

KAYA is an edible performance lecture tracing Ang's Southeast Asian roots through taste and time glitches. Join her on an intimate journey of the uncanny - traversing cultural dislocation and sticky histories.

KAYA is a lecture-performance that explores my identity as a Singaporean artist, tracing the personal and political threads that connect me to a wider Southeast Asian diaspora. The work confronts the lingering effects of a postcolonial hangover—an emotional disorientation shaped by the enduring logic of postcolonial capitalism. As Naruse (2023: 11) argues, treating the postcolonial as the agent of postcolonial capitalism moves us beyond mere nostalgia or imperial-centrism. In KAYA, this is explored through the material and symbolic realm of food— how its systems continue to underpin present-day sociopolitical structures (ibid: 12).

But the aftermath is not just historical—it is also lived. The piece seeks to evoke a sense of phenomenological estrangement, specifically, the feeling of dissonance between one's body and the world. Food becomes the medium through which this alienation is both articulated and felt. I use food not only as a 'convention of communication' (Piper 1985: 134), but as context for three key reasons:

1. Food has long been severed from its origins, thus echoing the theme of disconnection.
2. It grounds the work in a 'show-and-tell' format (A Learned Pig, 2018). This was inspired by *Common Salt*, which was written and performed by Sue Palmer and Sheila Ghelani.
3. It activates sensory memory and heightens the affective experience of estrangement.

The lecture-performance format is particularly apt. As Seita (2022: 77) notes, it is motivated by questions about how knowledge is embodied and the norms that govern its dissemination. *KAYA* deliberately blends pseudo-academic lecture, research, quotidian gestures, participatory acts, and anecdotal storytelling to mirror the layered effects of the impact of the postcolonial condition on the individual. Moreover, estrangement becomes not just a theoretical concern, but something felt through the audience experience: for example, the audience's taste of kaya is not what is described, or the senses evoked in the present only partially constitute the performer's present experience.

I was also interested in experimenting with the conventions of the form. I resonate with Patricia Milder's argument about how 'it attempts to bring to the fore what is happening and how it is working on you and with you [...]' (Milder, in Frank 2013: 6). For *KAYA* as an edible lecture performance, this involves: integrating facts and research as well as autobiographical content, moments of heightened realism, and more importantly, fostering a sense of intimacy between myself and the audience, which includes ingesting food. In other words, I was concerned with how knowledge transmission can also be an intimate encounter, which can help blur the boundaries between the facts and the personal, while making visible how knowledge resides in the performer. Staging choices helped reinforce this intimacy. Firstly, the performance was designed for small audiences of five. Initially, the idea was to use headphones so I could speak directly into the audience's ears and more importantly, eliminate the environmental sounds as part of world-building. Due to technical difficulties, this was not an option for this run. Instead, other strategies such as the use of physical proximity to the cart and eye contact became essential.

On a personal note, the aspiration is for *KAYA* to be more than just a performance about identity, it is also an opportunity to counter a global aesthetic tendency to intellectualise topics relating to the postcolonial hangover.

References:

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