- ¹³ Kim Lim, notes on sculpture, n.d. Archival collection of the estate of Kim Lim, digitised and accessed at the Resource Centre, National Gallery Singapore.
- ¹⁴ Alex Potts, "Anthony Caro, 'Early One Morning'", in *Modern British Sculpture*, ed. Penelope Curtis and Keith Wilson (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2011), p. 178.
- ¹⁵ It is worth noting that Lim encountered Caro when she was a student at the St Martin's. However, Lim's interests in abstraction preceded Caro's, and he had little to offer her at the time as he had not yet embarked on the abstract sculptures he became renowned for. Lim recalled his disapproval: "[...] the Sculpture Department was run by Tony Caro, who was doing figurative things at the time [...] he thought, you know, when I tried to do abstract things, you know, it was greatly disapproved of. Everybody was doing these figures, and I just didn't go with it." See Lim, *National Life Stories*, p. 97.
- ¹⁶ Lim's sculptures found a place alongside the machine-welded works of artists like Caro, Turnbull, David Hall and Australian sculptor Ron Robertson-Swann in the 1968 Sculpture in a City, a travelling open-air exhibition organised by the then Arts Council of Great Britain.
- ¹⁷ Baro, "The Work of Kim Lim", p. 188.
- ¹⁸ The distinction between the constructed sculptures of Caro and Lim were also observed in Sandy Nairne, *Carved. Modelled. Constructed: Three Aspects of British 20th Century Art* (London: Tate Gallery, 1977).
- ¹⁹ See Gregory Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York, NY: EP Dutton, 1968).
- ²⁰ Linda Talbot, "Elements of Co-operation", *Express and News*, 11 May 1979, n.p. Archival collection of the estate of Kim Lim, digitised and accessed at the Resource Centre, National Gallery Singapore.
- ²¹ Melanie Clulow, "Carving a Niche", *Vogue* (July 1996): 123.
- ²² *The Tate Gallery 1974–6: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions* (London: Tate Gallery, 1978), pp. 42, 79.

- ²³ This is corroborated by the artist. See Lim, *National Life Stories*, p. 99.
- ²⁴ Battcock, *Minimal Art*, p. 20.
- ²⁵ Lim, notes on sculpture, n.d.
- ²⁶ In a manifesto published in *Signals Bulletin* in 1965, David Medalla mooted the idea of “sculptures that breathe, perspire, cough, laugh, yawn, smirk, wink, pant, dance, walk, crawl”. Medalla’s proposal, Araeen pointed out, preceded oft cited examples of the emergence of post-minimalism, such as Richard Long’s walking sculpture in 1967 and Gilbert & George’s first performance of their “singing sculpture” at St Martin’s in 1969. See Araeen, “A Very Special British Issue?”, pp. 134–5.
- ²⁷ Mel Gooding, “Carvings of Flow and Rhythm”, *The Guardian*, 6 Dec. 1997, n.p.
- ²⁸ Howard Rombough, “Breaking the Rules: Kim Lim”, *HOT*, n.d., pp. 38–40. Archival collection of the estate of Kim Lim, digitised and accessed at the Resource Centre, National Gallery Singapore.
- ²⁹ Gooding had pointed out that Lim’s work embodied “the principal criterion of classical Chinese painting, the ‘breath and movement’ required by Hsieh Ho’s famous First Canon of painting, a prescription of which Kim Lim was well aware”. See Mel Gooding, “A Reflective Art: The Sculpture of Kim Lim”, in *Kim Lim* (exh. cat.) (London: Waddington Galleries, 1990), p. 6.
- ³⁰ The archives of Lim contain an extensive number of photographs she took during her travels, and of hers and Turnbull’s works. These have never been exhibited or published, and further research into the relationship between her photographic and sculptural practice remains to be done. I am indebted to Alex and Johnny Turnbull for generously sharing the archives of Lim, which have enabled research.
- ³¹ Baro, “The Work of Kim Lim”, p. 187. Lim’s choice of the word “empathy” perhaps signals her desire to distance herself from the matters of influence, especially of her own cultural heritage, which often implies a top-down transmission across generations, and thus reliant upon a hierarchy between an active source and a passive recipient.
- ³² *Ibid.*, pp. 186–9.
- ³³ Lim, *National Life Stories*, p. 95.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- ³⁵ My reading is informed by Johannes Fabian’s account of the differentiated usages of time in anthropology, specifically the “denial of coevalness”, to lay bare the power dynamics between the anthropologist and his/her (colonial) subjects. See Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Objects* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002).
- ³⁶ Kobena Mercer, “Art History and the Dialogics of Diaspora”, *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 16, 2 (July 2012): 219.
- ³⁷ Baro, “The Work of Kim Lim”, p. 187.
- ³⁸ See Lim, notes on sculpture, n.d.

