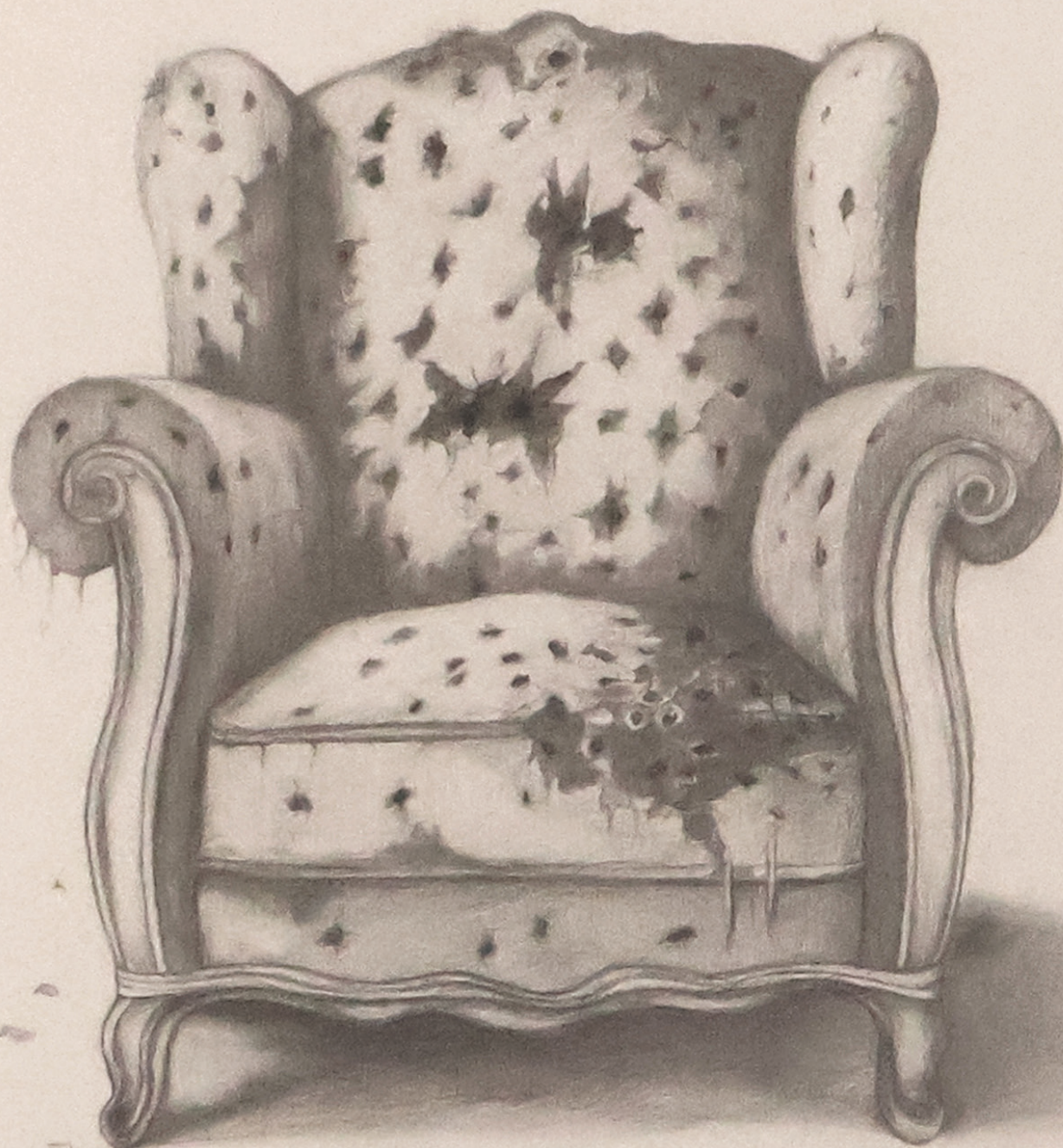


*W* YEO WORKSHOP



JUSTIN LOKE





# JUSTIN LOKE

Justin Loke (b. 1979, Singapore) is a multidisciplinary artist and curator. He is the director of Vertical Submarine, an art collective acclaimed for their interdisciplinary projects that blend art installation, painting, theatre and curating, focusing on storytelling through words and images. Loke's notable achievements include receiving the JCCI Japan Foundation Arts Award in 2009. He was the creative director and writer for the Singapore Night Festival 2022's highlight act, *Cathay Hotel: The Curse of The Missing Red Shoe*. In 2023, he curated Benchmarks, a placemaking initiative commissioned by the Civic District Alliance.

Recently, he completed an artist residency and exhibition at Points Center for Contemporary Arts in Shanghai-Suzhou, organised by the Troy Foundation (London), curated *Creative Intersections: Traces of Dragons* at Funan Mall, and *8-Bit Word Cloud*, a public art installation for National Art Gallery of Singapore's Light to Night Festival for Singapore Art Week 2024. Vertical Submarine has earned numerous awards including The President's Young Talent Award (Singapore, 2009), The Celeste Prize (New York, 2011), and a finalist position for the Sovereign Asian Art Prize (Hong Kong, 2015).

