



# LEARNING GALLERY

## EDUCATORS' RESOURCE

This resource is designed for educators with the aim of fostering meaningful discussions on contemporary art between them and their students.

## JULIAN ABRAHAM "TOGAR"

# HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This educators' resource is designed for use with students before, during and after your visit to the Learning Gallery at Singapore Art Museum.

It shares key concepts and ideas associated with the exhibition to facilitate your visit and complements lessons conducted in school. This includes suggested guiding questions and activities that students may explore in the gallery, at home or in class, wherever relevant.

You may customise your visit by choosing your own preferred exhibition route.

For additional support, please refer to the additional notes for educators and facilitators when addressing the social and emotional learning aspects of the artworks during your discussion.

# INTRODUCTION

# LEARNING GALLERY

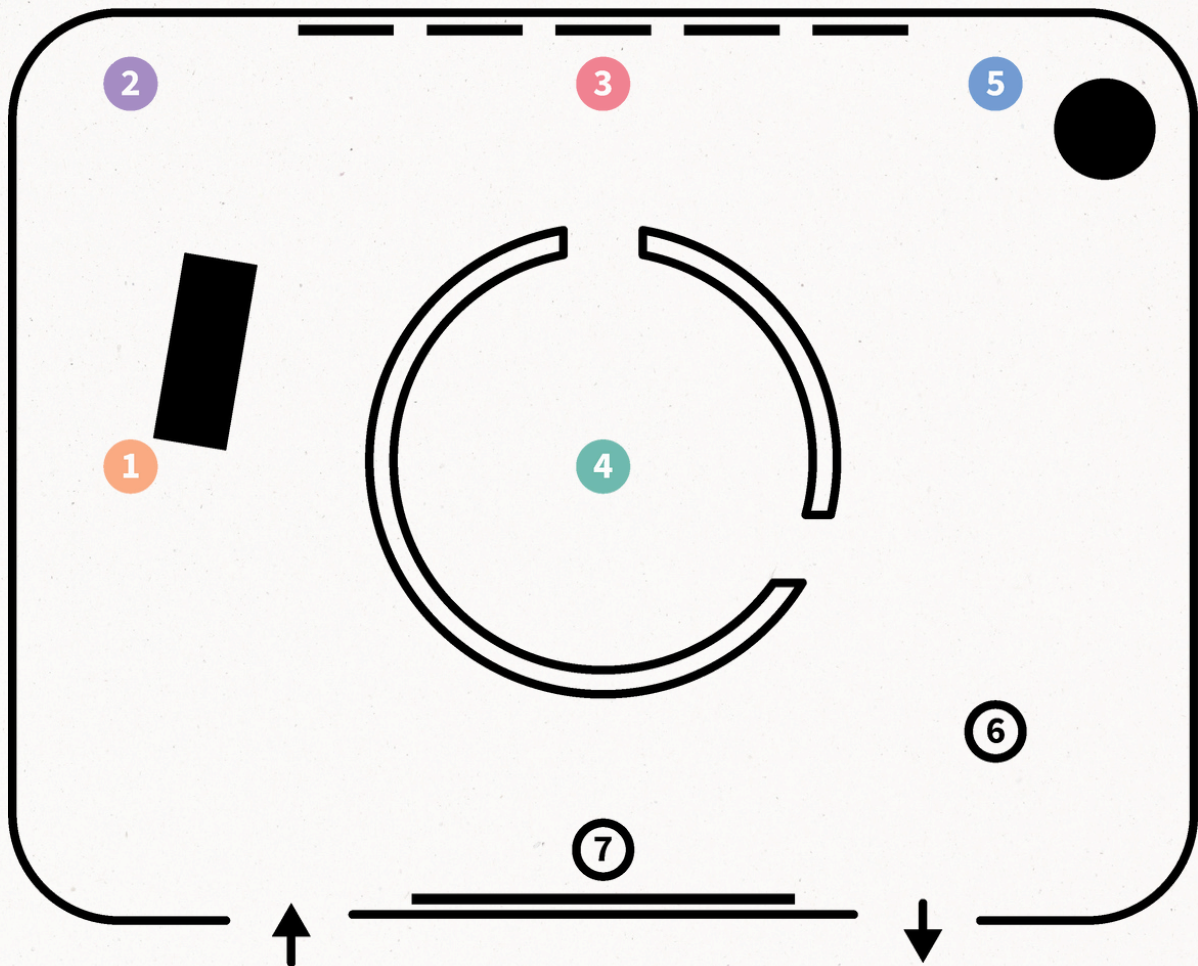
Childhood is a defining stage in all our lives. The foundations of our emotions, beliefs and memories take root during these formative years, with some receding within as we transit into adulthood.