- ³⁹ Nikos Papastergiadis, "The Cosmos in Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism", *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* 12, 3 (June 2013): 10.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Jean Fisher, "The Other Story and the Past Imperfect", *Tate Papers* 12 (Autumn 2009), <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/no-12/the-other-story-and-the-past-imperfect> [accessed 1 Apr. 2018].
- ⁴² Rasheed Araeen, "Introduction: When Chickens Come Home to Roost", in *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain* (exh. cat.), ed. Rasheed Araeen (London: Hayward Gallery/South Bank Centre, 1989), p. 9.
- ⁴³ Kim Lim, letter to Andrew Dempsey, 9 June 1988, quoted in Hammad Nasar, "Notes from the field: Navigating the Afterlife of The Other Story", in *Field Notes* 4 (Hong Kong: Asia Art Archive, 2015): 57–8. The artists Shirazeh Houshiary and Anish Kapoor also declined to participate. See Fisher, "The Other Story and the Past Imperfect", n.p.
- ⁴⁴ Stuart Hall, "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments'", *History Workshop Journal* 61 (Spring 2006): 2. Its usage was predicated on a necessary politics of anti-racism in Britain to promote solidarity, and often overlooked the distinctions of ethnicity, race, class, and religion.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 4.
- ⁴⁶ These artists, as Araeen pointed out, turned to figures such as Herbert Read, for whom the modern indicated a stylistic break that produced "forms more appropriate to the sense and sensibility of a new age". See Rasheed Araeen, "In the Citadel of Modernism", in *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain* (exh. cat.), ed. Rasheed Araeen (London: Hayward Gallery/South Bank Centre, 1989), p. 16.
- ⁴⁷ Hall, "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain", p. 15.
- ⁴⁸ Fisher, "The Other Story and the Past Imperfect", n.p.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ Baro, "The Work of Kim Lim", p. 187.
- ⁵¹ This is further complicated by the contradictory force of the art market's increased appetite for "global art", which has served to regulate the visibility of these artists albeit only within the scope of its commercial reaches, while the recuperation of their legacies in art histories remained lagged.
- ⁵² For an account of the complex socio-political factors which shaped the social consciousness of Britain in the 1970s, see Araeen, "A Very Special British Issue?", 127; and Araeen, "Introduction: When Chickens Come Home to Roost", pp. 9–15.
- ⁵³ Courtney J. Martin, "Exiles, Emigres, and Cosmopolitans: London's Postwar Art World", in *Postwar: Art between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965* (exh. cat.), ed. Okwui Enwezor, Katy Siegel and Ulrich Wilmes (Munich: Haus der Kunst/Prestel, 2016), p. 571.

