




*from a dot*

**Journey of Sun Yu-li**

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面对伟大，  
终于渺小。  
— 河南古谚

“When confronted with the  
greatness of Nature, mankind is  
humbled by how small he is.  
—An ancient saying from Henan.”

Sun Yu-li, *Mapping the Universe*, 2000,  
each 10 x 10 m (comprising 10 pcs of 2 x  
5 m), enamel paint on canvas, held at Far  
East Square. Five pieces were acquired by  
Chase Manhattan Bank, Far East Square  
and private collectors from Singapore.







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ArtBeatz Pte Ltd  
#05-08 The Calrose  
511 Yio Chu Kang Road  
Singapore 787066  
www.artbeatz.com.sg  
Email: artbeatz@iqkidz.com.sg  
Produced by ArtBeatz Pte Ltd

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Text by Sun Yu-li and Hong Bei Yu  
Editor: Hong Bei Yu  
Editorial Advisers: Dawn Tam and Dr CJ Kho  
Concept and layout: Amalina Ahmad, ArtBeatz Pte Ltd

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Sun Yu-li (孙宇立) pondering his future on his graduation day from Tung Hai University in June 1970.

# FOREWORD

*From a dot* lies the convergence of arts and science. Without a dot, there can be no line. Joining the dots forms a line and the line moves to form a plane, a circle. Give movement to the plane and it will create volume resulting in three-dimensional space. Such simple yet profound and subtle concept has served as the guiding principle in celebrated artist, Sun Yu-li's art for more than thirty years.

As a scientist, I am struck by this awesome similarity that an atom, like a dot, can be linked together to form a molecule and the seemingly random joining together of four fascinating molecules provides the code that governs life. The collaborative nature of these molecules gives rise to the complex structure of an organism that is then constantly in flux with the environment.

In this book, Yu-li chronicled his developmental path as a child to an architect. A great thinker, now an artist, he discovered the Universal Language and uses his paintings and sculptures to express his concept of a transformational dot. The vivid details elucidated the integration of science and arts at its very best. Our existence will be beautified and uplifted by people who can integrate their thinking brains with the feeling hearts. He takes us through a journey illustrating how the Universal Language has encapsulated his art and brings about connectivity between people, cultures and countries.

Yu-li has varied talents as an architect, an artist and an inventor. In this book, he has also brought to light the interplay of science, art and the community. Starting from a dot, you can create a beautiful piece of art that connects and bridges diversity while bringing out love and respect within the community irrespective of age, colour and religion. This is truly amazing!

There is no doubt that for Yu-li, writing this book was a labor of love and wisdom.

For you, reading it will be both enlightening and an enriching experience. Start the road to discovery by being a little sculptor and participate in the interactive art collaboratory. You will be gainfully delighted!

Dr CJ Kho  
Educator and Life Scientist





Fun Yuli

五

The background is a solid black field filled with various white, hand-drawn or painted elements. These include thin, straight lines of varying lengths and orientations, some thicker brushstrokes, small solid circles, and larger, more complex shapes like concentric circles and loops. The overall effect is abstract and dynamic, resembling a cosmic map or a collection of random marks.

# CHAPTER 1



Sun Yu-li, *Window of Hope*, 2010, brass,  
450 x 450 x 550 cm, Collyer Quay, Singapore,  
commissioned by Far East Square.



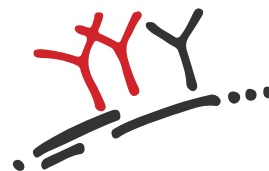


## FROM A DOT

The golden square frames were polished to its finest. They gleamed and emanated a glow under the bright afternoon sun. It was another hot day in sunny Singapore and the day of the installation of a sculpture at Collyer Quay. A historic site in the island state's history, this was where the early immigrants first landed after enduring a long voyage on the sea. One can only imagine their excitement at the first sight of land seen through the windows of the ship. With hearts full of hope, they came from different lands seeking a better future in the young British colony.

To mark the historic importance of the site, Sun Yu-li (孙宇立) designed the sculpture as a series of interlocking

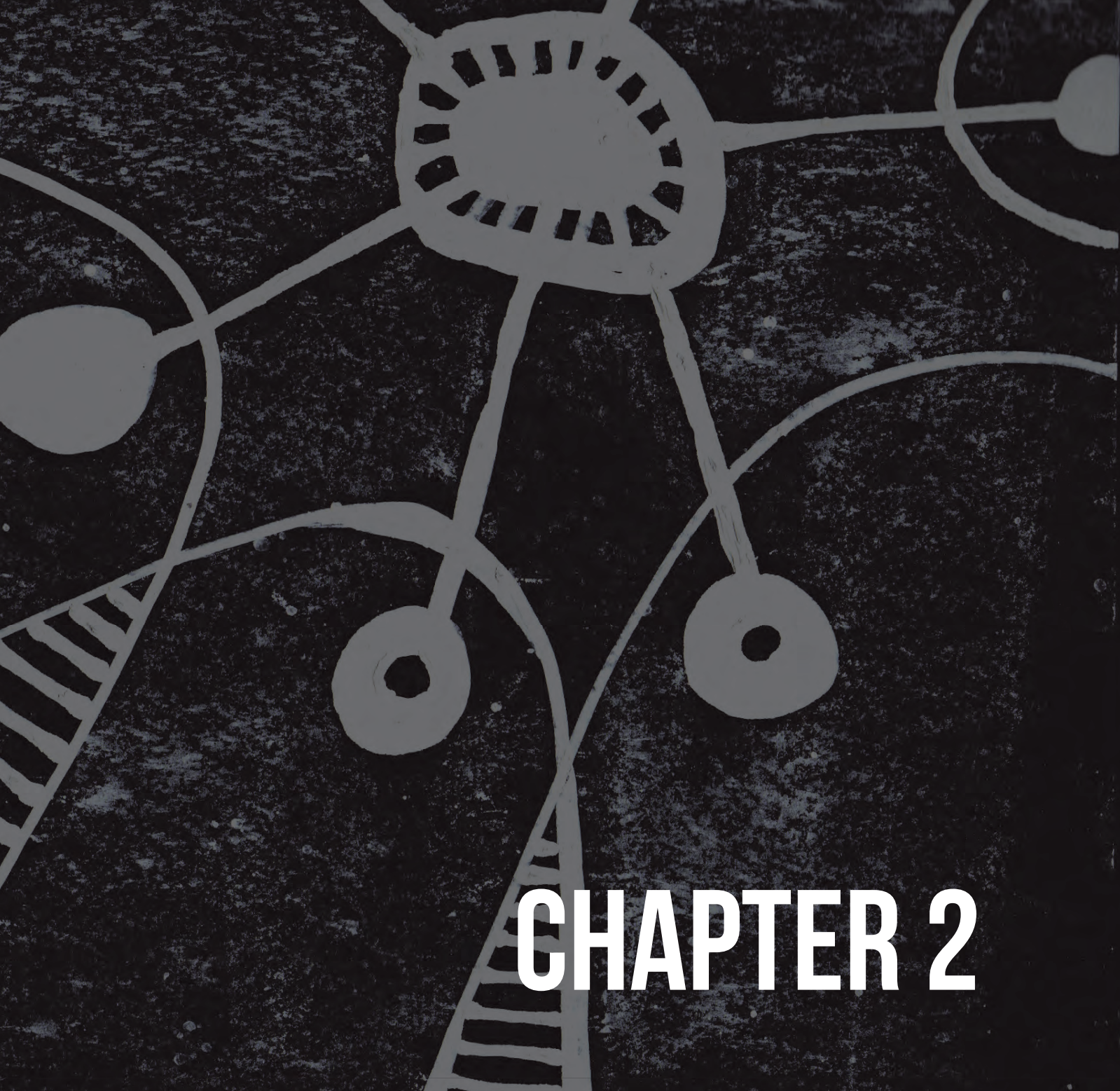
squares that were connected at the end allowing an array of views formed by the many “windows” so that one could enjoy the view of the horizon. These frames were symbolic of the windows of the ship that the early immigrants must have peered through. In addition, from where we stand on the quayside, looking through the windows, we reminisce about the lives and contributions of our forefathers. In recognition of the historic importance of the site, the brass sculpture was named *Window of Hope* to commemorate the role played by the pioneer generation in making Singapore the success it is today.





Sun Yudi 2012





# CHAPTER 2





Sun Yu-li at four with his parents and elder brother, Sun Yu-tong (孙宇同), in Taipei, Taiwan, 1952.

*I was born on 25 May 1948 in Nanjing, China to my father, Sun Kwei Chi (孙桂籍), a politician and my mother, Chang Yu Lien (张郁廉), an artist.*



## GROWING UP

One year later, the Chinese Communist Party gained control of most of China and the Kuomintang withdrew to Taiwan. My family was among the two million people who started a new chapter in Formosa, the beautiful island as the Portuguese called it. On hindsight this was a blessing to me as being surrounded with nature gave me an appreciation for aesthetics and curiosity about natural phenomena. During the numerous trips to the seaside, what I relished the most was to lie on the sand and be amazed by the constellations while listening to the sound of waves crashing on the rocks. I never thought of being an artist despite my mother being an accomplished artist in Chinese brush painting. Little did I realise that the seeds of my artistic career were planted in my childhood.

In my mothers' younger days, she took lessons from teacher and esteemed artist Huang Jun Bi (黄君璧) and brought me along so that I could observe the master at work. She would reinforce what I had observed by demonstrating the finer points of the painting at home and through these lessons, I grasped the technique of painting. I also attended violin classes since six years old and played the violin for over ten years. These memories of painting

*1948, Nanjing, China*

and music resided in my subconscious mind and I discovered I had the confidence with the brush and a basic appreciation of music when I decided to practice art.

In kindergarten I was a bright kid and was chosen to represent the class at the graduating ceremony where I gave a well-received heartfelt speech. However at nine, my grades plummeted and I found my memory no longer as sharp as before after an infection of Japanese encephalitis (inflammation) caused through a mosquito bite. The virus had caused a swell inside my brain which raised the pressure and affected the temporal lobe which controls memory. I was fortunate mine was not a serious case, as according to the doctor, this disease could lead to fatality or impaired brain in two of three children.

In a way it was a blessing in disguise as nature had compensated me with the ability to perceive and comprehend the profound concepts that my father introduced to me. He was a voracious reader with a wide range of interests that spanned philosophy, metaphysics, archaeology, logics, linguistics, world history and geography. Naturally, he loved to bring me to museums and archaeological sites where he would bring the facts to life through stories of the unseen



Sun Yu-li at age 16 with his sister Sun Yu-chao (孙宇昭) at their mother's solo art exhibition in Taipei, Taiwan, 1964.



This sculpture is from the celebration of family series by Sun Yu-li in 2001.

past that stretched tens of thousands of years. It widened my horizons and sparked off a desire to uncover the truth and origin behind all things in the phenomenal world. My parents were patient in explaining these difficult concepts and I cannot recall a time where I was once scolded, blamed, or forced to do something against my will. In this nurturing environment, I developed a healthy dose of self-confidence.

Still, I was daunted when my neighbour and childhood friend Tu suggested a visit to the sculpture studio of Professor Yu Yu Yang (also known as Yang Ying Feng 杨英风). He was a renowned artist known for his realistic and abstract sculptures and I was just a junior high student of thirteen or fourteen years of age. Yet I was fascinated by the term “sculpture studio” as I had no clue what it would look like. We made our way to the nearby single storey timber house. We stepped past the main gate and there to the right was the dimly lit shed, the sculpture studio of Professor Yang. Despite the low light, I could see a variety of models, some completed while others in different states of progress on the tables and shelves. Professor Yang had depicted some of these models in a realistic style while others were abstract. There were sketches and books lying around and some easels with paintings on them around the room. It was truly a studio

befitting of a man with many talents. A giant figure emerged at the door of the room and both of us bowed and greeted aloud, “Good evening, Teacher Yang!” It was a nervous and exciting moment for me to finally meet this famous sculptor. I came under Professor Yang’s teaching and gleaned much from this great artist. Never would I have known that I would become involved in his art projects twenty years later.

In July 1966, I sat for the university entrance examination and was placed 54th of 100 places. The university placement system was somewhat arbitrary, had I landed in 53rd place I would have been assigned chemistry in Tamkang University (淡江大学) and if I was in the 55th place my major would have been ship building in National Taiwan Ocean University (国立台湾海洋大学). The 54th place was for architecture in Chung Yuan Christian University (中原大学). I was quite discouraged to get such a low ranking but my father encouraged me and said that architecture was an interdisciplinary subject that encompassed many disciplines from art to science and engineering. Architecture was never my chosen subject but since it was my major, I decided to give it my best shot.

During one of our lessons on “Studying Movements” from the Basic Design module, our lecturer challenged us to capture movement on a piece of A4 cardboard. As I looked around at my





Chang Yu Lien (张郁廉), *Untitled*, 1964, 65 x 120 cm, Chinese ink on paper, private collection.



Sun Yu-li in his moment of solitude by the coast of Wu Chi in Taizhong, Taiwan in 1967.



classmates, I saw some of them splashing paint while others were leaving footprints on the board. An idea struck me. Instead of focusing on movement on the board, why not introduce movement from outside the board? I painted the board black and glued a piece of cube sugar in the centre. When it was my turn to explain, I said that after a while, ants would be attracted to the sugar and will be crawling around on the board. I was praised for the idea.

Through my father's friend, Professor Wang who was teaching at Tung Hai University (东海大学), I came to know that there were a few more places in the Architecture department. I passed the placement test and after one year in Chung Yuan Christian University I transferred to Tung Hai University, an elite university till present day.

We had many books to read as architecture students and one book in particular captivated my interest — *The Image of the City* by Kevin Lynch which Professor Wang recommended and gifted me. In his book, Lynch claimed that there were only five constituent elements to any city. A city, no matter how complicated, could be recorded and analysed from these universal and constituent elements<sup>1</sup>. I found it very accessible and understood the content of

the book. This was the seed which would awaken ten years later and develop into my life's pursuit of the Universal Language (UL).<sup>2</sup>

Change was in the air and the Cultural Revolution was in full swing in China much to the alarm of the United States who monitored the evolution through reconnaissance missions. I personally witnessed the low flying black bird-like aircrafts known as the U-2 that were deployed to China. I also heard the distant drone of the US B-52 bombers flying over the campus every morning after 4 a.m. I was told that they were dispatched to bomb Vietnam.

