

Wok to Walk: A Conversation With NTU Hawkers

Listen to the stories of our NTU hawkers.

It's Not You, It's Online Dating



Get to know Beverly, the woman behind Not.A.Dating.App (NADA)!

The Real Whiz Behind Artificial Intelligence

Find out more about artificial intelligence with Jiafei

How Can We Redefine Success?

Embark on a journey to reflect on success





ABOUT U-INSIGHT

U-Insight is a student-run print and digital publication by NTU Students' Union (NTUSU), managed by the Editorial Committee. Bringing to you perspectives that are more than just ink on paper, U-Insight features the voices and insights from our peers, for our peers.

This issue is a collaborative effort between the NTUSU Editorial Committee and the Communications Division (External), with our writers, designers and photographers coming together to put together this commemorative piece for our 30th anniversary. In this special issue, we hope to represent the rich diversity of our student population and the vivid stories they have to share.



Disclaimer: All group photos used were retrieved from past photo archives.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Dear Union Members.

On behalf of NTU Students' Union (NTUSU) Editorial Committee and Communications Division (External), I would like to proudly present the fifth issue of U-Insight. The two committees have worked tirelessly over the past few months to present this print edition of U-Insight. This issue is a special one – a commemoration of the NTUSU's 30th anniversary. As we reached this milestone, we want to acknowledge the hard work put in by our predecessors, which had laid the foundational ground in establishing the Union today. Moving forward, the 30th Executive Committee will continue to build on the Union's work and advance our core beliefs, which is to represent the voices of students and contribute to our university via our service.

In this issue, you may find stories of students from all walks of life. Through these stories, NTUSU hopes to celebrate your achievements and contributions to the NTU community. These contributions have collectively gone a long way in enriching the students' NTU experience over the years, especially today, when the meaning of community becomes more pertinent than ever.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in disruptions to our routines and upheavals of what we are familiar with. Many of us have struggled in the past year to adapt to the new changes. However, my student leaders and I firmly believe that a holistic student life is a cornerstone of a meaningful NTU experience. We therefore remain committed to executing our vision and implementing our four pillars (Identity, Employability, Sustainability, and Empowerment), which have become even more essential today than ever.

In spite of adversity, NTUSU's commitment will remain resolute and together, we are prepared to explore new, alternative ways to reach out to you and listen, with your best interests at heart.

Cheah Guan Ying

30th NTUSU President





Dion Sng Jia SinCommunications Executive
(Relations & Engagement)

EDITORIAL ADVISOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the fifth print issue of U-Insight, an NTUSU publication by students, for students!

The Editorial Committee has put together a special curation of articles focusing on you, our fellow undergraduates. My team has decided to take on a different stance by honouring the talented individuals amongst us, the Humans of NTU who have continued to thrive in their passion projects amidst the COVID-19 climate.

Follow us on a little stroll down memory lane, as we recap some of our initiatives from the last 10 years in this issue. May 2021 be a year of extraordinary change for us all!



Lim Ziqian Head Editor

EDITORS' NOTE

What are stories but colourful patchwork quilts – vibrant art that wraps us in warmth and gives us spaces to dream? In this special print edition of U-Insight, where we commemorate the 30th anniversary of NTUSU, we have gathered a myriad of voices from the student community. From visions to revolutionise the world with technology to bittersweet poems about the experiences of migration, we hope that these stories resonate with you, and perhaps inspire you to weave new possibilities of your own.



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Wok to Walk:

A Conversation With NTU Hawkers

Written by: Ng Ka Wai, Oh Jia En Natalie | Designed by: Kerlyn Ong Shi Yi | Photos by: Victor Lim

When was the last time you spoke to a hawker on campus? If you are like us, the answer should sound something familiar – perhaps just yesterday, though we seldom speak with them past what is required to get our meal. Some might even say, the less said, the better. Yet, hawkers undoubtedly occupy a prominent place in our daily lives as Singaporeans. These unsung superheroes may appear to lead simple, unassuming lives yet there is so much more that goes on behind the scenes.

They wake up early every day to prepare our favourite meals and must withstand long shifts in the process. However, who exactly are these people, and what stories do they have to tell?

We started our inquiry by talking to Kelvin, an employee at the Fine Food @ South Spine's duck rice store. Born in Malaysia, he has been working in Singapore as a hawker for the past four years. Unfortunately, a year ago, a hawker store he had worked at in Choa Chu Kang was forced to close down due to construction works. With the opportunity at hand, he took the chance to continue working with a duck rice business at NTU.

"My work is not very hard now because I am used to it,"

Kelvin told us in Mandarin as he detailed his work schedule starting from 7AM. He begins his day by preparing rice in the morning and would only wrap up at 8PM after washing the dishes. When asked what prompted the decision to sell duck rice, he replied with a chuckle, "We chose to sell duck rice because it is convenient. There is really not much thought to it."

Stories like Kelvin's tell us of the rugged nature of life as a hawker. Some are driven by the promise of a better life in Singapore, like Kelvin and his Vietnamese co-worker. Kelvin makes it clear that bonds within the hawker community are strong.

"We look out for one another, and we talk to one another," he told us. Occasionally, hawkers would also patronise each other's stores. For instance, Kelvin would sometimes buy a plate of vegetable rice to go with his soup. Experiences like this helped foster closer bonds between hawkers in NTU.



However, the hawker scene is constantly evolving. Today, not all hawkers resemble Kelvin. Ray Sheng, an NTU Computer Science student, represents a new generation of hawkers. Known as a "hawkerpreneur", Ray Sheng and his team founded a bee hoon operation, Raydy Beehoon and ever since then, Ray Sheng has expanded his business into selling mala at North Hill as well.

When asked about his motivations, he noted the lack of latenight food alternatives for students on campus, which prompted his decision to seize the opportunity. He also made clear the difficulties of running the business. He confided: "There are so many challenges for us to deal with." For example, the team must pay levies, manage foreign labour, settle their own electricity bills, and ensure hygiene standards are met.

The job of a hawker has traditionally been relegated to the fray as jobs that youths do not want to take on due to their physically demanding nature. When asked to comment, Ray Sheng told us, "I believe that if no Singaporeans continue this legacy (Singapore's hawker tradition), we will lose out to the other big F&B companies like McDonald's."

He also remarked on how hawkers could stand to benefit from technology. Ray Sheng showed us the app he created for his business using his programming knowledge. This has helped his employees complete end-of-day settlements and chart graphs to anticipate future demands to curb food wastage.

Starting a hawker business can be fun at first, but it is not as simple as one would think. You need to work hard for it.

Ray Sheng bears testament to these hardships of starting a hawker business against the grain.

Such hardships also resonate with the founders of NEGATIVE21DEGREES, an up-and-coming ice cream store at Crescent and Pioneer Halls. Run by Justin, a first-year Electrical and Electronic Engineering student at NTU along with his National Service friend, Liang Hao, NEGATIVE21DEGREES is known for their delectable ice cream selections and their unique methods of serving ice cream – reverse frying, as inspired by a Thai dessert.

While this trendy stall has attracted waves of students in its opening week, the business has faced various challenges. "Most of my friends say that it is not going to work because of the undesirable location," said Justin.



"Students tend to only buy ice cream once in like, two weeks," he also mentioned. Yet, he remains resolute in running the stall. When asked about his motivation for pursuing this business, he replied:

Whatever you do in life, don't regret it."

Justin is certainly a passionate advocate of the YOLO mentality and the spirit of entrepreneurship. After all, how many students get the chance to set up their own stall during their time in university? Perhaps there are indeed times when we should seize the moment and not let risks or challenges hold us back.

The hawker scene in NTU is evolving. Hawkers no longer just constitute those in the traditional sense – young NTU students are also venturing out to preserve this aspect of our precious and unique Singaporean heritage. Undoubtedly, this trade is rife with hardship and we need to have more conversations about hawker culture in Singapore. However, we hope that these insights inspire you to ponder where the hawker scene is headed in both our university and in Singapore.



