

Almost Always

Sarah Choo Jing

GAJAH GALLERY

Sarah Choo Jing

(b. 1990, Singapore)

is a multidisciplinary artist working across photography, video and installation. Her practice explores identifiable moments and characters within contemporary urban society, revealing intimate, often solitary narratives. Engaging with the gaze of the flâneur, voyeurism and the uncanny, her works examine the tensions between public spaces and private experiences.

Choo holds an MFA from the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London (2015), and lives and works in Singapore. In 2024, she was commissioned by Maison Valentino to present a series of works at the Soho House Residency during Singapore Art Week. She received the 3D/Interactive Award at the Lumen Prize for Art and Technology (2021), placed third in the Women United Art Prize (2023), and was a finalist for the 29th ifva Awards (2024) and the Audemars Piguet Art Commission for Art Basel (2020). Her earlier accolades include the ICON de Martell Cordon Bleu Photography Award and the Kwek Leng Joo Prize of Excellence in Still Photography (2013).

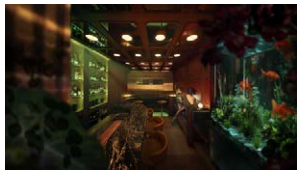
Her works have been exhibited internationally at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (2023); Turku Art Museum, Finland (2019); National Museum of Singapore (2017); Busan Museum of Art, South Korea (2016); Art Paris at the Grand Palais, Paris (2015); START Art Fair at the Saatchi Gallery, London (2015); and Photo London at Somerset House, London (2015). Her works are held in public and private collections, including the Chrysler Museum of Art, Singapore Art Museum, National Museum of Singapore, and The Arts Club's permanent collection in London.









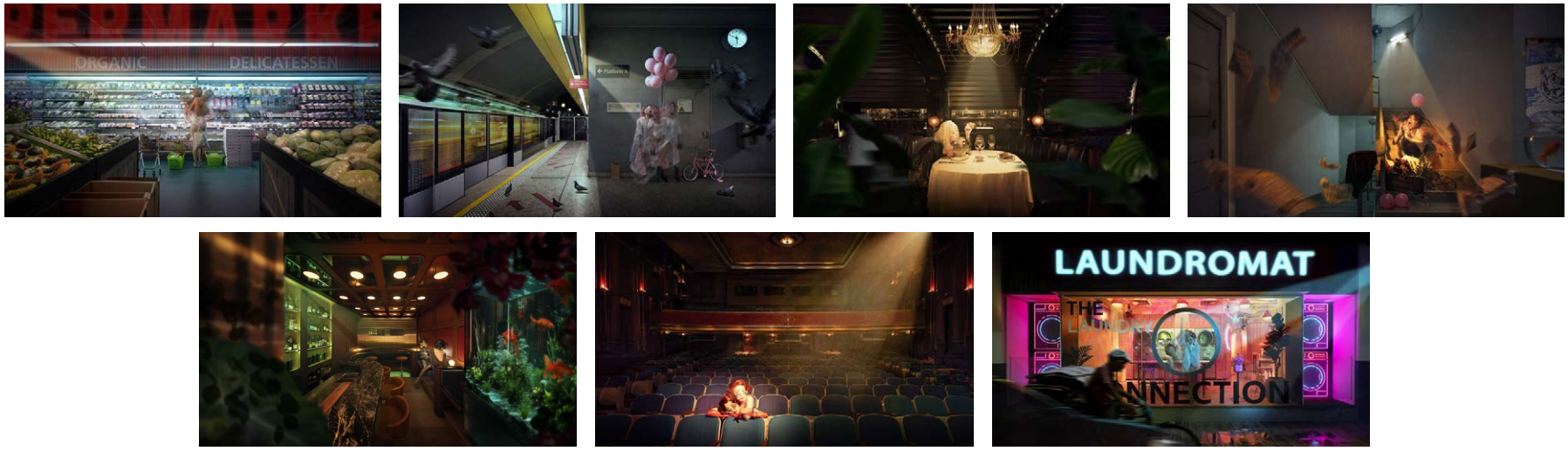






Almost, Always

2026
Diasec Print
Variable Dimensions | Edition 1 of 3 + 1 Artist Proof
0549h: 56.7 x 100 cm, 1938h: 34 x 60 cm, 2300h: 85 x 150 cm, 0007h: 56.7 x 100 cm,
1505h: 34 x 60 cm, 2015h: 56.7 x 100 cm, 2100h: 150 x 85 cm”