With the completion of my university days, I went on to serve my national service duty from 1970 - 1971 as a Marine Corps Platoon Commander. In the first six months I was deployed to guard the coast of Peng Hu (澎湖), an archipelago off the western coast of Taiwan. Subsequently I was sent south to the Ken Ding National Park (垦丁国家公园). Famous for its scenic beach, I savoured my duty as it gave me the opportunity to spend time alone by the seaside or the forest with no one in sight. After my national service duty was fulfilled, I flew to the United States for my post graduate study. Like many others in my generation, this was only possible because of my parents' thriftiness and years of saving.

<sup>1</sup>Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, Mass : M.I.T. Press, 1960), pp. 46-48.

<sup>2</sup>Sun Yu-li, "The Formal Language of the Metaphysical", <http://sunnyuli.com/ul>





An abstract line drawing in a light gray color on a dark gray background. The drawing features a central vertical line that branches into several shapes: a large circle at the top, a smaller circle below it, and a spiral on the left. A star-like shape is positioned to the right of the central line, and a small circle is at the bottom. A thin diagonal line crosses the bottom right corner.

# CHAPTER 3





Sun Yu-li, *Heaven & Earth*, 2008,  
240 x 600 x 600 cm (3pcs), stainless steel,  
Holmdel, N.J., USA, private collection.

*“I arrived in September where I had enrolled into the Urban Design graduate program of the Catholic University of America. To earn extra income I worked as a draftsman earning \$2.25 per hour. In those days where groceries cost a couple of dimes, I could buy an entire trolley of items for over ten dollars. The modest salary was a huge relief to my parents and me.”*

## THE DISCOVERY

*1971, Washington DC, USA*

A year later I moved to Champaign-Urbana where I was offered a Performing Arts fellowship at the Department of City Planning, University of Illinois. I discontinued my studies at the Catholic University of America in order to take up the fellowship. I was most interested in the two new subjects that I learned - Statistics and Computer Science. I also learned Russian which brought back memories from my younger days as my parents often conversed in Russian. A Russian couple had adopted my mother in Harbin after her biological mother passed away due to illness and my father was born in Vladivostok and lived in Harbin, hence he was fluent in the language.

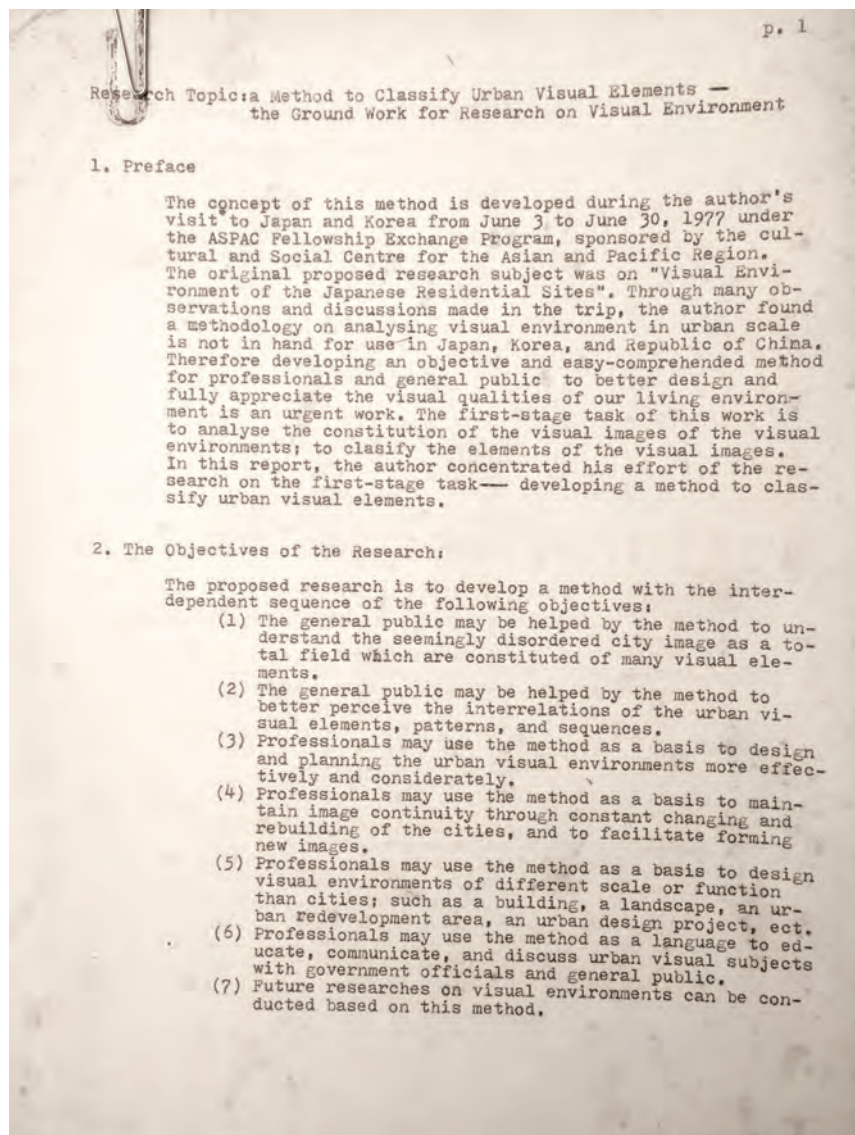
Upon completing the two year course, I graduated with my first master's degree in City Planning. I applied to the World Bank and was offered a Research Assistant position in the Department of Transportation and Urban Projects. This brought me back to Washington DC. My first project was to review the urban development projects in Africa and later, I was assigned to a team tasked to review the Philippines's loan application for the development of its national transportation. There were perks as a staff of the World Bank; I travelled first class on a mission to Manila. With my United Nations laissez passer (French for “let pass”), I was given diplomatic privileges. This trip opened my eyes to the vast disparity between the two worlds that existed in the Philippines. On one hand, we met ministers and high ranking officers to talk

about macro planning. Yet I also saw the people who were left behind in the country's progress. They were the slum dwellers who were extremely poor. I truly hoped the loan monies would benefit the people whose faces I saw in the trip.

I worked in the day at the World Bank office and attended night classes at the Catholic University of America. After one year, I completed my second masters in architecture and continued to work at the World Bank. During the lunch hour while passing through the lobby of the World Bank, a lady with a big hat approached me for direction. I brought her to her destination and over conversation came to know that her family was from Fuzhou (福州), China. She was brought over by her mother when she was one year old to Mersing, Johor, Malaysia to join her father who had a wholesale business there. An opportunity brought her to the lobby of the World Bank where we had that memorable encounter. We eventually dated and tied the knot in 1975.

During this time, my father who was a majority party leader in the Legislative Yuan, was facing increasing pressure at work. He was in charge of many of the economic policies in Taiwan and the stress aggravated his heart condition. I was very concerned about his health and so I tendered my resignation from the World Bank and returned to Taipei with my wife.





The first article on the Universal Language (UL), "A Method to Classify Urban Visual Elements" written by Sun Yu-li in 1976.

## 1975, Taipei, Taiwan

A lakeside house in Da Hu (大湖), a suburb in Taipei became our home. My parents who lived in central Taipei would take a one hour bus ride to visit us on weekends. Just as before, my father and I would talk over a cup of coffee or stroll by the lake. Our conversations came to an end in 1976 when my father passed away at the age of 68 years old. I fulfilled the purpose of my study when I served as a city planner and architect in various government agencies. I was responsible for the design of some of the public buildings and the master planning at the city and regional level. I visited Singapore in 1977 to study the success of public housing. In that one week, I was given a tour of the many Housing Development Board (HDB) estates and was impressed as each was self-contained with its places of worship, schools, and shops. My in-depth report was subsequently published in the architectural journal, *The Architect* (建筑师杂志).

In 1976, I became a part time Associate Professor at the Chinese Culture University in recognition of my two graduate degrees from the US. I taught on the module on Urban Visual Environment as part of the City Planning graduate programme. While preparing the teaching materials, I came across *The Image of the City* by Kevin Lynch

as well as books by Christian Norberg Schulz and Christopher Alexander; books that I had read in my university days. This rekindled my interest in searching for a simple theory which could constitute a city. I penned down my first article of the Universal Language (UL) titled, “A Method to Classify Urban Visual Elements”.<sup>3</sup> At that point of time I did not know it would turn out to be my forty years pursuit of an evasive theory that challenged my mind to its utmost.

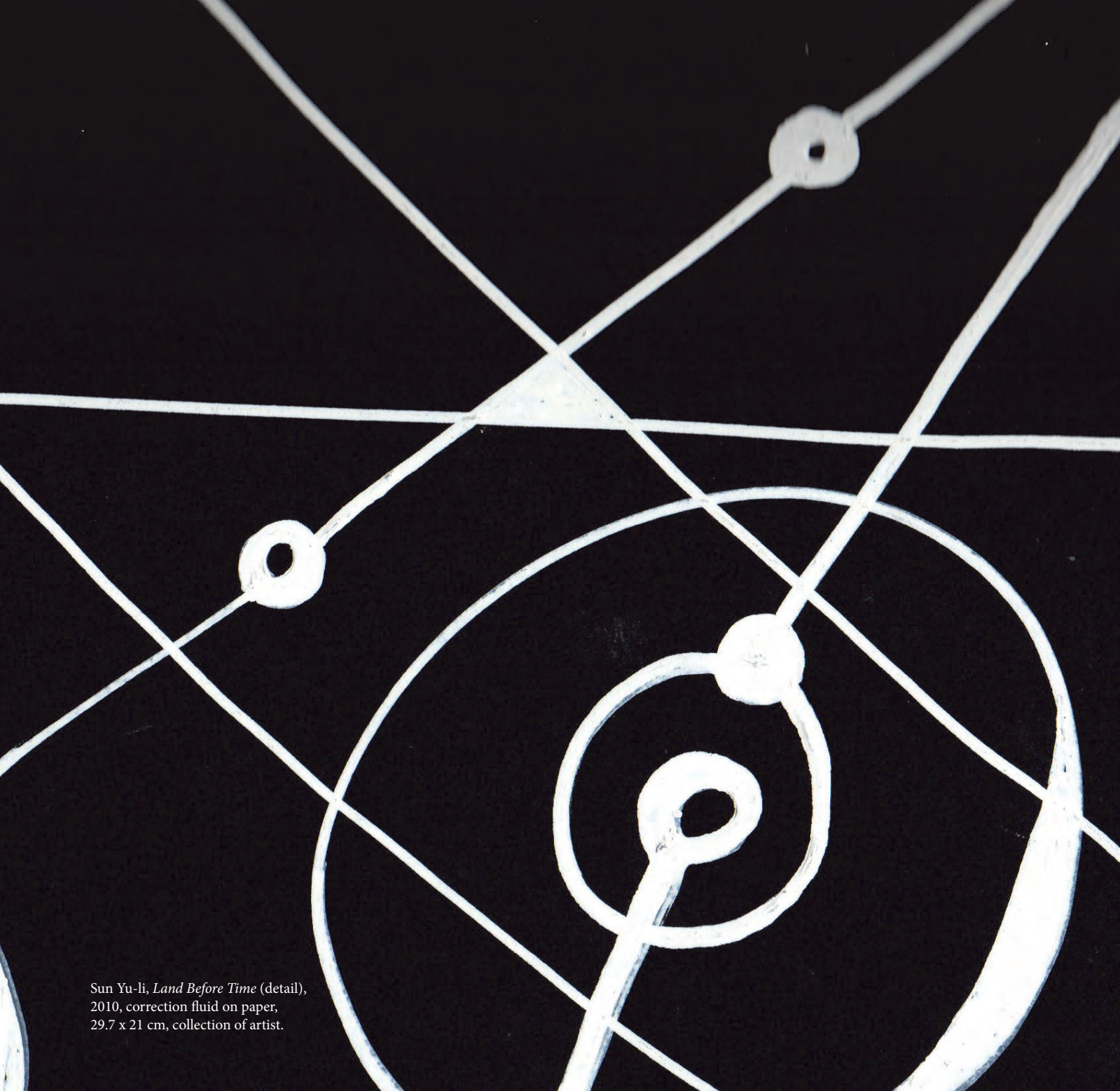
Despite my extensive experience in architecture projects, I was not a qualified architect. One had to pass the professional qualification examination where only 8 to 10 candidates out of 200 people were awarded the qualification. It seemed that it was easier for architects with foreign qualifications and those with a doctorate in architecture to qualify as they only needed to take one exam on the building code instead of the five papers which the rest of us had to take. With my wife's and my preference for a change in environment, going overseas was the best choice. Thus I wrote to Professor Wang who happened to be a visiting researcher at the University of Sydney about the possibility of doing a doctorate there. He approached the faculty on my behalf and replied with good news. We flew there in the autumn of 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Sun Yu-li, *A Method to Classify Urban Visual Elements*. (Unpublished, 1976).

Sun Yuli 2012







Sun Yu-li, *Land Before Time* (detail),  
2010, correction fluid on paper,  
29.7 x 21 cm, collection of artist.



## 1979, Sydney, Australia

We moved to a rented apartment and I started working part time in a small architecture firm that did design work for housing development projects. I found out through my colleagues that in Australia, one could take the architect qualification examination organised by the Board of Architects, New South Wales after completing one year of work. Out of the three subjects, design, city planning, building and planning code; I failed the third twice. I sent in my appeal and waited.

By this time, my daughter was a toddler who could barely speak English so my wife started taking care of another girl of the same age in order for both girls to play with each other. With time our daughter spoke fluently. The parents of the little girl were both architects too. One evening, when the couple came to pick up their daughter, I casually mentioned to the father about my appeal. A few weeks later I received a reply. To my greatest joy, my appeal was granted and I became a qualified architect of New South Wales. I knew he had helped me with my appeal and we have stayed in contact ever since. He is now the most prominent architect in Australia. With this qualification, I took the building code exam in Taiwan two years later and became a qualified architect listed in both Australia and Taiwan.