The human impulse to create and appreciate art starts in childhood, and has transcended cultural and geographical boundaries from the moment humans first made their mark on the world. Both art and childhood are universal human experiences, which are characterised by freedom, curiosity and exploration.

The Learning Gallery invites you to embrace this spirit of exploration with a child-like lens. Allow yourself to approach the artworks curiously, unburdened and unafraid of the unknown. Learn about the artworks, artists and their attachments while engaging in both internal conversations and open dialogue.

Perhaps you may once again have an uninhibited relationship with the world: to look, feel and live fearlessly.

# EXHIBITION LAYOUT



1 HAN SAI POR  
*Black Forest*

2 JULIAN ABRAHAM "TOGAR"  
*A Gesture*

3 NGUAN  
*Untitled, from the series Singapore*

4 MIGRANT ECOLOGIES PROJECT  
Lucy Davis and collaborators, Zai Tang, Kee Ya Ting and Zachary Chan, with editing by Daniel Hui  
*{if your bait can sing the wild ones will come} Like Shadows Through Leaves*

5 TANG DA WU  
深疤風 SEMBAWANG

6 ACTIVITY CORNER  
*Cloud Library*  
*Cloud Mailbox*  
*RE-Material*

7 INTERACTIVE WALL

## ARTIST

# JULIAN ABRAHAM “TOGAR”

b. 1987, Indonesia

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### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Julian Abraham “Togar” (Muhammad Hidayat) is an Indonesian multidisciplinary artist, programmer and pseudo-scientist who uses a lot of music and soundscapes in his work. Combining his different skills and interests, his work deals with the intersections between art, environment, science and technology.

Togar’s practice is often centred on the act of listening. For Togar, listening involves taking an active position: conversing with the source of voices or noises as a form of call-and-response; becoming aware of and familiar with the subtleties of sound, and generating questions with others about the sounds they encounter. His projects have taken different forms related to sound. These include spaces for concerts or jam sessions, automated sound installations, online radio stations and programming, bands, a record label for archiving sound and a music album, among others.

He closely considers how his artworks function within surrounding realities and is fascinated by how small interventions can produce changes that form new, sustainable support structures.

Togar’s prior exhibitions include the 58<sup>th</sup> Carnegie International (2022–2023), documenta fifteen (2022) and the 17<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial (2022), among other group exhibitions and artist residencies. Recent solo presentations include *Too Good to be OK* at SculptureCenter, New York (2023); *Ulah Tanah* at RUCI Artspace, Jakarta (2019); and *~IIINNNGGG~* at Cemeti Institute of Art and Society, Yogyakarta (2018). He lives and works in Amsterdam, Medan and Yogyakarta.

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# ARTWORK



Installation view of *A Gesture*, 2016. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

## **A GESTURE**

2016

Sound installation, 5 min 52 sec (loop)

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

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### **ABOUT THE ARTWORK**

- By playing various pronunciations of “ehm” and “sstt” in the gallery, Togar highlights what is unique about sound as a medium and how it is received. Though the rise and fall of the voice that creates the sound “sstt” can be explained with words and the pitch of “ehm” can be illustrated with notes, every listener interprets these sounds differently, forming their own associations with the sounds based on past experiences.