Almost, Always

Edition of 5 + 2 Artist Proof
2026
Diasec Print
34 x 60 cm each | 56.7 x 100 cm each | 85 x 150 cm each



Fictional character: **Vanessa Lim, 29**

In ***2100h***, the supermarket's meticulously organised abundance becomes an architecture of reassurance, where objects are classified, displayed and rendered immediately legible. Within this regulated environment, Vanessa sustains an equally cultivated image of composure and self-possession. Her purchases participate in the social construction of identity, offering strangers the familiar signs through which a life might be understood while withholding the private circumstances that give those objects meaning. The photograph exposes a discrepancy between visibility and knowledge: everything appears available for inspection, yet the figure remains fundamentally opaque. Against the promise of order, consumption becomes both a performance of normalcy and an instrument through which its temporary disruption is anticipated. Control emerges not as the absence of instability, but as the means by which instability is given a permissible form.

2100h

2026
Diasec Print
85 x 150 cm | Edition of 5 + 2 Artist Proofs

Micro-narrative 1 of 2

2100h / Supermarket

Tuesday, nine o'clock.
In the calendar it says gym.
Which is not exactly a lie.
It is scheduled.
It has a kit.
I never skip it.
I arrive in barre clothes, ponytail, good water bottle —
a woman who takes care of herself.
I am that woman all week.
I am that woman now.
Technically.
I like supermarkets at this hour.
Everything knows where it belongs.
Fruit with fruit.
Dairy with dairy.
Labels facing forward.
Trolleys nested nose to tail.

Nothing has to decide what it is.
I take a basket.
That is important.
By aisle four, the basket becomes a trolley.
I couldn't tell you exactly where the handover happens.
Family sizes.
Two-for-ones.
I shop in family sizes for a family of one.
Tonight I put an anthurium in the trolley.
Red.
Too glossy to look completely real.
The label says easy care.
I read that twice before putting it in.
Also serviettes.
And a lemon.
The serviettes and lemon are for the cashier.