After spending some months in the doctorate research program at the University of Sydney, I realised it was loosely structured and required self-discipline. I kept working on my research but felt frustrated at the lack of direction. Serendipity played a role and I recalled my University lessons where we were required to draw a bubble diagram to express the spatial relationship of the people living in a house before drawing a formal floor plan. This same bubble diagram can be applied in many ways - from their location within a city to the organisational structure of a community.

In *The Image of the City*, Lynch stated that any city could be expressed by five elements: the path where people pass through; the edge as a perceived boundary; the node where people congregate; the district as a sizeable portion of a city that has a distinctive identity; and a landmark which is easily recognisable and used as an external point of reference.<sup>4</sup> Lynch has drawn many diagrams which are similar to the bubble diagram. Therefore I hypothesise, if Lynch's elements are the variables to a city then bubble diagrams could serve as the spatial organisational patterns of the city. Hence finding the stringing rule that connected these elements together to form patterns would give us a legitimate formal language which could be applied to any city. Thus, we could deal with the issues of cities in a more objective, thorough, comprehensive and quantitative way.

<sup>4</sup> Lynch, *The image of the City*, pp. 46-48.



Sun Yu-li, *Love is a many splendored thing*, 2013, stainless steel, 220 x 320 x 160 cm, Monash, Australia, commissioned by the Monash Council.

Struck by the importance of the stringing rule, I embarked on the quest to find it in order to complete the UL. Weeks went by without any progress until one afternoon, when I spotted a manila envelope at the lowest shelf in the “Planning” section of the Library. It was a manuscript titled “Topological Organisation of Architectural Spaces” by Professor Jean Cousin, Montreal University.<sup>5</sup> In his manuscript, Cousin depicted space with dot, line and plane as its elements. Underlying these graphs is the formula written by Leonhard Euler, a Swiss mathematician and scientist.<sup>6</sup> Since Euler’s formula could be used to string the dot, line and plane into patterns, I had an epiphany that this formula was the stringing rule that I have been searching for.

I penned my second draft known as “Syntax of Urban Space”<sup>7</sup> and went to see my Professor who was supervising my doctorate studies. A colleague was with him so I presented my discovery to both of them. After my presentation, and some exchange of opinions, I left politely. As soon as I closed the door, I heard the sound of laughter. Perhaps they could no longer hold in their feelings at such a crazy declaration that someone would have the audacity to claim he had discovered a

formal theory which could be used to explain the issues concerning all cities. My confidence was not shaken, because I knew that I was merely ill equipped in my explanation of UL.

Living in Sydney was truly enjoyable as it was a beautiful place that gave me many fond memories. We stayed near the Balls Head Reserve where I would go for long walks alone or with my family. At the waterfront there was a huge flat rock that remains a fond memory. It was engraved with a fish that measured over two meters long. Carved by the indigenous people of Australia some 10,000 years ago, it served as a marker to indicate that this was a good fishing spot for fish of this size.

Somehow an inner urge told me it was time to move on. Faced with the remote possibility of getting a PhD for UL, I did not see the reason to remain in Sydney. I had found the critical stringing rule to my UL and with my architect qualification, I could pursue my architectural career wherever I went. My wife suggested Singapore as she missed home a lot, and Singapore was close to Johor Bahru, her hometown. Since my marriage, I had visited the country several times and had a good impression. I happily agreed.

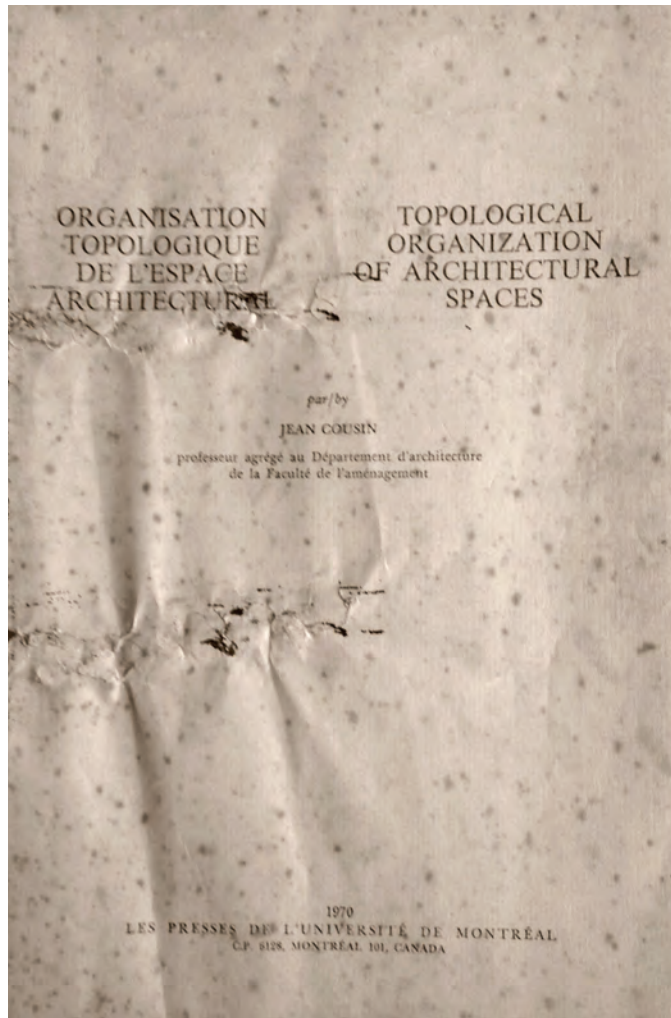
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<sup>5</sup> Jean Cousin, *Organisation topologique de l'espace architectural / Topological Organization of Architectural Space* (Montreal: University of Montreal Press, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

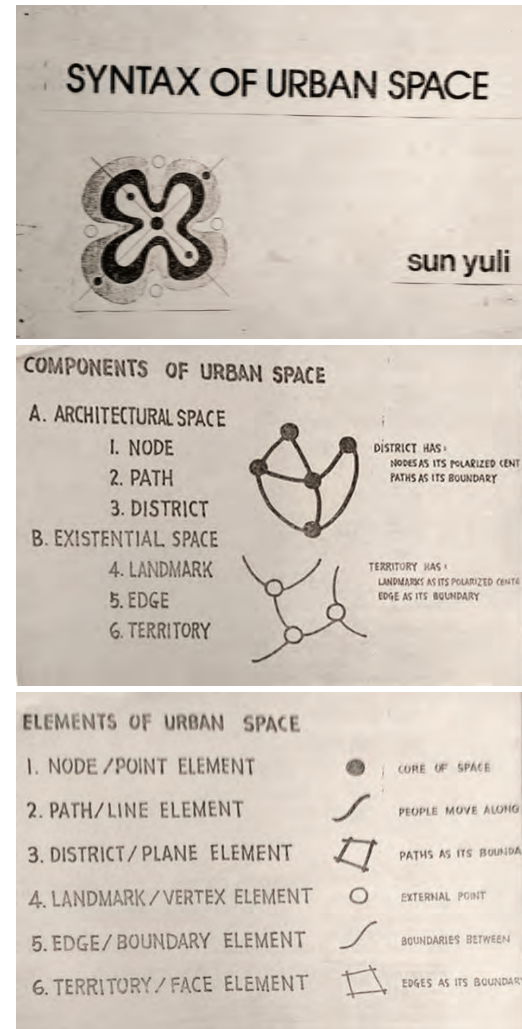
<sup>7</sup> Sun Yu-li, *Syntax of Urban Space*. (Unpublished, 1981).





The manuscript “Topological Organisation of Architectural Spaces” by Professor Jean Cousin, Montreal University which Sun Yu-li found in the library of University of Sydney in 1980.

The second article on the Universal Language (UL), “Syntax of Urban Space”, written by Sun Yu-li in 1981.





Sun Yu-li, *Friends of Soho*, 2007, stainless steel, 420 x 600 x 80 cm, Central Soho, Singapore, commissioned by the Central Mall.

## 1981, Singapore

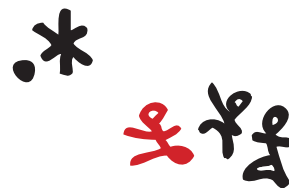
Upon arrival at the newly completed Changi Airport, I was surprised by the stamp on my white arrival card that qualified me for permanent residency. I became a naturalised citizen with my wife in 1987. The Chinese market was beginning to open up in the early eighties so I started a design firm in late 1986 with a staff of five in Singapore and a branch office of ten staff in Beijing. Our business flourished as we were the only foreign design firm in Beijing who could provide design and furnishing services to these foreign companies which were moving into the newly completed buildings, such as the China World Trade Centre.

While I was in Beijing on a work trip in mid May 1989, I was disturbed to see demonstrators demanding for an open society as I was walking along Jianguomenwai Avenue. It was another tiring day of work and I suddenly felt a severe pain in my left chest. Immediately, I knew it was a heart problem. Thankfully, I managed to walk into the lobby of Jianguo Hotel to rest where the pain gradually

receded and I walked back to my hotel. I took a flight back to Taipei at the end of May.

I did a thorough CT scan and discovered a minor blockage in the blood vessel near my heart. While recovering at home, I was shocked to see the live coverage of the 4th June incident at Tiananmen Square on television. No one would have attended to me if I had collapsed in the street that afternoon. My life's quest for the UL will never be fulfilled!

At that moment, I decided to leave the architecture profession. I returned to Beijing in late October and informed my staff that I would fulfill all existing commitments but not accept more projects. I flew back to Singapore and thought deeply about my life's direction. What would I be if I was no longer an architect? Becoming an artist was a natural choice as I could apply the UL concept to create art and in the meantime I could continue my research.











Sun Yu-li, *Alpha Omega*, 2008,  
a pair of stainless steel sculptures,  
420 x 220 x 220 cm each, Keppel Marina,  
Singapore, commissioned by Keppel Marina.  
Depicted here is *Alpha*.







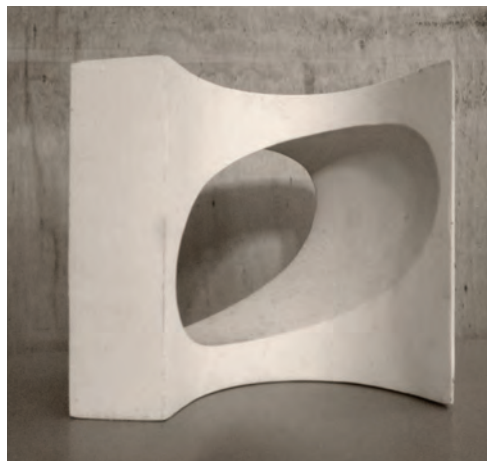
The background is a dark gray surface covered with various white, hand-drawn or painted abstract elements. These include thin vertical and diagonal lines, some ending in small circles. There are larger, more complex shapes like a central circle with a smaller solid circle inside it, and several elongated, leaf-like shapes with internal line details. In the bottom left corner, there is a square frame containing a smaller rectangle. The overall style is minimalist and artistic.

# CHAPTER 4

## DARING TO DREAM

Walking away from an established career as an architect was not an easy decision. My friends and family were perplexed. Instead of working on architectural designs my life took an abrupt turn. Though art could be explained in many ways, I decided to follow closely to the way in which I understood art and that was through my UL. I used the dot, line and plane, principles of the UL and applied it to create two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms. For example, I would wet a stack of cut cardboard, wrap around the dustbin and tie it to achieve a circular shape (above). This process lends my work the characteristics of both carving and sculpting. Though it was an uncertain future, I had chosen the path to be an artist without hesitation.

One of the earlier maquette made in 1989. An oval hole was cut out of each piece of cardboard, stacked together, and wrapped around a dustbin to achieve this curve.



I was fortunate that my background as an architect laid a foundation for my art. Both architecture and art begin from simple ideas before progressing to completion. Both grapple with the existential issues that we face in life and require formal means to realise the attempt. Architecture space captures time and a boundary that can be measured. Architects design a building — a definite meeting place of congregation. Artists, however distill from experience and interactions with others to create a piece of art that encapsulates the emotion.

My childhood friends who were then established sculptors gave me some good advice. Tu Guo Wei, suggested that I complete at least twenty sculptures to boost my portfolio.



This is a maquette  
of *Daring to Dream*  
made in 1996.



Professor Yang's son, Yang Feng Sheng recommended including photos of the sculptures from all angles would improve my presentation. I heeded their advice and began developing more maquette.

I am grateful that in this journey as an artist, I have found people who have believed in my vision and opened doors for me. One of my biggest patrons is an architect whom I met in 1983. Our offices were both on the same floor in the former Shaw House building. I often saw this impeccably dressed young man in the lobby and began chatting with him. I learned that he had just started his career as an architect in this firm. The office building was later torn down by the owner and redeveloped into the present Shaw House. We parted ways and no longer kept in contact.

It was in the early nineties that I became an artist and was looking for ways to sell my first piece of work. I came across an interview in the newspaper which featured the architect I had lost touch with. He was now a developer and said that he would like to have art in all of his developments. After reestablishing contact, I presented my portfolio to him and from that day, he became my biggest patron. One of the sculptures that followed that conversation was *Dancer*, a bronze sculpture with a simple curve that represented the freedom of body and soul. Though asymmetrical, it achieves harmony and rhythm, inviting the passerby to a dance.

### ***Celestial Earth***

In 1998, I was commissioned by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) of Singapore to do a public sculpture that

would be placed at the front entrance of the URA building facing Maxwell Road. I proposed *Celestial Earth*, a sculpture that was developed from the UL. Comprising a solid circle and a hollow square in the centre, it was inspired by the old Chinese saying: heaven is a circle and earth is a square *tian yuan di fang* (天圓地方). *Tian yuan* 天圓 means a big solid circle which symbolises heaven. Its solid nature provides all that is needed for life. *Di fang* 地方 – a square shaped hollow which symbolises earth. During the discussion with URA I was asked for my reason in depicting earth as a hollow. I replied that hollowness is necessary for the phenomenal world to be perceived. The committee nodded in approval.

It was during my work of developing the full sized model using the stacking method that one of the senior staff of URA came to view the progress. She saw me hollowing out the centre of the circle which formed a twirled square that balanced elegantly on one point. Seeing that it could stand as a sculpture on its own, she asked if I could place it on a pedestal to enliven the atrium of the URA. I gladly agreed. As an artist, one of my best work, *Celestial Earth* is standing tall outside the URA centre and is complemented by the other sculpture located in the atrium.





