

# across the way

by Salty Xi Jie Ng  
curated by Kimberly Shen

11 – 26 Nov 2023  
Fri 4–8pm, Sat and Sun 1–8pm

starch  
81 Tagore Lane  
Tag A Building, #02-11  
Singapore 787502



萬家香貿易  
BAN KAH HIANG TRADING



*across the way* gathers the constellations of Salty Xi Jie Ng's interdimensional practice and presents her long-term body of work as **Baibai Research Group (BBRG)**, a transdisciplinary lab that encompasses spirit studies embedded in the everyday vernacular. In these lush and mystical landscapes conjured by Salty, we are guided towards rest and remedy, as we ruminate over our relationships between the living and the dearly departed. Foregrounded by her research experiments with the **Ancestor Dream Visitation Repository (ADVR)** and her ongoing relationship with historic religious goods merchant **Ban Kah Hiang (BKH)**, the exhibition unfolds as portals between realms, embodied by creative manifestations in a reimagining of our ancestral ties and practices.

Developed during her recent residency at Treasure Hill Artist Village in Taipei, the ADVR collects and translates dream visitations (托梦; tuomeng). If 托 is to entrust with a message or request, then 梦, our dreams, embodies the murky, watery realms we traverse in the darkest of nights – a gateway to the other side. Gifted a bottle of dream-inspired millet wine by Taiwanese artist Huang Po-Chih – who received the wine from an Indigenous elder and collaborator, made from her ancestor dream visitation – Salty ingested this wine nightly, with the intention of connecting with her great grandmother. The ingredients of chives, sugared peanuts, ginger, and garlic were revealed by her great grandmother one night, forming the basis of 托梦糖 (dream visitation candy). She has since experimented with many versions of the candy, in a frustrating, perhaps necessarily futile process that mirrors the impossibility of grasping the slippery and elusive nature of our dreams.

Amongst the portals conceived during her residency, dream visitation 托梦 #48 emerges from the ground (with soil and vegetation from the nearby forest), as a phone line to 土地公 (God of the Land), while the Dream Visitation Temple 托梦殿 manifests as a sacred space for people to dream together, drawing upon the dream visitation repository to begin realising a shared cosmology of symbols, forms, and associations. ‘由爱开启的梦’ (a dream that sparked love) observes a ritual cleansing of Grandfather Banyan (榕树爷爷), an aged tree behind Tadpole Point, a cafe in Treasure Hill – in a quiet acknowledgment of our spiritual kinships.

By reframing the ways we remember our deceased loved ones, Salty's collaboration with BKH establishes the business as an invaluable educational resource to preserve and document Chinese religious practices and traditions. Through decades of diligent attention and care, BKH served as unofficial aides, granting assurance as they bridge their customers' earthly aspirations in connection to the spiritual afterlife. An unexpected collaboration with Jaria Ramakisoona from Trinidad and Tobago has emerged from Salty's engagement with BKH. A keen practitioner of Chinese ancestor veneration, Jaria produced a series of videos explaining the practice, in response to the Chinese Religious Goods poster created by Salty in consultation with BKH.

To unpack our personal relationship with ancestor worship, Salty attempts to reinvent ways we use prayer goods, in a renewed adherence to these inherited rituals. Departing from traditional burnt offerings, she creates gatherings to compose joss paper sculptures, prompting a rethinking of the inherent capitalist afterlife these practices point towards, instead, refocusing on intention and the individual's hand in gifting.

Through engaging in personal and collective acts of remembrance, Salty proposes intuitive models of grieving and healing that are intentional and meaningful. Activated as performances, rituals and intimate encounters, *across the way* transforms into a multiverse that resituates and enables spiritual knowledges and practices. In creating a community of dreamers, the exhibition ultimately speaks of an innate desire for divine affirmation and intervention, a profound longing to communicate and reconcile with loved ones and beings in distant realms and around us.

## ABOUT

**Salty Xi Jie Ng** is an artist and educator co-creating semi-fictional paradigms for the real and imagined lives of humans within the poetics of the interdimensional intimate vernacular. Often playing with relational possibilities, her transdisciplinary, constellational practice proposes a collective re-imagining through humour, care, subversion, discomfort, institutional critique, a celebration of the eccentric, and a commitment to the deeply personal, in hopes of uncovering hidden selves and histories in kinship with the erotic and other-than-human.

