



MONASH  
University

MALAYSIA



SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

# Metamorphosis

School of Arts & Social Sciences | **10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**



## The Curatorial Team

The stories, drawings and photos in this collection were lovingly curated, sketched and edited by a team made up of the following individuals:

Dr Cyren Wong - *Chief Curator and Artist*

Dr Yeoh Seng Guan - *Curator*

Dr Nicholas Chan - *Curator*

Miss Nadiah Ahmad - *Editor*

Miss Caryn Lim - *Editor*

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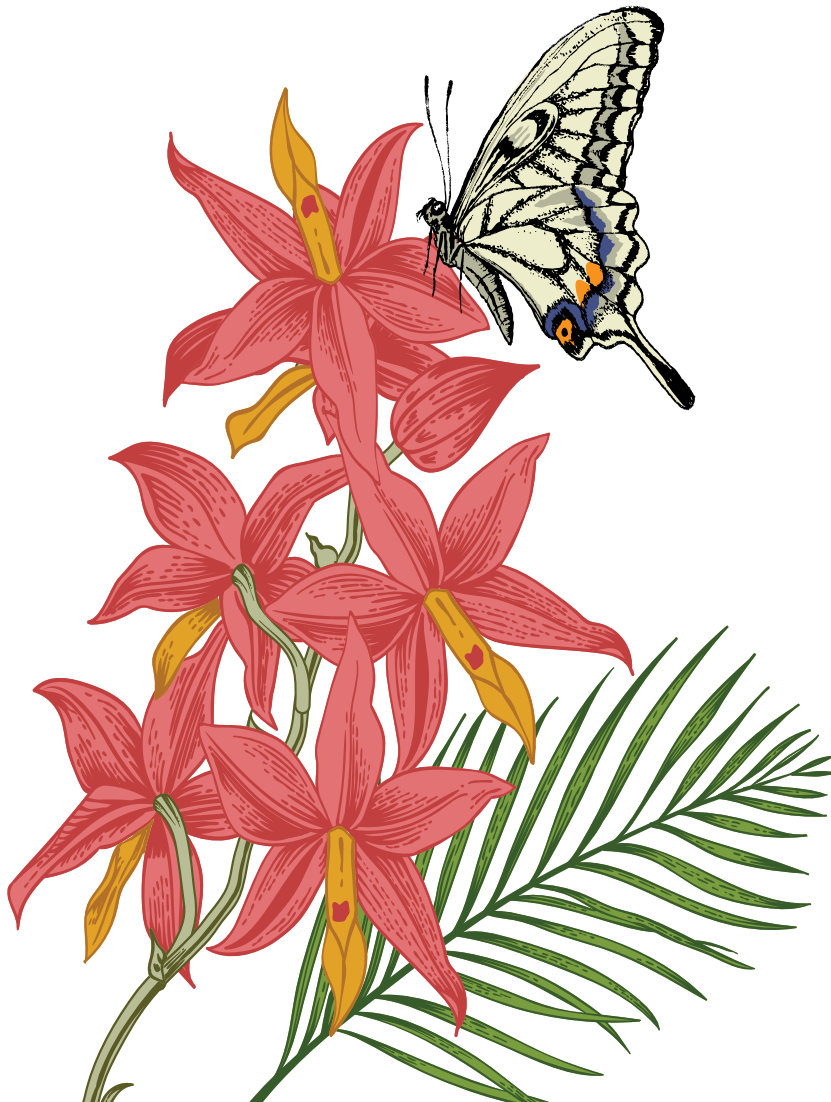
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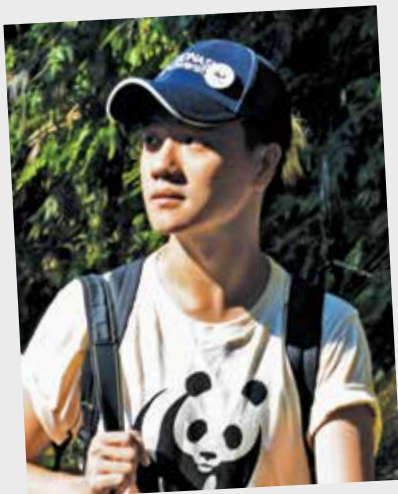




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## Notes from the Curator

I was lured into this monumental task with the promise of butterflies. It sounds strange, I know, but I assure you that those who know me are probably nodding their heads in understanding right about now. Like myself when I was first approached by Dr. Yeoh Seng Guan, they are probably wondering how on earth my own interests align with the prospect of filling in the role of curator of the School of Arts and Social Sciences 10th Anniversary commemorative magazine. Indeed, despite the considerable amount of time I spend writing - and teaching creative and experimental writing strategies to undergrad students - most of the people close to me would also be aware of the fact that I do not consider myself a particularly talented or proficient writer. Surely, there were better candidates for the position!

However, as I listened to Dr Yeoh discourse at length about how he had conceptualized the theme and idea, I began to see how my personal strengths and interests could fit into his vision of the school magazine. The magazine, he explained, would function as a sort of retrospective window into the School's transformation over the past 10 years. "A sort of metamorphosis, if you will" he said in my office that afternoon. "As editor, you can have creative freedom over the interpretation of that idea." The job was therefore less about "editing" the personal memoirs, recollections, and anecdotes of former staff and students, as much as it was about curating the content of the magazine, and coming up with an overall design and layout for the end product. Throughout his time with the School, Dr. Yeoh had amassed a formidable collection of contacts, photographs, and other sources that eventually made their way (in one form or another) into the magazine.<sup>1</sup>

"Well... I'll think about it"

"And you can include some of your drawings of butterflies," he added.