### **DID YOU KNOW?**

- The artist recorded his own voice to create the artwork.

# PRE-VISIT QUESTIONS

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Discuss the importance of sound in our everyday lives.

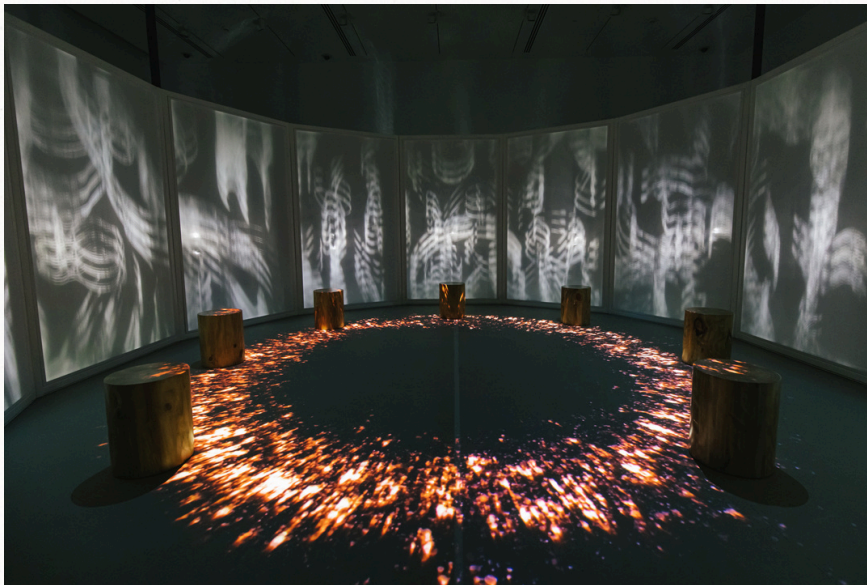
- What kinds of sound are there? How would you categorise them?
- What role does sound play in communication?
- What is the difference between sound, noise and music?

Describe what would happen in a world without any sound.

- What are sounds that you listen for every day? Why?
- What do you hear all the time but are not always conscious of?
- What sounds have appeared in or disappeared from your surroundings?
- Which parts of your life would be most affected if there was no sound?
- What is the difference between hearing and listening?

Find out more about other Singaporean artists who create artworks using sound.

## ZAI TANG



Installation view of *Escape Velocity V*, 2021. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