Salty has an MFA in art & social practice from Portland State University. She has been artist-in-residence at spaces like Singapore Art Museum, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's College of Visual & Performing Arts, Kaman Art Foundation, Elsewhere Museum, Arteles Creative Centre, Taipei Artist Village, and Ban Kah Hiang via the Arts-Business x Business-Arts Residency. Her work has been supported and presented by diverse platforms such as Nordic network Museum Why, Mi Hak Gwan (Korea), King School Museum of Contemporary Art (USA), and Singapore International Film Festival. Her projects include feature film *Singapore Minstrel*, prison variety show *The Inside Show*, collaborative publication *The Grandma Reporter*, collaborative multidisciplinary project *Not Grey: Intimacy, Ageing, and Being*, community space *Buangkok Mall Life Club*, and institutional critique / performance-lecture *Dear Singapore Art Museum Acquisition Committee*. Salty received an Honourable Mention for the Impart Art Prize (2022) and was a finalist for the Chamberlain Award for social practice artists (2022). As an educator, she has taught and guest-lectured in institutions in the U.S. and Singapore. She is the lead artist of Both Sides, Now 2023-24 and an akashic records practitioner. [saltythunder.net](http://saltythunder.net) | [baibairesearch.art](http://baibairesearch.art) | [@saltythunder13](https://www.instagram.com/saltythunder13)

**Kimberly Shen** is a curator and arts educator based in Singapore. Her practice research engages with feminist thinking and consciousness, and seeks to affirm the gendered gestures and vocabularies that transcend bodies, spaces, and institutions of knowledge. She is co-founder of dblspce, an integrated studio and incubator dedicated to artistic practice. She is currently Programme Leader (Fine Art) at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and PhD candidate at Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London. [www.kimberlyshen.com](http://www.kimberlyshen.com) | [@kimberlyshen](https://www.instagram.com/kimberlyshen)

## COLLABORATORS

**Jaria Ramakisoorn** is Hindu and from Trinidad and Tobago. He started practising Chinese ancestor veneration 8 years ago, when he stumbled upon paper money in a small grocery store, and changed the fortunes of his friends and himself. Since then, his ancestors have helped him raise funds to travel to Singapore, where he visited Ban Kah Hiang, a Chinese religious goods merchant. He runs [armyofancestors.com](http://armyofancestors.com) and prays to his ancestors everyday.

Butoh choreographer and performer **XUE** makes art in memoriam of the forgotten casualties of an accelerated society. Their practice is a persistent reflection on loss, fragility and impermanence in a world that is quick to move on. XUE conducts and engineers catalytic assemblages as open-ended propositions into rewiring the past-present-future. Through performance-making XUE illuminates what is precious to them — the fleeting and transitory. [111xue111.com](http://111xue111.com) | [@111xue111](https://www.instagram.com/111xue111)

**Zheng Jialei** (b. 2001, Singapore) is an artist investigating the concerns of diaspora and the fragmentation of cultural identity. Born to immigrant parents, her sense of displacement inspires her to look at loss and trauma. Currently investigating familial bonds and urban memory through the body, she hopes to reconcile with her roots in an age of urban amnesia. [www.zhengjialei.myportfolio.com](http://www.zhengjialei.myportfolio.com) | [@dermatronic](https://www.instagram.com/dermatronic)

**Ruby Jayaseelan** is a crazy movement artist. She lives her art and life holistically, hoping to connect and reveal our truths to each other and ourselves. [@ruby.jayaseelan](https://www.instagram.com/ruby.jayaseelan)

**ila** (b.1985, Singapore) is a visual and performance artist whose intimate works incorporate objects, moving images and live performance to generate discussion about gender, history and identity. Negotiating alternative nodes of experience, her works reconfigure and merge speculative fiction

with factual histories, informal archives and collective experiences, conceiving them as sites for empathy and connectivity. [@ilailailailaila\\_](https://www.instagram.com/ilailailailaila)

**Shawn Creeden** (b. 1981, USA) is a transdisciplinary artist living and working on unceded Cowlitz territory in what is now Portland, Oregon, USA. Cross pollinating a diverse range of media and methodologies, Creeden's creative output includes living sculptures, sound, textiles, performances, activism, dance parties, environmental installations, publications, plant care, and cable access video art. [www.shawncreeden.com](http://www.shawncreeden.com) | [@glown\\_ups](https://www.instagram.com/glown_ups)

**Anise / Su Hee** (b. 1990) is a multidisciplinary artist, composer and electronic musician working with sound, performance and experimental scoring. Her current research interests include inhumanisms and the body as ecosphere. Her music under the moniker Anise is an entropic, cinematic blend of harsh glitchy beats cutting through delicate, shimmering vocals, field recordings, and chamber music blending the grotesque and beautiful. [www.heesuhui.com](http://www.heesuhui.com) | [@anise\\_\\_\\_](https://www.instagram.com/anise___)

## PROGRAMMES

### 11 Nov (Sat), 6pm | opening performances

*a vast (((shimmer)))* by XUE is a butoh choreography that dances the language of distance and estrangement, in search of the ghosts of four rooms within their ancestral home towards an impassable epilogue.

*Breathing, Gasping, Words Stuck In My Throat: Iteration II in honour of your lingering spirit* by Zheng Jialei is a private ritual by a diasporic individual, reading aloud a letter in an invented script for her great grandfather, in hopes of reconciling family history.

