Exposing the State: Loo Zihan's Queer Performance

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Abstract

After the controversy of Josef Ng's Brother Cane *in 1994, which resulted in the ban on licensing and funding of performance art and Forum Theatre in Singapore for nearly a decade, the government's conditional support for the contemporary arts remains an issue. Since the loosening of the de facto ban in 2003, queer performance artist Loo Zihan has spoken out about the continued regulation of queer content. However, in order to speak about this, Loo was required to submit a script to the Media Development Authority. I examine Loo's* Cane *(2012), which reenacted* Brother Cane*, in light of Singapore's sexual politics and cultural policies. I focus on the trope of the "global Asian queer boy" in* Cane *and its mingling with his position as a performance artist. I reveal how in putting these troubled positions in conversation, he has created a local imaginary of queer identity that expresses the abilities and inabilities, visibilities and invisibilities, presences and absences of queer performance in Singapore.*

Introduction

In regard to his 2012 reenactment of Josef Ng's *Brother Cane* (1994), queer Singaporean performance artist Loo Zihan made the following remark: "it

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would be simplistic in judging the fact that [Loo] can stage *Cane* means that the country has liberalised".[1] Loo's intention in performing *Cane* (2012) was to expose the image of a liberal, accepting Singapore, one that did not equate to his own lived experience as an artist. After all, his work has been censored and censured for its homosexual content and themes. He noted that "the fact that [he] can stage *Cane* just means that [he is] *allowed* to speak about it".[2] In order to speak about these issues, however, Loo was required to submit a script to the Media Development Authority (MDA). While the de facto ban on funding and licensing for performance art imposed after Ng's *Brother Cane* (*BC*) has been lifted, not everyone in the Singaporean arts community are in agreement that artists should comply with this rule.[3] Criticisms of Loo's complicity, insinuations of 'selling out' and suggestions that he was seeking controversy ensued after his intent to reenact *BC* was announced in the *Straits Times*.[4]

Malay Singaporean playwright Alfian Sa'at took to the comments section of Loo's Facebook post titled "Breaking the Silence" to voice his opinion on the matter. Sa'at stated that he was "unsettled by the ways in which [*BC* was] compromised; … through its possible appropriation as an indicator for how we are living in a Singapore that is supposedly more open and permissive".[5] For Sa'at, being "allowed" by the MDA to "speak" about the controversy surrounding *BC* was surely evidence that the "country has liberalised". On the other hand, artist and scholar Ray Langenbach pointed out the ironic similarity between the condemnation of *BC* by people and agencies who had not seen the performance themselves and Sa'at's judgement of a performance that had not yet occurred.[6] Interestingly enough, Loo's *Cane* utilised many of the strategies to circumvent censorship outlined in Sa'at's "A Censorship Manifesto".

Cane, perhaps, exemplified Sa'at's "nudist strategy", in which "the artist has to be an exhibitionist, to expose the battle wounds and the exact sites of damage".[7] After vetting Loo's script, the MDA took issue with his intent to reenact the specific gesture that had caused such a controversy in 1993: the cutting of pubic hair.[8] In order to make this act of censorship visible, Loo instead revealed a cleanly shaven crotch and, while holding a pair of scissors, directed his gaze at each audience member. He made it clear through his shaven crotch that the act of cutting pubic hair was glaringly absent while also hinting at his previous intent to reenact this gesture by holding a pair of scissors. He also denied "the dialectics of censorship as one between aggressor and victim" by acknowledging a "third player in the equation".[9] As Sa'at has argued, the audience or spectator is this third player and "under its gaze, the battle lines are re-drawn".[10] In directing his gaze at the

audience while making the act of censorship visible, he acknowledged that the audience's reception of this revised act was an important part of his battle for artistic freedom.

However, in viewing the reenactment in light of Singapore's sexual politics and cultural policies, arguments that suggest Loo's work circumvented censorship also became arguments that further highlight its complicity. For instance, this concept of visibility as reparative, viewed in the context of Singapore's queering, is reminiscent of Anglo-centric homo-normative studies that have overemphasised the relationship between liberalism and the emancipation of homosexuals. In turn, arguments that Loo's reenactment reinforced an image of Singapore as an open and permissive country perpetuate a binary that fails to account for the complexities of doing a queer act in a transnational site. On the latter issue, Melissa Wansin Wong has attended to the ways in which these criticisms fail to account for how these "conditional allowances can depoliticise the potential radicalism present in the original".[11] In this essay, I intend to focus on the former issue by eliciting Eng-Beng Lim's "glocalqueering" theory to reflect on what Loo's ability to stage *Cane* means in terms of how queer performance is present (and absent), visible and invisible, in creative, gay Singapore.[12]

Rather than using what some queer theorists call a "global queering" framework, or "a neoliberal model of free market transmission, by which an emancipatory and often glamorised Western gay culture is transforming the rest of the world", Lim has used a "glocalqueering" framework in his studies of queer performance in Southeast Asia.[13] In the context of neoliberal regimes that utilise representations of acceptance and inclusion and at the same time restrict and control subversive narratives and ideologies, a glocalqueer framework asks important questions about global transmission and formation of queerness.[14] J.K. Gibson-Graham states that in querying globalization, it is possible to open up to a variety of alternative scripts and works that may be read for their forceful representation of local queer issues.[15]

In Lim's application of the glocalqueer theory to Sa'at's stage play *Asian Boys Vol. 1* (2000), he focuses on the trope of the "global Asian queer boy". This trope is a figure "caught on the cusp of epistemic and political possibilities and impossibilities while embodying Singapore's economic and cultural globalization". I focus on the trope of the "global Asian queer boy" in *Cane* and its mingling with Loo's position as a performance artist. Singaporean performance artists rose to a high level of visibility in the media via sensationalist stories in the 1990s, resulting in the government's awareness of the art form's potential to agitate audiences. I argue that Loo put the ways in which "local artists, actors, activists and gay boys in the street, together with

censors, bureaucrats, and evangelicals are all actively involved and invested in negotiating queer representations" in conversation with how these figures also came together to negotiate artistic limits and boundaries. In reenacting *BC* from a different temporal position, Loo decentred the epistemic strongholds of Western queer liberation theory which dictate a set of debates attuned to Western sexual contingencies by using the performance as an alternative reference point.

Eighteen Years Later

The de facto ban on performance art enacted through the targeted withdrawal of government funding and the restriction of licensing in Singapore was lifted in 2003. Obstacles and restrictions still exist in the form of the mandatory process of submitting a script to the MDA. Though the loosening of restrictions on performance art hinted at as part of the country's liberalisation, little progress has been made on the issues brought to light by *BC*. The events created an awareness of how the government's decision to widen out-of-bounds (OB) markers in an effort to promote the arts put the onus on artists themselves to discover which boundaries could not be crossed.[16] This supposed freedom was a disguise for the indeterminacy of these OB markers, which ultimately maintained—if not strengthened—the government's control over how certain topics are addressed.[17] In a similar vein, while the Singaporean government's efforts to become a Global City for the Arts (GCA) has seen the city state emerge as one of the newest gay capitals of Asia, depictions of queer life and issues in contemporary arts have continued to be regulated and scrutinised.