Above: Sun Yu-li, *Celestial Earth*, 1999, bronze, 450 x 450 x 350 cm, URA Centre, Singapore.  
Left: *Celestial Earth Dual*, 1999, fiber glass, 320 x 320 x 160 cm, URA Centre, Singapore.  
Both pieces were commissioned by the Urban Redevelopment Authority.





Sun Yu-li, *Abundance III*, 1995, bronze,  
360 x 360 x 100 cm, Suntec City, Singapore,  
commissioned by Suntec City Development.



### *Abundance III*

One of my better known works is *Abundance III* at Suntec City. I responded to an open call for artworks for the Suntec City development through advertisements placed in international media. The most important piece they were seeking was located at the junction of Temasek Avenue and Raffles Boulevard. The project manager visited me at my studio and invited me to submit my work. I showed him my studio where many maquette were lying around. After explaining the project he left without making any comment. I studied the site and made a proposal. A few months later, I was informed that I was selected. I went to his office to meet for a discussion. I was astounded by the scene I saw. In a modest sized office were a few hundred models. He told me there were nearly 700 submissions from around the world but after seeing the model of *Abundance III* in my studio he felt that it resonated best with the site.

Shaped like a huge cylinder, *Abundance III* overwhelms the passerby, its glorious golden colour contrasts with a patina of blue-green on the exterior surfaces. I had chosen the circle to represent abundance. As the symbol of heaven and infinity, it is the most ideal form that nature has bestowed on man. My choice for the sculpture was bronze, the earliest metal used by ancient civilisations. It is a strong and humble material which is soft, warm, and close to the heart. The shape

“Though Sun Yu-li’s works are rational and orderly, his sentiments are, however, Oriental. Behind the blocks of cold and hard metal lie implied meanings that are soft and tender.”

— **Professor Yu Yu Yang,**  
acclaimed artist and sculptor

is simple yet profound; it is solid looking yet contains a huge void, a blend of the Chinese philosophy of yin and yang.

Today, I am pleased that *Abundance III* is regarded as “probably one of the most popular sculptures in town” according to the website ComeSingapore.com.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps this sculpture fascinates as it seems to change shape as you walk around it. On numerous occasions I have been told that *Abundance III* is a great piece for the site. I am encouraged that my art resonates with the public.

<sup>8</sup>Delia Toh, “The Sculpture Trail,” <http://comesingapore.com/travel-guide/article/554/the-sculpture-trail> (June 2012).

## Friendship

Being a sculptor can be challenging at times due to the different perspectives of various parties. Forbearance is the key.

An incident involving *Friendship*, the largest of a series of six sculptures known as *Land Before Time* commissioned by the Paragon Shopping Centre illustrates this point. *Friendship*, a sculpture of three people holding hands was to be installed in front of the main entrance. Just as the crane was lowering *Friendship*, the project manager exclaimed, “Hold it Mr Sun, it is just too tall!” I replied that we had mutually decided that *Friendship* should stand at 4.6 metres high after several meetings. It was 2 a.m. and all the workers were waiting, while both of us were running to both sides of Orchard Road to view the sculpture from all angles. Finally the project manager insisted that *Friendship* should be 4 meters high to which I reluctantly agreed. It was close to 4 a.m. by the time *Friendship* was installed. I looked at the foot of the figure and realised my signature was nearly touching the ground. It was not very obvious and it was too late to mention anyway. A quote by a famous philosopher came to mind: “Art is all embracing and should have no insistence.”



Sun Yu-li, “Friendship” part of the *Land Before Time* series, 1998, bronze, series of 6 sculptures up to 400 x 600 x 120 cm, Paragon Shopping Centre, Singapore, commissioned by the Paragon Shopping Centre.

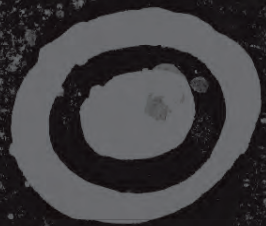








Sun Yuli







# CHAPTER 5

## FINDING MY WINGS

As I reflected on my paintings and sculptures for the past thirty years, I discerned an evolution in my artistic style but underpinning it is still the UL, a metaphysical language that bridges the mathematical language and natural language. It is different from both the mathematical language and natural language but borrows certain properties from each. Similar to the mathematical language, it has few elements and similar to the natural language, it can be apprehended in the real world. In UL, the existence of a syntactically well-formed pattern itself guarantees and specifies the meaning.

In the course of my artistic career, there were three exhibitions that were memorable as they were held in the countries that I loved best. My first solo was held in December 1991 at the National Museum Art Gallery of Singapore. This was followed by my second solo held at the Taipei Fine Art, Taiwan in March 1994. The third exhibition was held in 1996 at the National Art Museum in Beijing, China. I gave a talk at all the three exhibitions and the topic was always the same: the UL and my art.

Sun Yu-li, *Land Before Time* (detail), 2010, correction fluid on paper (below) and pastels on paper (right), 29.7 x 21 cm each, collection of artist.



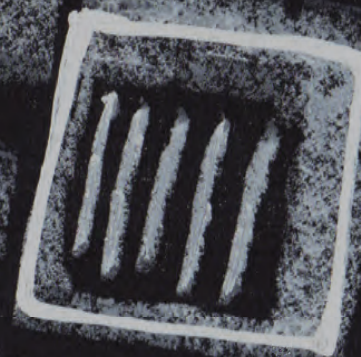
On what grounds did I have the confidence to claim that I had discovered this theory which is fundamental to our existence?

I had a firm belief from the beginning that this theory, if attainable, would not be hidden in a particular knowledge field. Instead, it was present since the beginning of the scientific mindset during the time of Rene Descartes, a French philosopher and mathematician. From here, various knowledge fields grew from the same platform which are based on the same simple rule from nature. It was easy for me to understand.

天作棋盘星作子, 谁下?  
地作琵琶路作弦, 谁弹?  
- 河南古谚



*If the sky is the chessboard, stars the pieces, who moves?  
If earth is the guitar, roads the strings, who strums?  
— An ancient saying from Henan.*



SUN

2012





Sun Yu-li, *Mapping the Universe*, 2003,  
10 x 10 m (comprising 10 pcs of 2 x 5 m),  
enamel paint on canvas, held at Far East Square,  
collection of the artist.







## Collaborate

In 2008 I was commissioned to create *Collaborate*, a sculpture that was 4.5 metres tall and 6 metres wide. It is located in a public park that is situated between the largest and most prestigious commercial complex, the China World Trade Center and the China Central Television Headquarters. It was unveiled during the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

Doing a public sculpture in Beijing was challenging due to its strict public art reviewing procedures. Beijing had virtually no abstract sculptures in public places at that time. However after my submission was reviewed, I was told that the committee members felt they should start introducing abstract sculptures into the Beijing scene. They agreed it was good to commission a foreign artist for an abstract piece in order to assess the public response. It has been five years and *Collaborate* is still well liked by the people. It looks like it will stand in this prominent place in Beijing for a long time.



*Collaborate*, 2008, stainless steel,  
420 x 660 x 420 cm, Beijing, China,  
commissioned by Kerry Centre.





此雕塑仅供观赏  
严禁涂画及攀爬！

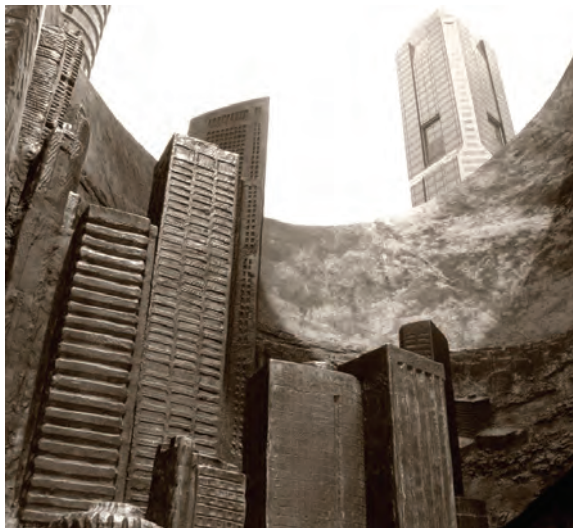








# CHAPTER 6



## THE JOURNEY

### Progress & Advancement

In 1988, Professor Yu Yu Yang received a commission from Overseas Union Bank and requested my expertise regarding the installation of the sculpture. It was made of bronze and was titled *Progress & Advancement* which was to be placed at the north end of Raffles Place in Singapore. The sculpture had arrived a few days earlier and was originally intended to be installed on a solid concrete base. However as there was a train station located below, I had to consider the load bearing capacity of the floor. I changed the design and built formwork, a mould which reinforced concrete could be poured in. The sculpture was successfully installed on 8 August 1988.

Yu Yu Yang, *Progress & Advancement*, 1988, cast bronze, 600 x 380 x 250 cm, Raffles Place, Singapore, commissioned by the Overseas Union Bank.









## *Sculpture Square*

It was by chance that I became the founder of Sculpture Square, an art space that is dedicated to the showcase of sculptures. From the mid-nineties, I worked from my studio at Sophia Road and walked to Middle Road often. Along Middle Road were old shop houses that were torn down one by one, to make way for smaller commercial buildings. Two buildings at the junction of Middle Road and Waterloo Street caught my eye due to its unique architectural features. The building in the corner was a former church building of historic importance. It was vacant and badly run down. While the two storied building was painted in a garish green and yellow and was used as a budget hotel known as Continental Hotel.

In 1995, a notice was put up by the Urban Redevelopment Authority to transform the site into a 7 storied commercial building. With my architect's instinct, I knew it was a great pity for these two historical buildings to be demolished. As a sculptor, I was aware of the scarcity of venues dedicated to the display of three dimensional art. The disused

building with its 9 metre high ceiling and open area that was unblocked by pillars would be ideal for sculpture exhibitions.

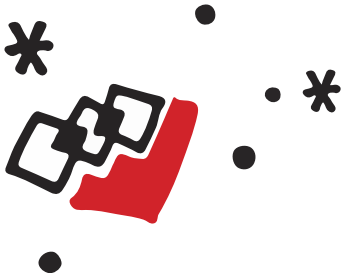
I shared this project with my friend and patron that I mentioned earlier. Both of us had a common interest in art and began to work earnestly on the Sculpture Square project. In 1996, under the National Arts Council (NAC)'s Art Housing scheme, both buildings were set aside for use as the Sculpture Square. We founded Sculpture Square Limited, the non-profit organisation that was established to manage the venue. I was the artistic director and my friend became the first chairman of the Sculpture Square. NAC provided the funds needed for refurbishment and the rest came in from donations from organisations such as the Real Estate Developers' Association of Singapore, the Shaw Foundation and the Lee Foundation. Altogether \$1,600,000 was raised; half of it came from the NAC matching grant. Today, the Sculpture Square runs a vibrant programme which enables emerging and established artists to grow in the realm of 3D art.



The Sculpture Square  
at Middle Road.







Art is a universal language and it is an excellent way of expressing friendship between people and nations. Through a recommendation by the Singapore Art Museum, I was commissioned in 2001 to create a sculpture for the China Singapore-Suzhou Industrial Park (CS-SIP) in Suzhou, China. This joint project was to facilitate trade and exchange of knowledge between both countries. An iconic sculpture would be the icing on the cake to celebrate the warm bilateral relations. I decided to give a fresh interpretation to the Chinese saying *tian yuan di fang* (天圆地方). I stacked one hundred layers of elongated 'H' frames - one hundred symbolising perfection. Once stacked, it would look like the sculpture was two parts entwined around each other in an embrace giving a sense of movement. The 12 metres stainless steel sculpture also looked like two circles symbolising the collaboration and friendship between the two nations.

### *Harmony*

Like the old Chinese coins, they represented 'prosperity' and 'abundance' for the CS-SIP and its tenants. In the upper circle, I designed a small square to encapsulate earth within heaven. It was a balance between the void and solid.

In the summer of 2001, my family and I flew to Boston to visit my daughter who was studying there. During the trip, I received a call from Suzhou, informing me of the unveiling of *Harmony* by Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew and China's Vice-Premier Li Lan Qing, that would take place in three days' time. The organiser requested me to attend the ceremony so that I could explain the significance of the sculpture to the dignitaries. Our original plan was to go on a road trip to New England but after a discussion with my family, both my children felt that my wife and I should not miss this opportunity. We caught the next flight to Shanghai and arrived in time for the unveiling ceremony, where it was arranged for me to stand behind the VIPs.

Sun Yu-li, *Harmony*, 2001, stainless steel,  
1200 x 1000 x 600 cm, Suzhou, China,  
commissioned by China  
Singapore-Suzhou Industrial Park.





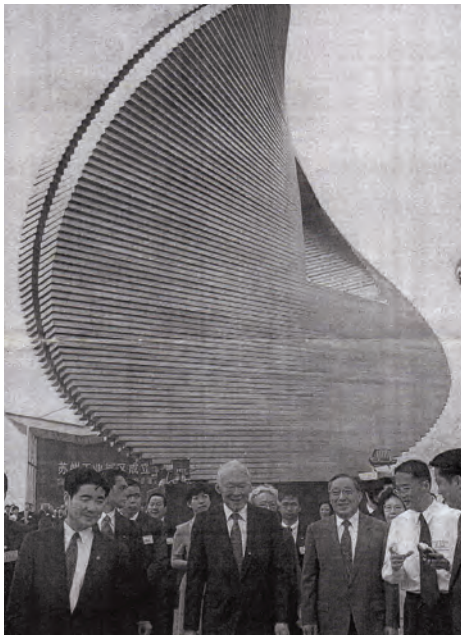


The joint stamp issue by the Chinese and Singapore Postal Authority depicting *Harmony*.

The cameramen rushed in once the veil was dropped. In the excitement, I was pushed forward and found myself standing next to the two statesmen. I quickly introduced myself and explained the meaning of the sculpture in Mandarin. I kept the explanation brief; in concluding I mentioned to Senior Minister Lee that I was proud to be a Singaporean! He looked pleasantly surprised and replied, “Are you really a Singaporean?” It was a valid question that I have been asked for the past twenty seven years. Due to my accented Mandarin it has been difficult for people to believe that I was truly a Singaporean.