## (VERTICAL SUBMARINE)



W



Justin Loke

*Unarmed Chair: Broken Window Fallacy*, 2026

Brass Plate, Acid, 12 Bore/ 12-gauge shotgun, 00-buck cartridges, on Armchair  
(Cow Leather) in Glass Display Cabinet (from recycled Teakwood of old, broken  
windows and doors)

120 x 110 x 160 cm

Unique



W

This sculpture is part of Justin Loke's ongoing *Unarmed Chair* series, which investigates what remains of an object once its utility is broken. By subjecting a comforting piece of furniture to abuse and damage, Loke pushes the chair beyond function and into another form of visibility. He references the economic theory Broken Window Fallacy, which notes that damage presented as improvement conceals underlying loss. In this work, apparent harm serves to expose the underlying structures and assumptions that previously remained concealed by the object's usefulness.

In everyday life, a chair hides behind its purpose; we notice only what it does, not what it is.

Here, once the chair can no longer serve its function, it finally presents itself as a thing: its meaning no longer concealed by usefulness. In an art show devoted to making and creating, Loke turns to unmaking as its necessary counterpart.





W

**Justin Loke**

*Unarmed Chair: Explaining the Broken English of Butcher Ding, 2025*

Wooden chair, new and used choppers

95 x 90 x 128 cm

Chair Dimensions: 47 x 46 x 100 cm

Edition of 3





W

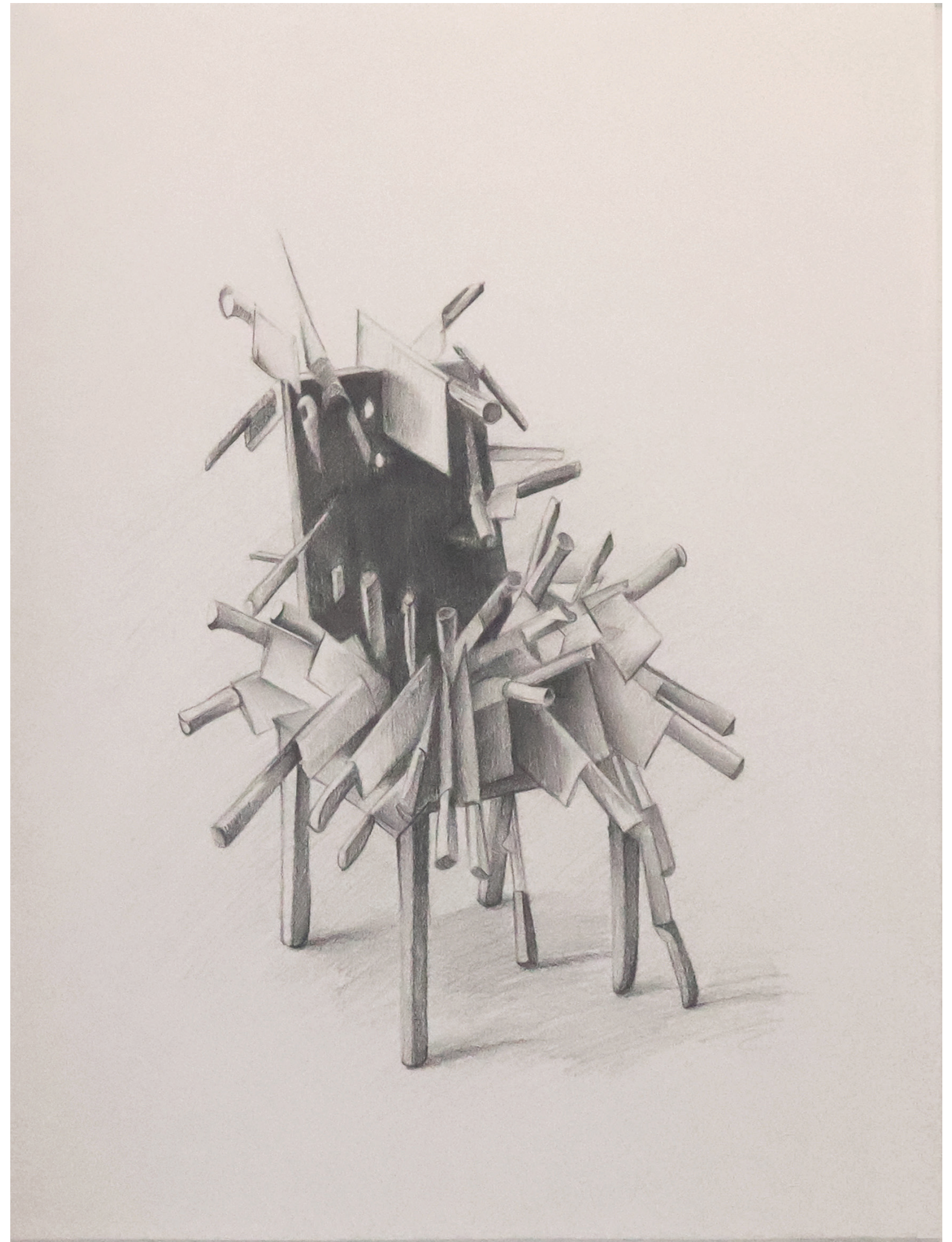
**Justin Loke**  
*Unarmed Chair I*, 2025  
pencil on paper  
56 x 43 cm





