





# ABOUT LEE WEN

**LEE WEN** studied at the LaSalle-SIA College of The Arts and the City of London Polytechnic in the United Kingdom from 1989 to 1992.

Besides performances and exhibitions for the Artists Village in Singapore, Lee Wen has participated in "Many In One" a travelling exhibition in Washington DC documenting twenty five years of art from Singapore; "PULLIT X" a series of exhibitions cum performances in London in 1992 and the 5th Fukui International Video Biennale in Japan in 1993.

Lee Wen's performances and works have also been seen by audiences in Hong Kong ("Happenings II" The Artists Village exhibition at QU\* Art Gallery), India (International Sculpture Symposium), Thailand (Sense Yellow), Poland ("Castle of Imagination" at the 3rd International Artists Meeting in 1995), Germany ("Fighting The Universal Spider" at the A and O Gallery in Berlin and the MA Performance Festival in Dusseldorf and Darmstadt) and Japan (4th Asian Art Show in Fukuoka and Tokyo).

In 1993, Lee Wen made his debut in a TheatreWorks production of the much celebrated Kuo Pao Kun/Ong Keng Sen collaboration of Lao Jiu, playing the puppet master, alongside established actors like Lim Kay Siu and Margaret Chan. This production also played to full houses at the 42nd Festival Of Perth in Western Australia in 1994.









# JOURNEY OF A YELLOW MAN

continued

All fetuses begin as female.  
All fetuses begin as female.  
All fetuses begin as female.  
All fetuses begin as female.  
Only in the third month of gestation  
does masculinization begin.  
Only in the third month of gestation  
does masculinization begin.  
All fetuses begin as female.  
All fetuses begin as female.  
All fetuses begin as female.  
Children are intuitive moralists  
Children are intuitive moralists  
The process of interactions with family and friends is a  
learning product.  
Japanese and Israeli, although having radically differing  
Mother-Child relationships in child rearing, have in their  
society,  
Relatively and equally low rates of entering into delinquency  
And criminal careers in the western sense  
Freedom is a self-evident good. But.  
But. The Chinese consider freedom as "Licentiousness"  
and  
"Valorisation of personal liberty".  
What is considered freedom may not have self-evident  
values in some cultures.  
Harmony and conformity is prized higher than freedom  
sometimes. Sometimes.  
"Consensual Marriages" prepare the ground for extension  
of individualism.  
Does a good life depend on "rights" or "virtues"?  
Are rights inherent only in individuals or more importantly  
in groups?  
Which is better, "group centered" or "individual-centred"  
cultures?  
For some, individualism implies universalism.  
Since if each person is morally equivalent  
then all peoples are morally equivalent.  
"Immoral behaviour" does not imply weakness of moral  
sense...  
The problem of wrong action arises from conflict among  
several different moral senses.  
This struggle. This struggle.  
This struggle between "morality" and "self-interest" has  
a corrosive effect on those forces that blunt the moral  
senses.

Some cultures emphasize duty and self-control.  
Other cultures emphasize sympathy and fairness.  
Too much. Too much. Too much individualism leads to  
stiffness, uneasiness and alienation submission to authorities.  
Submission to authorities and unquestioning lead to lack of  
choice and loss of individual assertiveness.  
What happens to society?  
Which question is asked depends on who is asking now.  
TV, newspapers and print presses have far-reaching ability to  
eliminate the media opposition to ruling cultures.  
Therefore the ruling cultures may not allow them to do so  
without license.  
Cultures attempt to purge freedom various factions of media  
are strong armed into submission.  
Licensing and regulation controls the ownership of media  
oppositions to the ruling culture.  
The division of media control stocks into 2 classes of  
"historically-proven" idea.  
Only "management" have voting rights and must have the  
approval from the ruling culture.  
"Non-citizens" need not apply.  
"Foreign Investors" must not be from extremely differing  
cultures from the ruling cultures.  
Global culture today.  
Global culture in today's world accepts every human being as  
citizens.  
Global culture in today's world is slowly learning that all living  
beings are citizens.  
Who opposes the ruling cultures shall be defined by the  
"management" of the "management" as "foreign".  
Those who oppose the ruling culture are "foreign" and cannot  
be the "management".  
"Nothing against the system. Nothing without the system.  
Nothing lives outside the system." is the implied secret  
argument.  
Since doing is difficult...  
Speaking must be more cautious.  
Since doing is difficult  
Speaking becomes a cautious effort.  
Since doing is difficult.  
Speak cautiously...

- Lee Wen



# NEO- BABA

15 MARCH 1996

"Baba" was a derogatory term for the Straits-born Chinese, used by the more recent arrival of other Chinese immigrants. They called them "baba" because the Straits-born Chinese have mostly lost the ability to speak their ancestral Chinese language fluently. Today we use the more politically correct term, "peranakan", to describe this unique marriage of Malay and Chinese cultures amongst the Straits-born Chinese.