During the Circuit Breaker, many of us took a well-needed breather, spending time on ourselves, our hobbies and with our loved ones. For final-year Communication Studies student Beverly Chew, however, nightly Skype sessions with her best friend Shirin gave rise to something bigger. Lamenting over their lacking love lives and the superficial nature of online dating today, Beverly and Shirin decided that things needed to change. That decision marked the beginning of Not.A.Dating.App (NADA).

Pick a date, then find your match. With this system, NADA subverts conventional online dating applications. On typical dating apps, users can spend up to months texting a potential partner only to discover an appalling lack of chemistry when they finally meet. On NADA, however, the first contact users have with their matches already takes the form of a date. Designed for those who yearn for spontaneity and chance in their love lives, NADA opens the door to more meaningful connections.

Users first select an activity of interest from a catalogue of dates on NADA's Instagram page. NADA then matches users who have selected the same date, taking into account the compatibility of crucial factors such as views on family and religion. Rather than having to sift through hundreds of profiles, users are presented with a single match through a streamlined matching process.

Typical online dating apps require users to make snap judgements of others based on a short biography and a few strategically curated photographs. With a focus on mindful dating instead, NADA gives users the opportunity to hold a real conversation with an individual they are likely to get along with. Users also get to know their matches on a deeper level while bonding over their favourite activities. Even if the date doesn't work out, at least you're at your favourite bar or watching a good film!

Established during the Circuit Breaker, NADA kicked off with a series of virtual dates. These included activities such as horoscope readings, Truth or Drink and 36 Questions to Fall in Love. As NADA gained traction, it expanded its outreach in the post-Circuit Breaker period with physical dates held in collaboration with restaurants such as Old Habits and Wild Olive Branch. More recently still, NADA played host to Singapore's largest online dating seminar. Over 120 participants turned up for the speed dating session and benefitted from coaching by love gurus from The Style Atelier.

Over the course of 11 months, NADA has come a long way, having set up its very own physical space in Katong just last December. The cosy space is now home to in-house dates, where users can engage in art jamming and play board games together. The journey has definitely not been without hiccups, but these challenges are meaningful to Beverly and her team.



"There were so many obstacles we didn't anticipate," Beverly recalled with a laugh. "For example, we wanted to do cement flooring, so we hacked the floor tiles, only to realise that the floor wasn't suitable for cement!" The team managed to overcome such obstacles with the help of Beverly's parents, whom she is grateful to have grown closer to during the process.

NADA has also grown largely due to the generous support of mentors and seniors from NTU's Overseas Entrepreneurship Programme (OEP), whom Beverly describes as guardian angels. Participating in the OEP Pitch Day also provided the team with funding to keep the project going.

Looking back on their year-long journey, NADA has exceeded Beverly's wildest dreams. What started as a late-night rant with her best friend took off as a platform that has turned online dating on its head.

> "If you have a passion for something, just go for it. You never know what could come out of it."



How Can We Redefine

Written by: Sng Hui Ying, Eunice, Tan Ching Yee

Designed by: Lai Ling Liu

Immaculate LinkedIn profiles boasting a curated selection of professional experiences. Examination certificates displaying highly coveted "A" grades. Trophies and medals – gold, gleaming and prominent – adorn rows of shelves, serving as reminders of competitions won or awards earned from weeks of work.

In Singapore's performance-oriented society, we devote our lives translating hard work into visible manifestations for the world to marvel over. These physical accolades testify to our status as successful high achievers to be admired and emulated by others.

However, are there alternative ways to understand success? Other than grades and our salaries, are there subjective meanings of success that cannot be quantified? In that same vein, is there even a need to measure and peg a value to success?

We believe in a future beyond grades - a nurturing culture where people are not solely defined by their performance in examinations.

Reflecting on Success

Seeing peers achieve material success may breed feelings of inferiority, and we may be pressured to match up to them. But perhaps intangible, personal goals that deliver purpose to one's life can be just as meaningful.

For some, scaling the social ladder gives them joy, and that's alright.

Sng Hui Ying, Eunice
Year I, Communication Studies

However, personally, I feel jaded after spending 20 years prioritising my grades at the expense of everything else. Entering the university course of my dreams seemed like the endpoint and after that, I experienced a disconcerting emptiness.

As I noticed others taking the time to participate in exciting events, travel, volunteer, spend time with friends and make their own art, it dawned on me then that there was so much more to life. Even though they may not have performed that well academically, that did not stop them from living a life filled with meaning.

I also feel inspired when I witness them pour their souls into passion projects – living beyond themselves and their grades to make their significant impact on the world.

Rethinking Success

Perhaps doing well in life doesn't always have to entail following the tried and tested trajectory of attaining the highest test scores, landing a well-paying job and then buying a big house.

Success is subjective and ever-changing. Success can also mean being a warm friend, a good citizen, a filial child, and a kind person, especially to yourself. Being successful can be simple – it could be about leading an uncomplicated life full of abundance and gratitude. It is not just about things like one's GPA.

After all, a report card alone does not give insights into a person's morals and value systems, which are arguably more important than academic achievements.

Maybe, all we need is to be contented with doing what we love and sharing this joy with others. Taking time to pursue talents and passions, for instance, regardless of what other people think can be viewed as a form of personal success.

It is rather unfortunate that many of us give up on dreams just because society deems them as less valuable than material gains.

> Tan Ching Yee Year 3, Sociology





As a child, I liked visual arts very much. Drawing and designing were my favourite pastimes. When I entered school and became socialised into embodying the expectations of a typical student, however, I gave up the dream of becoming a visual designer. Learning math and languages were deemed as more important.

Had I chosen to keep drawing, perhaps I would have developed my skills more. Maybe I would have even become a professional visual designer. Some days, I find myself questioning my decision to stop pursuing art. I always wonder how different my life would have been had I chosen to do what I truly wanted. What would it be like to always be excited about my next project, simply because I liked doing it so much?

Let Passion Drive You

As eminent talk show host Oprah Winfrey once said: "Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you." In our Humans of NTU series, we feature a group of students who are happy with themselves and love what they do.

What we hope to present is not the list of things in their resume. Rather, we want to inspire you with their passion for their belief in certain causes for society, so much so that they did everything in their power to make progress in that direction. They don't just start these initiatives to show off or advance their social standing, but because they are driven by a sense of purpose.

Similarly, we believe in personal growth – moving forward in the paths that we have chosen, at our own paces. Respecting different definitions of success is important and small measures of success can be just as celebrated as bigger ones. Every individual's measure of it is unique and forcing a one-size-fits-all narrative inhibits different, meaningful definitions.

"I was a Normal student, but now a university professor.", "I scored 280 for my PSLE!"

Unfortunately, even late bloomer narratives conform to the one-dimensional notion of success. Occasionally, we hear of those who did not excel academically in their younger years suddenly becoming a top-performing professional later in life. We praise them for "defying circumstances". Yet, ironically, we are still measuring them against conventional societal standards.

Conversely, what about precocious individuals who excelled academically in their early years but end up not "living up to their true potential"? We like to speculate and theorise where it might have "all gone wrong" for them, why they stopped striving for "success". But have they really failed just because they embarked on a new path? Perhaps it is time to have these conversations and develop a more nuanced understanding of the concept of success.

It's All About You

Ultimately, how one defines success differs from person to person. Success is an amorphous concept and it has many interpretations.

For us here at NTUSU, we believe that every individual has their own unique value and there should be less emphasis placed on measuring ourselves against others. In the end, nobody is a failure for not being a top scorer or the highest-paid employee. Instead, deriving satisfaction from the simple joys in life and pursuing your own form of meaning may be more important.

Let us move beyond grades and do what makes us happy.





BREWING THE JUICE BEHIND CHRISTY'S INSPIRATIONAL FOOD JOURNEY

Written by: Ng Ka Wai, Oh Jia En Natalie | Designed by: Tay Wan Yin Natalie

If you love a good slice of toast, Christy does it best. Having discovered her passion in creating delectable, yummy bakes for people during the summer of 2018, Christy Chua, a third-year Communication Studies student, now heads a thriving bakery business called Toast Tribe. On top of that, she has also recently launched The Slow Press, an independent food magazine.

