

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Encounter beauty beneath complexity in first solo exhibition by artist Fern Wong, organised by ART:DIS & UOL**

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Singapore, 5 September 2024

ART:DIS (Arts & Disability) Singapore and UOL Group Limited jointly present *Natural Geometry*, a solo exhibition by **Fern Wong** following her receipt of the grand prize at the inaugural UOL x ART:DIS Art Prize 2023. This exhibition showcases over two decades of Fern's artmaking, featuring more than 30 artworks of her current paper-cutting style alongside earlier geometric drawings and dot paintings.

As a self-taught visual artist with Down Syndrome, Fern draws inspiration from the natural world. Her artworks evoke the beauty of natural phenomena, reminding visitors of the interconnectedness of all living things. Through this exhibition that runs from 19–29 September 2024 at Objectifs, curator John Tung invites viewers to immerse themselves in her fields of pattern and colour whilst contemplating the complexity of the natural world.

"We are inspired by Fern's achievements and the unique artistic vision she brings to Singapore's arts scene. The National Arts Council is committed to making the arts accessible to all, and we commend UOL for striving to foster a more inclusive cultural landscape in Singapore," said Low Eng Teong, Chief Executive Officer of the National Arts Council.

#### **Platforms to share her world with others**

Over the years, Fern's work has evolved from simple geometric drawings into delicate paper designs crafted from found materials, with each piece taking several months to complete. Her current approach stems from a significant development in her artistic direction. In 2015, she turned to recycling church bulletins and a chipped penknife to create her art when faced with a shortage of her usual art supplies. This resourcefulness marked a pivotal turning point in her artistic journey.

Last year, Fern received the opportunity to stage a solo exhibition after winning the Mature Category (Closed) in UOL X ART:DIS Art Prize 2023. Her winning artwork, *PAPERAZZI*, captivated the judges with its intricate paper cut-outs, transforming ordinary bulletin paper into bursts of joyful celebration. Earlier this year during Singapore Art Week 2024, she was further in group exhibition *Turning Points*, showcasing never before seen paper-cuts in a unique format.

"Artists with disabilities don't have the same access to resources and platforms as their non-disabled peers. The opportunity for Fern to stage her first solo retrospective show is an important milestone and recognition that artists with disabilities can

achieve artistic excellence when given support to develop their talent and practice," said Angela Tan, Executive Director of ART:DIS.

The UOL X ART:DIS Art Prize is Singapore's first comprehensive art prize to recognise artists with disabilities at all stages of their artistic practice. The biennial competition drew a strong response last year, with over 300 artworks submitted from 17 special education schools in Singapore and artists from ART:DIS.

"Watching her grow in confidence and pursue her passion means so much to me, and I am excited to see the impact she's making through her art. Competitions like the UOL X ART:DIS Art Prize have not only empowered Fern, but also inspired countless others to showcase their unique talents," said Mrs Wong, Fern's mother.

### **Beneath complexity lies interconnectivity**

The natural world has long since captured the imagination of many artists and Fern is not the first in history to look towards it for inspiration. Sectioned into two distinct zone, visitors will first encounter older, two-dimensional works of Fern when she was first developing her visual language. Her technique of colouring, often times appearing like mosaic pieces from a distance, is a testament to Fern's intuitive understanding of organic patterns. This is most apparent in a series dedicated to exploring the topic of fishes, flowers and shapes.

As visitors proceed deeper into the exhibition, they will witness a transformation in her practice to more fractal-like patterns. Through three-dimensional papercuts, Fern demonstrates her acute attention to details and her affinity for creating natural designs. A highlight of this zone is a three-tier chandelier of gossamer-like papercuts, and the accompanying off-cuts she has studiously saved from these creation exercises.

"We are immensely proud to support Fern in her debut solo exhibition. Her work not only garners appreciation but also highlights the contributions and influence of the disability community through the power of the arts. We are honoured to have played a part in her artistic journey and remain committed to continuing our support for inclusive art platforms," said Liam Wee Sin, Group Chief Executive of UOL.

Accompanying the exhibition will be a series of drop-in activities such as art-jamming with Fern's paper cut-outs and a keychain-making station, offering opportunities for creative engagement. In addition, a range of lifestyle products featuring her designs will be available for sale at the exhibition under [ART:DIS Studio](#).

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### **EXHIBITION DETAILS**

Title: Natural Geometry

Date: 19 Sept – 29 Sept 2024

Time: Tue–Sat (12:00–7:00pm), Sun (12:00–4:00pm), closed on Mon & PH

Venue: Objectifs, 155 Middle Rd, Singapore 188977

Price: Free

Website: [www.artdis.org.sg/natural-geometry](http://www.artdis.org.sg/natural-geometry)

Media assets: Downloadable [here](#)

- *Annex A: Exhibition highlights*
- *Annex B: Biography of artist Fern Wong*
- *Annex B: Biography of curator John Tung*

## **ABOUT ART:DIS SINGAPORE**

Formerly known as Very Special Arts Singapore, ART:DIS is a non-profit organisation established in 1993, championing the learning and livelihood opportunities for persons with disabilities (PwDs) in and through the arts.

We provide a wide range of programmes to enable PwDs to develop their artistic interests, grow their self-confidence and engage them as active members of a supported community, outside of and beyond formal education.

Our parallel professional development pathways further supports disabled artists to develop professional careers in the arts through industry mentorships and showcase opportunities.

At ART:DIS, we value the unique strengths and perspectives of persons with disabilities and believe the arts offers us a lens to understand who they are, to connect with and to experience the world together.

## **ABOUT UOL GROUP LIMITED**

UOL Group Limited (UOL) is a leading Singapore-listed property and hospitality group with total assets of about \$22 billion. The Company has a diversified portfolio of development and investment properties, hotels and serviced suites in Asia, Oceania, Europe and North America.

