

To Become & To Create:

Ink Drawings & Notes on Performance & Performance Art

Earlier this year, after a brief chat with visual artist Elizabeth Lim at the opening night of Zai Kuning's gallery installation I Will Send You to a Better Place, I found myself tagged in the former's online photo album, my outline sketched out along with other audience members listening intently to Zai's thoughtful monologue.

With the proliferation of digital photography and highly sophisticated consumer-level cameras, the idea of documentation-by-sketching may seem quaint and anachronistic, but the resultant image spoke for itself: remarkably poignant, the sketch was a modern, black and white version of Chua Mia Tee's Epic Poem of Malaya, more roughcast and spontaneous, with Zai playing the role of the impassioned orator, albeit cutting a cooler figure with jacket, shades and bucket hat. On her sketch, Elizabeth commented: "other ppl got like 100 photos and i only have 1 sketch and some words that really meant a lot to me written in my notebook..."

I later invited Elizabeth to help document Playfreely IV. As she explained to me after: "at the event i sketched out the basic placements and scales in pencil and then i listened and the tones and shades came in based on the performance. then i got home, pen ink up, cleaned up the page then inked it all up."

When I asked about a detail in her early sketch, she explained that she was not drawing "performers" as much as she was, the "performance".

Finally, I asked Elizabeth if she wanted to pen down any thoughts on her experience at the session. Having a keen interest in performance art, she offered her own musings on the improvising musician as performance artist. – Ed