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## MEDIA RELEASE

# T:>Works in 2021

### Knowledge production: art as knowledge for everyone and everything

SINGAPORE, 30 March 2021 – Led by Artistic Director Dr. Ong Keng Sen, T:>Works continues to expand its mission of pioneering thought leadership in the arts in 2021. Moving beyond the art world, T:>Works will introduce a fellowship platform that cuts across silos, disciplines and fields. Supported by a seed fund, T:>Works is committing one million dollars over three years to kickstart a fellowship programme, which will support knowledge production, research, and contextualised practice from April 2021 to March 2024. Further funds will be progressively raised in these three years to sustain the fellowship programme.

Established arts administrator Traslin Ong will also assume the role of Executive Director, while acclaimed multimedia artist Brian Gothong Tan will join T:>Works for the next three years. With a re-calibrated team working towards a futures-oriented vision for everyone and everything, T:>Works will continue to harness thought leadership, as a path forward into the new decade.

### New Decade, Old Friends: Reintroducing Traslin Ong and Brian Gothong Tan

T:>Works will welcome two members joining the team as part of its regeneration and integration of a younger generation of creative individuals: Traslin Ong and Brian Gothong Tan. Collaborating on multiple occasions with the organisation over the past three decades, Traslin and Brian will bring a synergistic slant to the organisation's futures-oriented vision.

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### Traslin Ong

Established arts administrator Traslin Ong is known for her decade-long engagements with esteemed institutions in New York such as the Brooklyn Museum and the Museum of Chinese in America after her graduate studies in New York University. Building on her experience as a manager at T:>Works from 1999 to 2004, Traslin will take on the custodianship role of Executive Director, encompassing the areas of strategic partnership and legacy-building, as well as, charting the future direction of T:>Works.

Traslin Ong, Executive Director of T:>Works, says, “Buoyed by years of working in cultural institutions in the U.S. that shaped how I work with artists and engage with communities, I now return to T:>Works, and a Singapore arts landscape, both of which have changed vastly from 20 years ago. For me, that’s an exciting place to be in, both artistically and operationally. I am now charged to effect change and steer T:>Works towards the next phase of its artistic journey. I look forward to asking questions and formulating plans on how to support and sustain artistic endeavours for T:>Works, as well as extending care to create an inclusive, safe space for the next generation of arts practitioners.”

### Brian Gothong Tan

Traversing mediums such as theatre, film and installation art, multimedia artist Brian Gothong Tan will direct an artistic atelier within T:>Works for the next three years, following the third installment of theatre artist Noorlinah Mohamed’s three-year residency helming the *Festival of Women N.O.W. (not ordinary work)*. Brian’s journey with T:>Works started in 2007, when he participated in *The Flying Circus Project* at Ho Chi Minh City. Earlier that year, Brian had presented *Signs, Omens and Relics of Faith*, an interactive multimedia installation as part of the 72-13’s Creatives-in-Residence programme. Brian’s first new work with T:>Works will premiere in October 2021.

Brian Gothong Tan, Artist at T:>Works, says, “I’m very excited to work with my new T:>Works family, especially in these strange times, where we are saying goodbye to the old world order and watching a new one being born right in front of us. I think it is a blessing to have this window to articulate and redefine the world that we live in. T:>Works is one of those rare companies that has evolved and transformed radically over the years and I am energised to push boundaries and contribute to this body of work.”

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Dr. Ong Keng Sen, Artistic Director of T:>Works, says, "This is a pivotal time of stepping into the new decade beyond the pandemic. We believe in and support the thought leadership of artists. We align ourselves to their vision rather than just their artworks and hopefully they align themselves to our vision. We seek to foster a flat landscape of horizontal thought leaderships, rather than vertical hierarchies. We also intend to redefine arts management as a field of *arts care*, and move away from a model of efficiency and productivity above all else. Carrying out our mission requires the right team, and it is gratifying to welcome both Traslin and Brian back into the team, as we collaboratively write a new chapter for T:>Works."

### **Living ethically in compromised times: T:>Works furthers mission of thought leadership in 2021 and beyond**

Galvanised by the upheavals dominating the new decade, T:>Works is doubling down on its mission and vision of pioneering thought leadership focused on transdisciplinary, transcultural, and inclusive processes in the arts. In particular, beyond the pandemic, T:>Works will be focused on translocal practices, as a new dimension of the transforming international landscape.

A new fellowship platform by T:>Works will open to situated practice in the diverse local contexts around the world. The Fellow may be based in another localised context, and knowledge as well as research produced there will be digitally shared with the publics in Singapore and internationally. The fellowship is open to collaborative ventures between artists, scientists, writers, curators, activators, creative communities, amongst others.

To this end, T:>Works is particularly attuned to the making of potential futures that speak to the ethical interconnections between cultures, humans, species, and other forces that animate our physical world. From advancing cultural development in the new millennium in *The Flying Circus Project*, an alternative university and a nomadic artist residency of international artists engaging with local contexts, to spotlighting intersectional solidarity and alliance for projects created and developed by women making positive change in our communities [*Festival of Women N.O.W. (not ordinary work)*], ethics light up the trajectory of T:>Works.