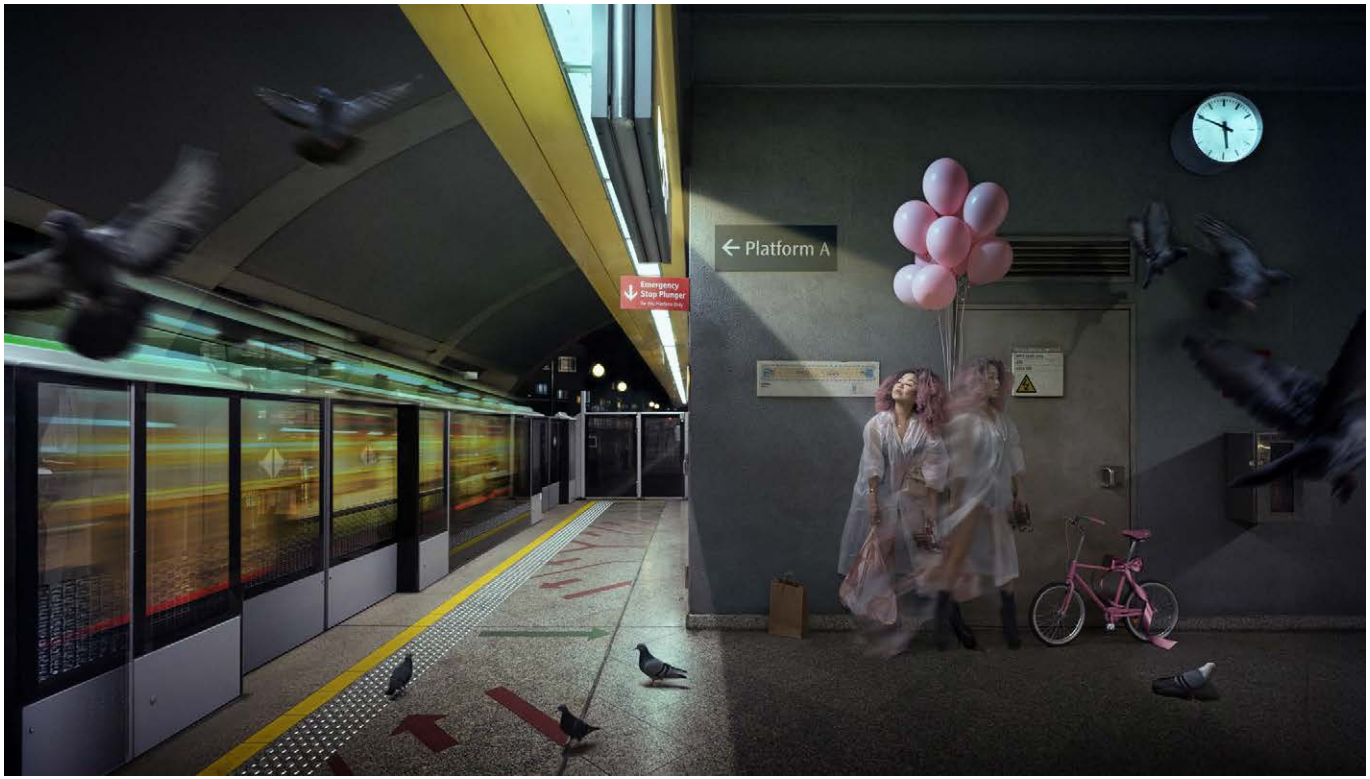
Micro-narrative 2 of 2

Having people over?
Girls' night, I say.
She gives me the look you give a good hostess.
I have the receipts of a very popular woman.
My hair has been tangerine since March.
Everyone says it suits me.
Under the fluorescent light I can see
the ends breaking against my top.
Little orange threads.
I brush them away before I reach the cashier.
Sometimes I put something back.
Not because I don't want it.
Just to prove I still can.
I walk three aisles away before going back for it.

Daniel is in camp for two weeks.
The flat is mine tonight.
I've had tonight in my calendar for a month.
That is the part nobody would understand:
how far in advance I book
the losing of control.
By eleven, the kitchen will be spotless.
The after is what I'm best at.
The trolley goes back straight,
nose to tail.
People think this is the opposite of control.
It isn't.
Control is the venue.



Detail of ***2100h***



Fictional character: **Wendy Chng, 46**

In ***0549h***, a moment of anticipated reunion unfolds within an architecture designed for perpetual movement. Against the platform's regulated passage of arrivals and departures, Wendy remains suspended in an encounter that has yet to materialise. Her multiplied presence unsettles the apparent singularity of the photographic instant, suggesting the accumulation of rehearsed gestures, imagined possibilities and years of deferred recognition. Balloons and gifts introduce the visual language of celebration into a space where expectation remains precarious. Here, waiting emerges not as passive inactivity but as a sustained performance through which kinship is imagined, negotiated and provisionally maintained. The photograph holds together incompatible durations: the fleeting promise of a meeting and the prolonged emotional labour of preparing for someone who may never arrive.

0549h

2026
Diasec Print
56.7 x 100 cm | Edition of 5 + 2 Artist Proofs

Micro-narrative 1 of 2

0549h / *Train Platform*

Thursday, 5.49am.
Platform A.
She said she would be passing through.
Ten minutes, maybe.
Ten minutes is more than I have had in thirty years,
so I said of course,
whatever is easiest for you.
I arrived at 4.50am.
With a bouquet of balloons; dusty pink.
The auntie asked boy or girl and I said girl.
I did not say thirty-one.
I bought a tin aeroplane too — for you.
And a bicycle — for your baby girl.
Some chocolates in a bag.
The gifts.
It is not really for her.
It is for the six days I had in 1994, when I was fifteen and
everybody agreed we were doing the right thing.
I have spent thirty years being the kind of person
who agrees.
I practised seeing her once,
in the toilet mirror.
Not what I would say. Just my face when she arrived.
I tried smiling.
Too eager.