*Harmony* is now an iconic sculpture in Suzhou City and was featured on the cover of *System Planning Urban Sculpture* (城市雕塑系统规划) written by Huang Yao Zhi (黄耀志), an authoritative figure on public sculptures. To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Suzhou Industrial Park, both the Chinese and Singapore Postal Authority jointly issued a set of postal stamps featuring *Harmony*. A set of commemorative coins featuring the imprint of *Harmony* was also issued by the Singapore Mint.





Unveiling of *Harmony* at China-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park by Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Vice-Premier of China, Li Lan Qing on 8 June 2001.



The 2004 China-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park 10th Anniversary Commemorative Coin bearing the imprint of *Harmony* was launched by Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and the Ambassador of China, His Excellency Zhang Yun at The Ritz-Carlton, Millennia Singapore.



## *Youth Olympic Park*

In 2006, the famous helix bridge linking Marina Centre with Marina South in the Marina Bay area in Singapore was near completion. There was about 0.4 hectare of land at the end of the bridge at Marina Centre. I was invited to a lunch held on the top floor of URA Centre by the senior executives. They sought my suggestion for the land use from the perspective as a former city planner and practicing artist. I evaluated the land use of Marina Bay, a key destination as a financial hub with a vibrant night life. However I felt it was important not to forget the children, the future hope of the nation. So without hesitation, I suggested a Children's Art Park which could celebrate their creative talents. The suggestion was warmly received.

It took me a year to work with dedicated URA staff to organise a Student Art Competition. Twenty seven works from 136 submissions responding to the theme "Aspirations for Life in Singapore" were selected after the competition closed on 31 March 2006. Each selected student was paired with a Cultural Medallion recipient who mentored the student in refining his or her design. Some of the mentors include the late Anthony Poon, Professor Edwin

Thumboo, Ong Keng Seng and Lee Wen. In the centre was a reverse-cone mountain with a wind-activated figurine of a girl, holding a flag "Hi! I'm here!" At the foot of the mountain were the words "I want to scale the highest mountain in the world". This was done by Joyce Seah from Maha Bodhi School.

Initially, this submission did not attract much attention as it was buried among all the other submissions. I proclaimed that it should be the iconic sculpture and a debate started. I implored the jury members to look at the ring of words at the foot. Besides her statement the young girl had drawn a scale on the side indicating 10,000m, 20,000m; she was certainly very imaginative! Eventually the other jury members were convinced. I suggested that that the height should be 7 to 8 metres to provide a shelter for people to rest under the sculpture. However due to other safety considerations, it was eventually built at 4.5 metres. Just before the construction of the park started, news came that Singapore had won the bid to host the first Youth Olympic Games in 2010. Art depicting sports activities were now included and the Marina Bay Student Art Park was renamed the Youth Olympic Park.



*The iconic sculpture in the  
Youth Olympic Park by Joyce  
Seah from Maha Bodhi School.*







Sun 10 Jul 2013

An abstract geometric pattern in white and light gray on a dark background. The pattern consists of various shapes including triangles, circles, lines, and a fan-like shape with horizontal stripes. A prominent diagonal line runs from the top left towards the bottom right. Other elements include a small triangle with a dot inside, a circle with a dot inside, and a larger circle with a dot inside. A curved line with two dots is also present. A fan-like shape with horizontal stripes is in the top left. A curved shape with vertical stripes is in the bottom right. A curved shape with a grid pattern is in the bottom right. A curved shape with a grid pattern is in the bottom right.

# CHAPTER 7

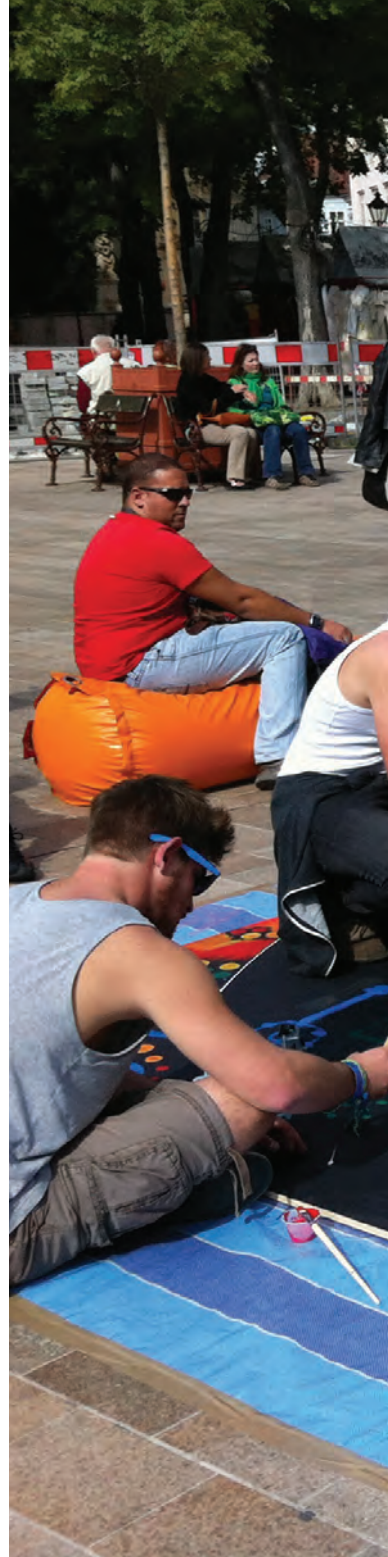


## LOVE · REVOLVE THE WORLD

I realised that art is like life, it is not a sprint but a marathon to be enjoyed. I have read books about art history and movements. I like Giacometti, he is a philosophical artist. I like Miró, he is a poetic artist. I like Cézanne, he is an artist of the soul. The different movements such as Impressionism, Post Impressionism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Surrealism all shared a specific common philosophy or goal which a group of artists would subscribe to. I am humbled by the accomplishment of these great minds in history but admiration alone is not sufficient. Having found the stringing rule, I have completed my quest in search of the Universal Language, the discovery that I believe mankind awaits. How is my discovery relevant to society and how do I move on from here?



Sun Yu-li adding the finishing touch to *Love · Revolve the World*.







Participants painting on the interactive art piece, *Looking For You* in Bratislava in 2012.





Photo Credit: The Old Parliament House Limited.

*Infinite Bond*, a painting by the people of Singapore and Slovakia and presented to the Mayor of Bratislava, on 24th September, 2012 as a symbol of friendship between the two countries. (From left) Artist Sun Yu-Li; Mayor of Bratislava Milan Ftáčnik; Sam Tan, Singapore's Senior Parliamentary Secretary (SPS), Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Ministry of Community, Development, Youth and Sports; Slovak's State Secretary Peter Burian; and Singapore's Non-Resident Ambassador to the Slovak Republic Jennie Chua.

William Blake, an English poet captures this beautifully in *Auguries of Innocence*, arguably his most famous poem — “to see a World in a Grain of Sand and a Heaven in a Wild Flower”. If one has eyes to see the Universe from a grain of sand then scaling this metaphysical world is within reach. I expressed this idea through “Mapping the Universe” a 10 metres by 10 metres canvas which I painted four times. Though it is a large painting, even a small area of the painting is valid as it is part of the realisation of the Universe.

### Spotlight Singapore

In 2012, I was approached by The Arts House to participate in the art and cultural programme of the Spotlight Singapore: Young Entrepreneurs Series in Bratislava & Prague. An initiative to bridge people

through art, culture and businesses, it went beyond a showcase of Singapore's cultural heritage but also provided opportunities for people of different cultures to engage and foster meaningful connections. The theme resonated with me as a person who has lived in several countries. I conceptualised an art project using a large canvas that comprised of a series of small canvases. They were visually connected by a series of painted dots and lines. This was titled *Looking for You* by the organisers and was staged in the public squares of Bratislava and Prague where we invited passers-by to join me as I painted my feelings of the city through my UL. The outcome was a visually stunning painting; through art each individual like a single thread was woven into a tapestry of multi-coloured humanity. I selected three of these collaborative canvases and named them *Infinite Affinity*, *Infinite Bond* and *Togetherness* which were respectively presented to Milan Ftáčnik, Mayor of Bratislava, Dr Pavol Foltin, Deputy Head of the South



From left to right: Dawn Tam, Principal Tan Wai Lan, Sun Yu-li, with teaching staff and students of CHIJ St. Nicholas Girls' School.

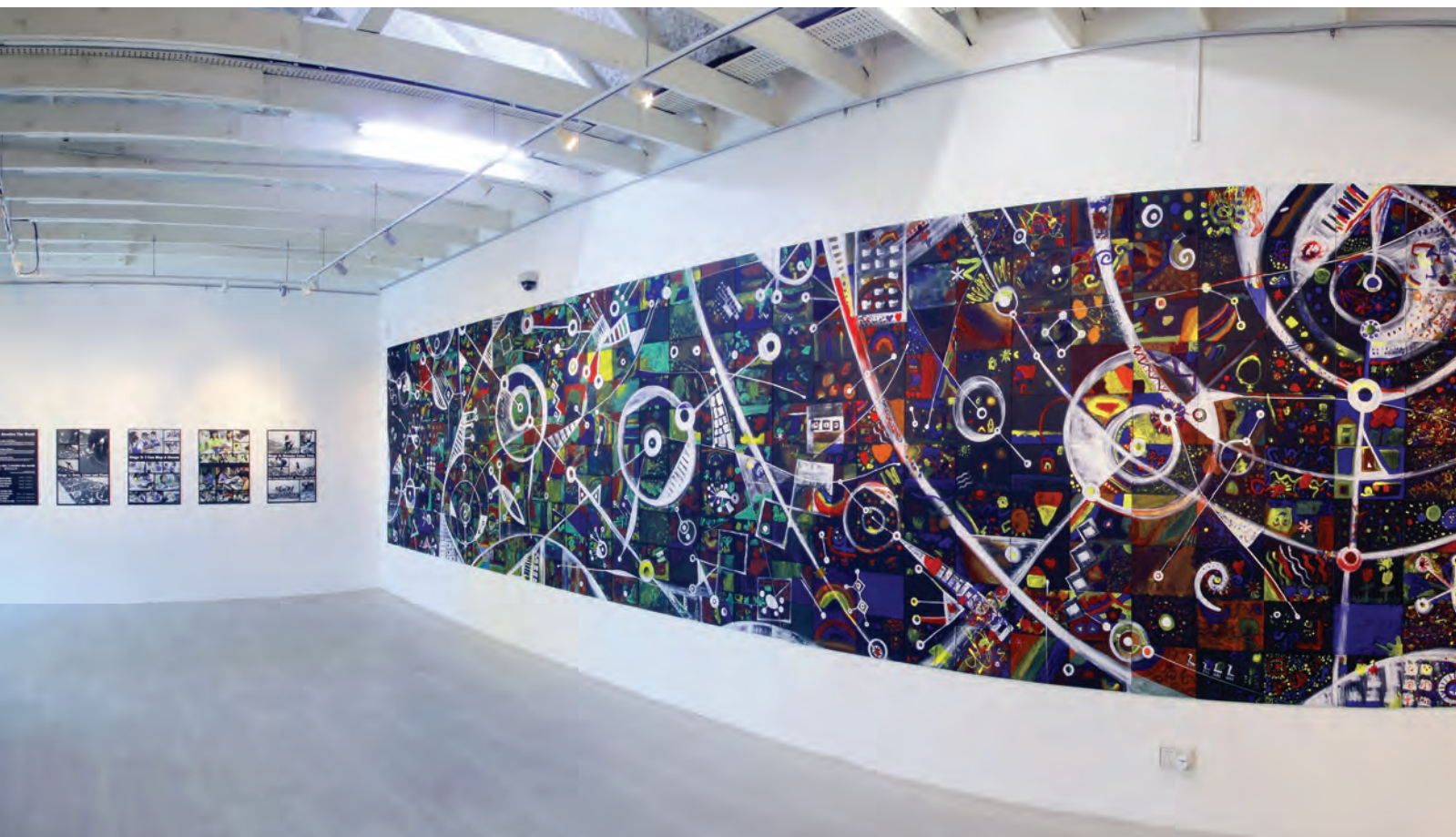
Moravian Region's Foreign Affairs Department, and Tomas Dub, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Czech Republic.

### Love • Revolve The World

The Spotlight programme was also memorable as it was here that I met Dawn Tam, an art educator during our stop in Bratislava who was passionate about art and its power to bridge people of all walks of life. She subsequently invited me to partner her on a project called *Love • Revolve The World*, a joint effort between 750 children and myself. Using only white paint, I painted the basic forms of the dot, line, plane — fundamental elements in building the universe on the 750 black canvases.

After which the children added their creation in different coloured paints on these canvases while listening to “Give me a Dot, I Revolve the World”, a song about the UL which I had lyricised. The music created the mood and encouraged creative expression. Its melody was inspired by a Russian folk song, a legacy of my foster grandmother's influence. These pieces were collected and touched up with white paint before they were assembled and displayed at the Singapore Art Museum as part of the Art Garden exhibition in 2013. It was a pleasant treat for the young participants of the project to see their art being featured in the museum and for me, I am glad to have so many talented artists join me on the UL Movement.



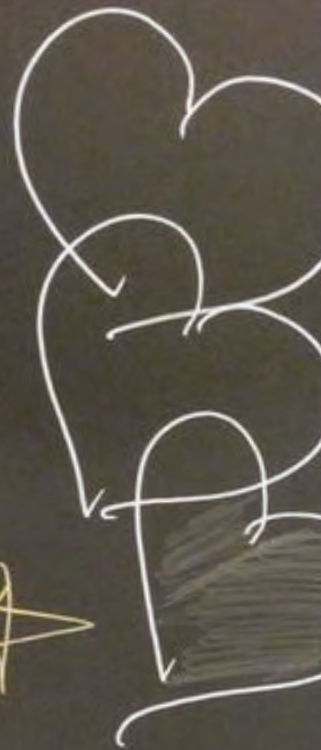




*Love • Revolve the World* (2013), two collaborative murals measuring 18.28 x 2.28 m and 4.57 x 2.28 m were showcased at the Art Garden 2013 exhibition held at the Singapore Art Museum.