This concoction started from the quirky pantry pop-ups that Christy organised for her friends and neighbours while she was still staying on campus in 2018. It was fairly simple yet heartwarming, as the smell of good o' scrambled eggs invited neighbours to indulge in the shared camaraderie between toast lovers.

To Christy, making toast for her friends is like giving someone a warm hug – it is something to be shared and appreciated. Preparing toast might sound fairly simple, but behind the scenes, a lot of thought and love goes into every slice made. Toast is simple yet versatile and enjoyable in many ways – a slice can be the fuel to start one's day right, or a touch of gooey sweetness to return home to after a long day.

THE START OF SOMETHING NEW: TOAST TRIBE'S FIRST BABY STEPS

After a series of on-off toast parties, Christy observed how friendships were established among a sea of strangers. She noted how serendipitous connections like these were hard to come by nowadays. Armed with a personal vision to connect strangers through her food, Christy kickstarted Toast Tribe. She believes in making one's own food from scratch – procuring quality ingredients as well as devoting time to make batches of bread and cookies.

In one year, Christy's Toast Tribe has grown tremendously with four physical pop-up events being held and over 150 slices of toasts sold. When asked about the source of her gastronomic creations, she heartily quipped:

"Inspiration can be born from anywhere; from the most random sketches to the craziest food inventions, tried and tested!" For instance, when Christy picked up the art of kombuchamaking and lacto-fermentation last November, she quickly realised that fermented bakes were a big hit. Hence, she decided to take a bold risk and whip up eight boxes of lacto-fermented blueberry galettes for her November pop-up.

THE SLOW PRESS

Along with Toast Tribe, Christy also developed a strong passion for food writing and graphic design through The Slow Press. The Slow Press initially started off as a monthly newsletter when Christy took up writing as a "quarantine project" and decided to branch into food journalism where she penned simple toast recipes and documented her food journey. It has since grown into a bi-monthly independent food magazine.

Managing a publication single-handedly is hard, as Christy found herself struggling to find the time to complete the first issue. Slowly, she started scouting for interested members from her school cohort group and circle of friends. Today, The Slow Press is a joint collaboration between writers, editors, illustrators and photographers.

When asked about the primary focus of The Slow Press, Christy shared with us that it is the authenticity of Singapore's food scene that the magazine hopes to showcase. The team wants to make food and the joys of preparation and consumption more relatable to the layman. Additionally, they hope to introduce elevated cuisines that are not commonly accessible as well as uncover unique food stories that stemmed from humble beginnings and steadfast legacies.

With a focus on long-form journalism and in-depth food reporting, the first volume that was launched in February 2021 covers a range of topics from food styling, vermicomposting, food and cultural heritage stories, as well as personal interviews with Bunkerbunker and Ah Mah's Legacy about authentic kueh making.

Christy's legacy in Toast Tribe and The Slow Press is indeed awe-inspiring and has encouraged some of her friends to start their own newsletters as well! From her sharing, we are equally inspired by her fearlessness to try new things and challenge boundaries to pursue what she loves – food. If anything, her passion venture can be succinctly encapsulated in the following quote which she lives by: "to be present for the food made with love".

TOXIC 'PRODUCTIVITY':

A GUIDE TO PREVENTING BURNOUTS

Written by: Ong Zhi Yi, Soh Gek Shuen Designed by: Lim Zheng Wei Filling up your schedule to the very minute, then regretting your decision at the end of the week when you barely have time to breathe. Sounds familiar? Many students in Singapore – like you and me – tend to be so obsessed with the concept of "productivity" that we cause ourselves to be burnt out before we even know it. So why do we worship productivity so much? Most of us tend to determine our self-worth through what we have achieved, especially through tangible goals. Furthermore, it is safe to say that people here are competitive in nature. Seeing others accomplishing so much may give us the pressure to keep up. The pressure can be both internal and external – perhaps from your parents, your peers, or even yourself.

What's worse is that we might not even derive happiness from this hectic lifestyle. If you're intent on changing this way of life, read on to find out how you can detach productivity from self-worth.



SETTING DOWNTIME

It's time to embrace the fact that we all need to take a breather from time to time. Switching off periodically certainly helps to prevent a burnout and can even gift you with greater inspiration. You can learn to start small. For instance, set your bedtime. While this may sound easy, small habits like this can help us fall into a more sustainable lifestyle. Switch off your work notifications and spend some time to reflect on your day; you can read, journal, or meditate!

More importantly, devote time to what you love to do the most – even if it doesn't necessarily produce an "outcome" towards your goals. Many of us tend to do things for the sake of our portfolio, but is it what we truly like to do? Some of us might be guilty of this – selecting CCAs strategically only because it helps to elevate our resumes. For a change, set aside time every week to do what you enjoy, like playing the guitar, dancing, or simply reading.

STOP OVER-COMMITTING

In our quest to fill up pockets of time "meaningfully", we may overindulge and take up more than what we can handle. The truth is, we can only achieve so much within a limited time. Therefore, it's important to learn how to prioritise accordingly. Spend your time on perfecting what's important rather than trying to accomplish many things at once. By directing your focus onto the few important things, you can actually be a lot more productive and have more time to spare for yourself. Remember, prioritising is key!

Master the art of saying no. When opportunities are offered to us, some of us may tend to commit without even considering what we already have on our plates for fear of letting others down. Learn to set boundaries and put yourself first! It might be hard for some of us but being direct can save us from regret and resentment in the future. Once you let yourself be in control, it will get a lot easier from there on.



REAFFIRM YOURSELF

Celebrate every milestone, no matter how big or small. More importantly, don't compare yourself with others. While that might be easier said than done, try to focus on self-improvement and being a better version of yourself. We are more than our goals, so learn to cherish the process and the person that you've become. Even when we deviate from our "planned" route and make mistakes, don't be too hard on yourself! It is not necessarily time wasted – try to appreciate the lessons learnt.

Detaching productivity from self-worth takes time; it is indeed a process. What matters is our conscious shift in mindset and putting in the effort to adopt a sustainable lifestyle. But if things do get too tough for you to handle, keep in mind that you can always seek help. Speak to someone you trust – your friends, family or mentors. You may also reach out to the Students' Union – we're here to listen to you.

Remember, you're not alone — everyone's rooting for you.

Good luck in your quest to becoming a better version of yourself!

HUMANS OF NTU



Scan here to see the full interview

Shi Zhou

Materials Science & Engineering, Year 2

There is only that much one can realistically achieve in a day but some people have a way of balancing it all. Shi Zhou Tan, a second-year Materials Science & Engineering student, is many things: self-starter, sustainability advocate, prospective engineer and the list goes on. It's safe to say that it's his world and we're just living in it!

THE MANY HATS OF THE ENTERPRISING ENGINEER

Written by: Aggarwal Kavya | Designed by: Tay Wan Yin Natalie

Self-starter, keen sustainability advocate, prospective engineer and a licensed private investigator with the Singapore Police Force.

A man of many hats. Although a fine art of balancing, secondyear Materials Science & Engineering student Shi Zhou Tan does it all with great finesse.

During our exchange, I distinctly remember asking him about his long-term goals. Without skipping a beat, he replied that he wanted to work with various stakeholders and the school management to create a greener campus for everyone.

To many, this may seem like a lofty pipe dream. However, for Shi Zhou, this is just another opportunity. Simply put, if he feels strongly about the cause, Shi Zhou is unfazed and will devote time to effect change.

Shi Zhou has felt strongly about the environment and social welfare since his time at Temasek Polytechnic. He stumbled upon a documentary on deforestation that first sparked his interest in environmentalism. After that, he joined the Temasek Polytechnic Green Interest Group as the club president to advocate for environmental and biodiversity conservation.