Loo has dealt with censorship in his film practice, the most notorious being the removal of three scenes from his 2007 film *Solos*, which depicted gay sex. Another instance of this targeted form of regulation was the censorship of the work of Japanese-British artist Simon Fujiwara in the 2011 Singapore Biennale. Ironically, the work, titled *Welcome to the Hotel Munber* (2010), revisited the censorship of homosexual literature under Francisco Franco's fascist dictatorship in Spain in the 1970s. The installation comprised of a homoerotic reimagination of a Spanish hotel owned by Fujiwara's parents in the 1970s. The installation was peppered with phallic objects such as sausages and pornographic calendars as a way to reimagine the hotel as a gay paradise. The work was censored by the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) as it was considered to be in breach of the law on pornography.[18] All objects that were deemed pornographic were removed by the museum without consultation with either Fujiwara or curators Russell Storer and Trevor Smith.[19]

The government's vision of the nation state as a GCA where international, regional and local arts can be displayed and consumed is a recent development in its larger quest to become a global city. As T.C. Chang has outlined, developing a GCA requires striking a balance between "going global and staying local".[20] This balance, Chang continues, is achieved by recognising both economic and humanistic objectives in the arts while also encouraging global exports of local talents and, at the same time, importing foreign talent.[21] Yvonne Low has noted that while the study of Singapore's vision to become a GCA is not necessarily new, there has been little acknowledgement of the heteronormativity of the city state's nationalist-contemporary art narrative.[22] Relatedly, Low also discusses how the state plays the roles of both patron and mediator. She argues that the development of contemporary art in Singapore has been affected by decisions made by the NAC.[23] In focusing closely on Loo's *Cane* as a case study, I intend to extend Low's exploration of the contradictions that are inherent in Singapore's status as a creative city. I aim to provide a nuanced analysis of the work which acknowledges how Loo not only pushes against restrictions on artistic freedom but also the state's conditional tolerance of queerness.

Loo has decided to speak up about these processes, stating that he utilised *BC* "as the constant in the experiment to reflect how much the state, audiences and arts community has or has not changed over these eighteen years".[24] In 2011, while undertaking his Masters of Fine Arts at the School of Art Institute of Chicago, he reenacted *BC* for the first time. "Sometimes a silent protest is not enough", was the final remark Loo left his audience to ponder on in this early reenactment. Loo reproduced this line that Ng had uttered in the first hours of 1994, "believing that [he] was a shaman channeling the ghost of *Brother Cane*".[25] Using the trial affidavit provided by artist and scholar Ray Langenbach, which was to be presented in the trial of Ng, Loo had taken the text as absolute truth in his reproduction. Upon returning to Singapore and visiting Langenbach, who showed him the video documentation of the original performance, he realised he had misquoted Ng as he heard him utter the words "*Maybe* a silent protest is not enough" (my italics).[26]

Recalling this moment, Loo suggests "sometimes" is "a performative utterance of certainty and indignation, guiding the way to multiple temporalities" whereas "maybe" is an utterance of "self-doubt and possibilities".[27] This interpretation is significant for its acknowledgement of the different contexts in which both performances occurred. While Ng's performance in Singapore was contained within an invisible boundary in which it was difficult to ascertain what was deemed unacceptable, Loo's performance in Chicago was able to express indignation against the unfair treatment of Ng

without fear of censorship. Loo has acknowledged that his 2011 reenactment bears many differences with *Cane* due to the different audiences they were performed to and the different contexts they were performed in.[28] The 2011 reenactment was much more straightforward and was seen through a Western lens that was unable to truly understand the cultural context in which Loo was performing both within and without. However, despite being performed in Singapore where most people are aware of *BC*, Loo's *Cane* also performed within and without.

For queer people in Singapore, the contradictions of the government are felt every day through its cultural policies and sexual politics.[29] Despite the Censorship Review Committee Report 2003 advising a relaxed approach to homosexual content, Loo's film *Solos* (2007) was censored for its homoerotic depiction of anal sex.[30] While the Economic Review Report 2003 outlined the need to attract "foreign talent" as a key strategy to rebrand Singapore as a regional arts centre, local queer talent is never afforded the same promise of acceptance.[31] Ng performed *BC* at a moment where there was a possibility that he was, *maybe*, crossing boundaries. Loo performed *Cane* in a moment where s*ometimes* the Singaporean government accepts homosexuality, and *sometimes* it does not. It was in bringing these different contexts together in *Cane* that Loo illustrated that he, as a gay Singaporean performance artist, is 'on the cusp' in many ways. On the global stage he was seen as breaking political boundaries in his visibility; on the Singaporean stage he was seen as compliant and complacent in his visibility.

Loo's encounter with the original *BC* subsequently informed the structure of *Cane* as a history told in six different accounts, "all of which point to, but should never be taken for, the truth".[32] Loo read aloud 12 articles which had responded to Ng's performance. In reciting these articles, Loo appropriated Ng's original intent to critique the media's complicity in the criminalisation of homosexuality. He then called upon Langenbach to read aloud his trial affidavit that he had written in defence of Ng. The affidavit intricately recounted the actions Ng performed in 1993 and included lengths of time taken to perform each action. Next, Loo reenacted *BC* while footage of his 2011 reenactment was screened on one side of the space and a feed of the 'live' reenactment was screened on the other (see Figures 1 and 2 respectively). Loo made an effort to follow the lengths of time Ng took to perform each act by following the times dictated in Langenbach's affidavit. However, unlike his 2011 reenactment, he performed the piece in silence rather than announcing each act, allowing the audio of his first performance to guide him.

As mentioned above, the reenactment portion of the performance also differed greatly from the original in many ways. It was a scripted performance,

FIGURE 1: Loo Zihan, *Cane*, 2012, performance documentation, The Substation Theatre, Singapore. Source: Photograph by Samantha Tio on Loo Zihan's website: http://www.loozihan.com/cane2012.

FIGURE 2: Loo Zihan, *Cane*, 2012, performance documentation, The Substation Theatre, Singapore. Source: Photograph by Samantha Tio on Loo Zihan's website: http://www.loozihan.com/cane2012.

a fact that was highlighted in the distribution of the script to the audience. This script included two intentional instances of rewording dialogue from the original performance: "sometimes, a silent protest is not enough" and "they have said that cutting hair is a form of silent protest". The former was altered to replace "sometimes" with "maybe" in order to incorporate the mistake he made in his first performance. The latter was altered by replacing "cutting hair" with "a clean shave" to reflect another glaringly obvious deviation from the original—the absence of cutting pubic hair. These deviations, informed by both his own artistic choices and the MDA's regulation of sensitive content, were performed in a way that made visible the state's presence in the performance.