In this new decade, T:>Works seeks to develop knowledge production in hopes of sustaining futures on a planetary level, beyond cultural, geographical, ideological and national borders.

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Dr. Ong says, "As humans, we produce knowledge on a daily basis. But how often do we think about the implications of our knowledge production? Knowledge can be used to connect and bridge. It has also been used to divide and conquer. By threading ethics throughout T:>Works' journey from the '90s till today, T:>Works, as an independent arts organisation and a thought leader, brings with us a new way of being and acting – guided by care and, hopefully, repair – into this new decade."

### **Leaving Nobody and Nothing Behind: The Roots of *PerForm***

Remaining true to its mission of providing educational perspectives through research and discourse situated within Southeast Asia, T:>Works has named this fellowship platform, ***PerForm***, which is centered around the idea of *leaving nobody and nothing behind*.

Initiated by Dr. Ong, *PerForm* harnesses the contexts of multiple 'locals', such as situated knowledge, local practices, or a fellow's sustained engagement with local communities around the world. *PerForm* brings the audience of this fellowship programme back to the basics of **acting** in our personal capacities and **performing** our personal responsibilities to create liveable societies.

The first six fellows of *PerForm* 2021 are: Ho Rui An, Jerrine Tan, Munirah Mansoor, Nurul Huda Rashid, Shubigi Rao, and Wong Bing Hao. More fellows from the Global South will be released in the later half of 2021.

#### Shubigi Rao will present the inaugural digital lecture on 6 May 2021.

Dr. Ong says. "Possible futures are already happening close to home or in diverse contexts in the Global South.<sup>1</sup> It may involve knowledge which has been forgotten, left behind, or even repressed. We need to listen differently to other voices, not just speak differently. *PerForm* zooms into these local, situated projects, and posits the question: How do we, as common custodians of this planet, continue life for everyone and everything? Using knowledge production as a vehicle at *PerForm*, T:>Works seizes upon the same ethical urge, felt in both

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<sup>1</sup> Generally, definitions of the Global North include the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, all member states of the European Union, Russia, Israel, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. Global South includes all countries outside of the Global North.

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the '90s and in the new millennium, to transform the world, and to perform our responsibility to sustain the planet. It is imperative that we perform differently from just making art. We need to learn and figure out how to live together, once again.”

For more information on the 2021 journey of T:>Works, refer to the Annex.

**T:>Works Social Media Channels**

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/TWorkssg/>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/TWorkssg>

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/tworkssg/>

**YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheatreWorksSG/>

**END**

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## About T:>Works

Established in 1985, [T:>Works](#) is an independent and international arts company based in Singapore at its space, 72-13. It is currently led by Artistic Director, Dr. Ong Keng Sen. T:>Works' mission and vision is the pioneering of thought leadership in the arts focused on transdisciplinary, transcultural, and inclusive processes. To this end, there is a strong educational perspective with research and discourse contextualising the histories, contemporary experiences, and art practices of Southeast Asia. T:>Works also serves to investigate the current urgencies of being located in Singapore through different creative expressions in the public sphere. It is a recipient of the National Arts Council Major Company Grant for the period from 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2022. T:>Works is an Institute of Public Character with charity status.

## About Dr. Ong Keng Sen

Dr. Ong Keng Sen is an artist-curator as well as the Artistic Director of T:>Works and the artspace 72-13 in Singapore. Apart from creating renowned productions, Ong founded the Arts Network Asia, a micro-grant peer organisation, and the international Curators Academy focused on the synergy between contexts and curation. His seminal work was the nomadic artist residency, *The Flying Circus Project*, traveling international artists through Asia, sharing their contexts amongst themselves and young people in the local sites. Ong was the Founding Festival Director of the all-new Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA). He directed four editions of SIFA from 2014 to 2017. He was a Fulbright Scholar and was awarded the prestigious Fukuoka Asian Arts and Culture Prize in 2010 for his creations in Asian contemporary performance. He holds a Ph.D. in Performance Studies from Tisch School of the Arts, New York University.

## About Traslin Ong

Traslin Ong is the Executive Director of T:>Works. She is also an arts administrator, curator, programmer and educator who has had 20 years of experience working in both the performing arts and visual art worlds. She has a keen understanding of the processes and challenges faced by cultural institutions, including museums and theatres, having produced and marketed many performances, site-specific works, symposia, festivals, and works-in-progress. She worked as a manager at T:>Works from 1999 to 2004, and collaborated with various venues in Europe and Asia. After her graduate studies at New York University, she continued her passion of working in the arts at the Brooklyn Museum, Museum of Chinese in America and Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York. Traslin holds a BA (Hons) in Theatre

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Studies, National University of Singapore and a Masters in Arts Administration from New York University.