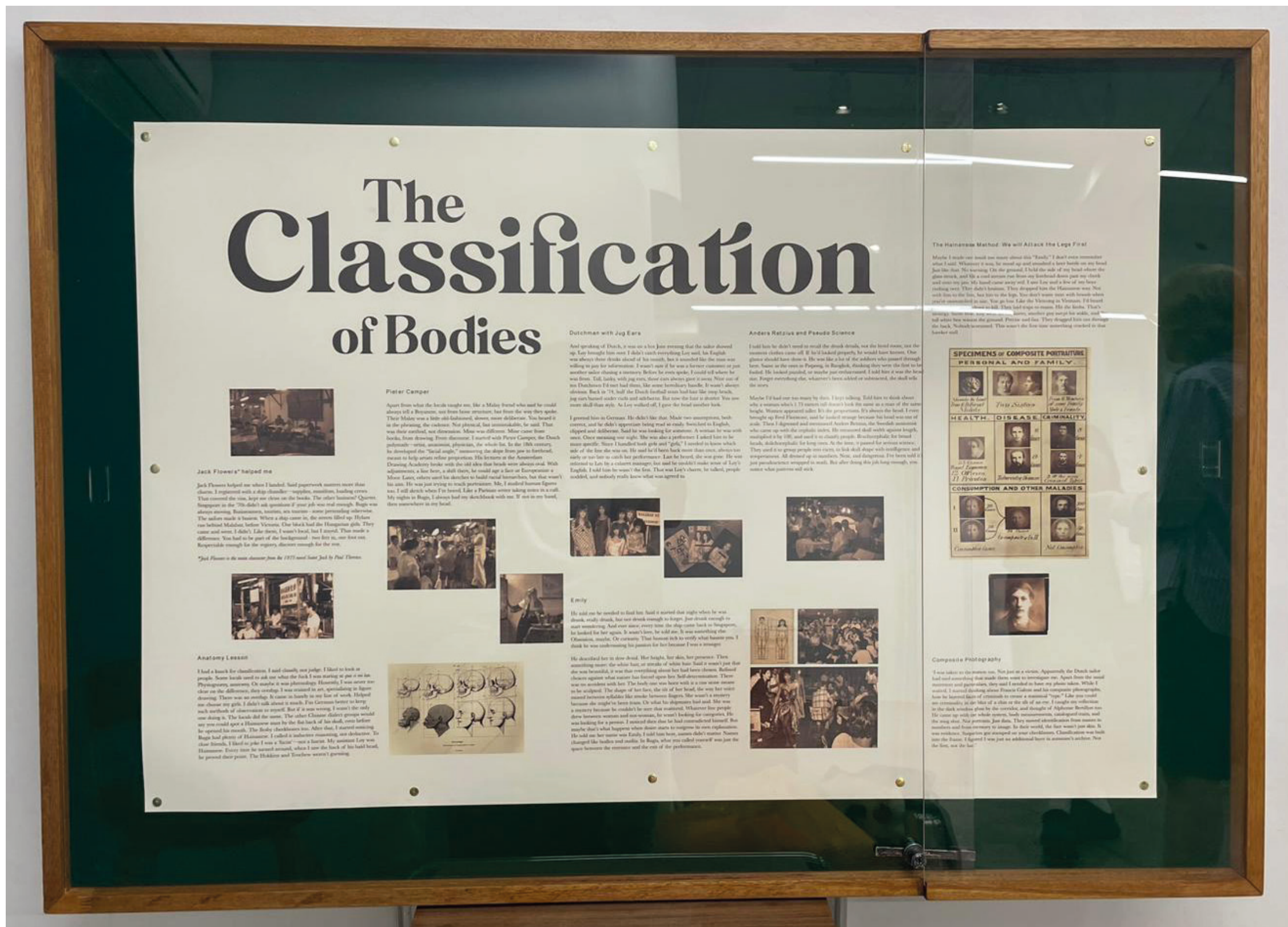
W

Justin Loke  
*Unarmed Chair V*, 2025  
Pencil on paper  
56 x 43 cm





W



Justin Loke  
 The Classification of Bodies, 2025  
 misaligned notice board with print on archival paper  
 (Durevole Conservation cotton paper 400 gsm)  
 140 x 100 cm (framed); 120 x 80 cm (print)  
 Edition of 3



W

# of Bodies

*The Classification of Bodies* unfolds through the voice of a German expatriate living in 1970s Bugis Street, Singapore. Officially registered as a ship chandler, he operates quietly as a pimp, navigating the city's underbelly with the calculated eye of a former art student trained in human anatomy.

Obsessed with categorisation, he applies the outdated sciences of physiognomy and forensic photography to the people he encounters. Across a backdrop of open drains, cabaret neon, and transient bodies, he meets a Dutch sailor in search of a performer. The sailor's memory, part desire, part obsession, unravels easy definitions of gender and identity.



## ers\* helped me

helped me when I landed. Said paperwork matters more than tered with a ship chandler—supplies, manifests, loading crews. the visa, kept me clean on the books. The other business? Quieter. he '70s didn't ask questions if your job was real enough. Bugis was g. Businessmen, tourists, sex tourists - some pretending otherwise. ade it busiest. When a ship came in, the streets filled up. Hylam alabar, before Victoria. Our block had the Hungarian girls. They it. I didn't. Like them, I wasn't local, but I stayed. That made a u had to be part of the background - two feet in, one foot out. ough for the registry, discreet enough for the rest.

s the main character from the 1973 novel *Saint Jack* by Paul Theroux.