Micro-narrative 2 of 2

I tried not smiling.
Worse.
In the end I decided I would let her decide whether we hugged.
I thought this was very respectful of me.
There are nine pigeons on the platform.
I count them because I have stopped counting trains.
If there are more things than places to put them,
something has to be shared.
Something cannot have a place of its own.
At 5.57:
So sorry — work exploded. Another time?
I typed three replies.
I sent: Of course! Take care.

The exclamation mark is so she does not worry.
Not-worrying people has been my life's work since 1994.
I realised I had spent over an hour worrying
about where to put my arms for a person
who was not coming.
I could not carry the bag home.
Bringing it back through the gantry would make it mine again,
and it was never supposed to be mine.
So I left it
beneath the Platform A sign.
Unattended item.
Someone will open it eventually.
Something I chose for her should get opened this year.



Detail of ***0549h***



Fictional character: **Lim Bee Geok, 58 / Vivien**

In ***1938h***, an intimate encounter is sustained through the meticulous repetition of its outward forms. Beneath the chandelier's ordered symmetry, a table prepared for two accommodates an absence that has become integral to the ritual itself. Bee Geok's transformation into Vivien extends beyond disguise; through the accumulated gestures of dressing, arriving and being recognised, an invented identity acquires the continuity of lived experience. The restaurant becomes an unwitting participant in this performance, preserving the conditions under which a relationship once appeared legitimate. The photograph examines the fragile distinction between authenticity and enactment, suggesting that identity may reside less in an essential self than in the repeated acts through which a particular version of oneself is made recognisable to others.

1938h

2026
Diasec Print
34 x 60 cm | Edition of 5 + 2 Artist Proofs

Micro-narrative 1 of 2

1938h / *Diner*

The reservation is under Vivien.
Second Friday of September.
Eight o'clock. Corner banquette.
Table for two.
Marcus stopped asking about the second setting years ago.
Now the extra glass simply arrives,
as though the room owes it to somebody.
Vivien lives in a hatbox on top of my wardrobe.
Blonde.
Ridiculous on me, which is precisely the point.
I put her on in the taxi somewhere around Braddell Road.
Vivien has posture.
Vivien orders steak frites, medium rare,
and a glass of Bordeaux.
Vivien never checks her phone.
There is a chandelier directly above our table.
I like it because nothing on it is out of place.
Every piece of glass catches the same light.
Every arm sits at exactly the same height.
I once spent an entire dinner trying to find the crooked one.
There wasn't one.
I found this strangely upsetting.
For eleven years, I was a Thursday.
To the front desk we were Mr and Mrs Chen —
a married couple who existed nowhere except one table, once a week.
I will tell you something about an invented marriage:
you keep it alive exactly the same way you keep a real one.
You turn up.
Then he retired to Perth to be a grandfather.
That was the one part I couldn't play opposite.
Sometimes I wonder whether I miss him,
or whether I miss being Vivien with him.
This is not a nice question.

Micro-narrative 2 of 2

I only allow myself to ask it
after the steak arrives.
So every September, I keep the table.
I drink the Bordeux,
leave the steak frites.
His glass sits beneath the chandelier,
going warm very politely.
At ten, I pay in cash.

Vivien does not appear on statements.
Somewhere around Braddell Road I take her off.
By the time I reach home,
I am Bee Geok again.
Bee Geok sleeps very well.
It is Vivien who waits the whole year.



Detail of ***1938h***



Fictional character: **Sarah**

In ***0007h***, the stairwell becomes an indeterminate space in which the boundaries separating memory, performance and lived experience begin to dissolve. The figure's fractured presence resists a singular temporal or psychological reading, while familiar objects surface as fragments of narratives that cannot be securely located within her own recollection. Neither destination nor point of departure, the stairwell occupies a condition of perpetual transition, its architecture giving spatial form to the instability of identity itself. The recurrence of objects and gestures suggests affinities with other photographic worlds without establishing a definitive relationship between them. Rather than proposing an authentic self beneath successive performances, the photograph considers identity as something continually assembled, displaced and revised. What remains is not a moment of revelation, but the unresolved experience of becoming.

