

# PearlLam Galleries

Singapore

## FrictionaL

BEN LOONG, ZULKIFLI LEE duo exhibition

Exhibition Dates 2 December, 2018 – 27 January, 2019  
Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–7pm; Sunday, noon–6pm  
Venue Pearl Lam Galleries, 9 Lock Road, #03-22, Gillman Barracks, Singapore 108937

Singapore— Pearl Lam Galleries is pleased to present *FrictionaL*, a duo exhibition featuring a selection of paintings and sculptures by Ben Loong (b. 1988, Singapore) and Zulkifli Lee (b. 1978, Malaysia). A tour de force display of the unconventional processing of material infrastructure, the exhibition will engage the gallery space in constructing a site of active encounters between the two emerging artists, suggesting different points of resistance between their practices and in the creation of the works themselves.

A development of his *Terra Blanca* series, Ben Loong continues to explore the textural qualities of wall plaster and resin while expanding the scale and variation of his compositions. In his present body of work, mosaic tiles, produced through a systematized process, are configured into various brick patterns, setting up a resistance between the wall and the work of art. The free-pouring of wall plaster into standardized moulds introduces elements of chance and serendipity into an otherwise ordered process, transforming the canvas into a three-dimensional terrain of craters, concavities, and bulges. Asserting their status as aesthetic objects while seeming to dissolve into their surrounding architecture, Loong's works reveal the conceptual complications guiding notions of artistic labour and authorship. The tension between the singularity of the work of art and the uniformity of industrial production methods is further compounded by the pairing of modest drywall plaster with dustings of gold leaf. Playing on our faculties of visual categorization and pattern recognition, Loong thus subjects our preconceptions of rarity and banality to an artistic undoing.

In contrast, Zulkifli Lee navigates contemporary art practice with the Islamic aesthetic philosophy of *Nazzariyah*, emphasizing the empirical materiality of his works above a prescribed narrative. Working with natural mediums such as dirt, soil, sand, limestone, and rust, Lee engages with their physical and phenomenological properties. Informed by principles of abstraction, modular structure, successive combination, repetition, dynamism, and intricacy that are found in traditional Islamic art, Lee produces personalized abstract, geometric patterns tessellated by a dynamic play between order and chance, between human intervention and nature's hand. These paintings are accentuated by a series of minimalist modular sculptures, harmonizing materials that seem to at first be contradictory opposites. Here, the organicity of wood is fused with metal, interlocked in a direct material exchange. The participatory element in some of Lee's sculptures further activates a space where the personal and public coalesce. Lee's practice is inextricably linked to his cultural background and faith, involving the reclamation of abstraction as a long-held Islamic aesthetic tradition, with an emphasis on organicity, community, and man's interconnectedness with nature.

By exploring the parallels and contrasts between the exhibiting artists, *FrictionaL* brings into contact the two approaches to abstraction, embracing resistance as a productive force that generates their creative co-influence. The artists share a keen sensitivity to materiality, compelling the viewer to appreciate the corporeal and sensual aspects of their works, while questioning how they are embedded in larger systems of value.

## About the Artists

Ben Loong (b. 1988, Singapore) works in the mediums of painting and sculpture, taking a diaristic approach to his artmaking. Working primarily with drywall plaster, Loong's practice manipulates the familiar aspects of mass-produced, industrial base objects to reinterpret material culture and value systems. Textures in the work are deliberate reiterations of marks and patterns observed in the physical environment as a means of highlighting commonalities across scale and material. Loong recently concluded his first solo exhibition *Aggregate* (2018) with I\_S\_L\_A\_N\_D\_S, Singapore. His selected group exhibitions include *Lingering Manifestations* (2018), Pearl Lam Galleries, Singapore; *River Stories* (2018), The Mountbatten, Institute of Contemporary Art, Singapore; *Empirical Atlas* (2017), Pearl Lam Galleries, Singapore; *Black & White* (2017), AC43 Gallery, Singapore; *Untapped Emerging* (2017), Visual Arts Development Association, Chan + Hori Contemporary, Singapore (2017); *Ends* (2014), Hart Lane Studios, London, UK; and *Joyless Unity* (2013), Mori + Stein, London, UK.

Zulkifli Lee (b. 1978, Raub, Pahang, Malaysia) is a versatile multi-disciplinary artist working in the mediums of painting, sculpture, print, and installation. Lee graduated with a BA, majoring in Fine Art (Sculpture), from Universiti Teknologi MARA, and he pursued an MA (Fine Art and Technology) at the same university, receiving the Master's Excellence Award in 2013. Lee's practice explores the dynamic between personalized and impersonalized forms, using the language of materials. His works are often made from natural, organic mediums, such as soil, sand, and corrosion patina, juxtaposing the beauty of the relationship and paradox between humans and nature. Bridging Islamic aesthetic philosophies with contemporary principles and execution, Lee references traditional Islamic and Malay folk art to create minimal yet intricate compositions. Since 1999, Lee has exhibited extensively in galleries and institutions in Malaysia. As Rimbun Dahan's Yearlong Resident Artist for 2017, he presented works inspired from the natural and built environments surrounding the private arts facility in his first solo exhibition *Material, Order & Chance* (2017). His recent selected group exhibitions include *Lingering Manifestations* (2018), Pearl Lam Galleries, Singapore; *Bintang 5* (2018), Segaris Art Centre, Kuala Lumpur; *Locals Only* (2018), Taksu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur; *The Unreal Deal* (2017), Bank Negara Malaysia Museum and Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur; and *Young Contemporary '16* (2017), National Visual Arts Gallery, Kuala Lumpur. Lee currently lives and works in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

## About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. With over 20 years of experience exhibiting Asian and Western art and design, it is one of the leading and most established contemporary art galleries to be launched out of China.

Playing a vital role in stimulating international dialogue on Chinese and Asian contemporary art, the Galleries is dedicated to championing artists who re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice from the region. The Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore collaborate with renowned curators, each presenting distinct programming from major solo exhibitions, special projects and installations to conceptually rigorous group shows. Based on the philosophy of Chinese Literati where art forms have no hierarchy, Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to breaking down boundaries between different disciplines, with a unique gallery model committed to encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

Further building on the Galleries' commitment, Pearl Lam Galleries opened a new gallery space at H Queen's, Hong Kong's latest art hub, in March 2018. The five gallery spaces of Pearl Lam Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore represent an increasingly influential roster of contemporary artists. Chinese artists Su Xiaobai and Zhu Jinshi, who synthesize Chinese sensibilities with an international visual language, are presented internationally with work now included in major private and public collections worldwide. The Galleries has also introduced leading international artists, such as Leonardo Drew, Jenny Holzer, Carlos Rolón/Dzine, and Yinka Shonibare MBE, to markets in the region, providing opportunities for new audiences in Asia to encounter their work. Pearl Lam Galleries encourages international artists to create new work which engages specifically with the region, collaborating to produce thought-provoking, culturally relevant work.

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## Press Enquiries

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