- ⁵⁴ Araeen, "A Very Special British Issue?", p. 131.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ Anwar Jalal Shemza experienced an artistic trauma after attending E.H. Gombrich's lectures where the professor had relegated Islamic art to the arena of functional decoration, and changed his artistic direction. Other artists such as Frank Bowling and Ahmed Parvez left London in pursuit of modernism elsewhere. Hall, "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain", p. 16.
- ⁵⁷ See Fisher, "The Other Story and the Past Imperfect", n.p.
- ⁵⁸ Lim felt that Singapore was not conducive for her practice; she said: "Singapore is a very difficult place to be creative in. It's very small. When you have something that's so hermetically sanitised it makes artistic endeavours hard to develop." See Rombough, "Breaking the Rules: Kim Lim", p. 38. When asked how she felt about moving to London, Lim replied: "I loved the idea. Because it was like having a cage opened. [My family was] terribly upset with me because I was never homesick." Lim, *National Life Stories*, p. 89.
- ⁵⁹ See Kobena Mercer, "Introduction", in *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005).
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 6–23.
- ⁶¹ James Clifford in Mercer, *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*, p. 11.
- ⁶² Ibid., p. 10; Fisher, "The Other Story and the Past Imperfect", n.p.
- ⁶³ Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), p. 33.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ See Fisher, "The Other Story and the Past Imperfect", n.p. One recent example includes the three-year research project "Black Artists & Modernism" funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.
- ⁶⁶ See Tariq Modood, "Political Blackness and British Asian", in *Sociology* 28, 4 (Nov. 1994): 859–76.
- ⁶⁷ Araeen, "A Very Special British Issue?", p. 135.
- ⁶⁸ Courtney J. Martin, "'Non-compositional and Non-hierarchical': Rasheed Araeen's Search for the Conceptual and the Political in British Sculpture", in *Anglo-American Exchange in Postwar Sculpture 1945–1975*, ed. Rebecca Peabody (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011), p. 126.
- ⁶⁹ See Fisher, "The Other Story and the Past Imperfect", n.p.
- ⁷⁰ Medalla in Guy Brett, *Exploding Galaxies: The Art of David Medalla*, ed. Yve-Alain Bois (London: Kala Press, 1995), p. 61.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., p. 78.
- ⁷² Ibid., p. 53.
- ⁷³ See Mei-Ching Fang, *Viewpoint: A Retrospective of Li Yuan-Chia* (exh. cat.), ed. Ya-chi Tsai (Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2015).

- ⁷⁴ It was noted by London-based gallerist Yu Chee Chong that despite Lim's international reputation, she was "virtually unknown in Southeast Asia, even in Singapore". Leong Weng Ka, "Museum Eyeing Sculpture by S'pore-born Kim Lim", *The Straits Times*, Oct. 29 1994, p. 23.
- ⁷⁵ Reflecting upon the task of appraising sculptural development in 1991, T.K. Sabapathy noted the "absence of a discernible critical enterprise or an extant body of writing on art" in Singapore. See Sabapathy, "Sculptors and Sculpture in Singapore; An Introduction", in *Sculpture in Singapore* (Singapore: National Museum Art Gallery, 1991), p. 10.
- ⁷⁶ Brett, *Exploding Galaxies*, p. 50.
- ⁷⁷ Reiko Tomii, *Radicalism in the Wilderness: International Contemporaneity and 1960s Art in Japan* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), p. 10.
- ⁷⁸ Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, p. 33.
- ⁷⁹ Tomii, *Radicalism in the Wilderness*, p. 10. My reading is informed by Tomii's methodology of drawing "connections" and identifying "resonances" in the study of post-war art, in order to better understand similar artistic phenomena that takes place across the globe. This allows for links to be drawn between similar practices around the same period, even if there are no evident or direct connections between artists. These two concepts, Tomii argues, allow us to construct clusters of "narrative tangents" which serve as counterpoints to the Eurocentric narratives of post-war art.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid.
- ⁸¹ I wish to thank my peer reviewers as well as T.K. Sabapathy, Roger Nelson, Seng Yu Jin, Qinyi Lim, Russell Storer, Goh Sze Ying and Lim Shujuan for their helpful suggestions in the development and revision of this text; all errors are my own.

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