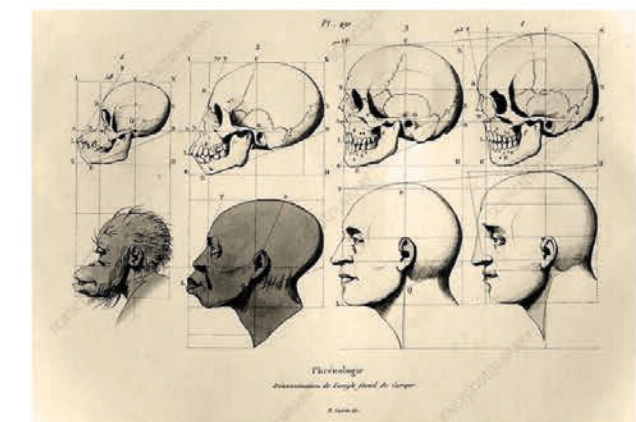


## Lesson

for classification. I said classify, not judge. I liked to look at locals used to ask me what the fuck I was staring at *qua si mi lan*. anatomy. Or maybe it was phrenology. Honestly, I was never too iffERENCE, they overlap. I was trained in art, specialising in figure re was an overlap. It came in handy in my line of work. Helped r girls. I didn't talk about it much. I'm German better to keep of observation to myself. But if it was wrong, I wasn't the only The locals did the same. The other Chinese dialect groups would spot a Hainanese man by the flat back of his skull, even before mouth. The fleshy cheekbones too. After that, I started noticing nty of Hainanese. I called it inductive reasoning, not deductive. To I liked to joke I was a 'facist'—not a fascist. My assistant Loy was very time he turned around, when I saw the back of his bald head, ir point. The Hokkien and Teochew weren't guessing.

## Pieter Camper

Apart from what the locals taught me, like a Malay friend who said he could always tell a Boyanese, not from bone structure, but from the way they spoke. Their Malay was a little old-fashioned, slower, more deliberate. You heard it in the phrasing, the cadence. Not physical, but unmistakable, he said. That was their method, not dimension. Mine was different. Mine came from books, from drawing. From discourse. I started with Pieter Camper, the Dutch polymath—artist, anatomist, physician, the whole list. In the 18th century, he developed the “facial angle,” measuring the slope from jaw to forehead, meant to help artists refine proportion. His lectures at the Amsterdam Drawing Academy broke with the old idea that heads were always oval. With adjustments, a line here, a shift there, he could age a face or Europeanize a Moor. Later, others used his sketches to build racial hierarchies, but that wasn't his aim. He was just trying to teach portraiture. Me, I studied human figures too. I still sketch when I'm bored. Like a Parisian writer taking notes in a café. My nights in Bugis, I always had my sketchbook with me. If not in my hand, then somewhere in my head.



## Dutch

And spe  
up. Loy  
was alw  
willing t  
another  
was fron  
ten Dut  
obvious  
jug ears  
more sk

I greete  
correct,  
clipped  
once. O  
more sp  
side of t  
early or  
referred  
English.  
nodded.



## Emily

He told  
drunk, n  
start wo  
he look  
Obsess  
think he

He desc  
somethi  
she was  
choices  
was no  
to be sc  
moved l  
because  
a myster  
drew be  
was look  
maybe  
He told  
change  
space bo



Jack Fluorin helped me when I landed. Had paperwork, money, car, that stuff. I registered with a drop-chance—supplies, clothing, housing costs. That covered the rest, kept me close to the border. The United Nations' Queens Singapore in the '70s didn't ask questions if your job was still rough. Began to always missing. Businessmen, activists, are treated as some presiding authority. The sailors made it home. When a drop came in, the screen filled up. When they landed Malayan, before Vietnam. One took back the Hungarian ship. They came and went. I didn't like them. I wasn't hard, but I stood. That made a difference. You had to be part of the background, not too far out, but not too different. You had to be there, always enough for the war.

[illegible][illegible]

And speaking of Dutch, it was on a hot June evening that the music started up. I've brought home more I didn't eat or everything I've used, his English was always there, almost that of his mother, but it sounded like she was not willing to pay for lessons.

Another lovely evening, a summer, before the even good, I could not come to my home. Tell Jack, with my way, those two stories gave a more than one of them. I'd not had time, the same technology here, I must be honest. Back to '78, but the Dutch had not had time for the first time, my last year, I had to go to school and celebrate. But now the music is there. The music was still there. It had walked off, I gave the last number too.

[illegible][illegible]

**PERSONAL AND FAMILY**

**HEALTH (DISEASES, ACCIDENTS)**

**CONSUMPTION AND OTHER MALADIES**

**PERSONAL AND FAMILY**

[illegible]



W

# The Lamplighter

**In 1999**, an art student at a colonial-era building on Upper Wilkie Road, a former Japanese Consulate repurposed as an art school campus, heard a passing remark from a lecturer: the building was haunted because the Japanese army had killed a Jew there, or perhaps an entire Jewish family. There were also accounts from classmates that seemed to confirm the haunting, with one claiming to have felt a touch on his face when he was alone in the painting studio early one morning. The student later learned that the lecturer John had a quiet

obsession with local ghost stories, and kept an archive of old newspaper clippings whenever such tales were still considered newsworthy.