On top of receiving certifications in resource efficiency, Shi Zhou has also brought together a group of like-minded NTU and NUS students to set up Hazy Waste, a startup addressing the issue of transboundary haze and inefficient management of oil tin waste. With Hazy Waste, his team aims to recycle the metallic oil tins used by hawkers and used cooking oil that will be reprocessed into biofuel. Additionally, his diploma in Chemical Engineering has also exposed him to water treatment technologies and waste management systems.

A lot of behind-the-scenes work goes into starting a business – ideation, prototyping, finance management and product development. When asked about his own entrepreneurial experience, Shi Zhou described himself as a beginner who is still learning about value creation and business operations.

It seems like "busy" is an understatement when it comes to Shi Zhou. Yet, when asked how he manages to cope, he remarks that his academic schedule has not slowed down his community outreach pursuits. In fact, he credits the university for giving him a platform and access to resources that allow him to amplify his outreach and work more efficiently.

"Two aspects in which NTU has helped me are finances and opportunities. The bursaries awarded to me have helped me offset some of the financial strain of university education as I focus on environmentalism. At the same time, NTU has also provided me with a lot of opportunities in terms of leadership and exposure."

Having heard about Earthlink – the largest student-led environment club at NTU, Shi Zhou had thought about joining it even before his undergraduate journey started. To him, getting elected to serve as the 28th President of the club only a year after joining not only brings him great pride, it also simultaneously puts him in a position of immense responsibility. Ever since his investiture, he has already overseen over 20 projects ranging from biodiversity conservation, resources management and community engagement and represented our university at the Inter-University Environmental Group Coalition.

Beyond all things academic and entrepreneurial, Shi Zhou can also be trusted to perform some reliable sleuthing! As a licensed private investigator with the Singapore Police Force, he has both credibility and credentials. It was his keen interest in detection and forensics that first got him interested in investigation as a hobby. Nowadays, he keeps his grey cells functioning by participating in case challenges and contests.

Considering his numerous roles and responsibilities, you may wonder how he manages to multi-task! Well, he finds it quite straightforward. Passion and ambition drive him. He constantly faces setbacks and must make certain sacrifices, but he never lets anything stop him. Shi Zhou is keen to continue exploring better environmental practices and engineering with a cause. He also hopes to pursue postgraduate studies in Renewable Energy and Green Materials to assist him in his future endeavours.







Founded in 1991, NTU Students' Union (NTUSU) is a student-run association which is committed to representing the collective voice of all 24,000 undergraduates at NTU. We act as the bridge between students and the University, to provide a vibrant campus and academic experience for all students.

MOTTO

Voice, Service, Vibrancy

MISSION

To empower the voices, advocate the interests, and enhance the vibrancy of campus life for NTU students

VISION

A community where NTU students are empowered partners in building their university experience.



To celebrate 30 years of NTUSU, let us revisit some of the milestones that the Union has achieved. This year, we remain committed to executing our vision and implementing our IDEN30, which has become even more essential today than ever. During times of adversity, the four pillars of IDEN30 ground our work in aligning and coordinating everyday operations within the Union.

Cheah Guan Ying 30th NTUSU President

IN THE LAST 7 MONTHS

19 COMMITTEES 364 USSOCIATES 38 INITIATIVES

30th NTU Students' Union Four Guiding Pillars

Following the Union Vision 2020, NTUSU would like to formally present the 30th NTUSU's four guiding pillars, IDEN30 – Identity, Employability, Sustainability, and Empowerment. This year, NTUSU strives towards channelling our efforts towards the development of our unique identities as students. As we celebrate 30 years of service and excellence, we believe that IDEN30 will continue to guide us in serving the student body. These pillars have been the core of our strategically planned initiatives, events and ideas.



The Union strives to forge a unique identity that encapsulates the vibrant diversity of NTU – one that can be proudly owned by each student. We hope to build a community that encourages the collective growth of our students, while simultaneously allowing for individuals to reach their fullest potentials at their own pace. Here at NTU, rather than having one particular conception of identity, we focus on a unique collective identity where we celebrate all undergraduates' achievements. These achievements come together to form the diversity that we represent.



The Union firmly believes in hiring beyond grades and we are constantly working towards creating opportunities that will prepare our students for the workforce. In equipping NTU students with valuable skill sets to ensure that they are future-ready, we strive towards recognising our students as holistic individuals.



The Union has increasingly placed more emphasis on sustainability efforts and initiatives within the University. We have been working hard to incorporate greener habits into our day-to-day practices, to move towards an eco-friendlier school environment and ultimately, a more sustainable way of life.

EMPOWERMENT

The Union has continuously pushed for the empowerment of our students over the years by shaping the University's social environment into a safe space for students to learn, grow and excel in their own areas.

The Union recognises the importance of self-respect and respecting others, especially in this day and age. Therefore, we have been working conscientiously to create platforms for students to raise concerns and to be supported by our qualified peer helpers. We have also brainstormed and implemented essential initiatives focusing on increasing self-empowerment.



THE PEOPLE WHIND THE UNION WEATHVE THE UNION

Have you wondered how NTUSU operates? Or what a Union member, also known as a Ussociate, does? Let us bring you through the works of each committee and how they all come together!

committees encapsulate

conviction and spirit of NTUSU – to empower, advocate and enhance the vibrancy of campus life for fellow NTU students. Read on to find out how NTUSU's committees work hand in hand to serve the student population!

The 19



COMMUNICATIONS & RELATIONS

The Communications Portfolio manages the arm of content curation, for both online and offline platforms, that represent the engagements of all 19 committees under NTUSU. We also provide information for the student body through the five main social media channels and official website of NTUSU.

In ensuring a two-way communication with the student body, the Communications Portfolio also oversees NTUSU's official feedback channels, as well as NTUSU's own student-run publication, U-Insight.







FINANCE & BUSINESS

The Finance Portfolio manages the Union's retail and external relations, overseeing NTUSU's very own retail storefront, U-Shop, at North Spine, as well as external relations with NTUSU's corporate partners.

The Portfolio also oversees NTUSU's arm of social responsibility, pooling donations that contribute to the NTU Students' Fund and providing bursaries to fellow students in need.









SECRETARIAT & SUPPORT

The Secretariat Portfolio supports the Union in its back end operations and the management of talents and diversity within the Union. They are the people behind the Union's logistical and IT support who help to sustain the Union's functions.

The Portfolio also oversees NTUSU's internal member relations and supports the international student community.









RESEARCH & POLICY

The Policy Portfolio strives to uncover gaps in student life, by gathering data on student sentiments to develop thorough insights to support consistent policy reviews.

The Portfolio also oversees all policy introduction and review pertaining to areas of Academia, Hall, Transport, Sustainability, Healthcare and Empowerment.





STUDENT ACTIVITIES

The Student Activities Portfolio focuses its efforts on boosting campus vibrancy through its regular engagements with the student body. Apart from welfare and carnival events, the Portfolio also manages orientation and induction programmes such as Welcome Week.

The Portfolio also oversees the planning and execution of NTUSU's flagship events such as the annual Open House and Ministerial Forum.













U-Initiatives





At NTUSU, we strongly believe in a holistic and vibrant campus life to go along with an enriching academic experience for all students. With that vision in mind, we launched U-Initiatives. From rental lockers to cosy spots to chill with friends, these initiatives are meant to complement undergraduates' academic journey.

U-Initiatives U-Initiatives



YOU faced an issue?

Have a concern to sound out? Reach out to our friendly officers who manage U-Feedback, NTUSU's official feedback channel!

YOU want a new fit?

Looking to purchase exclusive NTU merchandise? Shop away at NTUSU's official retail store, U-Shop, located at North Spine!

YOU have an idea?

Have an idea on how you can improve the NTU community? Head over to U-Nnovate and share your ideas!

YOU need more storage?

Need more storage on campus? Utilise our U-Lockers located at North Spine, between LT 3 and 4 to drop off your stuff!

YOU want to unwind?

Want to unwind during your free time? Head over to SAC and check out our Wii, Xbox, PS4 and many other board games that we have at U-ROC!