Due to these deviations, there have been many other criticisms levelled against *Cane* by people who did, in fact, witness the performance. Ho Rui An has criticised *Cane* for its lack of "liveness", citing the ways in which it departed from the proceedings of the original performance as a reduction of the performance to the "therapeutics of the self".[33] Adeline Chia, in her review of the performance in the *Straits Times*, argued that Loo had made a "fundamental compromise" by submitting the script to the MDA.[34] She suggested that in providing a copy of the script to the audience, Loo had only highlighted the fact that it was a highly policed and controlled show and she questioned whether it could even be thought of as performance art.[35] However, these criticisms do not reflect on Loo's visibility as a gay man in the performance, a point I want to approach through both a critical lens and as a way to understand how the liberal concept is teased out in myriad ways via his position as a performance artist and as a "global Asian queer boy".

The deviations and their distance from the original have allowed Loo to be explicitly visible as a gay man. The exposure of his body in front of an audience is ironic when considering that through the MDA's regulation, he appeared more nude than Ng. This ironic nudity is best understood as undeniably linked to a core part of his queer body of work. Many of his works have projected his private shame onto moments of public shame, allowing him to insert himself into highly recognisable moments and issues to heighten his queer visibility.[36] For instance, Loo has stated that *Solos* is both autobiographical and relevant to wider socio-political concerns.[37] This is observed in the ambiguity of the main character who is simply known as "Boy", a young gay man who falls in love with "Teacher". This queer relationship puts a strain on his familial relationship with "Mother".

However, while the film makes visible the struggles for queer people in Singapore whose lifestyles are incompatible with notions of family constructed by the heteronormative nation state, this visibility comes through

"aesthetic choices that allow queerness to occupy an impossible presence in mainstream Singapore cinema".[38] For instance, while the film included three scenes of rarely seen sexual intimacy between two (and in one case, between three) men, the choice of making the film without speech or a script minimised the amount of control that could be taken over the film. This choice, however, limited the ability for critical commentary on the issue by privileging the ocular or the visible. Indeed, it left the film defenceless when the three scenes that aimed to make queer sex visible were censored by the Singapore Board of Film Censors (SBFC).

In a similar way, Loo mapped his experience as a gay man in Singapore onto Ng's moment of public shame. The artistic choices made in response to the MDA's regulation of the performance made visible how much the state, audiences and artists have or have not changed 18 years later, but Loo also had to occupy an impossible presence to do as such. In utilising the impossibility of truly bringing *BC* from the past to the present, he provided commentary on the lack of progress the Singapore government has made in regard to homosexual rights and artistic freedom. It is through occupying an impossible presence that he makes himself visible as a gay man in and through history. While this tactic is employed to recuperate queer subjectivity over history, its reliance on a liberal politics of the visible suggests that the extent to which queer visibility can be truly critical in a complex city of contradictions like Singapore is uncertain.

Loo could choose between occupying an impossible presence in mainstream Singapore cinema or the "outside-in" approach in which queer Singaporean filmmakers take their films to major film festivals globally where they can exist censorship-free.[39] Subsequently, *Solos* has met with critical acclaim globally in contrast to its negative reception by the public and its censorship by the SBFC.[40] It should be noted that the sense of public hostility towards homosexual content and themes is informed by arbitrary "community values" which are not necessarily created by the "public" itself but rather are "concretised through the ventriloquism of the Singaporean government".[41] Loo has also proven that the "outside-in" approach is available for queer performance artists as he has performed a reenactment of *BC* in Chicago where it suffered no regulation or containment. Loo's decision to perform *Cane* in Singapore, however, did not occupy an impossible presence in the *mainstream* as *Solos* did. It was performed for one night only to an audience of about 40 people in the small theatre space of The Substation Gallery.

While there has been a saturation of queer performance in mainstream theatres which cater to a general public, queer performances in smaller theatres do not connect with this general public in the same way.[42] This is to their

12 men nabbed in anti-gay operation at Tanjong Rhu

TWELVE men were arrested for alleged sexual offences in the space of a week at a reclaimed piece of land at Tanjong Rhu during an anti-gay operation by the police.

Among those arrested in the operation and charged with allegedly outraging their victims' modesty were a broadcasting producer and a butcher.

In the mid-September operation, plainclothes policemen from the Geylang Police Division Headquarters posed as decoys.

They would identify themselves when contact was made before back-up officers moved in to help round up the alleged offenders.

Only six of the 12 men pleaded guilty in court yesterday.

The rest claimed trial.

Those who pleaded guilty received sentences ranging from two to six months' jail.

All of them were also ordered to be given three strokes of the cane each.

In one case, salesman and part-time karaoke assistant [redacted], 26, chatted up a special constable before proceeding to caress his buttock and chest. He was sentenced to six months' jail.

In another, hawker assistant [redacted], 33, started rubbing an inspector's private parts. For his act of indecency, he was sentenced to five months' jail.

The other four men who similarly pleaded guilty to using criminal force to molest their victims were:

[redacted], 28, unemployed, who was given five months' jail; hawker [redacted], 43, who was sentenced to four months' jail; tailor [redacted], 34, who received a three-month jail term; and tailor [redacted], 33, who was jailed for two months.

One of the accused who claimed trial, contract worker [redacted], 35, told the court: "The guy had approached me and smiled, so I walked over to chit-chat with him."

He said that the other man had suggested having sex in the nearby undergrowth.

"Since he was so keen, I thought I would satisfy his need," he said. His case will be heard on Nov 29.

Another accused, butcher [redacted], 25, who pleaded guilty initially, later said that the complainant had asked him to touch him.

[redacted]'s case, together with those of factory operator [redacted], 32; hotel handyman [redacted], 48; flight steward [redacted], 29; and SBC producer [redacted], 36, will be mentioned next month.

FIGURE 3: *Straits Times*, 23 November 1993. Wiki Creative Commons.

advantage and to their detriment. It is this isolation, as Jason Luger has revealed, "that makes the exploratory possibilities and (relative) freedom of the Singaporean possible".[43] However, the relativity of this freedom should be stressed. In making a brief detour in my argument to attend to the symbiotic relationship between performance artists and the media in the 1990s, I intend to provide a backdrop in which Loo's choice to perform *Cane* in Singapore by occupying an impossible presence can be understood as something that has both allowed and restricted his speaking on certain issues in certain spaces.

The *Brother Cane* Affair, 1994

Ng performed *BC* as part of a weeklong interdisciplinary event, the Artists' General Assembly (AGA), which was held at 5th Passage Gallery in 1994. The performance protested the media coverage of an anti-gay police operation at Tanjong Rhu in which 12 gay men were arrested and received 3 strokes of the cane.[44] Ng specifically took issue with the *Straits Times'* article "12 men nabbed in anti-gay operation at Tanjong Rhu", in which the identities and professions of these gay men were publicly exposed (see Figure 3). He set the scene by placing clippings of the article on 12 tiles with a block of tofu and a bag of red dye on top.[45] He then struck the tiles with a cane to reenact the corporal punishment the men received, splattering tofu and red dye around

the gallery space.[46] In performing this act, he acknowledged the role of the media in the violence against the 12 men.