One day, the student noticed the Star of David symbol still faintly visible on the façade of some old shophouses down the hill. The

school's admin clerk, coincidentally named David, had a habit of showing up whenever the life drawing class featured a nude model. The rest of the mostly female class would wordlessly position their easels to block his view. The student dismissed the haunting story as one of many post-war legends, shaped by inherited trauma and the stereotype of the murderous Japanese. He thought about how rumours and legends formed part of the stories about places, like memories in contrast to historical narratives.

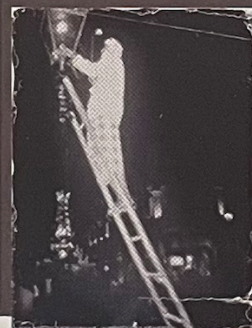


Over the years, the building remained humid and creaking, marked by unintentional pauses. The student recalled a passage he read about how images contain three temporal frames: the moment it depicts, the moment it is made, and the moment it is viewed.

He began to wonder if legends too were marked by three layers of time: the moment in the past they described, the day they were told, and the moment that day itself is remembered. Each layer is slightly misaligned, like a photograph exposed three times onto the same surface, never quite settling into a clear delineation. And perhaps the same could be said of all memories, recollections and forgotten histories.

Back in the 1930s, Ezra, a Baghdadi Jewish man living in the vicinity near Middle Road, observed from his window the evening gas lamplighter on his usual rounds.

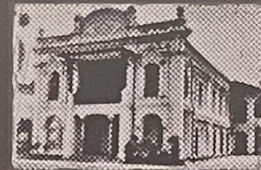
At that time, many quarters in Singapore were still not still lit by electric lamps, relying instead on gas lamps to light the streets after dusk. Ezra was accustomed to seeing a Malay or Indian worker in this street though he could rarely tell their difference, a fault for which he had been quietly rebuked. That evening, the lamplighter was Chinese. Ezra wondered how at times, he could not



tell the difference between the Chinese and the Japanese in Singapore too. The flickering light of the gas lamp made him recall a meeting with the dentist Dr. Jukichi Ikeda at the Japanese Club near where Wilkie Edge now stands.

They later also met at Ikeda's home at Mount Emily shortly before the house was sold to the Japanese Consulate in 1939. There were rumours, never quite confirmed, that Ikeda's ties to Tokyo ran deeper than dentistry and cavities — that he was involved, in some quiet way, with "information gathering and other activities." His decision to sell the house it was said, was not merely personal, but timed, perhaps, with certain geopolitical interests and movements quietly taking shape in the region.

Dr. Ikeda introduced Ezra to a younger Japanese man, Matsugae Kiyooki, who had studied in Germany. Their conversation turned towards light, language, and the nature of dwelling. They discussed the idea of Shekinah, the divine presence in Jewish thought that does not appear directly but is inferred through signs and absence. Matsugae remarked that, as an East Asian, he had never quite learned how to tell a European Jew apart from other Europeans. While saying this to Ezra, Matsugae recalled how, on a spring morning in a garden, he had once mistaken the shifting shadows of leaves for dirt on the face of Satoko, the girl he once loved — the 'dirt' he had tried to brush away, but could not. He then mentioned a German-Jewish man named Walter, whom he had met in Paris. Matsugae had encountered Walter during a lecture on Hegel by a Russian émigré aristocrat named Alexandre, said to be the nephew of the abstract painter Wassily Kandinsky. The event was part of the Collège de Sociologie, which organised a lecture series held every fortnight on Saturday nights in the back room of the bookstore Galeries du Livre. Like him, Walter had been there, listening in silence. Walter spoke of how Shekinah was marked not by fullness but by withdrawal, not by visibility but by trace. Dwelling, according to him, was not defined by possession but a condition shaped by exile. Presence was not something simply given but structured by its own retreat, a paradox that limns the space it vacates rather than fills. The conversation remained abstract and inconclusive. A few years later, the Japanese man heard that Walter had taken his own life in a town in the Pyrenees, a mountain range on the French-Spanish border, while fleeing from the war.



**In 2025**, the former art student stood once again in the same space. Now occupied by The Private Museum, he was to present a painting that resembled a floorplan, showing two adjacent

domestic spaces as if viewed from above. On the left, a family home, cluttered, yet communal, alive with traces of a shared life. On the right, a bachelor's quarters, sparse, enclosed and solitary. Between them, only a single dividing wall. The picture did not show a full view of either room, only partial scenes from each. In the bachelor's room, a man stood on a chair, reaching up to change the light bulb of a wall-mounted lamp. Because of the visual ambiguity, some might have the impression that the rooms are part of the same house. From a certain angle, the act of changing a light bulb on a stool, echoes the gesture of hanging a noose.

The painting was titled *No One Lit the Lamp*. Seen in the bachelor's room is a stain on the floor, and mirrored by another on the dining table of the adjacent family unit. Whether these stains resemble a country, a continent, someone's birthmark, or simply a trace of carelessness, if not violence, is left to the viewer's imagination.