SU Past Notable Initiatives

Written by: Dion Sng Jia Sin | Designed by Tan Hui Ru Kimberley

U-Shop Launch

In January 2016, NTUSU launched our own first ever student-run University retail store, U-Shop that sells a variety of NTU-exclusive apparels and accessories.

2014 Ministerial Forum with Prime **Minister Lee Hsien Loong**

The Ministerial Open Discussions and Events (MODE) committee invited Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong as a guest speaker for Ministerial Forum 2014. On the theme of "Singapore - Progressing Together", the Prime Minister discussed national efforts made to celebrate Singapore's 50th year of independence with NTU undergraduates. The dialogue session had a total of 220 in-person attendees and gained national traction on various media outlets.

COVID-19 Welfare Pack Initiative

In hopes of building a #oneNTUCommunity, NTUSU and the NTU staff rallied together during the pandemic to deliver breakfast, lunch and dinner every day to the affected students living in Leave of Absence (LoA) facilities and the Government Quarantine Facility (GQF). A total of 300 welfare packs were also given out to students. This collaborative community initiative also garnered support from our Minister for Education, Ong Ye Kung.

In supporting the unsung heroes on campus, the NTUSU Executive Committee along with some of our Ussociates delivered welfare packs consisting of hand sanitisers, masks and more to frontline workers of NTU - our janitors whose efforts have kept the NTU community a clean and safe one.

Union Collaboration Fund (UCF) Launch

In 2017, the Union Collaboration Fund (UCF) was launched as an initiative to provide funding to support collaborative efforts between NTU Constituent and Non-constituent clubs. The funding aimed to enhance club to club collaborations to build a strong oneNTU community.

2017

The First Step

2019

In January 2019, NTUSU Executive Committee hosted Singapore's first inter-varsity conference called "The First Step". Topics of the discussion revolved around student employability and the overemphasis on academic grades. The forum gathered over 300 CEOs and their human resource leaders, together with more than 250 undergraduates from the six autonomous local universities.

This event also encouraged the Union to pioneer a project for students to attain the best head start for their future upon graduation, broadening the definition of merit and moving beyond grades as part of the Union's vision pillars.

U-Shop x Kydra Collaboration

Last year, U-Shop also launched a collaboration with a local activewear brand, Kydra that featured an exclusive casual tee series. This exclusive series is currently in-stores at U-Shop @ North Spine.

2020

THE REAL WHIZ BEHIND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Written by: Annamalai Tanisha, Audrey Wan Earn Jia, Ng Ashley | Designed by: Tay Wan Yin Natalie

Genius. Tech Whiz. Magician. Entrepreneur.

For those of us who watched Iron Man when it first premiered, we were likely awed by the cutting-edge technology and innovation on display. We may have marvelled at Iron Man's Artificial Intelligence (Al) butler Jarvis and wondered wistfully what creating our own high-tech device would feel like.

Jiafei, however, was different. Instead of merely fantasising, he decided to make this dream a reality.

Citing Iron Man as his personal childhood hero, Jiafei is achieving heroic feats in the field of Al himself. With a specialisation in data intelligence and processing, the final-year student at the School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE) already has years of experience in innovation under his helt.

As the President of a student group on Machine Learning & Data Analytics at NTU and an A*Star Undergraduate Scholar, Jiafei has designed a host of data analytics and AI-related projects, clinching many innovation and research awards in the process. His interest is piqued by general purpose AI, in which AI programmes can be trained to perform different tasks.

One of his projects, a humanoid robotic arm, was built completely from scratch. Displaying the same ingenuity and tenacity as Iron Man himself, Jiafei and his partner constructed and programmed the arm from a single plastic structure. The result – which won the Tan Kah Kee Young Inventor's Award 2016 – was a skilled robotic arm that could be remotely controlled via a pair of gloves.

It gets even better – Jiafei's designs aren't just slick and sophisticated in appearance, they are also designed with the greater social good in mind. His project MaskedHero, a concept created for the MakeMIT 2020 hackathon, is a device that can calculate the lifespan of any N95 mask to ensure this precious resource is fully optimised, preventing mask wastage during the coronavirus pandemic.

With this impressive catalogue of inventions tied to his name, one might wonder: Who exactly is Jiafei under his metaphorical Iron Man suit? What drives him and what does he do in his free time?

Every day, Jiafei's first order of business is to make himself a cup of morning tea and clear his emails. A typical work schedule comprises frequent visits to his lab, as he applies himself to his projects while simultaneously juggling his university modules. He ends his day by relaxing with friends and playing some board games in the lab.

"I guess it's quite an average life of a student, but with more of the boring parts of research and study," he said.

When he does take the weekends to unwind and connect with family and friends, Jiafei's academic passion for Al and machine learning nonetheless overlaps with his hobbies. Along with augmented reality games, Jiafei also enjoys participating in Hackathons, competitive events where dedicated programmers and developers collaborate on software projects. On top of that, he even purchases technology gadgets, which he colloquially terms "toys", to play around and experiment with in his free time.

Aside from being a technophile, he is also a seasoned performer! Once a stage magician, he would perform in various settings from school events to corporate shows. With his repertoire of magic tricks, he enjoyed illustrating stories that unfolded before the audience. Given his inclination towards science and academia, one might find his interest in magic unexpected. To him, however, the line between science and magic is blurred:

"IF SCIENCE IS ADVANCED ENOUGH, IT IS JUST LIKE MAGIC."

One huge factor that Jiafei plans to tackle is the global issue on food security, one of Singapore's main focuses in the next five years. He is inspired to create a self-sustainable Smart Farm with limited human intervention at minimised costs. For instance, he is looking to venture into using insects and worms as an alternative energy-efficient source of protein.

Equipped with his host of invaluable skills and bold ideas, Jiafei is ready to take on the world of AI and spearhead impressive future projects.

Jiafei beamed as he told us: "I want to change the world."





Expressing Ourselves:

How Singapore's Local Arts Scene Has Flourished

It's no secret that art has the power to soothe, enrich and inspire. During the pandemic, however, when we needed the comfort art offers us the most, Singapore's arts scene has been badly hit. Safe distancing measures reduced human connection and fewer people participated in arts events, causing revenue to fall. Personally, we were dismayed when BooksActually, Singapore's darling indie neighbourhood bookstore, was forced to cease operations at its physical store in Tiong Bahru last year after the pandemic struck. The arts have suffered, and that makes it all the more important that we continue to actively support our local arts scene.

Preoccupation with the arts may seem frivolous when we face threats to our physiological needs during the pandemic. However, many works by artists have a therapeutic effect and can uplift us during these trying times. Art is cathartic and depicts our societal and cultural values in unique ways, encouraging us to reminisce, rejoice and reflect.

Take Singaporean artist Yip Yew Chong's murals, for example. You might see his lush, sprawling artworks if you take a stroll through heritage districts such as Chinatown and Kampong Glam, or pay a visit to the quaint neighbourhoods of Tiong Bahru and Everton

Road. In vivid colour and painstaking detail, Yip etches out whimsical scenes from his childhood that evoke the playful nostalgia of Old Singapore. From mama shops boasting orderly rows of trinkets and sundry goods to a cart exploding with fantastical paper masks, these dreamy vignettes preserve Singapore's multicultural flavour and history.

The murals also feature characters that reign in their respective domains, from the mama shop owner who reclines with one knee propped up to a costume maker attentively stitching a Lion Dance Head. Yip's murals, which unfurl across over 40 walls in Singapore, reflect and reanimate memories of our collective local past.







This contrast between Singapore's strict regulations and America's espousal of freedom encapsulates Mennen's own artistic frustrations in Singapore, where everyone around him told him that the arts could only be a viable career overseas. Reading the Salvation Sam comics, our hearts ached – those of us who studied arts subjects identified with Mennen's struggle between passion and pragmatism. With his art, Mennen expresses his struggle to navigate the Singaporean identity and challenges our own perceptions of ourselves as Singaporeans.

Another piece of art that encourages us to think what the Singaporean identity means to us is playwright Joel Tan's "Mosaic", which revolves around a woman trying to protest against the demolition of the Dragon playground in Ang Moh Kio. The play explores themes of cultural memory and loss, questioning the main character Sharon's real reason for trying to preserve the playground.