He then announced, "I have heard clipping hair is a form of silent protest", before going to the back of the gallery space and, with his back turned to the audience and his briefs lowered, performed an action that the audience could not see.[47] He returned to the tiles with a small clipping of what appeared

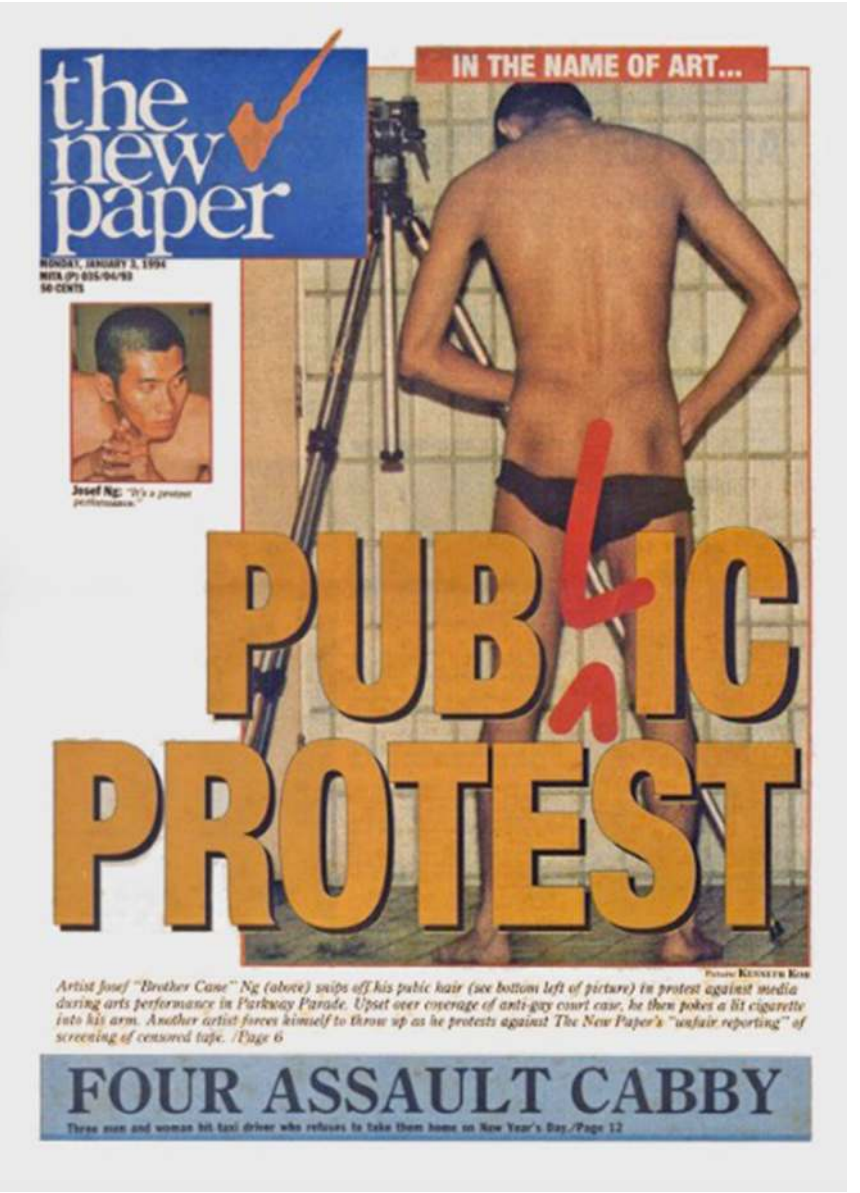

FIGURE 4: *The New Paper*, "Pub(l)ic Protest", 3 January 1994. Wiki Creative Commons.

to be pubic hair, which he then placed on the centre tile.[48] After this, Ng asked for a cigarette from the audience, smoked a few drags, then stated, "Maybe a silent protest is not enough", as he stubbed the cigarette out on his arm.[49] Ironically, Ng's protest performance against the media's sensationalism attracted its own expose in *The New Paper*. The front-page article titled "PUB(L)IC PROTEST", published on 3 January 1994, chose to focus on the 20–30 seconds of the 30-minute performance in which he snipped his hair in protest (see Figure 4). The visibility created by the article was unprecedented for AGA events and was of great concern for the government and the arts community itself.[50] The next day, the National Arts Council (NAC) made a statement that the performance deserved "public condemnation" and that "by no stretch of the imagination [could it] be construed and condoned as art".[51]

Subsequently, Ng was charged with committing "an obscene act, to wit, "in public by cutting pubic hair, and exposing his buttocks to the annoyance of the public" according to section 294(a) of the Penal Code.[52] In an unprecedented decision, the Singaporean government also banned the licensing and funding of performance art and Forum Theatre.[53] Had it not been for the journalistic opportunism of a reporter who knew nothing about performance art, *BC* might have remained a "footnote of a footnote in Singaporean art history".[54] The performance was not the first to be sensationalised in the media, however. A year prior, Vincent Leow's *Coffee Talk*, which was performed at the 1992–93 AGA, also generated a number of articles in the press.[55] The performance, which involved the ingestion of the artist's own urine, was a comment on self-consumption.[56] Leow explained his use of urine as a "metaphor for the artist as both producer and the consumer".[57] The sensationalist depictions of performance artists in the media that ensued proved that it was useful for both the media who were able to satisfy an appetite for scandal and generate readership, and performance artists who could court the press for publicity.[58] In fulfilling the media's need for sensational acts to trivialise, performance artists were able to push boundaries in order to make critical and political commentary with their works.[59]

This symbiotic relationship can be observed to be, at once, a possibility for artists to negotiate boundaries and evidence of complicity. While Leow's *Coffee Talk* and its commentary on the artist as both producer and consumer was able to reach a larger audience and push boundaries in terms of what could be performed, its reliance on the media to regurgitate his performance set the stage for the traumatic events a year later.[60] Ng's transgressive cutting of pubic hair was performed within a cultural landscape in which the media had control over the image of performance artists and, as such, it was not seen as art because of its obscenity. Indeed, there were limits to which this

symbiotic relationship could be a useful conduit for performance artists to push artistic and political boundaries. As June Yap highlights, "the charge of delinquency was triggered by an unfortunate incendiary headline, rather than by the performance itself, seeing that the artwork's re-enactment of the State's familiar choice of punitive action was, in fact, witnessed by a limited audience".[61] In the case of performance artists in the 1990s, visibility was both highly sought after and also limited what a work could say.