\*\*\*  
 Amazing Art & Amazing  
 Concept. I ♥ the idea &  
 the final artworks just left  
 me with a real feel-good  
 feeling. Art connects the world  
 indeed! - Senena  
 Singapore



"The universe appreciates  
 those that take time  
 to notice it.  
 Be conscious of the universe  
 and it shall be conscious  
 of you. and it shall protect  
 you."  
 There is a kind of beauty in  
 geometry shapes.  
 Madly in love with  
 the arts. I love ♥ Culture!  
 S.A.M.  
 continue to  
 bring in good art  
 for Singapore please! :)  
 Regards, Emily.T. :))

We  
 are  
 interested  
 Great job



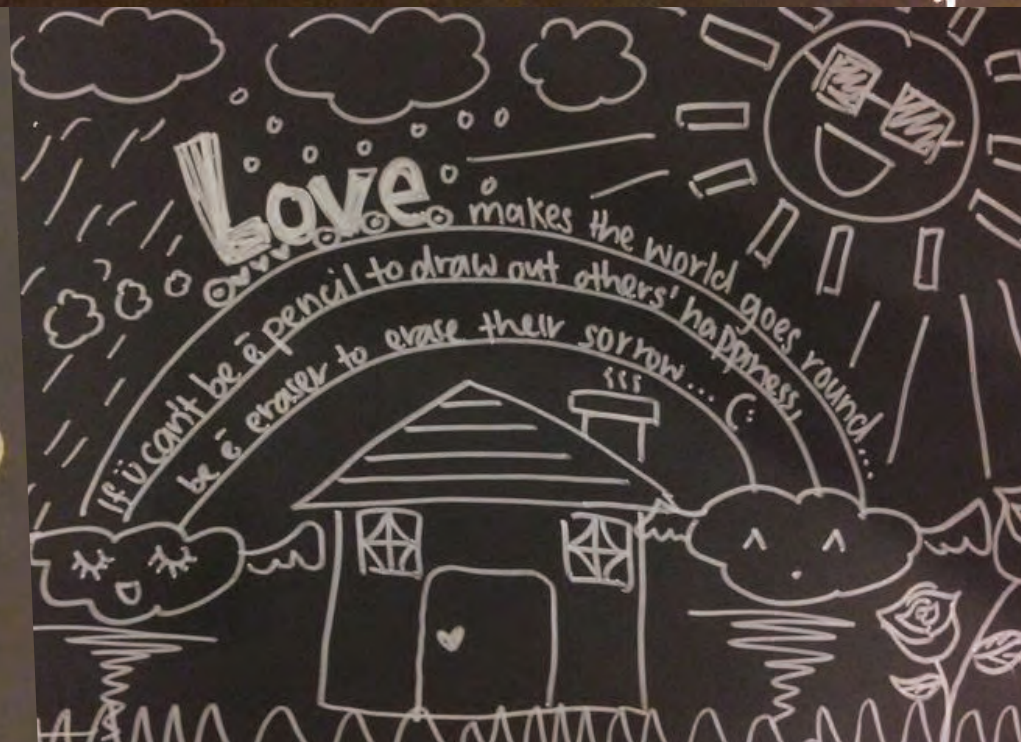
A World  
Filled with Simplicity

Love ☺

may be  
heavily  
happy

B. x  
12/5/13

That  
are  
world &  
connected





# ACCOLADES

“Yu-li’s art bridges differences, is layered with a level of sophistication but executed with simplicity and grace. We searched and wanted an artist that would exemplify the diverse culture of Singapore and yet be able to speak to everyone. His Universal language was the perfect fit for cities like Prague and Bratislava.

I have known Yu-li for over 15 years but every time there is an interaction, it only further deepens my admiration of his conviction and deep philosophy to life. He never demands but always gives beyond expectation. In Prague, where despite being very ill, he focused on what he thought was the right thing to do, that was to do his art proud for Singapore and for the people but never for himself.

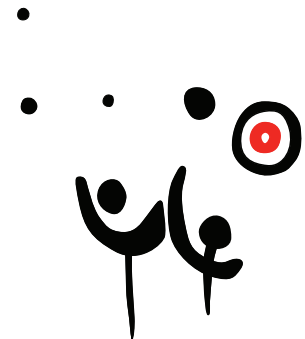
Yu-li’s Universal Language in his art form resonates with anyone and everyone! It bridges all cultures, brings diverse communities together and focuses differences into a single “dot”. There is no inhibition in his art except the desire to come close and experience the notion of being different and yet the same. This subtle and genteel art form has brought many together in both Prague and Bratislava - a testament that there is a Universal language that bridges all into one.”

— **Mr Colin Goh,**  
*CEO of The Old Parliament House Limited*

“This project is really interesting and refreshing. It allowed us as novices to work with a great artist.

There is a great sense of achievement when we see how our little part fits together with the rest to form a beautiful art piece. The pupils who were involved also had an enriching time. They got the chance to express themselves freely and contribute to a larger whole. Their collective art work is now proudly displayed in the school. Everyone involved feels proud to have been a part of this artistic process. Thank you for the opportunity!”

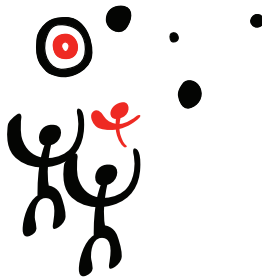
— **Mrs Tan Wai Lan,**  
*Principal of CHIJ St. Nicholas Girls’ School*



“Each dot on its own is just a little opaque circle. Each line on its own is perhaps a composite of many dots.

But when dots and lines connect, we see possibilities; many and perhaps infinite number of possibilities. Each piece of art by a child represents hope, a dream, an imagination, an expression of emotions. When the individual pieces of art are weaved together, we see a vision of innovation and dreams. Let them grow; help them blossom for the children of today will build the world of tomorrow. Thank you for the insight!”

— **Mr Chua Choon Hock,**  
*Principal of Greenridge Primary School*



“Sun’s art left an impression on me at first sight. Long ago, say about 15 years or more, when my daughter Tammy was still a preschooler, we chanced upon the “pipe” sculpture in front of Suntec city.

Tammy was curious about the sculpture as it gave the illusion of flatness. Cool was just the word to describe this sculpture. We took pictures with it and without knowing who the creator was. Years later, as I was going down the escalator I chanced upon *Cosmic Dance*, a mosaic piece at the Dhoby Ghaut train station. It was sleek with a contemporary touch. In September 2012, I met the man behind the art, at Bratislava during the Spotlight Singapore event. I was so excited to meet the great mind behind the art pieces that had stopped me in my path so many years ago. He came across as someone gentle and humble yet his art speaks louder than him. I was convinced of the appeal of his universal language when I witnessed the people in Europe coming forward readily to participate in the art making in the public square. I understood that art was the universal language that spans across all ages, races, language, cultural and nations. We have joined together with Mr. Sun in many collaborative art events with the community from all ages and all walks of life, connecting and communicating through arts!”

— **Ms Dawn Tam,**  
*Artistic Director, ArtBeatz Pte Ltd*



# CONNECTING THE WORLD THROUGH ART



Sun Yu-li and Dawn Tam with the paintings of *Love • Revolve the World* (2013) at Art Garden exhibition, Singapore Art Museum.





*Looking For You* presented in  
Spotlight Singapore: Young  
Entrepreneurs Series in the  
city square of Bratislava &  
Prague in 2012.







A detail of the collaborative mural  
*Love • Revolve the World*. This angel  
was painted by a four year old child.











Sun Yu-li with students from CHIJ St. Nicholas Girls' School, Greenridge Primary School and My First Skool who participated in the Love · Revolve the World project in 2013.



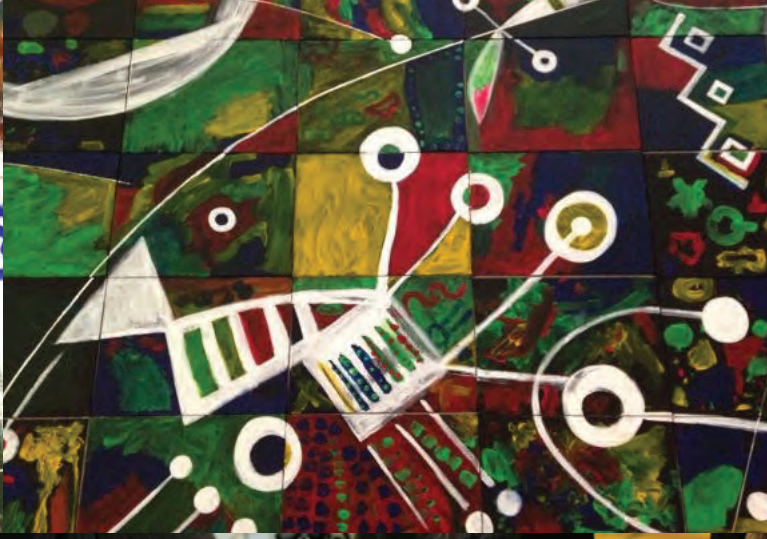




Sun Yu-li with students from CHIJ St. Nicholas Girls' School, Greenridge Primary School and My First Skool who participated in the Love·Revolve the World project in 2013.









# GIVE ME A DOT, I REVOLVE THE WORLD

Give me a dot, I can draw a line  
With this line, I can draw a plane  
Dot, line and the plane  
I can map a dream  
Dreams come true  
I revolve the world

May there always be sunshine  
May there always be blue skies  
May there always be happiness  
May there always be me

*Lyrics by Sun Yu-li*  
*Music by Shaw Wong Shi Haw*  
*Music produced by Alicia Tang, PrataRecord*

*The song can be listened on [www.iqkidz.com.sg](http://www.iqkidz.com.sg)*











Scan the QR code to view our  
students' responses to the song  
written by Sun Yu-li.

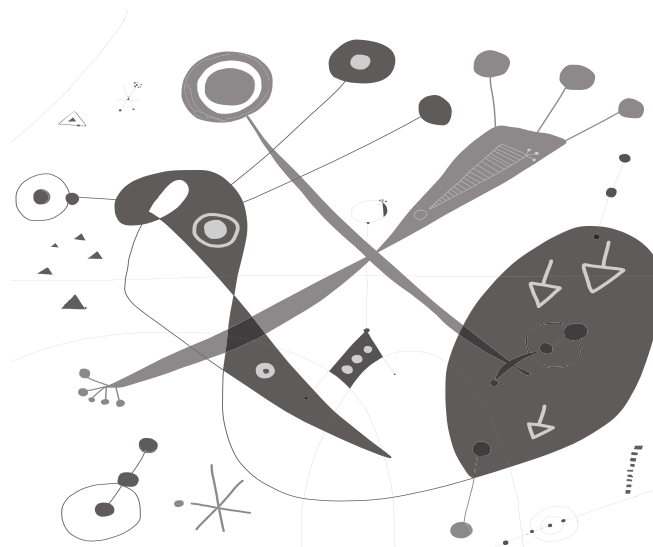
# AN INVITATION

*To Participate in an Online Interactive Art Collaboration*

Love • Revolve the World goes online.

First staged at the Singapore Art Museum as a mural jointly created by 750 children and Sun Yu-li, we have taken the Universal Language movement to the digital sphere. With the dot, line and plane, express your feelings through art and share it with the world.

Visit [www.artbeatz.com.sg](http://www.artbeatz.com.sg) to participate.





The Principals and teaching staff of the following branches of My First Skool.

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Xarius Tan

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Zhuang Kaili  
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Huang Qizhe  
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Jacinta Lim  
Zelene Bai Ye Ling  
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Ikson Siah  
Eva Anne Joseph  
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Natalie Chuang Shi En  
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Jazmyn Wong Hsin Cen  
Tia Bang Yi Travis  
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Wong Qi En  
Li Xinlei  
Edricia Joy Sim  
Er Jun Xian Nicholas  
Jiao Xinyan  
Nur Nazaha Binte Mohammad  
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Ong Yan Ling  
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Arradana d/o Raja  
Sharvin Santosh  
Quek Ming Xuan Jayden  
P.Rishikeshav  
Yit Teng  
Chai Xuan Yi, Trisha  
Cherish Chong  
Shermaine Mak  
Fan Jun Yan  
Nur Dini Batrisyia

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Tok Lee Feng  
Teo Xavier  
Abigail Cate Matthew  
Lauren Anne Lim  
Sarah Michelle Lim  
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Isaac Yeo Jae En

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Chloe Kan  
Seng En Le  
Loh Zhi Xuan Gerald  
Jaydon Koh En Kai  
Javier Kan

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Marissa Eshlyn Bte Muhd Sazalie  
Adine Cai Jingyi

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Lee Jonas  
Joseph Kam Siong Yi  
Emma Chng Zi Xing  
Ethan Chua Boon Kang  
Claire Tee  
Lucas Meejaroen  
Chow Si Min Corrine  
Yasmin Cheng  
Mathias Chong Tzeng  
Tan Yi Yan Haylee  
Teo Wei En Natalie  
Chan Jun Lin  
Wang Hong En  
Aniq Danish Bin Mohamad Jeffrey  
Nuryan Maira Binte Huzaimi  
Daven Cham

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Sara Xu Mu Yin  
Mah Ming Xi  
Joy Loo  
Bernice Er  
Reann Phua  
Sim Yan Tong  
Daniel Tang  
Jonas Tan  
Genecia Tan  
Peh Kang Chen

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Ryan Foo Jun Hao  
Crystal Oh Jia Hui  
Zack Teo Heng Bin  
Kok Zhi Han  
Travis Tan

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Toa Payoh**

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Ang Yong Le  
Tiffany Lim Xuan Yin  
Clare Fransisca Saputra  
Kya Chan  
Juel Chan  
Xavier Sng  
Gwen Lim Yi En  
Jenelle Phua  
Mathew Wee  
Timothy Wee  
Ong Xin Yan  
Jayden Ong  
Teo Yi Xin  
Faith Wong  
Wanyu Hannah  
Ong Fang Wen  
Kaede Koh  
Kayla Koh  
Xavier Lim  
Maxilus Chay Chong Ee  
Davien Sun  
Chen Guo  
Zac Luo  
Shayann Heng  
Mah Chen Jun