0007h

2026
Diasec Print
56.7 x 100 cm | Edition of 5 + 2 Artist Proofs

Micro-narrative 1 of 2

0007h / Stairwell

I lose things.
Not important things.
Small things.
A receipt.
One earring.
The good scissors.
A shirt I could have sworn I hung behind the door.
Then other things turn up.
Once I found a balloon tied to the stair rail - Pink.
I stood there for quite a long time trying to remember who I had bought it for.
I hadn't.
At least I don't think I had.
There was a fish once too.
I know how that sounds.
It was still alive.
I carried the bowl downstairs with both hands because the water kept spilling over my wrists.
On the third floor I started laughing.
I couldn't stop.
By the second floor I was crying.
There wasn't a difference by then.
I sat down.
People stepped around me.
Someone asked if I needed help and I said no so quickly that we both believed me.
The light above the landing flickered.
For a second I couldn't see my hands.
When it came back, everything was still there.
The papers. The water. My shoes. My knees.
Me.
I remember feeling disappointed.
I don't know why.

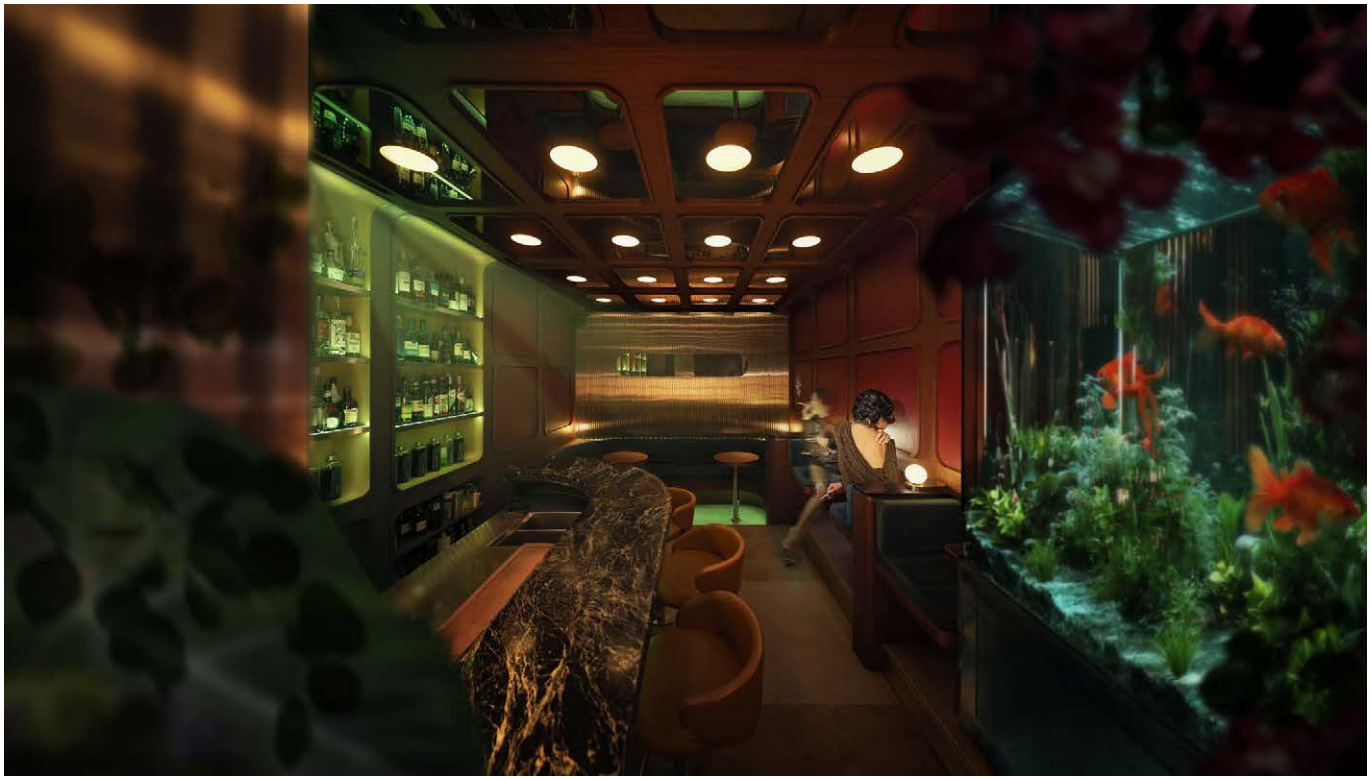
Micro-narrative 2 of 2

Sometimes, halfway down these stairs,
I get the feeling that I
have forgotten somewhere I am
supposed to be.
A dinner.
A train.
Someone waiting.

I check my phone.
Nothing.
Then the feeling passes.
I go downstairs.
Lately I have started taking the stairs very slowly.
Just in case I remember before I reach the bottom.



Detail of ***0007h***



Fictional character: **June Teo, 58**

In ***2015h***, the apparent freedom of a nocturnal interior conceals another carefully maintained ritual. June's monthly retreat to the bar offers a temporary suspension of the responsibilities through which she has become indispensable to others. Yet even this withdrawal is rehearsed, scheduled and governed by an unspoken understanding of how distress may be expressed. Within the saturated theatricality of the space, clothing and alcohol mediate the social interpretation of emotion, allowing vulnerability to assume the appearance of leisure. The aquarium's ceaseless circulation echoes the repetitive structures from which June seeks reprieve. Rather than opposing control and surrender, the photograph reveals their uneasy interdependence, questioning whether the temporary relinquishment of a role can ever occur entirely outside the conditions that sustain it.

2015h