In the realm of literature, "No Other City: The Ethos Anthology of Urban Poetry" is a collection of poems written by 64 local poets, some of whom include Arthur Yap, Boey Kim Cheng and Alfian Sa'at. Addressing a host of pertinent themes ranging from urbanisation to multiculturalism, this anthology describes Singapore to a T.

Then there is Ryan Mennen, an artist and writer who creates comics featuring Singaporean superheroes. In creating Salvation Sam, a feisty Singaporean superhero who relocates to California, he channels his uniquely Singaporean frustrations into the character. In Mennen's fictional Singapore, superheroes could only operate by signing on to an official force similar to the army, which was starkly different from the United States' glamorous, celebratory treatment of superheroes.

A particularly poignant line "Can you like, for five seconds, just sit down and enjoy the playground you're trying to save?" hits hard in a generation of performative social activism and a lack of true cultural appreciation. Reading the play, we were forced to reflect on the causes we supported in our lives and whether our motives were genuine.

Singaporean art also captures and depicts the nuances of emotion like no other medium. Recently, ceramic artist Fyon Cheong created several pieces for the National Arts Council and The Straits Times' 30 Days of Art series, which was commissioned to depict works on the pandemic. Cheong's claypots express delicate yet evocative faces that she hoped would "convey the gamut of emotions people are feeling during the pandemic" (The Straits Times). The medium of clay, which is fluid and malleable, evocatively captures the minutiae of emotion, from a despondently sagging face to the tranquil set of a pair of lips.

American academic Gordon Gee once said that "the arts, quite simply, nourish the soul". In times of strife, it is all the more important that we are aware of its power to remind us of, or challenge, who we are as Singaporeans, through expressing collective desires and emotions. The local arts scene is as vibrant as our own culture, and with our support, we can continue to nourish it as much as it nourishes us.

Written by: Annamalai Tanisha, Audrey Wan Earn Jia, Ng Ashley Designed by: Lim Zheng Wei

HUMANS OF NTU



Scan here to see the full interview



WeHiro: Changemaking With Empathy

Written by: Chew Xin Ying Audrey | Designed by: Tay Wan Yin Natalie

Abigail Magdelene Fernandez, a second-year Public Policy & Global Affairs (PPGA) student, is the Director of Finance & Communications of local social enterprise WeHiro. Taking over operations after the original founders left for their National Service, Abigail was motivated by the potential she saw in the enterprise – the ability to make a difference and give rise to a more empathetic society. To focus on getting WeHiro up and running, Abigail took a gap year and put a pause on her education.

Managing a social enterprise is challenging and more so when one also happens to be a student. In fact, many would think that running a social enterprise is non-profitable but Abigail, who has studied social issues in Singapore since her Polytechnic days, begs to differ. Social enterprises are businesses, not charities. Beyond that, they earn profits to support meaningful social causes.

WeHiro, formerly known as CampHiro, evolved from a Final-Year-Project to an established business working with large corporations such as DBS Bank and Temasek Shophouse. Originally a camp initiative to cultivate social responsibility among youths, WeHiro has since expanded to target adults as well! Through ageing simulation programmes that recreate difficult situations faced by the elderly, WeHiro aims to foster empathy and understanding among their clients towards the pioneer generation.

Though WeHiro's niche is gerontology, the enterprise is also exploring poverty in the local context, focusing on the invisible challenges faced by low-income households. Plans have been underway since January 2021 and we can look forward to seeing WeHiro's Poverty Simulation Programme (PSP) later this year.

"AGEING IS EASY TO TELL, IT'S BLATANTLY OBVIOUS. BUT YOU CAN'T TELL POVERTY FROM FACE."

Contrary to popular belief, many low-income Singaporeans struggle to keep up with the rising costs of living here. Although we are aware that poverty exists, we tend to think of it abstractly, oftentimes at the expense of local realities. Furthermore, our reputation as a modern cosmopolitan country masks the severity of hardships in Singapore. Through PSP, Abigail hopes to pose a critical sentiment to Singaporeans: "Why are we looking at poverty overseas when we already have it locally?"

From what I gathered, developing a comprehensive simulation programme is anything but a walk in the park. Curious about the process, I asked Abigail how things worked within WeHiro. She shared that the team always begins with extensive research. Delving into poverty in Singapore, they uncover local insights into the poverty trap as well as its deep-seated psychological impact. Integrating these insights into the crux of the PSP, the team then develops the programme from there on.

Over the Circuit Breaker period, WeHiro also came up with the Virtual Simulation Programme. With physical simulation programmes put on hiatus, the move online has helped WeHiro tide through the pandemic.

Abigail has been with WeHiro for the past four years. When asked about her most heart-warming memory with the enterprise, she fondly recalled the Yes! Festival 2018, an intergenerational event where youths and seniors embarked on a short journey rediscovering Singapore's heritage and food together. Prior to the festival, both seniors and youngsters found it difficult to connect with each other, but this changed in due time, thanks to WeHiro!

Aside from WeHiro, Abigail is also the President of the PPGA sub-club and the Events Director of the Welfare Services Club (WSC). Every week, she has multiple meetings from her various commitments. Whenever there are ad-hoc events, however, more meetings pile up. Yet, no matter how packed her schedule gets, Abigail sets aside time for WeHiro. Although she considers the social enterprise her "side hustle", the time and effort she puts into it suggests otherwise.

At the same time, Abigail has also expressed her wish to move on from WeHiro in June to embark on new challenges. We wish her all the best as she ventures out! Before closing the interview, Abigail offered advice to aspiring social entrepreneurs:

"GO FOR IT. IT'S THE BEST TIME TO START SOMETHING AND THERE IS ROOM TO FAIL."

The key is to have a structured business plan and the perseverance to make it work!

Poetry: The Enduring Power of the Written Word

Written by: Annamalai Tanisha | Designed by: Lim Zheng Wei



When we think of poetry, convoluted words printed on dusty old books may come to mind. However, far from being obsolete, the beauty of poetic verse exists in many aspects of our modern lives today. Some of our favourite tunes, artistic works by fellow Singaporeans and even Instagram posts all convey insights into the human condition through metaphors and stories, reflecting and challenging cultural values. As we commemorate World Poetry Day on the 21st of March, NTUSU explores the variety of ways in which poetry speaks to us.

What exactly do poems have to offer in the twenty-first century? How has poetry evolved from its historic beginnings to become an accessible medium of storytelling relevant to modern audiences?

Poetry in Pop Music

Many modern pop songs feature elements of poetry. For many artistes, their songs reflect their thoughts, much like diary entries. From the sting of heartbreak to the salve of friendship, song lyrics express a whole range of emotions. Musical artistes imbue these stories into rhythmic rap or soulful ballads.

The themes and writing styles of songs interestingly resemble poems where meaning is similarly conveyed through creative language. This shows that poetry has universal relevance. Even though poetry may be seen as an "older" form of art, modern songs demonstrate how poetry has been adapted to suit a contemporary artistic landscape.

For instance, the song "drivers license" by Olivia Rodrigo garnered a lot of its popularity from its transparent and honest lyricism that conveyed the realities of lost love. Perhaps this song strikes a chord with us because we have personally gone through a similar experience. Or, maybe we listen to it simply for its captivating melody, as an accompaniment during our study sessions. Whatever the case, Rodrigo's hit song has endeared itself to us, topping Singapore's Top 50 on Spotify for more than a month! Another example of poetic writing comes from pop singer Lorde, whose somewhat more abstract lyrics have intrigued listeners all over the world.

All these artistes, while garnering critical acclaim for their albums, have indirectly proven poetry's might. The ability to relate to someone's deepest emotions, having never met them or having the slightest clue as to who they are, is something special that the written word can achieve.