**My First Skool @  
Compassvale 1**

Trina Tan Wei En  
Koh Wai Ning

**My First Skool @  
Clementi 3**

Shen Jia Rui  
Xendaz Kang  
Eve Lim

**My First Skool @  
Bishan 153**

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Phua Kuan Ying Mega  
Sim Jing Xuan  
Raphael Than Tiang Yu  
Li Zhou Xi  
Leenashri D/O Shashi Kum  
Gabriella Ng Zheng Ki  
Chan Yi Sing  
Chole Yong Xin Hui  
Abishree Rajendra  
Ang Shiqi  
Boon Kye Teck  
Charlotte Yong Xin Yu  
Ela Sandilyan  
Foong Yun QI  
Kayden Chee  
Mohammad Yafi' Farieql Bin Mohammad Yazid  
Nur Izzati Binte Muhammad  
Nur Alyssa Ayumi Binte Mohammad Khairul Rezq  
Oh Rui EN Giselle  
Shirely Tng Jielin  
Teo Kai kng Elyssia  
Zheng Zherui Zachary

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Compassvale 2**

Pang Shi Ya Valerie  
Teng Jia Ler Lucas  
Albert Lim  
Sim Yu Tong Leanne  
Brandon Lim  
Tang Jie Cong  
Chin Ee Kai  
Feng Xiao Tong  
Goh Ling Li  
Adnan Bin Mohammad  
Rayson Tan Yi Long  
Audrey Tay  
Chah Ying Xuan  
Ng Zhi Hao Cayden  
Tristan Low Kai Yuan

**My First Skool @  
Ang Mo Kio 7**

Xavier Ong Hao Min  
Low En Zi  
Asher Tan Xuan Zhi

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Megan Pang Rui Eun  
Chee Jia Jing Alicia  
Hailey Tan Ying Shan  
Joelle Hann  
Tanya Dubey  
Jaymas Chng Kai Jie  
Chan Pei Ling  
Chang Ching En  
Gavril Koh Zhe Bin  
Lee Kai En  
Lee Kai Qi  
Leow Junxi  
Siddharth Nair  
Wang Yu Heng  
Lin YiTong  
Yong Xi Shan  
Zyon Chng  
Hector Tan De Jun  
Luis Yee  
Tricia Han  
Adam Bin Mohammad  
Ang Hui Min  
Neo Shun Yao  
Ng Ming Zhe  
Rachel Lim  
Siti Adrieanna  
Vera Chng  
Zhou Shu Lei  
Charmaine Toh  
Charlene Toh  
Aisy Irfan Bin Mohd Amran

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Javier Lim Zhan Feng  
Shernice Low Hui En  
Jayden Yeo Zhen Xiang

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Syarifah Dina Qistina Binte Syed Akbar  
Kirthana Ravishankar  
Ooi Yi Feng

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Kaylea Tan  
Dhaniya Umaira Binte Moha  
Hee Run Hao  
Ng Xin Rui Doralyn  
Tng Khai Chun Terence  
Tan Yu Da Joel

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Abdul Masyhur Deo Bin Dzulkarnaen  
Alexander Kunalan  
Anne  
Charles Yap  
David Wong Hong Ming  
Deborah Wong Shyi Rei  
Elisha Kunalan  
Ernest Yap  
Jerrell Tan  
John Mui  
Kenneth Yap  
Matthew Kunalan  
Rachael Tan  
Rhianna Kunalan  
Shaunn Mui  
Zachary Kunalan  
Tham Shi Jie Travis  
Tham Le Si Tricia

### Greenridge Primary School

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Chew Thong Xuan  
Chong Shun Zhi  
Illya Natrisya Binte Azlee  
Ow Kai Xin Emily  
Sher Ying  
Chong Qiao Li  
Jeralyn Zhou Jiamin  
Teresa Teo Yan Yu  
Desiree Lim Yi Xuan  
Faithe Odelia De Souza  
Aw Kai Xuan  
Koh Chin Teck  
Nurfarisya Husna Binte Syakhir  
Tay Tghee Hiang  
Wong Jun Wei  
Tay Tghee Hiang  
Aliyyah Nabilah Binte Azman  
Jessie Tan  
Nur Syakirah Binti Suhaimi  
Hong Wenqi  
Kang Luo Qi Benecia  
Patran Irina Elena  
Aiman Syafiq Bin Ghazali  
Li Yongjie  
Tan Yynn Shyan  
Fateen Waheedah Binte Abdul Rashid  
Fateen Wardina Binte Abdul Rashid  
Goh Quan Feng  
Lim Pei Yao  
Lim Zhi Qi  
Natasha Loo Si Qi  
Denisse Kong Sao Yue  
Tan Rui Shi  
Huang Yi  
Tan Yu Xuan  
Victoria Lee Xuan

Eng Si Ning Sharie  
Koh Ensheng  
Ang Xin Ning Serene  
Carey Lim Shin Yi  
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Ho Xuan Ying, Evelyn  
Jandinero Tierney Ramos  
Patience Ezra Mossadeg  
Soh Kah Hong  
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Chen Jing Fei  
Chua Yi En  
Goh Ee Xian  
Cheng Yu En Joseph  
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Raye Yap  
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Lim Li Wen Jolene  
Tay Yi Lin  
Chin Jing Wen Clara  
Ho Si En, Chloe  
Sim Jia Qi  
Janice Ong Hui Xin  
Joyce Lim Li Jun  
Cheah Le Qian  
Goh Jia Yi Shannon  
Koh Yat Soon  
Nur Rasyidah Bte Suhaimi  
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Koh Tze Pin Gabriel  
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Renzo Eng  
Chen Luyao  
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Eugene Ang Wei Kiat  
Tay Ching Nee, Venice  
Megan Bong Wei Ling  
Teo Kai Xuan  
Woon Wee Wern  
Hyun Jun Ho  
Mo Jin Yao  
Lum Boon Jun



Sun Yu-li, *Peace of Art* (detail), 2009, acrylic on board, 6 x 6 m, Emily Hill, Singapore. This collaborative mural was painted by 300 children aged 3 to 15 years old and was organised by Camilla Hall in conjunction with the Copenhagen World Weather Summit.









## CHIJ St. Nicholas Girls' School

The Principal and teaching staff of CHIJ St. Nicholas Girls' School.

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Guinevere Chan  
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Lo Kit Yeng  
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Amber Wan  
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Axelle Koo Xi  
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Caroline Chuwa  
Chloe Gabrielle Tan  
Bernice Lee  
Tan Wei Tian  
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Thea Tay  
Zoe Leong Zhi Yi  
Vivienne Loh  
Wang Yuqing  
Kristen E Tan  
Adelyn Tay

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Caitlin Tan  
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Sheryl Ong  
Cladise Tan  
Tania Ho  
Chan Shin Jen  
Emma Low  
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Thio Xin Yu  
Hayley Foong  
Celeste Anne Lim  
Eunice Lim  
Tan Li Si  
Talia Ann Chung  
Arianne Nathem  
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Elyssa Koh  
Wang Zhizhen  
Chloe Lim En Jia  
Jamie Leong  
Vivienne Loh  
Sheyenne Ong  
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Zoe Leong  
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Stella Wong  
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Charmaine Tam  
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Chang Shi Nuo  
Kathleen Tung  
Helena Grace Ding  
Tasha Lim  
Valerie Seow  
Goh Qjun Hjan  
Charmaine Goh  
Raeanne Tan

Caitlin Tan  
Ching Yannie  
Chloe Tay  
Christabelle Sng  
Tan Juan Faye  
Audrey Lim  
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Calyss Ng  
Sarah Phua  
Jodi Choo  
Aretha Wan  
Elyssa Koh  
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Juanita Tan  
Nicole Kok  
Joan Chan  
Regine Ong  
Andrea Shee  
Jeanelle Wong  
Colette Hu  
Elyssa Koh  
Hamnah Ali  
How Kiah Mui  
Wong Min Xi  
Tan Guan Feng  
Yeo Yu Xi  
Charmaine Yeo  
Glenda Gan  
Cheang Hui Xin  
Seah Jing En  
Wei Lai  
Caitlin Tan  
Goh Qjun Hjan  
Charmine Goh  
Ching Yannie  
Nicole Lim  
Eilyx Lim  
Charlym Ng  
Sng Hwee Wan  
Joan Chan  
Andrea Shee  
Eunice Lim  
Charlotte Ngong  
Natanya Lye  
Shirlyan Koh  
Meagan Oh  
Christal Low  
Crystal Wong  
Celeste Goh  
Chloe Li Ann  
Ashley Sia  
Amber Wan

Christine Yeow  
Victoria Fox  
Elenor Tan  
Evangel Tan  
Alina Wan  
Laura Lim  
Seah Jing En  
Wei Lai  
Joelle Sim  
Giselle Cho  
Grace Wee  
Ang You Jia  
Asha  
Jerusha Sung  
Lim Wan Yi  
Lee Yi Shyan  
Sarah Lim  
Lauren Sim  
Nicole Tham  
Leanne Lee Xinyi  
Jadyn Tee  
Zhan Kaiting  
Erin Lin  
Megan Sim  
Charmaine Yeo  
Angil Chin  
Lee Jin Yan  
Vivien Koh  
Rebekkah Wi  
Teo Yu Xuan  
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Samantha Chow  
Amber Wan  
Chew Myn  
Angeline Lim  
Tang Reiyan  
Faith Tan  
Sophie Chan  
Axelle Koo Xi  
Wong Zhi Ning  
Caroline Chuwa  
Chloe Gabrielle Tan  
Bernice Lee  
Tan Wei Tian  
Kho Soong Ying  
Mikayla Chui  
Nicole Lim  
Thea Tay  
Zoe Leong Zhi Yi  
Vivienne Loh  
Wang Yuqing  
Kristen E Tan  
Adelyn Tay

Chan Lu Wen  
Caitlin Tan  
Clara Tan  
Sheryl Ong  
Cladise Tan  
Tania Ho  
Chan Shin Jen  
Emma Low  
Joan Chan  
Thio Xin Yu  
Hayley Foong  
Celeste Anne Lim  
Eunice Lim  
Tan Li Si  
Talia Ann Chung  
Arianne Nathem  
Jeanelle Wong  
Elyssa Koh  
Wang Zhizhen  
Chloe Lim En Jia  
Jamie Leong  
Vivienne Loh  
Sheyenne Ong  
Megan Neo  
Chelsea Yeo  
Zoe Leong  
Lin Kehong  
Hio Hui Lin  
Aeryn Jaime Tay  
Megan Au  
Nicolette Ang  
Stella Wong  
Natalie Chua  
Emelia Boon  
Heidi Ho  
Charmaine Tam  
Phobe Choong  
Chloe Lim  
Shannon Tan / Natani

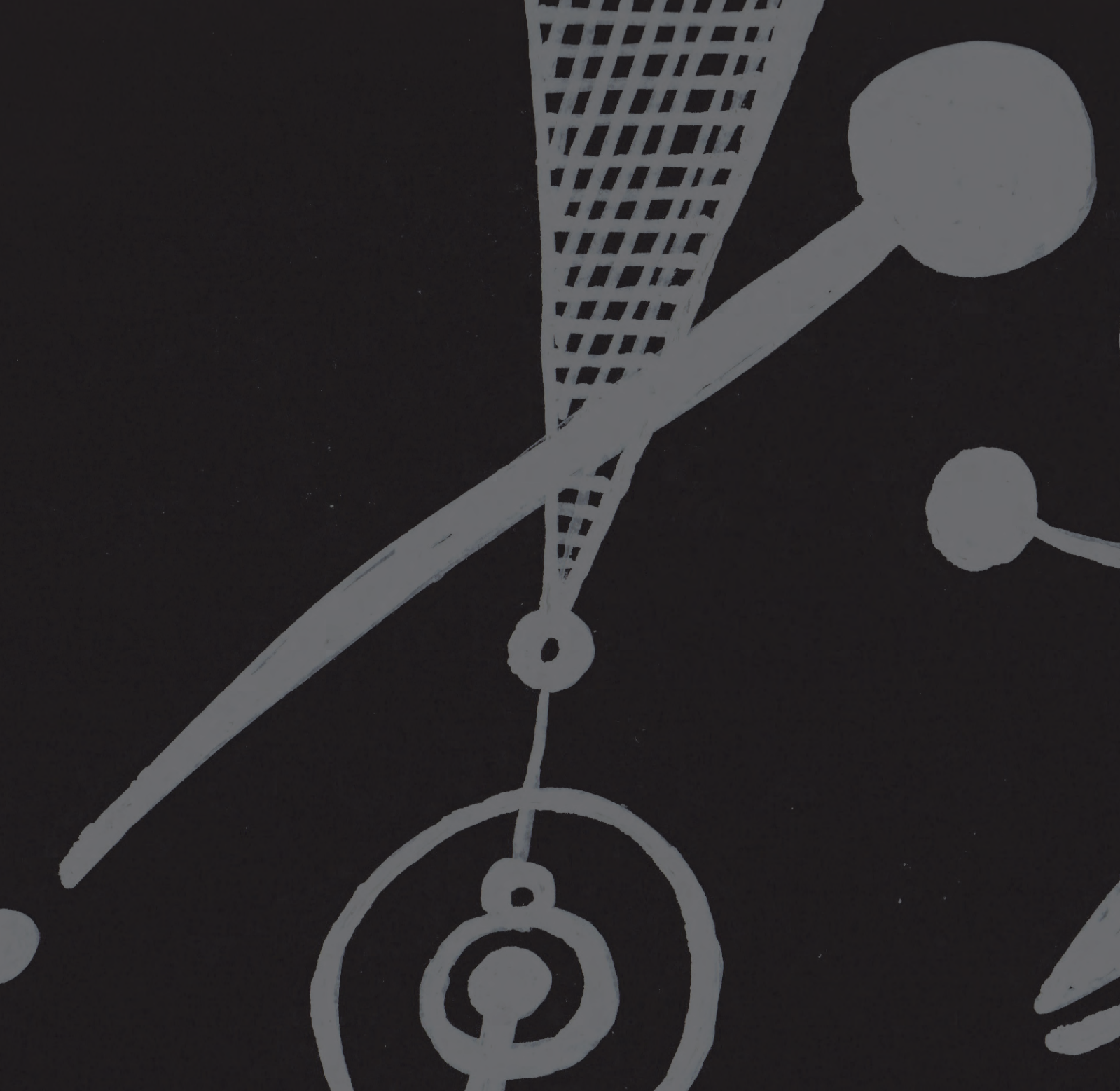




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**BE A LITTLE  
SCULPTOR**



# BE A LITTLE SCULPTOR

*In this section you will learn to create a sculpture just like artist Sun Yu-li who uses the method of the dot, line and plane twisted into volume to create his art.*

*Dot refers to the hole that will be drilled into the middle of the material; the line is the centre axis which is the point on which the sculpture will rotate on. The plane is the flat surface of the material to build the sculpture. Once the pieces are stacked together they will create volume.*

*You will need several materials which can be purchased at your local craft store.*

# WHAT YOU NEED

## *Part 1: For making the wooden base:*

Newspaper  
 threaded metal rod (50 cm length and 10mm diameter)  
 plywood base 60 cm (length) x 40cm (width) x 12mm (thickness)  
 electric drill  
 2 bolts

Pencil  
 Measuring tape  
 Ruler  
 Scissors  
 Tape  
 Craft glue  
 Paintbrush

- 
- 1) Prepare your work area by laying newspaper on the floor.
  - 2) Measure a hole in the middle of the plywood base.
  - 3) Mark the spot with an “x” and use a metal drill to drill a hole into the wood.
  - 4) Place the bolt at the hole and insert the metal rod into the bolt. Tighten the bolt.
  - 5) Place the other bolt at the top of the metal rod and tighten once more.
  - 6) Ensure that the rod is firmly secured into the base..