### ***Escape Velocity V***

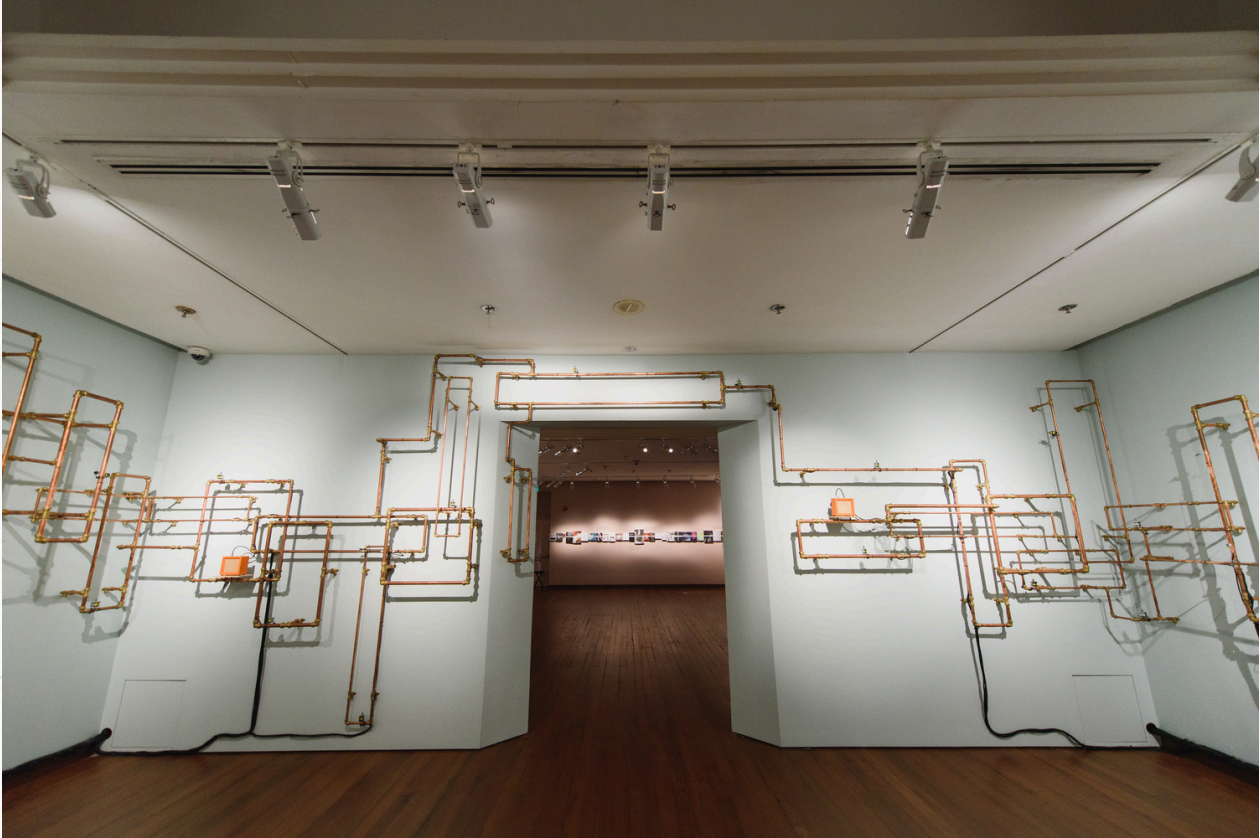
2021

Sound and video installation,  
dimensions variable

What does it mean to listen to nature in a time of ecological crisis? Artist Zai Tang poses this question in *Escape Velocity V*, an immersive sound installation that evokes the soundscape of places in Singapore where wildlife is threatened by urban hyper-development. Tang augmented his field recordings of birdsong and animal sounds to have an accelerated tempo, which mimics the harried pace of the city. Here, in the artificial night of the gallery, visitors are invited to adjust their senses to dwell in sound and darkness, and imagine how their relationship with nature can change.

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## ZUL MAHMUD



Installation view of *Raising Spirits and Restoring Souls*, 2015. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

### ***Raising Spirits and Restoring Souls***

2015

64-channel midi controller, solenoids, e-bows, amplifiers, piano strings, bass strings, guitar strings, copper pipes, midi player, dimensions variable

Collection of the artist

Contemplating progress, artist Zul Mahmud's poetic sound installation *Raising Spirits and Restoring Souls* evokes Singapore's national anthem, "Majulah Singapura" ("Onward Singapore" in Malay), in particular the line, "Sama-sama menuju bahagia" ("Let us progress towards happiness together"). To the artist, progress is not defined by technology but growth, development, evolution and facing the future with courage. Along a maze of copper pipes that hug the gallery walls, a staccato, metronomic orchestra taps out a melody of clinks and twangs, which seems all too familiar but somehow eludes immediate recognition.



# VIEW AND DISCUSS

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## LISTENING: TEN TIMES TWO

- Listen quietly. Let your ears take in the sounds of the gallery.
- List ten words or phrases about any aspect of these sounds.
- Listen again and add ten more words or phrases to your list.