*sky is dark, the ripened fall away* by Salty & Ruby Jayaseelan Sitting with the ancestors in a timeless space, gathering, decaying. What grows out of death? This ritual-performance-prayer unfolds as a weighted portal of love and remembrance by two living descendants.

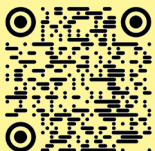
12 Nov (Sun), 3–5pm | *by hand across realms - joss paper mobile workshop I* rethinks traditional Chinese ancestor worship and the inherent capitalist afterlife it points to through discussion about joss paper, remembrance and prayer, alongside mobile/sculpture-making alchemizing intention.

26 Nov (Sun), 10am–12pm | *by hand across realms - joss paper mobile workshop II & ancestor worship ritual* - similar to joss paper mobile workshop I but ends with a ritual burning the sculptures made.

18 Nov (Sat), 3–4.30pm | *spirited gatherings and dream visitation candy-making with ila, Salty, XUE and Kimberly Shen* is a conversation over cooking, a dialogic crossing of artistic practices in communion with the other-than-human. Dream visitation candy is a food-based artwork in constant experimentation, borne from Salty's research and dreaming.

26 Nov (Sun), 3–4.30pm | *ancestor dreaming circle #3* is an intimate gathering for sharing lineages, ancestor dream visitations, and ancestral objects, followed by creating a ritual object and guided meditation-dreaming. Where did your ancestors walk and pray?

REGISTER FOR  
PROGRAMMES HERE:



1. **a dream that was the beginning of love** 由爱开启的梦 (video, 17m, 2023) In communion with Grandpa Banyan 榕树爷爷 of Treasure Hill Artist Village 宝藏岩国际艺术村, Taipei, Taiwan. With thanks to and featuring Jamie Lin 小嬉 of Tadpole Point cafe 尖蚪咖啡屋, Treasure Hill.

2. **dream visitation temple** 托梦殿 (2023) (installation, 2023) Prayer cushion, bed, pearl powder, pumpkin, pandan, lots, offerings. Chants for ancestor, deity, and plant dream visitations, respectively: 深夜祖颂 Midnight Ancestors Song by Shawn Creeden DEITYSENDTHEIRLOVE & NUMBERTOTINUSE by ila Blooming time by Anise

3. **dream visitation candy** 托梦糖 #49 (sweets, 2023) In communion with great grandmother. With thanks to Dawan Katjadrepan 包头目, her dream-inspired millet wine 梦启酒, and Huang Pochih 黄博志.

4. **dream visitation** 托梦 #48 (installation, 2023) Portal for God of the land 土地公; with soil and vegetation from Tagore Forest, visitors are invited to bring their own tea leaves and sweets (different from standard ones sold in stores) as offerings.

5. **Ancestor Dream Visitation Repository** 托梦库 | [bit.ly/advr](http://bit.ly/advr) (repository, 2023) “We help the dead to be or become what they are; we don’t invent them” — Vinciane Despret

Dream visitations — 托梦 — tuomeng — are a portal between realms, like two tin cans connected by string. 托 means to entrust with a message or request. 梦, dream, is made with forest and dusk; dreams then, are the dark, lush jungles we enter at night. In that darkness is a gate to the other side. At heart, tuomeng is a discourse on love, opportunity for

recourse, remedy for loneliness, stream for divine aid — depending if the visitor is departed loved one, murdered individual, plant, deity, or other, “engaged in a joint transformative process with the living” (Magali Molinié).

Ancestor Dream Visitation Repository is a research experiment collecting, theorising and translating ancestor dream visitations towards new notions of lineage, remembrance and spirituality for the living descendant / future ancestor. Artistic processes alchemically transmute spiritual intentions into creative manifestations sitting between art and life. Occupying the thin veil space between sleep and wake, living and dead, ADVR posits expanded definitions of ancestor while cultivating a community of dreamers touching portals.

6. **1955–2023** (video, 67m, 2023) Ban Kah Hiang, a historic Chinese religious goods merchant, at its Jalan Bukit Merah shop.

7. **你过得好吗?** (Chinese religious goods store, 2023) *The above is an untranslatable question. It asks to the effect of, how is your life? But what it means is, how is time passing for you, are you sleeping and eating well in your days, how are you in this immense ocean of suffering? / with residues from Ban Kah Hiang.*

8. **by hand across realms** (prayer paper sculptures, 2023) Made collectively

9. **Chinese Religious Goods** 祭拜物品 (poster, 2021) Made in consultation with Ban Kah Hiang.

10. **Ancestor Money Explained Parts 1–4 by Jaria Ramakisoorn** (videos, 33m, 2023) Series of videos explaining Chinese ancestor worship referencing the Chinese Religious Goods poster.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this research in one way or another.

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