"Oh!!! Alright then, you can count me in!"<sup>2</sup>

The promise of being able to incorporate my love for butterflies into the project was my proverbial carrot on a stick, and you will find scattered throughout the entire publication, multiple butterfly and natural history motifs. Many of these I have created



specifically for the magazine, but a fair few were selected from a series of sketches I came up with in 2014 while conducting research in the field. This collection of “new” and “old” drawings are reflective of my own metamorphosis and make up the bulk of my textual contribution towards this manuscript.

It was also only as I was reviewing the latter of these artworks that I eventually came up with the idea of presenting the magazine the style of a field journal. As an anthropologist and ethnozoologist, I always found the task of field journaling to be one of the most meaningful and significant components of field work. More than just recordings of interviews and photographs, the field journal can also function as a window into the thought processes of the researcher themselves; an insight into their personal growth and journey as they grow into, navigate, and respond to the world as learned academics and as human beings.

The theme and style of the magazine therefore seeks to capture the essence of every contributor’s journey and growth; their metamorphoses. And though we don’t all end up as butterflies on the other side (hence the decision to include moths in the artwork), I am of the opinion that there is no such thing as an “ugly” or “useless” insect. Each insect on this planet is inherently beautiful when you consider the fact that the endless possibilities of forms, structures and colors in which they appear today are all results of their ongoing responses to environmental interactions and pressures that are refined through metamorphosis over thousands, or even millions of years. Which is a reflection on the changing nature of our own selves, with each incarnation reflected in the stories we choose to tell.

*Dr. Cyren Wong has been with the School of Arts and Social Sciences from the beginning (2008), first as a student, as now as a member of the academic staff. He has taken over both the Creative Writing Labs with the School of Arts and Social Sciences and is the Malaysian Country Coordinator for the Global Immersion Guarantee (GIG). He is also the founder of the Community Biodiversity and Environmental Outreach platform “Naturetalksback” ([www.facebook.com/Naturetalksback](http://www.facebook.com/Naturetalksback))*

<sup>1</sup> There is something to be said about those of us in the anthropological profession, and a compulsive need to record, collect, and curate just about everything and anything!

<sup>2</sup> Conversations have been paraphrased.





Professor Andrew Walker  
President & Pro Vice-Chancellor

### Message from the President & Pro Vice-Chancellor

This year Monash University Malaysia celebrates its 20th anniversary. From a very modest beginning we have grown into one of the world's most successful international branch campuses. Our vision is to be a platform for Monash University's scholarly engagement with the dynamic Southeast Asian region.

The School of Arts and Social Science has been an important part of this history for the past 10 years, enhancing the breadth, depth and critical perspective of our comprehensive campus. The global studies program deepens our understanding of this region and its place in the world; the communication major provides students with essential skills to participate in the global economy; screen studies provides a creative window into social, cultural and political change; while gender studies provides students with conceptual and practical tools to understand and address persistent inequality and intolerance.

It is an exciting time for the social sciences and humanities in Malaysia. The election of a new government in May 2018 has opened up discussion on a range of issues that were previously approached with caution. I have no doubt that the the School's staff, students and alumni will make a valuable contribution to this enriched public domain as they pursue Monash University's tradition of critical and engaged scholarship.

The School has grown steadily over the years, and now has more than 600 students enrolled in its programs. Undergraduate students make up most of the numbers, but there is a growing cohort of Masters students in communication and media studies. Importantly an active cohort of PhD students drive new insights in fields ranging from the engagement of Chinese provincial governments with ASEAN states to ethnographies of ecotourism among Orang Asli communities. I am particularly pleased that another 650 students from other programs take arts and social science units, broadening their own disciplinary perspectives.

I congratulate the School of Arts and Social Science on a decade of achievement. I thank all the staff, past and present, who have worked so hard to build the School into what it is today. I look forward to new achievements and new directions in the coming years as the School embraces the opportunities and challenges of "New Malaysia".



## Foreword



Professor Helen E.S. Nesadurai  
Head, School of Arts and Social Sciences

### Message from the Head of School

I am extremely proud to be at the helm of a dynamic and diverse School whose mission is to produce creative, critical and compassionate lifelong learners through innovative teaching, a dynamic curriculum, and exemplary teaching. When Arts and Social Sciences became an independent School of Monash University Malaysia in 2008, the seeds had already been planted that would lead us to our present success and to the successes achieved by our graduates.

Then, as now, the heart of the School is its vibrant community of dedicated and inspiring staff who, through their involvement in cutting-edge research, their engagement with government, industry and community, as well as their commitment to creative forms of teaching, create an environment in which students actively learn how to ask questions, probe beneath the surface of things, and apply current research practices and specialised knowledge to analyse complex real-world problems and offer innovative solutions. These attributes have allowed our graduates to embark on exciting careers worldwide in governments, international organisations, corporations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), think tanks and universities. Many of our graduates have also launched their own business ventures and today are successful entrepreneurs. And it is their achievements and experiences that reflect the value of an Arts and Social Sciences education in a fast-changing world.

A second core strength of the School is its collective social conscience, a commitment to exposing injustices, to championing emancipation that is the basis of all we do in SASS. This shared ethos is reflected in our curriculum, our research activities, the way we interact with each other and with our colleagues in other parts of the university, and our engagements with the outside world. A third core strength is the School's very competent, dedicated and skilled professional staff who have worked tirelessly, with quiet efficiency, to achieve the School's goals and to support our students.

I would like to acknowledge the leadership of previous Heads. This School has been shaped by each of them who are, jointly, the architects of the School's achievements thus far and those of its students and graduates. We look forward to the years to come.





# Ancora Imparo

The staff at SASS

Monash University Malaysia is a joint venture



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