**About Brian Gothong Tan**

Brian Gothong Tan is one of the leading creatives in Singapore and is best known for his cutting-edge and highly engaging works in theatre, film and installation art. He graduated from California Institute of the Arts in 2005 under the Shell-NAC Scholarship. His works have been featured in numerous productions which have toured successfully in many countries like Italy, USA, Korea and the United Kingdom. His latest projects include “Tropical Traumas” (Singapore International Festival of Arts 2016), the Singapore Bicentennial Experience, “Lost Cinema 20/20” (2021, Esplanade) and “Havoc Girls and Kamikaze Boys” (2021, M1 Fringe and NAFA). He was conferred the Young Artist Award in 2012, and more recently, the Singapore Youth Award in 2015.

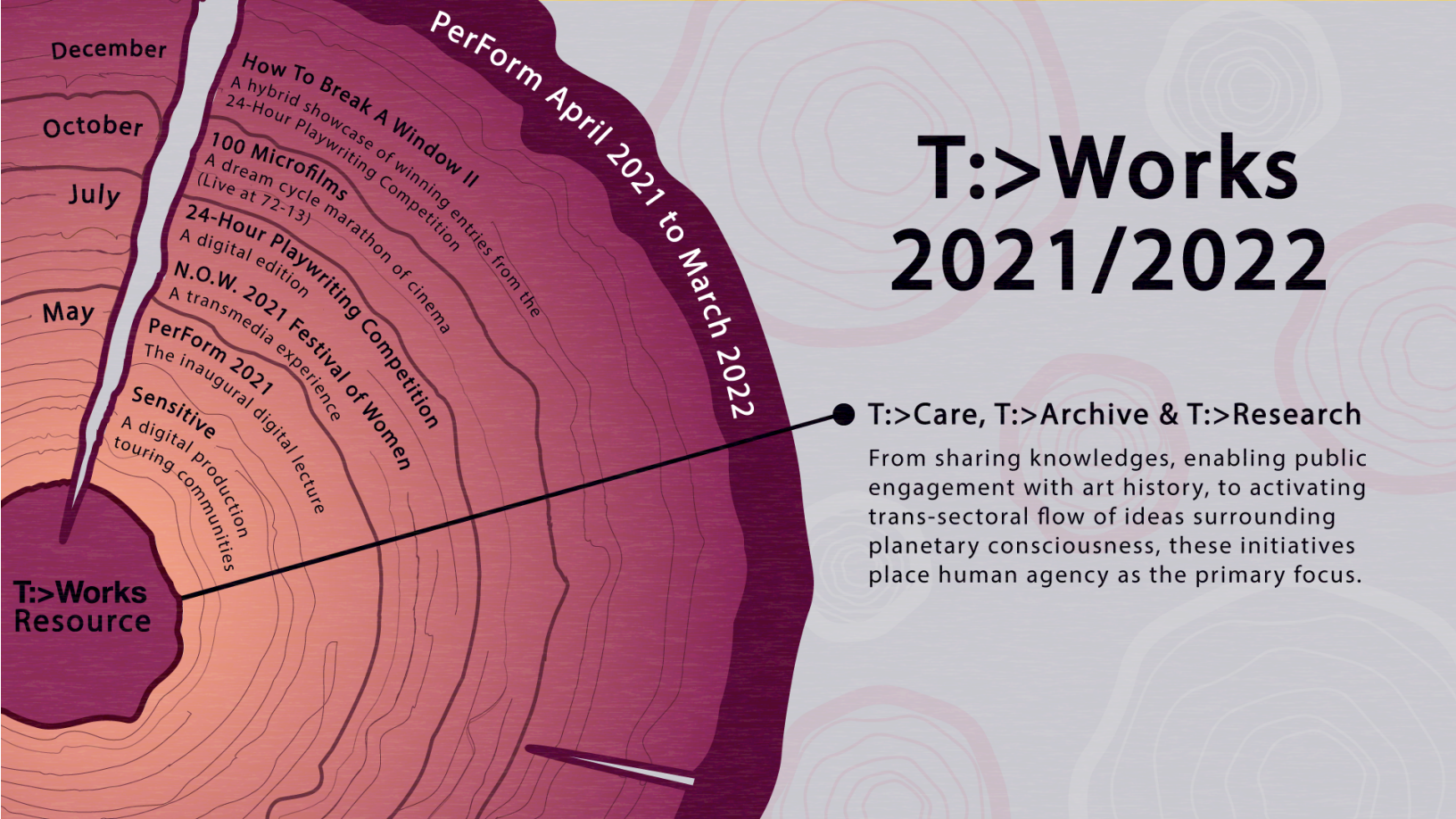
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**Annex**

# T:>Works 2021/2022





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2021 highlights include:

- ***Festival of Women N.O.W. (not ordinary work)***, a three-week interdisciplinary event spotlighting women creators and changemakers led by theatre artist Noorlinah Mohamed in July 2021. This year’s programme focuses on transgression, fear and intimacy.
- ***100 Microfilms***, a cinematic jewel directed by multimedia artist Brian Gothong Tan in October 2021. Driven by the sleep-dream cycle, 100 ‘microfilms’ will be a seven-hour-long immersive, site-specific experience.
- More details will be released in the second quarter of 2021.