Most meanings lie beneath the surface, not seen but felt. He recalls how one might have the experience but miss the meaning, and how the approach to meaning restores the experience. Perhaps, restored in a different form, beyond meaning itself.

Justin Loke  
*The Lamplighter*, 2025  
 UV Print on aluminium  
 80 x 42 cm



W

Through memory, digressions, and echoes of literature and history, *The Lamplighter* gathers fragments of a vanished past in an analogical manner - inspired by Enzo Melandri's *La Linea e il Circolo* - retold through the solitary ritual of a man lighting lamps at dusk. *No One Lit the Lamp* turns inward: within the home, the glow reveals both the intimacies of domestic life between neighbours and the stains that remain under its light.

At its heart lies the story of a Baghdadi Jewish man in 1930s Singapore. His recollections ripple across time: fleeting encounters with Japanese neighbours before the war, meditations on exile and belonging, and reflections on the fragile thresholds between shadow and light, between walls and the lives divided by them, on the eve of a world soon to be torn apart by war.





W

**Justin Loke**  
*No One Lit the Lamp*, 2025  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
100 x 100 cm





*No One Lit the Lamp* resembles a floorplan: two adjacent domestic interiors viewed from above.

On the left, a family home, cluttered, yet communal, alive with traces of a shared life.

On the right, a bachelor's quarters, sparse, enclosed and solitary. Between them, only a single dividing wall. The painting does not show a full view of either room, only partial scenes from each. In the bachelor's room, a man stood on a chair, reaching up to change the light bulb of a wall-mounted lamp. Because of the visual ambiguity, some might have the impression that the rooms are part of the same house. From a certain angle, the act of changing a light bulb on a stool, echoes the gesture of hanging a noose.

Seen in the bachelor's room is a stain on the floor, and mirrored by another on the dining table of the adjacent family unit. Whether these stains resemble a country, a continent, someone's birthmark, or simply a trace of carelessness, if not violence, is left to the viewer's imagination.