Langenbach stresses that Ng and other artists at the time did not attempt to counter the narratives portrayed by the media and the state, nor did they attempt to reclaim them.[62] This "pragmatic obsequiousness and lack of oppositional tactics in the face of spectacle power", which was the undeniable downfall of Ng's response, continues to be observed in the gay scene in Singapore in the form of "pragmatic resistance".[63] Pragmatic resistance is characterised by Lynette Chua as a tactic employed by Singapore's gay activists which balances the movement's survival and its advancement.[64] In avoiding direct confrontation and remaining within the existing political order, pragmatic resistance responds to Singapore's illiberal pragmatism wherein civil rights are less available.[65] This is observed in the case of Singapore's annual Pink Dot rally.

Illiberal Pragmatism and "Glocalqueering"

The incoherence of homosexuality with conservative family discourses in Singapore, which Loo brought attention to as a current issue as much as a historical one, has been raised by recently formed queer spaces and events such as the annual Pink Dot rally. The astute control of the event, which calls for social acceptance of LGBTQI+ people in Singapore, signals a sanitisation of queer subjectivity that has been deemed acceptable by the Singaporean government.[66] In her analysis of Loo's *Cane* (2012) alongside Pink Dot, Wong revealed the "evolving political subjectivities of selected Asian queer subjects who are at once enabled yet co-opted by the Singapore state's neoliberal objectives".[67] The event's name refers to the Singaporean identity card which is pink in colour and the dot-like size of the city state.[68] Each year attendees of the rally, wearing pink clothing and flashing pink torches, form a large circle as a symbol of unity and as a way to call for the acceptance of homosexuality. This is then captured through an aerial photograph (see Figure 5).[69]

However, Yue and Leung argue that rather than celebrating the success of Pink Dot and Hong Lim Park as queer spaces, the "celebration of mainstream homosexuality (championed through the homo-normative ideals of family values and family inclusion) also surfaces as a site of exclusion for other

FIGURE 5: Pink Dot rally, 16 May 2009, Wiki Creative Commons.

LGBTs othered by its normalising logic" and should be approached critically.[70] The event's palatable conduct, enforced by the government and the event's organisers, means that images of it signify Singapore's growing liberalism on such issues. The truth is that the event is confined to Hong Lim Park and its occurrence must not threaten the status quo. While the pragmatic resistance of the event has overcome a negative cultural perception of public assemblies, its reliance on liberal concepts' visibility and inclusion while remaining within legal and physical boundaries restrict the political efficacy of the event.[71] Although it strives to encourage the repealing of section 377(a), it does this in a non-confrontational way that does not put pressure on the government but rather capitulates to its rules.[72] Importantly, Yue has argued that Anglo-centric and homo-normative studies have overemphasised the relationship between liberalism and the emancipation of homosexuals.[73]

Instead, Yue argues that the encounter between the state and its queer subjects has created a vastly different imaginary of homosexuality.[74] This means that in order to re-examine Loo's *Cane*, there must be a consideration for how Singapore is governed by the logic of illiberal pragmatics. She describes this logic:

> Illiberal pragmatism is characterised by the ambivalence between non-liberalism and neoliberalism, rationalism and irrationalism that governs the illegality of homosexuality in Singapore.… Illiberal pragmatism has underpinned the logic of neoliberal postcolonial development in Singapore. It has also enabled the cultural liberalisation of the creative economy so much so Singapore is more renowned globally as a gay rather than a creative city.[75]

In focusing on the fight for equal rights on the basis of reforming stigma observed in the Pink Dot rally, the effects of developmental capitalism and colonialism on the queer community remain undisputed.[76]

In this way, the illiberal pragmatism of the Singaporean government, which informs its ambivalent position towards its queer subjects, is a form of censorship and regulation in itself. It has allowed for the normalisation of seeking government permission to speak about certain topics, a process that has largely featured in the government's regulation of the contemporary arts. Similar to the way Singaporean filmmakers employ the "outside-in" tactic to circumvent the government's restrictions on speaking about certain topics on the global screen, by capturing the Pink Dot formations in photos and distributing the images online, activists push beyond the boundaries of Hong Lim Park and the legal system.[77] However, these visibilities can only

"innervate" queer citizens to dare to imagine "a future (queer) Singapore… where sexual marginality and 'impossible presence' will eventually be things of the past".[78]

In the case of *Cane*, Loo pushed beyond the boundaries of the established meanings of terms such as theatre, performance art and performance. The very act of reenacting, Loo has argued, is an interpretation.[79] *Cane* cannot be *BC*, but "the act of striving towards the impossible… should be acknowledged with a critical eye".[80] *Cane* as a performance cannot repeal 377(a) or change the government's ambivalent position on homosexuality, but in hinting at what he can say and perform, it has provided grounds on which useful discussions may be generated. Rather than focusing on how Loo's *Cane* attempted to circumvent censorship, I intend to provide an understanding of how he incorporated many reference points which have the ability to stimulate a local imaginary of queer identity that both contends with and responds to the Western gay identity. I do this by providing an analysis of the media account and the reenactment(s) to highlight how Loo's position as a performance artist and a "global Asian queer boy" illustrates his ambiguous position in Singaporean society.

The Media Account

Ultimately, the issue of the persecution of homosexuals in Singapore that *BC* sought to expose was eclipsed by debates surrounding obscenity and whether performance art was a valid art form. The series of events were demonstrative of how performance artists were both enabled and restricted by their visibility in the media. Loo recalled this by reading aloud an excerpt from the news article "PUB(L)IC PROTEST":

> Mr. Ng explained: "It's a protest performance. I agree those men (who were arrested) were guilty of soliciting. But the press didn't have to print their names. And why were the men caned when they had already received a jail term?"[81]

In reading this excerpt aloud, Loo highlighted the mediated visibility of performance artists. While Ng is portrayed as protesting against the exposure of the identities of the 12 gay men in the exposé, he is also presented as agreeing that they are guilty. This seems particularly contradictory when viewed against Ng's previous performance *Don't Go Swimming, It's Not Safe* (1993), in which he stated: "I hate all this fucking gay bashing around the world. When will you fuckers leave us alone? I love to cruise. Just love to cruise."[82]

Through the voice of the media, Loo was then able to speak about the government's ambivalent position on homosexuality. In his incorporation of these articles into the performance, he called upon the audience to assess how assertions of Singapore as a creative, queer city may also be a part of the highly mediated narratives that are upheld by state-owned media and the government in the present. In this way, the incorporation of the media accounts may be viewed as an example of queer world-making, or as Kevin Floyd describes it, "the production of historically and socially situated, bounded totalities of queer praxis inherently critical of the ultimately global horizon of neoliberalized capital itself".[83] Jun Zubillaga-Pow elaborates this methodology of history production as one that positions the "invention of knowledge about queer lives and practices… amidst the existing resources of historical news archives and other public information within and without the boundaries of a foreclosed heteronormative world".[84]