Contemporary Poets

But of course, poetry extends beyond just song lyrics. Contemporary poets are also everywhere – their works appear both in online and print collections. It's safe to say that many of us have heard of Rupi Kaur. Her collection of strikingly direct, raw and emotive poems coupled with minimalist illustrations has propelled her to worldwide acclaim. Other contemporary poets to consider checking out are Lang Leav, Sarah Kay and Maggie Nelson.

Poems are widely circulated on social media, too. Recently, young poets, affectionately termed "Insta-poets", have emerged on social platforms such as Instagram. For these artists, the Internet is a tool they can tap on to expand their outreach and publicise their art. Users such as @camille.inkwell, @quarterlifepoetry and @thetypewriterdaily endear readers daily with their snappy stanzas and quirky, relatable captions.

Poetry in Singapore

Don't forget about our very own local poets – Singapore has its own growing arts scene, with many writers on the rise! Some beloved collections by them include Joshua Ip's Sonnets from the Singlish, Alfian Sa'at's One Fierce Hour and Md Mukul Hossine's Me Migrant. For English majors in NTU, some of these seminal works might even be studied in university! These books delve into themes such as urbanisation, multiculturalism and independence, relevant themes that I believe many local readers like us would resonate with. That is the beauty of Singaporean poetry – the words impress themselves upon us more deeply because there is a shared sense of camaraderie. This enables us to better relate with the themes discussed.

Manifesting itself in diverse forms, the medium of poetry is truly powerful and versatile. It has provided an outlet for people to express their emotions, achieving catharsis during difficult times. As an art form, it transcends boundaries and brings people together in shared appreciation. Given poetry's might, it definitely deserves more attention from young people like us. Poetry opens our minds to interesting ideas and varying perspectives – without it, the world would probably not be the same. Poetry is an art form that has stood the test of time and hopefully, will continue to impact future generations with people like yourself keeping it alive.

If you've reached this point and are itching to read some poetry, a good place to start can be poems from your fellow peers! NTUSU's Editorial Committee recently held a writing competition in conjunction with the Union's 30th Anniversary and you can read the winning entries in this very issue. We hope that you'll enjoy the rich stories that they have to tell!

Journalism's New Horizons:

A Soapbox For Students

Written by: Descalsota Ann Nicole Bernardino, Lim Ziqian | Designed by: Tay Wan Yin Natalie



Not many people are aware of the power that words wield – after all, they are merely different permutations of the alphabet. However, words can inspire us, and they are the medium through which we tell our stories. In the same vein, words can also manipulate and inflict hurt. By extension, journalists, who are wielders of words, then occupy an especially critical role in society today, especially in the media industry.

In 2019, two aspiring journalists from the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information (WKWSCI), Matthew Loh and Osmond Chia, started Soapbox.sg, an independent and student-run news organisation. Its mission is to provide impartial news about campus events and issues that matter to students at NTU.

The decision to start Soapbox emerged in part due to the termination of The Nanyang Chronicle in 2018. Launched way back in 1994, the Chronicle was a trusty student-run campus newspaper published by WKWSCI. With its cessation, life at the mass communications school just felt incomplete.

For the majority, life at school went on. However, for Matthew and Osmond, who had set their sights on specialising in journalism from the get-go, they knew something had to be done. Matthew explained: "We thought that we could become the ones to help them get their voices out."

With that, Soapbox was born. Fast forward two years later to today, the news organisation comprises a team of 16 dedicated writers, editors and photographers. For the team, Soapbox is a training ground for them to dip their toes into journalism. Soapbox's stories run the gamut, from updates on the pandemic to amusing accounts of students running into macaques on campus.

"We might not be the best or the most experienced, but at least we can have a platform for journalists to come together, encourage each other, and hopefully do something for their portfolios," Osmond said.

Additionally, while the publication was only started in 2019, the friendship between Matthew and Osmond actually goes all the way back to when they were freshmen back in 2017! Their shared passion for journalism, coupled with overlapping interests and mutual friend circles, brought the two together such that their working partnership in Soapbox felt like a natural fit.

In many ways, the personal friendship between the two had benefitted the publication as well. For instance, Matthew has been known to spur Osmond to take on a few gutsy interviews on quite a few occasions.

Despite being marketed as a club under WKWSCI, Soapbox is run independently. This has given the publication and its writers more space for creativity to cover stories of interest. But at the same time, this independence is a double-edged sword, especially when you're running a news organisation.

"We're not protected by any organisation. It leaves us vulnerable to being criticised or shut down," Osmond confided.

Opening up about the risks of running this publication, Matthew and Osmond highlighted the importance of impartiality when writing. Writers had to be cognisant of the language and tone used. They are also pushed to exercise neutrality by gathering perspectives from all parties involved.

Matthew shared:

"The job of a journalist is not to express themselves."

The onus is on the journalist to simply collect information and convey events objectively. Ultimately, Soapbox aims to serve their readers by allowing them to think critically and formulate their own opinions.

However, given the nuances of expression where substituting one word for another can turn a sentiment on its head, this job is anything but simple. It's safe to say that the journey of starting Soapbox hasn't been all that smooth sailing to say the least. However, at the end of the day, what matters to both Matthew and Osmond is having a platform that gives student a collective voice. Come what may, having a meaningful purpose in mind helps them tide through even the toughest of times.

"It's tough work, but you never know who these stories will benefit." Osmond said.

"If these stories can help someone or can put the spotlight on certain issues, it's worth getting up for.

That keeps me going."

Writing
Competition
Winning
Entry:
Prose

apepuia

Written by: Talitha Asha Cruz Designed by: Anil Ankitha

Flowers have always fascinated me. There's something very mechanical about the way they bloom, the number of petals they have, their colour, their seasons, their mere existence.

One day, I said to them, I'll have petals just like you. You'll count them on me, and I'll close my eyes. I'll bask in sunlight, be adored and cherished and held in close affection. I'll have petals just like you.

The time came to count them.

I stepped off the bus to walk to my first class in Nanyang Technological University. I was still lost in the mazes and rooms and mixed the North and South Spines for each other. I was a long, green stem with a flower waiting to bloom at the crown of my head. I was eager, I was afraid for my life. I knew I was ready.

"Blooming" is a very strange word. It exists in both the past and the present and does not limit itself there. For example, a flower can speak in its strange, old plant tongue. It can say *I was blooming*, and you cannot identify if it stopped in the past, if it stopped now, or if it will ever stop. You can only tell that it began. It calls to mind an unfurling motion stretched on infinitely. It calls to mind a calculated nature like a piece of paper unfolding a spill of hue and energy. A secret to be shown.

And like that, through a various array of professors and books and papers, the world became wider. It was a flower that revealed itself. Authors and critics came and went. I saw Mary Shelley sitting by benches, Byron and her husband Percy next to her. I saw Shakespeare scribbling away in the corner. I accidentally bumped into Arundhati Roy and Coetzee while rushing to my commute stops. I saw the world the way I felt it wanted to be seen and I understood it – its wants, its loneliness, its desires and hungers and struggles – a little better. And I was blooming: I spoke it in the tongue of strange, old flowers. I was blooming.

One of the very first things I wanted to do in Singapore was to see the Gardens by the Bay. But world crises, cancelled trips and grounded airplanes meant I had to wait a while for the chance. I had never seen a greenhouse quite like it. It was like a strange paradise where every ecosystem in the world could be seen with a brief walk around the room. I never saw roses so red in a room so cold, clinging onto overhead arches to dominate the space and flaunt their beauty. No two plants were treated in the same way or blossomed the same way.

Yet it somehow saddened me. Now I attended classes in my room and spoke to my professors from behind a microphone. The days all felt the same and so did the evenings. Authors travelled on a nonexistent commute and I longed to ask them questions I could never hear myself utter. I was going to wilt before I knew what colour I was going to be. I would never know how many petals I was going to have. I saw the roses in the Gardens and nearly cried. I asked them what I should do and how I could be happy. But I realised with horror I no longer spoke their old plant tongue. They could not tell me any more secrets.

There is a tree by my house I used to pass but pass no longer though I see her from outside my bedroom window. She blooms in a vibrant pink at the same time every year – lovely, ephemeral and eternal. Her flowers stay for a week then fall gently over time, fluttering to her roots like pink feathers until a pile of them sits at the base of her trunk. She is no Sakura tree but a childish part of me pretends she is one.