With a track record of 60 years, UOL strongly believes in delivering product excellence and quality service in all its business ventures. UOL, through its hotel subsidiary Pan Pacific Hotels Group Limited, owns three acclaimed brands namely "Pan Pacific", PARKROYAL COLLECTION and PARKROYAL. The Company's Singapore-listed property subsidiary, Singapore Land Group Limited, owns an extensive portfolio of prime commercial assets and hotels in Singapore.

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**ANNEX A: EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS**

Artwork Highlights	Description
<p><u><i>A series of paper cuts</i></u></p> 	<p><i>PAPERAZZI</i> (Papercuts on mixed media 60 x 80cm)</p> <p>Winning artwork for UOL X ART:DIS Art Prize 2023</p>
<p><u><i>A series on aquamarine life</i></u></p> 	<p><i>Fish 102</i> (Ink drawing on mixed media 30.5 x 30.5cm)</p>

A series on flowers

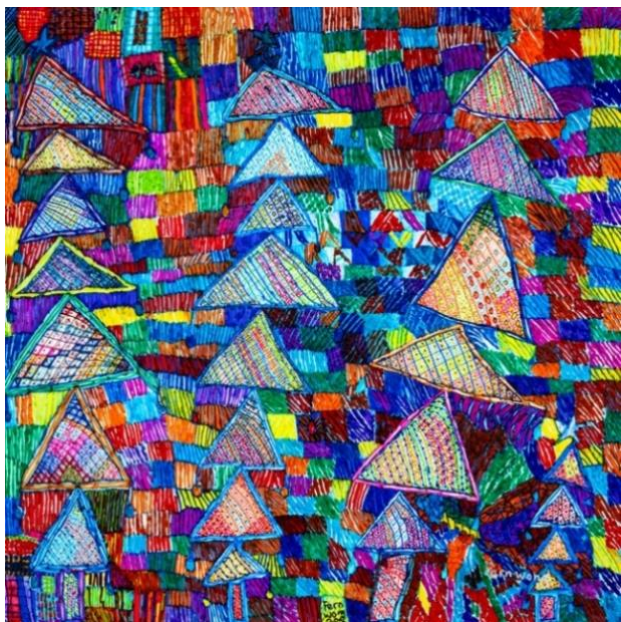


*Flowerworks*  
(Ink drawing on mixed media  
36 x 27cm)

A series on shapes



*Untitled*  
(Ink drawing on mixed media  
30.5 x 30.5cm)



*Christmas Lights*  
(Ink drawing on mixed media  
30.5 x 30.5cm)

## ANNEX B: BIOGRAPHY OF ARTIST



### Fern Wong (1983)

Fern Wong's artistic endeavour is deeply anchored in her affinity for the abstract natural world, where her signature use of felt tip markers articulates an exuberance for colour and form. With a foundation rooted in geometric curiosity, Fern's artistry has matured into a celebration of detailed organic patterns, achieved through a meticulous combination of drawing and papercutting techniques.

Her personal studio is a testament to her dedication. "We don't know how her mind works when she's doing her art but we know she enjoys it very

much because her work is very vibrant. If there is a patch of dark colours, it's when she's feeling sad because she has just gotten a scolding from us for sleeping late or not drinking enough water," shared Mr Wong, Fern's father.

Seeking perfection in every detail, Fern spends four to five months to craft each piece and over a period of 9 years, these creative endeavours developed into an archive of vividly-hued, delicate paper designs.

Acknowledged for her distinctive artistic voice, Fern has been honoured with several awards, including the prestigious UOB Painting of the Year in the Open Section. This recognition underscores her commitment to her art and its resonance with audiences. Fern's ambition to evolve as an artist is paralleled only by her desire to connect with viewers. Her ethos is simple yet profound, driven by the happiness she feels when her art is appreciated.

## ANNEX C: BIOGRAPHY OF CURATOR



### John Tung (1990)

John Z. W. Tung is an independent curator and exhibition-maker. In his former position as an Assistant Curator at the Singapore Art Museum (2015 – 2020), he curated and co-curated 9 exhibitions, alongside serving as a co-curator for the Singapore Biennale 2016, 'An Atlas of Mirrors', and the Singapore Biennale 2019, 'Every Step in the Right Direction'. Three of the artwork commissions he curated for the biennales were finalists for the Benesse Prize, with one work winning the prestigious award.

He is also the editor of the Singapore Art Museum's first publication to chronicle its exhibition history, *Singapore Art Museum: An Index of Exhibitions* (1994 – 2018). His recent appointments as an independent curator include

Festival Curator for the 7th & 8th Singapore International Photography Festival (2020 & 2022), Associate Curator for the Open House programme, For the House; Against the House (2021, 2022 & 2023), and the Curator of the first exhibition to examine the significance of the ground-breaking Singaporean artist initiative 5th Passage – 5th Passage: In Search of Lost Time. Projects he has produced include The Forest Institute (2022), a large-scale architectural art installation dedicated to secondary forest ecologies, and The Gathering: 千岁宫 (2022), a pop-up Chinese garden-teahouse experience in Chinatown, Singapore. In 2023, he was the recipient of the inaugural Tan Boon Hui Curatorial Prize.

He holds a BA (Hons) in Arts Management awarded by Goldsmiths, University of London (at LASALLE College of the Arts) and an MA in Cultural Management from the Chinese University of Hong Kong where he graduated on the Dean's List. He brings with him close to a decade of involvement across different fields in the arts, culture, and creative industry. Encompassing both creative and administrative roles, his experiences have spanned the curatorial, editorial, as well as pedagogical.