

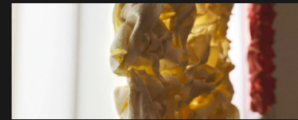
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Unleashing the Subconscious Dimension: Gerald Leow's *Perpetual Motion*

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Unleashing Motion in Skilman's Motion

Can machines create value?

And do objects have meaning if there are no humans around to experience them?

These are the questions that Singapore artist Gerald Leow has been grappling with in the past few months. If you're based in Singapore, you might have seen his latest work while walking by Marina Bay Sands. Called *Perpetual Motion*, it's a series of column-like sculptures with reflective surfaces that appear to be in constant dialogue with the skyscrapers on the bay.



Perpetual Motion by Marina Bay Sands. Photo by Colin Wan, courtesy of Art Outreach.

The sculpture is part of Gerald's exhibition with Art Outreach, entitled *Perpetual Motion*. It's presently running as part of Singapore Art Week until 6 February 2022. The rest of the exhibition is housed in Art Outreach's signature containers as part of its Art Encounters presentation. In this series — launched in 2020 and by now a

well-established fixture in the Singapore art scene – Art Outreach seeks to capture artistic creative processes within repurposed shipping containers. Functioning as mobile studios, galleries and public engagement spaces, the containers travel to a new site in Singapore each quarter.

Gerald's sculptures are meant to be moved by the wind, and if you feel bold enough, you can even touch them. This way, you can activate their rotatory structure and change the arrangements of their parts. Through Gerald's 'mobiles' – which are much sturdier than say, Alexander Calder's ultralight structures – the artist reflects on ideas of cycles and renewal.

Such ideas have been present in his work since the beginning of his art practice. Since starting out in the art world, Gerald has created visually striking installations that symbolise destruction and rebirth, blending mythology, contemporary aesthetics and even urban subcultures.



A process shot of Gerald in the studio. Image courtesy of Art Outreach.

The Spirituality of Space

Gerald has always had an interest in architecture, being particularly inspired by his travels to India.



"What's interesting to me," he explains, "is how architecture relates to human beings, not in an urban planning (kind of) way, but as a space for the spirit to dwell. I see architecture almost as a person. Space has a spiritual value to me."

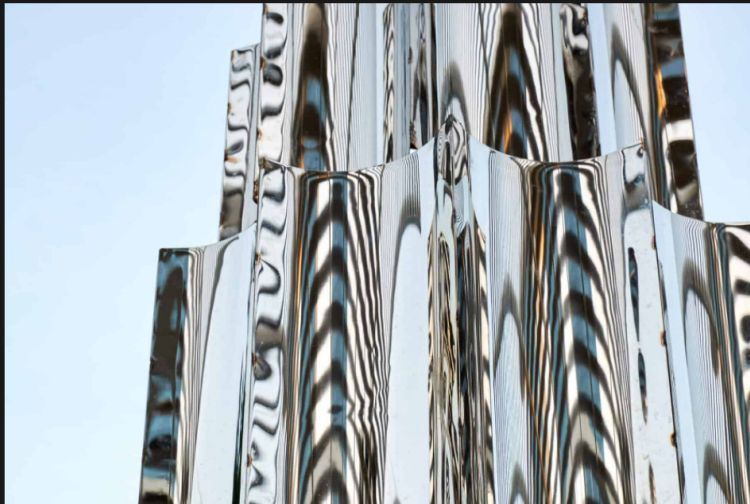
We can see these ideas play out in Gerald's previous works such as Saddle Roof from 2018, which melds aesthetics from heavy metal subculture with aspects of Austronesian island architecture commonly found in spirit houses, granaries and homes.





Saddle Roof (2018) at the exhibition *Mild Steel*, which was previously on show at Falcon Factory, Moscow and at the National Design Centre Singapore as part of *Atypical Singapore*. Image courtesy of the artist.

Typically devoid of symbolism, our use of space in contemporary society drastically differs from the sacred architecture of ancient cultures. Plunging his works into the Marina Bay area – the most scenic corner of his city-state of Singapore – Gerald uses his art to explore this disjoint.



Details of Gerald's stainless steel sculptures, photo by Colin Wan, courtesy of Art Outreach.