2026
Diasec Print
56.7 x 100 cm | Edition of 5 + 2 Artist Proofs

Micro-narrative 1 of 2

0007h / Stairwell

In my family, I am the one who is called.
Sister, the tap is leaking.
Sister, Pa fell.
Sister, the CPF forms.
Sister, the helper's day off.
I am very reliable.
Ask anyone.
They all have my number.
Last Friday of every month,
I come here.
Malik puts my bag on the stool beside me like another guest
and doesn't ask questions.
That is the entire service.
Five-star.
I dress for it.
A woman in office clothes crying is a crisis.
A woman in a T-shirt crying is just Friday.
Two drinks is warm.
Three is loose.
Somewhere inside the fourth, the key turns.
I don't drink to forget.
Where got time to forget.
I drink until I'm allowed.
Sober tears require a reason.
Drunk tears require nothing
except the drink.
Let them say I cannot hold my liquor.
I can hold everything else.
There are four fish in the tank behind the bar.
I know because when I cry I count them instead of looking at
Malik.
One. Two. Three. Four.
Then again.
One. Two. Three. Four.
They keep circling back,
which is useful.

Micro-narrative 2 of 2

You can count the same four for a very long time.
What do I cry about?
Nothing.
Everything queues.
The month files in one at a time
and I let each thing through,
in order.
Even here, apparently, I am an administrator.

At four, Malik calls the Grab.
Tomorrow someone will call.
I'll go.
I'm very reliable.
Twenty-nine days is a long time to be a wall.
One evening a month,
the wall is permitted weather.



Detail of ***2015h***



Fictional character: **Corinne Chua, 61**

In ***1505h***, the cinema becomes a site where representation outlives the body that once sustained it. A former actress returns to encounter a younger self preserved within the temporal permanence of the moving image. Seated among vacant rows, Corinne occupies an uneasy position between spectator and spectacle, witnessing a version of herself that remains available to public recognition even as her own life continues beyond the screen. Her repeated attendance unsettles the distinction between remembrance and performance: each viewing simultaneously restores and estranges an identity she once inhabited. The work considers the afterlife of images and the peculiar endurance of performed selves, asking what remains of a person when the identities through which she was once recognised continue to exist independently of her.