### AFTER WHICH...

- Share what you have written down with your friends and pick out the similarities and differences between your observations.
- Discuss how these similarities and differences came about by considering the respective listeners as well as the effect of experiencing this work within a gallery space instead of somewhere else.



## REFLECTION

### SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-MANAGEMENT

- How did the artwork make you feel? What thoughts or memories did it evoke?
- How did the experience of listening to the artwork affect your overall mood or emotional state? Did you notice any shifts in your energy levels or sense of calm?
- Can you describe a time when you felt a strong connection to a particular sound? Can you share an example of a sound that makes you feel happy, calm or energised?
- What are some strategies you use to express yourself through sound in a healthy and constructive way?

### SOCIAL AWARENESS

- How did your interpretation of the artwork compare to your friends'? What did you learn from their perspectives?
- How can sound be used to create a more welcoming environment for everyone?

## **RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING**

- How can we use sound in a responsible way and be mindful of the impact our sounds have on others?
- What are some potential consequences of excessive noise or unwanted sounds?

## **RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT**

- How can active listening improve our communication with others?
- What are some ways you can use sound to express your emotions or connect with others in a more meaningful way?

# **POST-VISIT QUESTIONS**

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## **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF SOUNDS**

- Choose one day of the week!
  - On the selected day, listen closely to and record the types of sounds that you hear throughout the day.
  - Compare your list with a friend! What are some similarities and differences between your lists?
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# SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



## ACTIVITY 1 – CREATE A SOUND STORY!

- There are many different types of sounds that exist in this world. Using only sounds, put together a 60-second audio story without using any words.
  1. Imagine a scenario or story with a beginning, middle and end.
  2. List down what happens in each part of the story and what kinds of sounds may be heard.

What is happening in the story?	What sounds can represent the activity?
A guest arrives at the door.	Knocks on the door
Person at home wonders who is at the door.	“Hmmm?”
Person at home walks to door.	Sound of footsteps
Person opens the door.	Sound of doorknob turning and door swinging opening
Door opens to the world outside.	Sound of birds, cars driving past and wind in the distance
Person sees a dog at the door.	“Ah?” and pitiful dog barks
Person brings dog home.	Sound of dog trotting in and happy dog barks Sound of door swinging and clicking shut

3. Find creative ways to produce the sounds that you need to include in your story.
  4. After practicing the sequence of sounds, perform or record your sound story!
  5. Exchange your sound story with your friends and take turns to guess what is happening in each other’s story.
- Pro-tip: Decide when to include pauses or silence in your sound story too. The absence of sound could also help to communicate important elements of your story.

## ACTIVITY 2 – EXPLORING MUSIC THROUGH MARK MAKING!

- Choose a variety of music tracks with different tempos, styles, and moods. Look into different genres of music, such as classical, jazz, electronic and rock, to find inspiration.
- Encourage students to create marks in response to the music that they are listening to!
- Think beyond specific forms or objects, the marks can be abstract, reflecting emotions, rhythms, or moods in the music. For example, students might use quick, sharp lines to represent fast, energetic beats and light, scattered dots to express joy or excitement.
- Feel free to suggest a variety of movements and mark-making techniques.
- Discuss how different types of music influenced their mark-making choices.

## ACTIVITY 3 – EXPRESSIONS ACROSS CULTURES

- Encourage students to research about the origin of non-word vocal expressions, onomatopoeia, exclamations or interjections commonly used in dialogue.
- Explore what these sound like in different languages.

Some examples are:

**“Agh!,” “ Phew,” “Shh!,” “Ugh!,” “Er.....,” “Huh?,” “Ouch!”**

How about the sounds of animals?

**“Oink,” “Woof,” “Meow,” “Chirp,” “Squeak”**

Do you know that a mouse squeak is “Chu” in Japanese, while a dog bark is “Wang” in Chinese?

## ACTIVITY 4 – SOUND CHARADES

- Play a game of sound charades to help students pay close attention to the associations they have made with each sound.