Perpetual Motion was originally meant to be titled *Spiritual Machine*, as inspired by Ray Kurzweil's book *The Age of Spiritual Machines*. Published in 1999, the book mused on the developments of artificial intelligence. The book is perhaps even more relevant today, some 23 years after publication, with the prevalence of machine learning and the advancement of technology.

Thinking further about machines, humans, and value generation, Gerald, who pursued a degree in sociology at the National University of Singapore, dusted off his Marxist books. Karl Marx's theories prompted him to consider whether machines were indeed developing a kind of consciousness, or if human beings were instead becoming more like machines.

"In our day-to-day lives, our backs hurt from being in front of a laptop for too many hours. We feel like we are one with the cars that we are driving. And perhaps most importantly, we have become caught up in the (very) concepts of productivity and time management that we have created. That's quite scary," he explains.

Bestowing Meaning onto Objects

In this edition of *Art Encounters*, you'll also find Gerald's drawings, maquettes, photographs of his process and past artworks located in two different shipping containers.

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OUR HEARTLANDS

In the first room, visitors will encounter prints depicting half-broken columns that one might have encountered on a *Grand Tour*. Being accustomed to Roman and Greek ruins from growing up in Europe, I immediately thought of a small, quiet temple and the spirit of something very old – right in the hustle and bustle of the busy urban landscape outside.



Exhibition view of one of the containers at Art Outreach. Photo by Colin Wan, courtesy of Art Outreach.

"Perpetual Motion is my first effective outdoor work and it represents consciousness, the rational part of the mind. On the other hand, one of the containers presents a set of drawings that expresses the subconscious," says the artist.

On his drawings, Gerald explains further, "I made these drawings over a long time. They started as sketches for the sculpture, but as I was realising them, I started to enjoy the process more and more, to the point that they became something entirely different from functional sketches. They became functionless; sketches that unleashed the subconscious dimension."

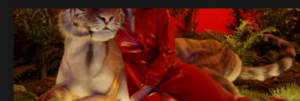
In the last container, visitors to Art Encounters will find an interactive wireframe sculpture, made by the artist and his sister. Visitors are encouraged to add little wires to the structure – as assisted by Gerald on Saturdays and Sundays.

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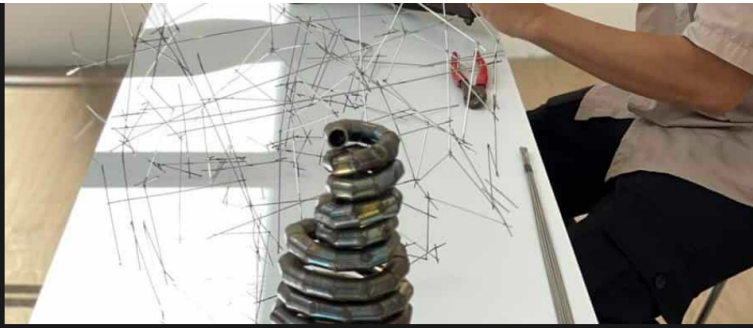
This work feeds into research that the artist has recently dived into, on ideas of the conscious and subconscious realm as developed by psychoanalyst Carl Jung.

"Jung described the *animus* as the unconscious masculine side of a woman, and the *anima* as the unconscious feminine side of a man, each transcending the personal psyche," Gerald explains.

"Today, this feminine, creative, hands-on energy is often missing. We are so disconnected from feeling the world and our bodies, and we are all catapulted into an increasingly virtual world. People feel (this loss), that's why they enjoy working with their hands so much," he continues.



Tiger Tiger Burning Bright! Art Takes Over at Funan Mall



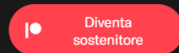
Gerald working on the wireframe sculpture. Image courtesy of Art Outreach.

Perpetual Motion encourages visitors to pause in their everyday lives, take part in Gerald's creative process and come to the realisation that they can experience spirituality in seemingly mundane activities.

In Singapore — as in many other parts of the world — the ethos of productivity and functionality often ends up engulfing the arts as people and communities become consumed with the trajectories of economic growth. Thankfully, that's when artists like Gerald step in to carve space for themselves and their audience, to return to the roots of art and provide fuel for the spirit.

Perpetual Motion runs at Marina Bay Sands Event Plaza till 6 February 2022. More details can be found [here](#).

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