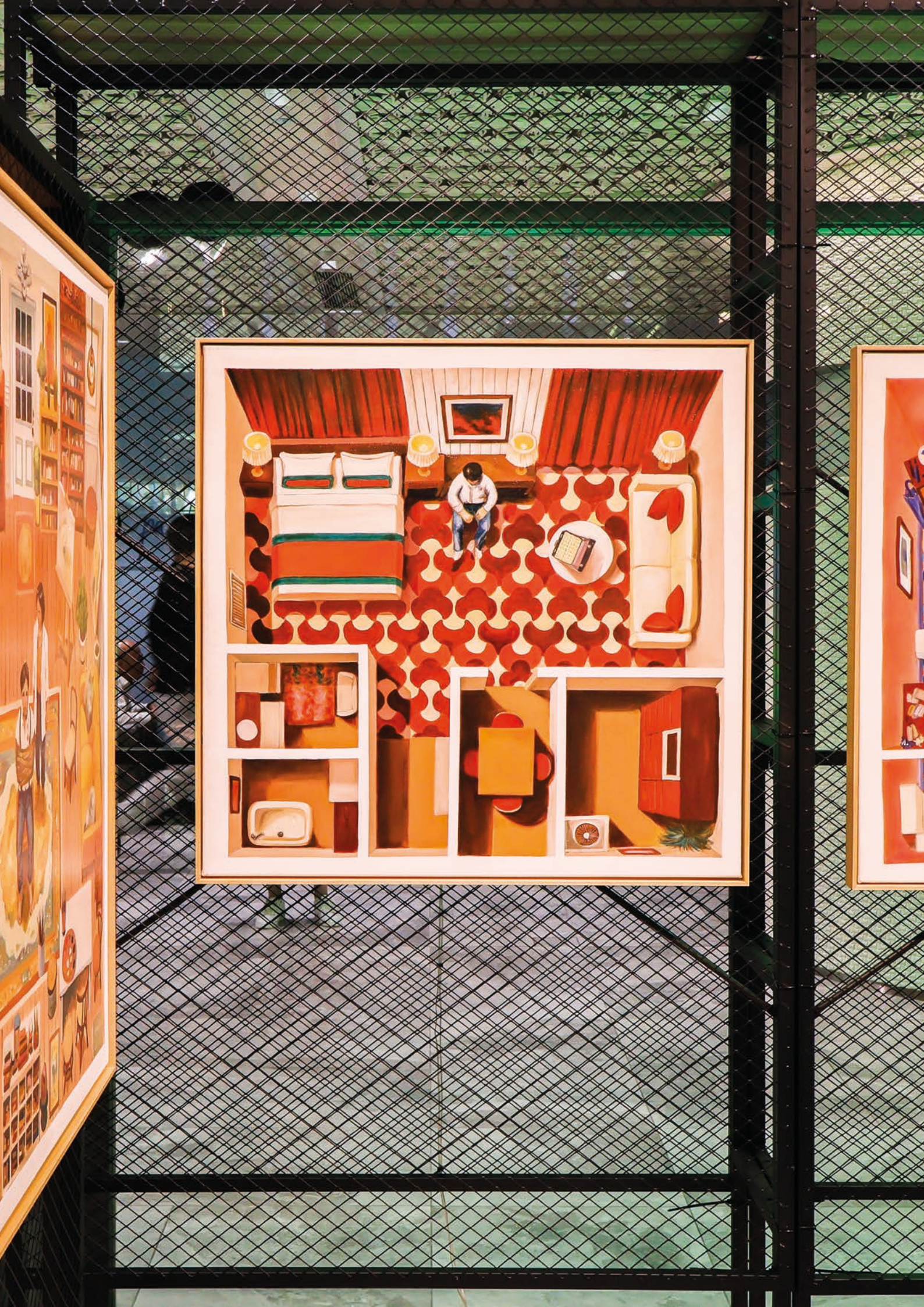


# LEAVING

*Leaving Room* is a series of paintings about archetypal figures and the spaces they once occupied, with a particular focus on figures from the art world. The title itself is a play on words, intertwining “leaving” and “living,” suggesting both departure and the place where life unfolds—the living room. This linguistic ambiguity invites viewers to engage with objects or pictures within pictures, forming a silent yet captivating analogical narrative.

The narrative revolves around a series of seemingly disconnected scenes, delving into the experiences of characters—or their absence—and the objects they left behind, revealing ineffable connections between them. Characters and scenes referencing books, films, theatre, and paintings are woven together to explore how, in a state of confinement, the desire to leave often surpasses the act of leaving..

# ROOM





W

**Justin Loke**  
*The Body of an Art Dealer Lying in the Room  
after a Meeting, 2024*  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
80 x 80 cm









W



**Justin Loke**  
*The Gallerist awake in his Hotel Room  
during an Art Fair, 2024*  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
80 x 80 cm



W

*The Gallerist awake in his Hotel Room during an Art Fair* plays on the enduring stereotype of the artist as adopts a plan view, placing both artist and viewer in the position of a voyeur.

At first glance, it seems to satirise the gallerist as a figure associated with money, but the gaze soon folds back on itself. The voyeur is not only the viewer standing before the work but also the artist who imagines the gallerist's world as one of endless transactions. In doing so, the artist forgets that both are bound by the same logic of buying and selling, each anxious within the machinery of the market economy - nobody is spared from it.

The painting's imagined suitcase of money becomes a hallucination, a symbol of projection and fear. The gallerist, rather than counting cash, lies awake, absorbed in private worries. It is a self-portrait by proxy, a meditation on complicity and fatigue within an art world that cannot escape its own economy.



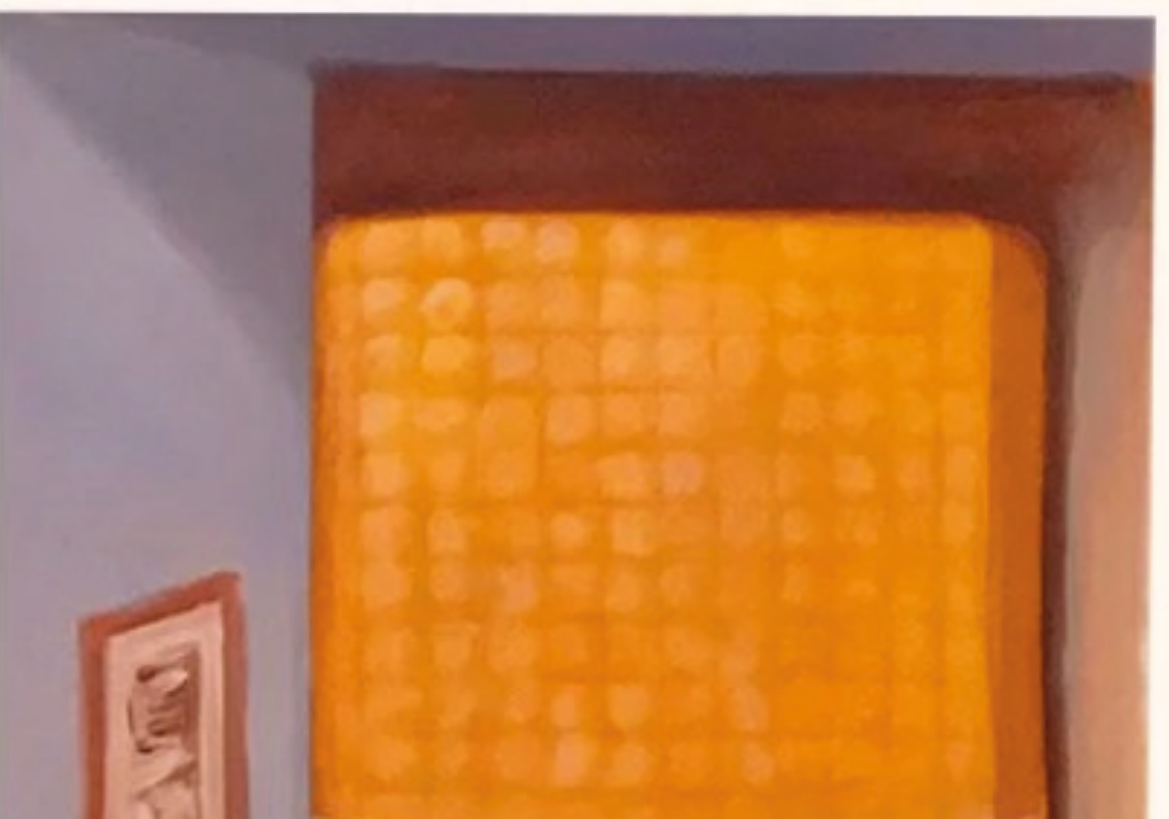


W



**Justin Loke**  
*At Home with a Potato after receiving Feedback*  
about his Artwork, 2024  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
80 x 80 cm