Zubillaga-Pow's attempts in his literary analysis of news reports on homosexual-related concerns in Singapore's English-language newspapers to show how the nation state fails to deliver on its promise of "national love".[85] He argues that this failure is a result of the incoherence between the nationalist politics that have been imposed on the queer community and the homophobic print media.[86] He notes that although Singapore's English-language newspapers have changed drastically since the 1970s with the introduction of new approaches and diverse voices, these changes may be merely an example of quietening dissidence.[87] Indeed, the failure to deliver "national love" has continued in new ways such as through the lens of homo-normativity and through representation politics which ultimately leave heteronormativity unchallenged.[88] Homo-normativity is defined by Lisa Duggan as a politics which upholds and sustains dominant heteronormative assumptions while promising the possibility of a privatised, depoliticised gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.[89] Zubillaga-Pow understands the portrayal of homosexuality by Singapore's postcolonial news media as an example of this neoliberal phenomenon and as such he argues that a subversive lens through which the "complete constellations of stories of love and hate" are made public rather than private is required to empower and liberate homosexuals from a heteronormative system.[90]

When Loo performed the *The New Paper* article dated 5 January 1994, which contained the NAC's condemnation of *Brother Cane*, he was highlighting the sensationalisation of performance artists to evoke the invention of knowledge about queer life that the media has also upheld. Reading this excerpt aloud, he firstly evoked the ways in which the Singapore state's support for the contemporary arts was conditional:

> NAC finds the acts vulgar and completely distasteful, which deserve public condemnation. By no stretch of the imagination can such acts be construed and condoned as art. Such acts, in fact, debase art and lower the public's esteem for art and artists in general. If the artist has any grievances there are many other proper ways to give vent to their feelings. Artists with talent do not have to resort to antics in order to draw attention to themselves or to communicate their feelings or ideas.[91]

Max Le Blond, a theatre director, responded in a letter opposing the NAC's suppression of artworks it had never witnessed itself.[92] While the NAC took a public stance against *Brother Cane* and suggested that there were more appropriate channels to discuss and oppose conservative discourses on homosexuality, then Chairman Professor Tommy Koh confirmed in response to Le Blond that whilst it was "true that no one from NAC witnessed Josef Ng's performance", they had "no reason to doubt the veracity of the newspaper reports".[93] Yet, Ng Li-San who had reported on the event later admitted she had no understanding of performance art.[94] Indeed, the media performs a very similar purpose for the Singaporean government, upholding the government's position on cultural policies and sexual politics. As Zubillaga-Pow has revealed, the homophobic print media has confined the queer community to exist within nationalist discourses that have consistently either excluded them or played a role in their persecution.[95]

Langenbach argues that Koh's response concentrated on ruling out public acceptance of performance art.[96] While Koh argued that Ng's 'act' only *purported* to be performance art and could not actually be condoned as 'art', the point of his response, here, was to preempt and invent an imagined stance that the public seemed to collectively agree upon.[97] When Loo performed this particular article, he was thus drawing attention to the ways in which such sensationalist articles have provided an extremely invented and highly mediated historicisation of the events in 1994. This is not dissimilar to the way that Singapore has emerged as a gay capital of Asia in a highly mediated and controlled form that has both allowed and restricted queer performances. To return briefly to the controversy surrounding Loo's film, *Solos*, the R21 rating given to the film states that "films that depict a homosexual lifestyle should be sensitive to community values".[98] The public statement by NAC seen above similarly attempts to speak for the public's opposition to homosexuality and takes as a given the public's support for Singaporean Asian Values and its need to be protected from corrupt morals.

FIGURE 6: Loo Zihan, *Cane*, 2012, performance documentation, The Substation Theatre, Singapore. Source: Photograph by Samantha Tio on Loo Zihan's website: http://www.loozihan.com/cane2012.

While performance art and homosexuality are continuously deemed obscene and evidence of corrupt morals, their existence in Singapore is also useful in propping up the claim that the country has liberalised. Thus they must be allowed but in a controlled and contained manner, something which Loo highlighted in his reading of the excerpt. This was also addressed in the way he circulated the articles and projected them on the screens behind him, evoking the all-encompassing presence and control of the media (see Figure 6). By inverting the sequence and foregrounding the aftermath of the performance, he provided an entry point for the audience to consider how these contradictions may have affected the reenactment that they were about to witness.

The Reenactment

It is the reenacted account's deviations from the media account and the original performance that served to perform the "global Asian queer boy's" ambivalent position in the Singaporean contemporary art scene. One of the main deviations from the original is the lowering of his briefs to reveal a clean-shaven crotch while holding a pair of scissors, instead of snipping his pubic hair as Ng had done.[99] Ho Rui Ann is specifically critical of Loo's

choice to turn around and expose his clean-shaven pubic area.[100] He argues that this choice strayed too far from the original to "touch" and "re-affect" it, adding that he was "abruptly repelled by the explicit body at the centre of the spectacle"; here, he took issue less with Loo's physical body laid bare but with the "explicitness of its call to look".[101]

As is clear in the performance score of *Cane*, this call to look was deliberate, where Loo, completely nude and with scissors in hand, "will be directing his gaze at each member of the audience".[102] This is coupled with the fact that his 2011 reenactment and a live feed of the live reenactment were screened in cadence with the reenactment itself. The "calls to look" that the audience were subjected to were inescapable. While this forms the basis of Ho's criticism of *Cane*, I suggest instead that this call to look was an important feature of Loo's critique of the ambivalent position queer artists have been placed in due to the illiberal pragmatism of the Singaporean government. In his explicit visibility, he blends his position as a performance artist and a global Asian queer boy to make a comment on the impossible presence that both performance artists and gay men rely on. The ways in which Loo exposed himself responded to the surveillance and scrutiny of homosexual subjects in the arts and in other public spheres.

As Louis Ho argues, Loo's body in its uncomfortable and obsessive exposure may be read as a gesture of confession.[103] Ho notes that *Cane* was performed under the extremely bright lights of The Substation theatre, as if his nude body was on display for the unrelenting scrutiny of the public's gaze.[104] He recalls a reader's letter responding to the *Straits Times* article "Remember This?", which announced Loo's intent to reenact *BC*, to demonstrate this public scrutiny:

> Cutting pubic hair again? What is it trying to show? There is absolutely no meaning in performing such an act. It is so silly, weird and crude.[105]

Loo met the public's scrutiny with a confession, Ho argues, which is observed in the exposure of his nude body rather than the cutting of pubic hair.[106] He describes Loo's body: 169 cm tall, slender in build, and completely hairless as a signifier of prepubescence.[107] His body, unable to procreate, conjured his opposition to official ideologies.[108] It confessed to his "subalternity" in a place where he was both highly visible and yet under the government's scrutiny.[109]

Gazing into his audience's eyes may have appeared to personalise the gesture as his own or suggest a solemnity associated with the way the government has intervened in his ability to reenact the original gesture that was grounded in protesting against the persecution of homosexuals in Singapore.

On the contrary, though the gesture differed from the original, it did not equate to a gesture that Loo owned himself. Rather, it was imposed upon him and was performed by the Singaporean government and its ideological apparatuses. It is this gesture that best encapsulated the power relationship of the colonial dyad, between the "global Asian queer boy" and the "post-colonial daddy".[110] It captured how the government's fatherly and controlling position on homosexuality has informed what Loo can or cannot do in his work. In turn, his navigation of this control by utilising the history of *BC* has allowed him to create an alternative imaginary of queer subjectivity in which the deviations of the performance are artistic choices that better describes his ambiguous position in Singaporean society.