She tells me to flourish. That is how I must be happy.

How? I complained. I am no blossom; I am no plant. I have been fooling myself all this time with pretty metaphors and I act as if I am a poet with them. I surround myself with hyperboles and similes so I do not get hurt. I am a human being with sorrows and heartache and shrivelled hope. Whatever roots I had have been torn from me forever and whatever flower I would have had already died.

Flourish. The answer was still the same.

All her flowers died a month after.

I first wrote the word "flourish" somewhere in my many notebooks. The ones I no longer used. But then the words did something miraculous: they did not stop.

Plato taught of eudaimonia. The highest of moral thought. Did he love flowers too and did he learn that word from them? Did they teach it to him in their strange, old tongue? Speak it slowly: eu-dai-mo-nia. The word blooms in your mouth. Your lips form the shape of petals. A stem grows from your tongue and unwraps for you a flower.

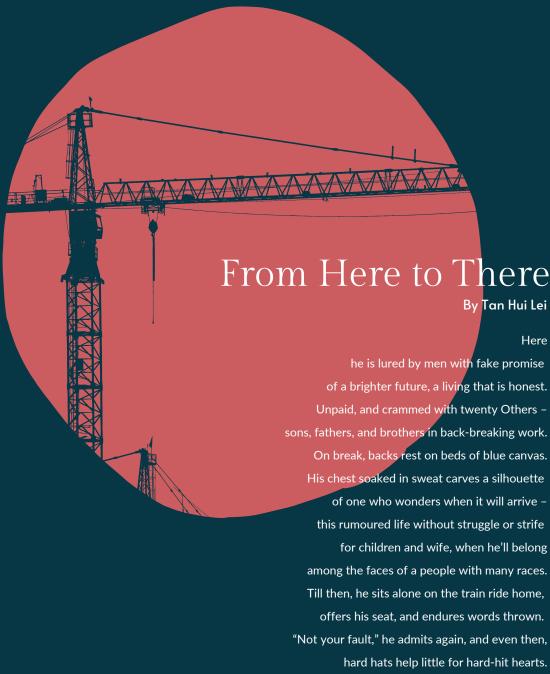
I found where I must flourish, and it is a space, even here, between the words. A white, blank space, where I plant little seeds to grow between the spaces of letters. I hope they are everything I could ever dream of. I hope they are hues I have never even seen before. I was never one flower; I was a hundred of them, I was a million of them.

I was not a flower, but I became a keeper of many. And through them, I flourish.



Designed by: Lim Zheng Wei, Violin Yapputri

Illustration by: Anil Ankitha



Writing
Competition
Winning
Entries:



Call him a fool.
A fool said life is fair.
So he waits for the day
when he does get
there.

MAPPING TWO WORLDS

By Ng An



Veni - I came

to a foreign land where the comforting porridge-like blandness of my language was served with exotic spices upon mangled tongues. We were all wide-eyed dreamers who sleepwalked amongst strangers, tiptoeing in streets paved with gold and cemented with sweat.

Vidi - I saw

sights I had never seen before.

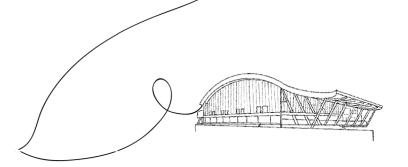
A rotating ceiling fan, each blade a slice of breath. Breads and pastries lined up like distant relatives of the plain loaves I tasted a lifetime ago.

Slender bottles of Coke shaped like bodies unknown in my home country,

the pop fizz crackle of firecrackers bottled in inky syrup.

Greased oil papers glisten like my skin in this unfamiliar humidity,

wrapped around coconut-scented grains.



Vici – I conquered

the local tongue at last.

Kopi-o, teh-o, teh-c

My native language is

a milky melting in my mouth,

replaced by the harsher consonants

overheard in local kopitiams.

The gentler sounds of my childhood

dissolve in the humidity like the morning mist

I used to see.

My breath stills

and my words stop

as I hold the maps

of two countries.

one for when

my eyes are open,

one for when

my eyes are closed.

Take a break,

Let's try this simple game!

Amidst all the hustle that we experience, it is important to take a step back and be mindful of our mental health and wellness.

How to play: Look for the hidden words in this word search, using the sentences below as a guide.

Ν	Μ	Z	Н	Α	٧	Q	Е	Υ	Μ	F	Q	S	Q	R	K	Е	Q
Р	Е	0	L	Н	В	Р	R	С	Υ	Μ	Α	1	-1	G	В	Μ	0
Υ	D	T	W	Р	L	Q	Е	Е	W	1	L	Р	В	-1	R	0	Р
В	-1	Μ	В	Р	D	R	С	U	L	D	D	F	Υ	0	Е	T	Q
Н	T	М	Е	Ν	T	Α	L	Н	Е	Α	L	T	Н	Q	Α	-1	Е
В	Α	Μ	0	G	Ν	0	-1	Ν	Z	1	Χ	Ν	Ν	-1	K	0	Е
T	T	1	Μ	M	Е	D	1	Α	T	Е	Ν	Α	Н	L	S	Ν	Υ
Р	-1	Μ	Υ	F	U	M	В	K	F	Μ	Е	T	T	F	Q	S	Χ
Р	0	S	1	T	T	٧	Е	0	M	R	٧	U	J	-1	Υ	L	0
W	Ν	D	W	S	U	Р	Р	0	R	T	G	R	T	В	0	Ν	-1
Q	T	L	٧	M	1	Ν	D	F	U	L	Ν	Е	S	S	Ν	Ν	D
D	W	Р	U	W	0	Н	0	С	J	G	D	Ν	Q	Р	F	L	Q

1.To cope with negative _____, you can try to take a walk at a park or talk to your friends. It may ease how you're currently feeling. 2. Taking occasional ___ ___ from studying can help you to recharge as well as regain your focus. 3. Practising _____ is key to be more aware of your thoughts, feelings and body sensations. 4. Procrastination affects us all - we are tempted to delay or postpone actions if there are no _____ deadlines. Try keeping a planner! 5. Focusing on _____ things allows us to begin looking at the world differently. 6. It is important to _____ your loved ones who are going through difficult times as we may be their only source of strength. 7. Remember to take _____ day-offs! 8. Spending some time with _____ is a way to practise mental mindfulness. 9.____ techniques for the mind and body are effective for helping you sleep better at night.

10.To calm your mind and relieve stress, you can try practising

_____ for 10-20 minutes in a day



BEREKS
2. BEREKS
3. MINDFUNES
4. MAMBDATE
6. SUPPORT
7. MENTAL HEA
8. NATURE
8. NATURE
8. NATURE
8. STRENZATION
9. RELAXATION





FLAGSHIP EVENTS

Ministerial Forum

Ministerial Forum is a yearly forum organised by the Ministerial Open Discussions and Events (MODE) Committee to provide a platform for NTU students to engage in discussions on local current affairs with our ministers. Join us as we take part in insightful discussions!

Welcome Week

An annual vibrant large-scale exhibition held for the freshmen and seniors of NTU in the first week of school. It will showcase the wide diversity of Co-Curricular Activities (CCA) booths and fun-filled activities that will appeal to all freshmen and seniors alike. Who knows? You may find a new passion there!

Confluence

Featuring NTU's largest annual cultural event that showcases the rich diversity within the NTU Community (staff, faculty, undergraduate and postgraduate students). You'll be sure to make lots of new international buddies through a series of educational experiences consisting of workshops and diverse cultural performances.

U-Study Initiatives

In NTUSU's move towards a more sustainable approach, the Welfare Initiatives Committee is exploring alternative ways to provide welfare support for students, in place of our previous welfare pack flagship event, U-Study. WIC seeks to find new avenues to engage with students while leading the Union in our efforts towards sustainability – in taking the first steps to reduce wastage in items commonly provided in welfare packs distributed across various levels.