W

Justin Loke

*An Artist Contemplating a Rash Act, the Cleaner  
Enters the Room Thinking it is Empty, 2024*  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
80 x 80 cm





W

*An Artist Contemplating a Rash Act, the Cleaner Enters the Room Thinking It is Empty* plays on the enduring stereotype of the artist as a fragile, suffering being. The scene unfolds quietly: a cleaner enters, believing the room to be empty, while the artist contemplates a rash act.

The Romantic image of the tormented artist, once a mark of authenticity, has become a marketable persona, a brand of emotional capital dressed in melancholy. The cleaner, absorbed in her routine, remains invisible to this spectacle of self-conscious despair. Her indifference is neither cruel nor careless, but an unconscious refusal to participate in another's performance of suffering.

The painting turns this encounter into an allegory of perception and class, of who is seen and who is unseen. It is also a reflection on the everyday moment in which we all, at some point, enter a room thinking it is empty, only to realise it was never empty at all.





W



Justin Loke  
*An Art Collector Sleeping in his Hotel Room, 2024*  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
80 x 80 cm





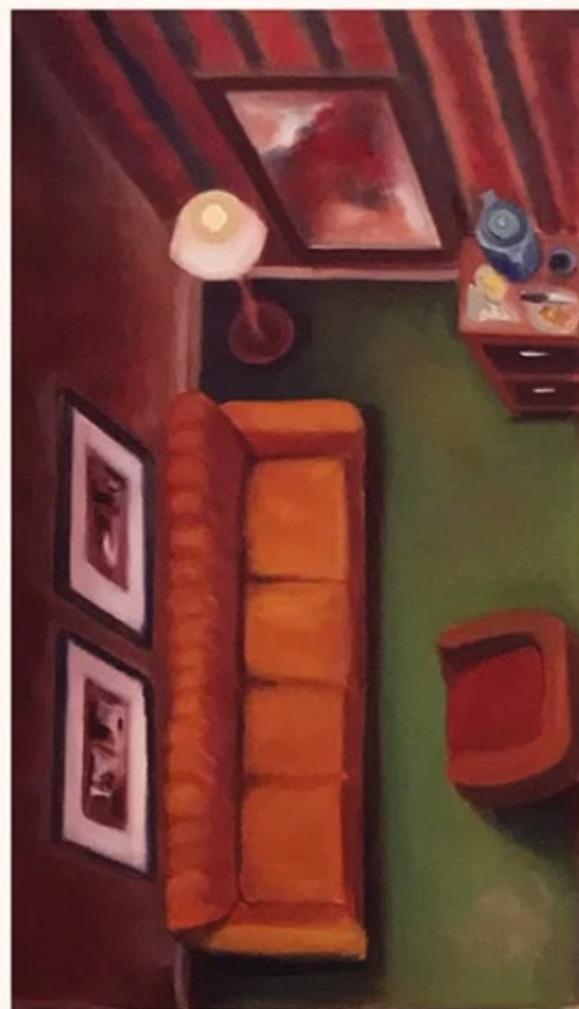


W

Justin Loke

*A Comedy that Nobody Laughs at*  
*is Performance Art I*, 2024

oil and acrylic on canvas  
80 x 80 cm





W

This painting revisits the image of the Joker, lying in bed, drawn from the film starring Joaquin Phoenix. The work reflects on empathy for the failed comedian and the uneasy overlap between comedy, tragedy, and art. The title borrows from the British drama *Baby Reindeer*, where the line "A comedy that nobody laughs at is performance art" captures the ambiguity between performance and breakdown, success and failure.

Here, the bed becomes a stage of inoperativity, a state between potential and action. The figure's stillness recalls Giorgio Agamben's idea that true potential lies not in what is done, but in the capacity to withhold doing. It is a portrait of exhaustion and resistance, of those who remain suspended between wanting to act and choosing not to. The painting turns idleness into a quiet philosophy of habit, madness, and survival.





W

Justin Loke  
*A Curator giving the Misogynist Artist  
a Lesson on Equality*, 2024  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
80 x 80 cm









W

**Justin Loke**  
*Bowling*, 2016  
ink on paper  
67 x 34 cm (drawing), 46.5 x 120 cm (scroll)





W

**Justin Loke**  
*Buying Lottery*, 2016  
ink on paper  
67 x 34 cm (drawing), 46.5 x 120 cm (scroll)





W

**Justin Loke**  
*Smoking*, 2016  
ink on paper  
67 x 34 cm (drawing), 46.5 x 120 cm (scroll)





## CONTACT

Yeo Workshop  
47 Malan Road #01-25  
Singapore 109444

info@yeoworkshop.com  
+ 65 6734 5168

[www.yeoworkshop.com](http://www.yeoworkshop.com)