1505h

2026
Diasec Print
34 x 60 cm | Edition of 5 + 2 Artist Proofs

Micro-narrative 1 of 2

1505h / Theatre

I was in pictures.
Not the pictures anyone remembers.
Ours.
I was the second sister.
The mistress in episode 214.
The drowned wife they find at minute six.
The neighbour who sees everything and says nothing.
Four separate times.
Casting men used to say I had a face that takes make-up well.
It took me years to understand what they meant:
a surface that takes any paint.
I gave a little of myself
to every woman I played.
One by one, they kept it.
I know exactly how I used to enter a room.
Left shoulder first.
Chin slightly down.
Someone taught me that when I was twenty-three
because my neck photographed better that way.
I still do it.
Nobody is photographing me now.
Once, a woman at the wet market grabbed my arm
and called me by a character's name.
She remembered what happened to my husband.
She remembered my children.
She knew that woman completely.
Nobody has ever recognised me as myself.
Including, on certain mornings,
myself.
The parts stopped coming somewhere in my forties.
You don't retire from acting.
It simply stops asking.
So on Thursdays I come here
and borrow somebody else's shape.

Micro-narrative 2 of 2

Someone taught me that when I was twenty-three
because my neck photographed better that way.
I still do it.
Nobody is photographing me now.
Once, a woman at the wet market grabbed my arm
and called me by a character's name.
She remembered what happened to my husband.
She remembered my children.
She knew that woman completely.
Nobody has ever recognised me as myself.
Including, on certain mornings,
myself.
The parts stopped coming somewhere in my forties.
You don't retire from acting.
It simply stops asking.
So on Thursdays I come here
and borrow somebody else's shape.

I die.
The lights come up.
I wake.
I go home.
Next Thursday,
I come back and die again.
It is the steadiest role I have ever had.



Detail of ***1505h***



Fictional character: **Tan Siew Lian, 64**

In ***2300h***, the luminous spectacle of a laundromat transforms an ordinary act of domestic maintenance into a meditation on what repetition preserves and what it erases. Its mechanical cycles promise renewal through the removal of traces, yet Siew Lian's ritual is organised around an object deliberately withheld from that process. An unwashed shirt becomes the fragile repository of a presence that cannot otherwise be recovered. The photograph's exuberant colour and restless visual activity resist the stillness conventionally associated with mourning, allowing private attachment to unfold within a space of public utility. Here, care assumes a paradoxical form: preservation depends upon refusing the very action that defines the ritual. The work considers how ordinary gestures continue after their original circumstances have disappeared, carrying absence forward through the persistence of habit.

2300h

2026
Diasec Print
85 x 150 cm | Edition of 5 + 2 Artist Proofs

Micro-narrative 1 of 2

2300h / Laundromat

Tuesday is washing night.
It has been washing night for forty-one years.
After ten the machines are free,
the aunties are asleep,
and nobody asks me anything.
Machine 5.
The big one.
Bedsheets.
Curtains.
Twelve dollars.
Dynamo, blue.
He said lavender made him smell like a hotel.
It has been four months already
and my hand still reaches for blue.
His shirt comes too.
The checked one he wore to weddings and full-month parties.
It sits on top of my basket.
It does not go in the machine.
The first Tuesday after he left,
I washed his pillowcase.
I didn't think.
I just put it in with everything else.
When I took it out I knew immediately what I had done.
It smelled clean.
I sat on the plastic chair and hated myself for making it clean.
Washing takes things out of cloth.
That is the entire point of washing.
Once,
when the tube light flickered,
I held his shirt against my face.
Like a woman checking for mould,
in case anybody looked in.
Nobody looked in.
I held it there for a long time.

Micro-narrative 2 of 2

Tomorrow Mei Lin at the fish stall will ask
whether I'm eating.
I will say got, got
and buy fish for one person.
After forty-one years,
I still don't know how much that is.
The dryer sings.

I fold everything while it is warm.
His side of the bedsheet folds exactly like mine.
The machine cannot tell.
The shirt goes home untouched.
I think it has one more Tuesday inside.
Maybe two.



Detail of ***2300h***

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