The scrutiny of the state was not necessarily circumvented or defied but made visible for the audience as a way of representing the dangers of the visibility around queer issues that the pragmatic decisions of the Singaporean government, observed in their recent expansion of the creative industry, have created. He reminded the audience that with this visibility comes the commodification of queer people in Singapore despite the reality of their continued persecution and surveillance. The act of revealing the shaved crotch, therefore, exposed the cosmopolitanism of Singapore, which has allowed many people who may have never met each other to embrace a common sense of belonging, ultimately as an imagined reality.[111] In his case study of Shanghai, Bao uses the concept of "imagined cosmopolitanism" to explain the differing of opinions between the organisers of the Pride Week and local Chinese gays and lesbians. The concept was developed by anthropologist Louisa Schein to "highlight the ways in which cosmopolitanism works as a social imaginary shared by people who may never have met each other but who embrace a common sense of belonging and aspiration".[112]

The performative gesture, and its call to look, represented the way this imagined cosmopolitanism has allowed fragmented understandings of reality to disguise themselves as a new, revitalised sense of unification in the form of a "separate pseudo-world that can only be looked at" or a "spectacle".[113] The act of cutting pubic hair was hinted at by Loo's bare crotch and the scissors in his hand, but it was only the representation of this act's occurrence that the audience could look at. There was no hair left to cut because the fragmented reality of Singapore's progression towards an accepting and creative city state has created a pseudo world where there is no reason to cut one's hair in protest and no reason to interrogate the presumptive depictions of reality maintained by state apparatuses such as the media.

Loo returned to Ng and *BC*, resisting an image of a unified, creative Singapore and instead used the fragmented reality of Singapore's art history to depict himself as a "global Asian queer boy" caught up in the postcolonial

father-state's confines. Though he chose not to perform the original act of protest, the act of making visible this inability was, in itself, a protest in the way it communicated the Singapore state's authoritarianism as an ongoing issue for queer artists. The concerns that contemporary artists in Singapore face despite the government's vision of Singapore as a GCA have been raised by the late Lee Wen, a Singaporean performance artist who, in collaboration with a number of local artists, shaped the development of performance art in Southeast Asia. He made his 2014 New Year's resolution to "not present performance art in Singapore under the compulsory need to apply for a license".[114] However, after recalling Loo's *Cane*, he had mixed feelings regarding his potential abstention from performance art and many questions that had been left unanswered.[115] Lee noted that he and other concerned artists had "been knocking on the doors of the arts council for the past ten years [1994–2003], since the traumatic aftermath of A.G.A. (Artists' General Assembly) in 1994".[116] He continued, "now that they open the door I must enter although it may not be comfortable".[117]

As Loo has stated himself, "the fact that [he] can stage *Cane* just means that [he is] allowed to speak about it".[118] As this essay has pointed out, there are still many things he, as a gay man in Singapore, is not allowed to speak about. However, at the heart of *Cane* is the necessity of entering through open doors despite discomfort. While the aftermath of *BC* left a deep temporal fracture in the performance art community that is felt to this day, Loo has not let this fracture continue. In resisting this fracture, he has also been able to make a comment on his ambiguous position in Singaporean society as a gay man. While his is but one voice in a highly asymmetrical formation of queer identity, the political potential of *Cane* is endless. In pushing the boundaries that still exist and reflecting on boundaries that have been crossed, Loo has also pointed to larger, global discourses surrounding homosexual identity whilst asserting his rightful place in Singaporean society.

BIOGRAPHY

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NOTES

1 Loo Zihan, conversation with Melissa Wong, 14 January 2013, quoted in Melissa Wansin Wong, "Performing Singapore's Queer Quandary: Walking the Tightrope Between Sexual Illegality and Neoliberal-Enabled Subjectivity at Pink Dot and in Loo Zihan's Cane", in *Queer Dramaturgies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 71.

2 Ibid.

3 There seems to be a scarcity of responses from the queer community regarding Loo's actions and performative practice. However, in his installation *Queer objects, an archive for the future*, he collaborated with many queer agencies and groups to assemble an archive of objects designed to communicate to future queer citizens about the nature of queer identity in the present.

4 Loo Zihan, "Editors' Note to Breaking the Silence", in *Archiving Cane Folio* (Singapore: Substation Gallery, 2012), p. 25.

5 Loo Zihan, "Breaking the Silence", Facebook, 14 February 2012. https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=archivingcane&set=a.291389377634455 [accessed 1 June 2021].

6 Ibid.

7 Alfian Sa'at, "A Censorship Manifesto", in *Histories, Practices and Interventions: A Reader in Singapore Contemporary Art* (Singapore: Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, 2016), pp. 170–1.

8 Louis Ho, "Loo Zihan and the Body Confessional", in *Archiving Cane Folio*, p. 105.

9 Sa'at, "A Censorship Manifesto", p. 168.

10 Ibid.

11 Wong, "Performing Singapore's Queer Quandary", p. 72.

12 Eng-Beng Lim, "The Global Asian Queer Boys of Singapore", in *Brown Boys and Rice Queens: Spellbinding Performance in the Asias* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), p. 97.

13 Ibid.

14 Lim, "The Global Asian Queer Boys of Singapore", pp. 99–100.

15 J.K. Gibson-Graham, "Querying Globalization", in *Post-Colonial, Queer*, ed. John C. Hawley (New York: SUNY Press, 2001), p. 263.

16 Ray Langenbach, "Performing the Singapore State 1988–1995", PhD diss., University of Western Sydney, 2003, p. 250.

17 Ibid.

18 Susie Lingham, "Art and Censorship in Singapore: Catch 22", *Art Asia Pacific* 26 (Nov./Dec. 2011).

19 Ibid.

20 T.C. Chang, "Renaissance Revisited: Singapore as a 'Global City for the Arts'", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24, 4 (2000): 818.

21 Ibid.

22 Yvonne Low, "Performing queerness: Singapore's 'Global City for the Arts' and the politics of invisibility", *World Art* 10, 2–3 (2020): 284.

23 Yvonne Low, "Positioning Singapore's Contemporary Art", *Journal of Maritime Geopolitics and Culture* 2, 1 & 2 (2011): 116.

24 Loo Zihan, "Interview with Loo Zihan", interview by Nora Taylor, *Asia Art Archive* (1 April 2012).

25 Loo Zihan, "For Words", in *Archiving Cane Folio*, p. 5.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., p. 6.

28 Loo Zihan, "Interview with Loo Zihan".

29 It should also be noted that the Malay and Indian communities that populate Singapore also feel these contradictions in often more material forms.

30 Oliver Ross, "Watching Solos in Singapore: Homosexuality, Surrealism and Queer Politics", *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* 38 (2015): 1.