"Dada" was a short-lived (1916 - 1922) but dynamic art movement which responded to the industrial age and was born out of despair from the First World War. "Dada" was often frowned upon for questioning established values, morals and aesthetics which they had lost faith in and found them meaningless after experiencing the catastrophic destruction of the great war. However, their iconoclasm and seemingly irrational antics should not be simply dismissed as negative nihilism. Theirs were calculated efforts for liberation, renewal and the rediscovery of creativity. The use of chance and encouragement of spontaneity spurred a broaden imagination and expanded consciousness. It led to many new movements and gave us hope for other possibilities.

The "babas" or peranakan is a less self-conscious evolution of cross-fertilisation of cultures arising out of expediency. The Straits-born Chinese found themselves in a foreign land and surrounded by a charming people with customs that is more conducive to the climate and terrain. It was a natural process of adopting the local new ways and incorporating their old ways from their old country.

The recent developments in history, nation-building and restructuring of society in education, employment and entertainment, strains the identity of the individuals in society. Not everyone can conform to strict regulated expectations of the "ruling" culture which defines social norms. There is a proliferation of difference in tastes, values and attitudes despite a carrot and stick/reward and punishment inculcation to enforce identity within a restrictive social hierarchy.

Over the last decade, many new forms of art is evolving in Singapore. Artists are adopting new strategies, experimenting with different mediums and discovering frontiers and processes. No doubt some of these were preceded by artists in the west, but they are not entirely alien to Asian or Singaporean roots. In many rituals and customs of South-East Asia, we find what we might call installation and performance in the contemporary sense. For example, the Chinese perform elaborate rituals to commemorate the dead during Qing Ming and the seventh month "Hungry Ghosts" festivals. These often have features of "installation" and "performance" if we look at them from a modern perspective. Furthermore, many of these rituals have undergone various adjustments and modifications to suit modernisation.

- Lee Wen



# GHOSTS STORIES

16 March 1996

I

\*Congratulations!

You've lived another hundred years. Survival is the thing.

You don't need to read the newspapers or watch television to know what's going on.

Bad news reaches you wherever you go. If you have ears. All you need is a question mark. To keep you on your guard.

Monkey see, Monkey do.

Do we really know what we are fighting for?

Do we really know what we are living for?

Do we really know what we are dying for?

Enough of dying!!!

I want to live...I want to live...

They killed the chickens, to scare the monkeys.

So back to zero. Then count again. Start again.

Don't go back to zero. Keep on counting.

See where it leads you. It's our destiny.

Unless you want history to repeat itself.

Don't give up. You have a choice.

Beware of fast cars and condominiums.

In some places, they still worship the half-blind kings.

Do they see?

See no evil...Hear no evil...Do no evil...

It's a promise.

If we play the game, we will get the prize.

The whole prize, from beginning to end.

But there's no such need for those who love.

But there's much to lose...and to fear.

The loss of power. The loss of gold and silver.

The darkness of morality.

Don't you want to live forever?

The chickens are dead, you are alive...\*

II

Despite encouraging liberalisation in this century, modern society still maintains itself in a hierarchical order. Such a system tends to trivialise the individual's rights and exaggerate the ruling sovereign powers. The ultimate "unfreedom" then is that of detention without an open trial. It is one thing to punish the severely deviant through legitimate jurisdiction in an open trial. But one suspects the justice of detention without an open trial where detainees are at the mercy of their jailers.

Furthermore, a system that allows such measures of social control, never hesitates to use it to deter other expressions of liberal minority views. Especially those deemed to be oppositional to the ruling system. It is often also used as the underlying intimidation to control the media, art, literature, culture, sexual deviations and preferences...etc. which may seem to threaten the perpetuation of the ruling system.



- Lee Wen



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Lee Wen

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TheatreWorks (Singapore) Limited

# THEATREWORKS

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**THEATREWORKS**, a charity and non-profit organisation, is an independent Singaporean theatre company which develops and nurtures professional theatre skills. It is dedicated to reaching a broad section of the community and to taking Singapore theatre abroad. The company recognises its responsibility in encouraging awareness on human and social issues. Ultimately, TheatreWorks is inspired by and dedicated to sharing the Magic of Theatre.

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[no, not the arts festival...]

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**THE CUTTING EDGE [no, not the arts festival...]** began on 29 February with the sell out production, **THE YANG FAMILY**. It was followed last week by Zai Kuning's production of **GROWING MADNESS: THE DAY AFTER**.

This Festival showcases uncompromising, cutting edge performances which emphasise new theatre forms, styles, techniques and talents.

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