# FIND OUT MORE!

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## ARTIST

- Abraham, J. (n.d.). “About.” <https://julianabraham.net/about/>
- Abraham, J. (n.d.-b). “Julian Abraham ‘Togar.’” <https://www.youtube.com/user/JulianTogarAbraham>
- “Julian Abraham ‘Togar’: Too good to be OK.” (n.d.). <https://www.sculpture-center.org/exhibitions/13764/julian-abraham-togar-too-good-to-be-ok>
- La Voce di New York. (2023). “Julian Abraham ‘Togar’: ‘Too good to be OK’” Exhibit at SculptureCenter, LIC. *La Voce Di New York*. [https://www.sculpture-center.org/files/SC\\_LaVocediNY\\_Togar\\_082423.pdf](https://www.sculpture-center.org/files/SC_LaVocediNY_Togar_082423.pdf)
- Interview with Julian Abraham “Togar” and Friends by Carnegie Museum of Art
  - Part 1 <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/sonic-discussions-with-julian-abraham-togar-and/id1651667199?i=1000632880808>
  - Part 2 <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/sonic-discussions-with-julian-abraham-togar-and/id1651667199?i=1000632880839>

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Singapore Art Museum. (2015). “Singapore Art Museum salutes Singapore’s Golden Jubilee through 5 Stars: Art Reflects on Peace, Justice, Equality, Democracy and Progress” [Press release]. [https://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg/-/media/SAM/Files/Press-Release/2015-PR/Singapore\\_Art\\_Museum\\_Presents\\_5\\_Stars\\_Media\\_Release\\_23sep2015.pdf?inline=1](https://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg/-/media/SAM/Files/Press-Release/2015-PR/Singapore_Art_Museum_Presents_5_Stars_Media_Release_23sep2015.pdf?inline=1)
- Singapore Art Museum. (2021). “Zai Tang | Escape Velocity V.” <https://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg/Art-Events/Exhibitions/Escape-Velocity-V>

# ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR EDUCATOR / FACILITATOR

**If a student is feeling uncomfortable when talking about their emotions, you may consider the following suggested approaches:**

**1. ACKNOWLEDGE AND VALIDATE THEIR EMOTIONS**

*Let the participant know that you are concerned about their wellbeing.*

- Verbal: “I hear you're feeling overwhelmed. It's okay to feel this way.”
- Non-verbal: Make eye contact, nod empathetically, and show that you're listening attentively.

**2. ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

*Allow the participant to talk about their experiences (and beliefs) if they want to, but do not force them.*

- Verbal: “What was that like for you?” or “Can you tell me more about...?”

**3. PARAPHRASE TO CLARIFY**

*Restate what you believe they are saying in your own words to ensure you are understanding their experience correctly.*

- Verbal: “It seems like you were frightened and worried.”

**4. OFFER A BREAK**

- Verbal: “Would you like to take a short break?”
- Non-verbal: Gesture towards a door or a quiet area.

## **5. CHECK-IN PRIVATELY**

- Verbal: “If you'd like to talk about this further, we can have a private conversation later.”
- Non-verbal: Discreetly approach the participant after the session.

## **6. GROUNDING TECHNIQUES**

- Verbal: “Can I offer you some grounding techniques? Perhaps focusing on your breath or the sensations in your body might help.”
- Non-verbal: Demonstrate deep breathing exercises or guide the participant through the technique.

## **7. ADJUST THE PACE**

- Verbal: “Let's slow down for a moment. We can revisit this topic later if you're feeling more comfortable.”

## **8. SHIFT THE FOCUS**

- Verbal: “Perhaps we could shift our focus to a different topic for now and come back to this later.”

## **9. GET HELP IF NEEDED.**

*If the participant is in distress, do not hesitate to get help from a fellow teacher or school counsellor.*

- Verbal: “I'm concerned about your well-being. Would you like me to get help from another teacher or a counsellor?”

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