31 Lim, "The Global Asian Queer Boys of Singapore", p. 392. An example of the inequality between local and foreign talent was in 2008 when Lee Kuan Yew reassured an American professor who had been invited to head Singapore's largest earth observatory that he would not face discrimination and would be able to bring his partner with him. Natalie Oswin examines the creative city's agenda as heteronormative in the way it privileges "foreign talent", even those who are openly queer, who are invited to take up citizenship while "foreign workers" often must abandon their families and are excluded from citizenship. For further discussions on how Singapore has emerged as a gay Asian city which privileges queer foreign talent, see Natalie Oswin, "The queer time of creative urbanism: Family, futurity and global city Singapore", *Environment and Planning A* 44, 7: 1624–40.

32 Loo, "For Words", p. 6.

33 Ho Rui An, "Making Live Again: Between Josef Ng's *Brother Cane* (1994) and Loo Zihan's *Cane* (2012)", in *Archiving Cane Folio*, p. 78.

34 Adeline Chia, "*Cane* bound by red tape", *Straits Times*, 21 February 2012.

35 Ibid.

36 Loo Zihan, "Interview with Loo Zihan".

37 Oliver Ross, "Watching Solos in Singapore: Homosexuality, Surrealism and Queer Politics", p. 1.

38 Kenneth Chan, "Impossible Presence: Towards a Queer Cinema, 1990s–2000s", in *Queer Singapore: Illiberal Citizenship and Mediated Cultures* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p. 169.

39 Ibid.

40 Loo Zihan, "Interview with Loo Zihan".
41 Oliver Ross, "Watching Solos in Singapore: Homosexuality, Surrealism and Queer Politics", p. 2.
42 Jason Luger, "Creative Singapore, Paradoxes and Possibilities. The Geographies of Cultural Activism in an Authoritarian City-State", PhD diss., King's College London/National University of Singapore, 2021, p. 181.
43 Ibid.
44 "12 men nabbed in anti-gay police operation at Tanjong Rhu", *Straits Times*, 3 November 1993.
45 Ray Langenbach, "Looking Back at Brother Cane: Performance Art and State Performance", in *Histories, Practices, Interventions: A Reader in Singapore Contemporary Art*, ed. Jeffrey Say and Seng Yu Jin (Singapore: Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, 2016), p. 183.
46 Langenbach, "Looking Back at *Brother Cane*: Performance Art and State Performance", p. 183.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Langenbach, "Performing the Singapore State: 1988–1995", pp. 203–4.
51 Ibid., p. 244. The National Arts Council (NAC) is a statutory board established in 1991 and oversees the development of the arts in Singapore.
52 Langenbach, "Performing the Singapore State: 1988–1995", p. 245. Section 294(a) of the Penal Code states: "whoever, to the annoyance of others, does any obscene act in any public place shall be punished with imprisonment for a term that may extend to 3 months, or with a fine, or with both".
53 Ibid., pp. 203–4.
54 Ng Yi-Sheng, *Becoming Josef* (Singapore: The Substation Gallery, 2012), p. 14.
55 Langenbach, "Performing the Singapore State: 1988–1995", p. 203.
56 Ibid., p. 192.
57 Email correspondence between Ray Langenbach and Vincent Leow, 11/12/98, quoted in Langenbach, "Performing the Singapore State: 1988–1995", p. 192.
58 Ibid., p. 203.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., p. 206.
61 June Yap, *Retrospective: A Historiographic Aesthetic in Singapore and Malaysia* (Washington: Lexington Books, 2017), p. 150.
62 Langenbach, "Performing the Singapore State: 1988–1995", p. 196.
63 Lynette Chua, *Mobilizing Gay Singapore* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), p. 5.
64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.
66 Wong, "Performing Singapore's Queer Quandary", p. 77.
67 Ibid., p. 66.
68 Audrey Yue and Helen Hok-Sze Leung, "Notes towards the queer Asian city: Singapore and Hong Kong", *Urban Studies* 54, 3 (2017): 755.
69 Ibid. Singapore is often referred to in the media as "the red dot" or "the little red dot".
70 Yue and Leung, "Notes towards the queer Asian city: Singapore and Hong Kong", p. 755.
71 Chua, *Mobilizing Gay Singapore*, p. 128.
72 Section 377(a) is a Singaporean law which criminalises sex acts between two males. According to section 377(a) "any male person who, in public or private, commits, or abets the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 2 years."
73 Yue, "Queer Singapore: A Critical Introduction", p. 2.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., p. 7.
76 Ibid., p. 2.
77 Chua, *Mobilizing Gay Singapore*, p. 128.
78 Chan, "Impossible Presence: Towards a Queer Cinema, 1990s–2000s", p. 173.
79 Loo, "Breaking the Silence: A love letter to the arts community", p. 28.
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81 Josef Ng quoted in Ng Li-San, "PUB(L)IC PROTEST", *Straits Times*, 3 January 1994.
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83 Kevin Floyd, *The Reification of Desire, Toward a Queer Marxism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 199.
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85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., p. 150.
87 Ibid., p. 151.
88 Ibid.
89 Lisa Duggan, *The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 179.
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91 National Arts Council of Singapore, *The New Paper*, 5 January 1994.
92 Langenbach, "Performing the Singapore State 1988–1995", pp. 247–8.

[93] Tommy Koh, letter to Max Le Blond, 13 January 1994 quoted in Langenbach, "Performing the Singapore State 1988–1995", p. 248.
[94] Langenbach, "Looking Back at Brother Cane: Performance Art and State Performance", p. 188.
[95] Zubillaga-Pow, "The Negative Dialectics of Homonationalism", p. 149.
[96] Langenbach, "Performing the Singapore State 1988–1995", p. 248.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ross, "Watching Solos in Singapore: Homosexuality, Surrealism and Queer Politics", para. 2.
[99] Loo, *Cane Performance Score*, p. 8.
[100] Ho, "Making Live Again", pp. 78–9.
[101] Ibid., p. 77.
[102] Loo, *Cane Performance Score*, p. 8.
[103] Ho, "Loo Zihan and the Body Confessional", p. 101.
[104] Ibid., p. 100.
[105] Pek Li Sng, "Why show Brother Cane again?", *Life! Mailbag* section, *Straits Times*, 18 February 2012, cited in Ho, "Loo Zihan and the Body Confessional", p. 100.
[106] Ho, "Loo Zihan and the Body Confessional", p. 106.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Lim, "The Global Asian Queer Boys of Singapore", p. 92.
[111] Hongwei Bao, "Queering/Querying Cosmopolitanism: Queer Spaces in Shanghai", *Culture Unbound* 4 (2012): 99–100.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, p. 2.
[114] Lee Wen, "Dead Art Daydream Action No.1" *Republic of Daydreams*, 2014. https://republicofdaydreams.wordpress.com/category/5th-passage/
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Wong, "Performing Singapore's Queer Quandary", p. 71.

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