*(!) **Advice to Parents:** Some parts of making this sculpture may be tricky for younger children and you may need to guide your child with preparation of the wooden base.*



# BE A LITTLE SCULPTOR

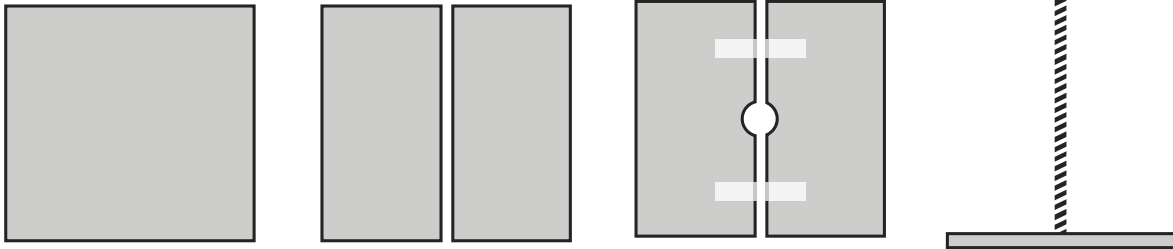
## Part 2: For making the sculpture

### Materials:

24 polystyrene foam sheets

30cm (length) x 30cm (width) x 20mm (thickness)

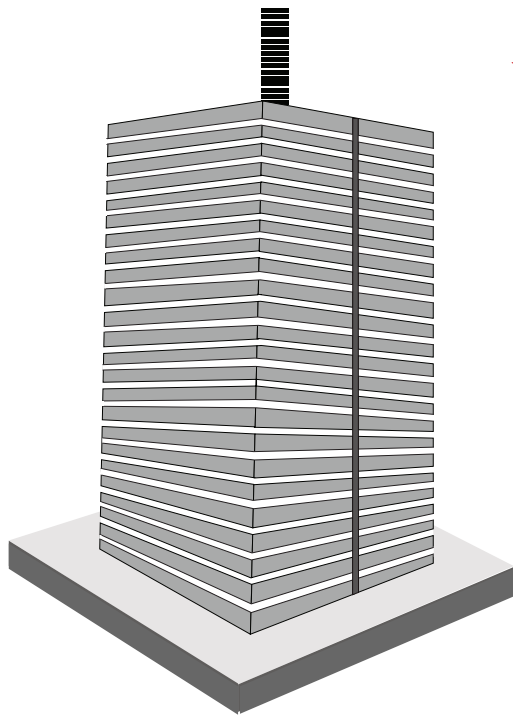
Readymade plaster



### STEP 1: PREPARATION

- 1) Lay one piece of foam sheet flat and using the pencil and the measuring tape draw a line across the middle of the foam sheet.
- 2) Make a mark in the middle, 15cm from the edge.
- 3) Repeat steps 1 and 2 for all the remaining sheets.
- 4) Cut a hole of diameter 12mm through each of the 24 sheets.
- 5) Cut the 24 sheets into two equal parts.
- 6) Paste two pieces of tape at the top and bottom of the sheet to secure both pieces of foam sheets.

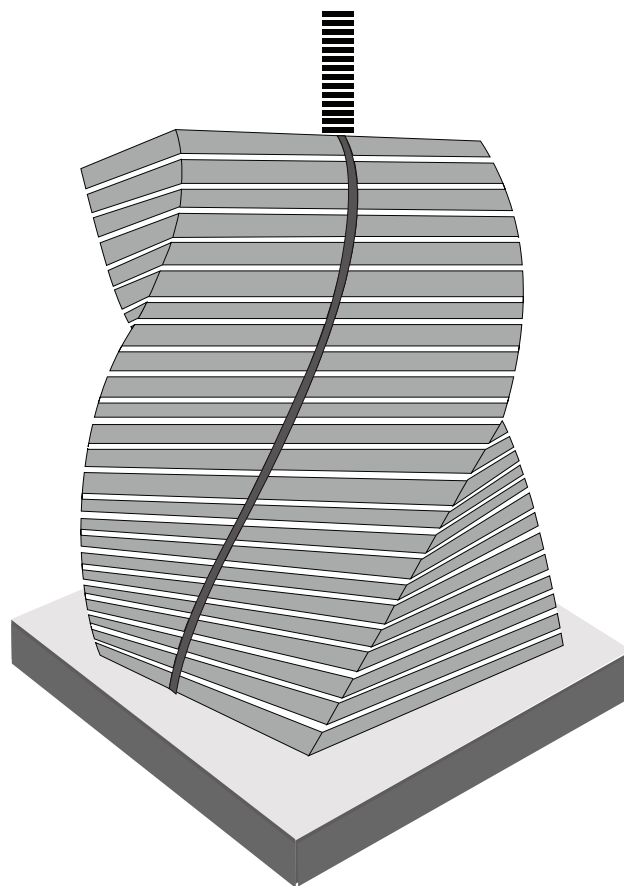




## ◀ STEP 2: STACKING UP

Now is time to bring our sculpture to life. A single polysterene foam sheet is light-weight and can be easily broken. However, when it is combined with several pieces of foam sheets it becomes a sturdy sculpture.

- 1) Gather the foams sheets and place it through the rod.
- 2) Do this gently and piece by piece so that you do not damage any foam sheet in the process.
- 3) Once completed it should look like this.



## STEP 3: TWISTING INTO FORM ▶

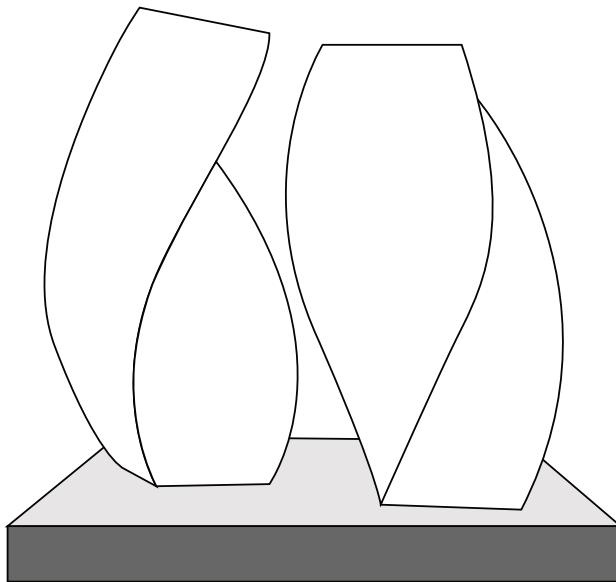
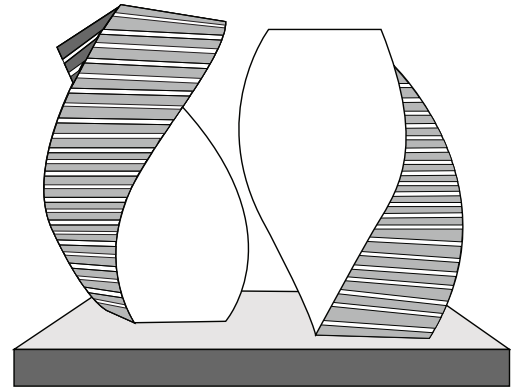
Step 1 and 2 require the precise placement of the materials and step 3 is where we express our feelings into the sculpture by twisting it to the desired shape. Together, the process is a harmonious whole.

Twist the foam sheets into the shape on the right by turning each piece at a constant speed.



#### STEP 4: SPLITTING INTO 2 ► COMPLEMENTARY SHAPES

- 1) Apply white glue to the entire surface of the foam sheets and allow the glue to dry completely.
- 2) Separate the two stacks of foam sheets by pulling it away from each other but keeping it within the wooden base.
- 3) Remove the tape between each piece of foam sheet.
- 4) Unscrew the metal rod by removing the bolts at the top and bottom.
- 5) Voila! Now you have 2 complementary sculptures.



#### ◀ STEP 5: COMPLETION

Your sculpture is almost ready. Before we finish we need to make a strong base. Plaster of Paris is one of the materials which artists use to make a maquette or a mini sculpture as it is strong and sturdy. In our project, we will use plaster to cover the hole made by the metal rod.

- 1) Using the paint brush, apply plaster to the entire surface of the wooden base and cover the hole made by the metal rod.
- 2) Glue both of the sculptures to the base.
- 3) Congratulations! You have made your very own sculpture. Now is time to make a plaque for the sculpture where you can write your name and the name that you have chosen for your sculpture.
- 4) Now you can use the *from a dot* notebook to jot down a few names for the sculpture.

## For Future Projects

- 1) Try using other shapes of foam sheets: round, rectangular or even free form which will give you different angles.
- 2) Experiment with different positions for the centre axis such as tilting it to the side. Your sculpture will be slanted at a different angle.

You can see that there are infinite possibilities in Sun Yu-li's world of the dot, line and plane.



*The sculpture above was developed from a maquette using the preceding steps from pages 107-110 and was sent to the factory to be fabricated.*



## BEHIND THE SCENES OF COLLABORATE

You are now a little sculptor and perhaps you may have dreams to become an artist one day like artist Sun Yu-li. In the following pictures, Sun Yu-li gives us a glimpse behind the creation of the iconic sculpture, *Collaborate* which now stands in Beijing, China.



A rendering of *Collaborate* at Kerry Centre in Beijing, China allows for visualisation of the sculpture to its environment.



The realisation of *Collaborate* into a maquette made of stainless steel of height 30 cm.

At the factory, Sun Yu-li inspects *Collaborate*.



The supporting structure inside *Collaborate*.



*Collaborate* being installed at the site with the background wall featuring the five Olympic rings designed by Sun Yu-li.





A detail of *Collaborate* with Sun Yu-li's signature motifs.



*Collaborate* juxtaposed with the China Central Television (CCTV) headquarters.



Lights transform the appearance of *Collaborate* at night.



*Collaborate* standing in front of the Kerry Centre in Beijing, China.





ArtBeatz was conceived to seek innovation in teaching pedagogy and brew creative ideas in art projects. Through ArtBeatz projects we intend to promote visual and audio literacy with thinking strategies.

Love . Revolve The World, ArtBeatz's inaugural Collaborative Community Art project, took on the synaesthesia approach in art education- a multi-sensorial and interdisciplinary integration of the arts. Renowned artist Sun Yu-li and 750 children painted two murals measuring 18.28 x 2.28 m and 4.57 x 2.28 m together, stringed by the synergistic flow of the master's strokes. Carefully planned elements of visual and audio stimulation were introduced while creating the art. The final magnificent display was showcased at the Art Garden 2013, an exhibition featuring engaging and immersive art for children at the Singapore Art Museum at 8 Queen Street that was held from 17 May to 1 September 2013.

ArtBeatz is powered by the passion for arts!




We believe every child is born creative; teachers are merely facilitating the natural self-discovery process to unleash the creativity and confidence to excel.

IQkidz is dedicated to the provision of high quality children educational enrichment programs. IQkidz programs are designed to provide every child with an absolutely positive learning experience; to be fun and enriching. We aim to inspire, discover and encourage each child to flaunt the genius in him/her. Working on the freedom of 'Creative Expression', children are given the time, space and tools to express themselves freely. IQkidz encourages the freedom to explore independently and abilities to express creative ideas with confidence in various modes: language art, visual art and critical thinking processes resulting with solutions.









**“Never look down to test the ground  
before taking your next step; only  
he who keeps his eye fixed on the far  
horizon will find the right road.”**

— Dag Hammarskjöld  
Secretary-General of the United Nations  
(1953 - 1961) who was posthumously awarded  
the Nobel Peace Prize in 1961.

Sun Yu-li, *Mapping the Universe*, 2000,  
each 10 x 10 m (comprising 10 pcs of 2 x  
5 m), enamel paint on canvas, held at Far  
East Square. Five pieces were acquired by  
Chase Manhattan Bank, Far East Square  
and private collectors from Singapore.





Tan You Zai and Sumithra GP, *Untitled*, 2014, ink and watercolour on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm, Singapore. This was the winning entry in the tertiary category of the *from a dot* competition organised in conjunction with the launch of this book.

*From a dot* tells the story of one man's dream to scale the Everest of the mind, through his discovery of the Universal Language; a formal language of the metaphysical. Sun Yu-li has attempted to develop a macro theory that integrates the diversified knowledge fields from a simple perspective. Much of his research work was done in Singapore, also colloquially called the Little Red Dot. Quoting Archimedes, a Greek engineer and inventor who said "Give me a dot, and I will revolve the world" he explained the principle of the lever in moving heavy objects. A heavy weight in his own right, Sun Yu-li has placed Singapore on the art world map, with his art displayed in prominent places worldwide. Beyond his public persona as an artist, few know the personal story of Sun Yu-li. In his own words, Sun Yu-li shares about his formative years and highlights the significance of his parents' role in igniting his love of nature, interest in art, and intellectual inspirations. Pursuing architecture as his major in university was by chance, but the chance proved to be the crucial turning point of Sun Yu-li's life. How did this come about? In understanding the present, we first turn our lens to the past.

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