

3

Performing Singapore's Queer Quandary: Walking the Tightrope Between Sexual Illegality and Neoliberal-Enabled Subjectivity at Pink Dot and in Loo Zihan's *Cane*

Melissa Wansin Wong

In 2012, Singaporean multidisciplinary artist Loo Zihan re-enacted a 1994 piece by performance artist Joseph Ng that had sparked controversy both in the artistic circles and mainstream media in Singapore. Titled *Cane*, Loo's piece revisits Ng's original impetus of protesting against the imprisonment, corporal punishment and public shaming of 12 gay men who were caught up in a sexual entrapment sting devised by the police, as well as the legal and censorship mechanisms taken up against Ng and the arts community by the state. At that time, Ng was charged with 'committing an obscene act in public', and performance art was indirectly censored by being denied public funding for the next ten years (Lee 1994: n.p.).¹ In this chapter, I analyse the performance of Loo's *Cane* in 2012 alongside the civil-society-led, pro-LGBTQ campaign, Pink Dot, which gathers LGBTQ citizens and their supporters together to celebrate and promote the voices and lives of queer Singaporeans. I demonstrate how *Cane* and Pink Dot reveal how queer resistances are enacted and perceived in reaction to the Singapore state's shifting positions in regards to the presence of queer subjectivities and LGBTQ rights. I argue that these case studies are examples of hybrid performances that merge global LGBTQ rights discourses with Asian-based rhetoric. They manifest the evolving political subjectivities of selected Asian queer subjects who are at once enabled yet co-opted by the Singapore state's neoliberal objectives.

This chapter is dedicated to my father

The production of queer in neoliberal Singapore: Legal, cultural and political perspectives

At present, queer lives in Singapore are still criminalised under the anti-sodomy law of Section 377A of the Penal Code, which criminalises ‘any male person who, in public or private’ commits ‘any act of gross indecency with another male person’. This is punishable ‘with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 2 years’ (Singapore Statutes Online 2013: n.p.). While its existence is a reminder of the continued legal and social discrimination against the LGBTQ communities in the country, at the same time representations of queer lives have proliferated in varying degrees through film, live theatre (Lim 2014: 124)² and LGBTQ advocacy groups, as well as in LGBTQ-orientated events like Pink Dot.

To understand this paradoxical state of affairs requires knowing that the Singapore state sees itself as a primarily conservative country orientated towards ‘Asian Values’ (Avonius 2008), alongside its aspirations of being a cosmopolitan economic hub.³ Over the last two decades, various ministers of the ruling People’s Action Party (PAP) have expressed contradictory viewpoints on how the state should respond to its queer subjects. In 1994, incumbent Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong spoke of homosexuality⁴ as an influence of western cultural and economic decline, and an affront to the traditional heteronormative Asian family structure (Offord 1999: 303).⁵ However, Goh’s stance had softened by 2003 when he professed that homosexuals are ‘like you and me’ – a statement accompanied by a change in government policy that enabled gays to serve in ‘sensitive’ positions within the military and to ensure that LGBTQ expatriates would not feel unwelcome (Elegant 2003). In 2007, Singapore’s first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew declared that homosexuals should be accepted despite their ‘idiosyncrasies’ because they are ‘creative’ and therefore have the ability to contribute to Singapore’s image as, and capacity to be, a vibrant cultural hub (De Clearq 2007: n.p.).

The Singapore state still retains its, largely unenforced, sodomy law to placate the conservative majority and religious right. This position coexists alongside the desire to rebrand its international image from that of an authoritarian state to one that is a cosmopolitan and vibrant economic powerhouse, in part signified by the cultural and economic capital provided by the presence of queer lives. This stance, discussed at length in performance theorist Eng-Beng Lim’s work (2005, 2014), explains how ‘“acting gay” in this global city has many inter-Asian dimensions that are not accommodated by Euro-American models’ (Lim

2014: 135).⁶ According to Lim, Singaporean queer subjectivities cannot be solely understood by the narrative of the spread of globalised queer politics emancipating queer lives in more culturally conservative milieus (Lim 2014: 96–101). The need to understand the particularities of queer subjects in Asia on their own terms is also echoed in media and cultural theorist Audrey Yue's work. She observes that Singaporean queer subjectivities are not predicated on the 'Western post-Stonewall emancipation discourse of rights, but through the illiberal pragmatics of survival' (2007: 151). In other words, queer subjects are in part produced by the allowance of the illiberal Singapore state for *pragmatic* reasons of economic expansion. However, Yue also hints at the agential practices of LGBTQ communities in Singapore as they pragmatically adapt to the neoliberal rhetoric of the nation. Finding spaces within this milieu, they reclaim 'the shame of their deviant homosexualities and localised new embodiments of doing queer' (2007: 158).

What, then, do the queer embodiments enabled by neoliberal economics, yet restricted by conservative social mores, indicate about the state of LGBTQ rights claims in Singapore? The following two case studies exemplify this dialectic: they perform human rights scholar Glenn Mitoma's 'hybrid articulation of rights' (Mitoma 2013: n.p.)⁷ and cultural anthropologist Ara Wilson's critical 'queer regionalism' embedded in the specificities of the local political dynamics that produce queer subjectivities within Asia (Wilson 2006: n.p.). *Cane* and Pink Dot are agential attempts to claim spaces for queer subjects in an illiberal state. The performance of their aesthetics and the politics of production reveal meanings often exceeding their narrative intents, exposing the compromises necessary in the practice of Yue's 'illiberal pragmatics' and the possible depoliticisation of the very rights that these queer subjects are fighting to claim.

The manifestation of contained queer sexuality in the state-licensed performance of Loo Zihan's *Cane*

On 19 February 2012, Loo Zihan re-enacted for the third time a performance art piece, *Brother Cane*, first performed by Joseph Ng in 1994 (Figure 3.1).⁸ This particular re-enactment, titled *Cane*, differed from Loo's other two attempts, as well as Ng's original, in three aspects. First, the Media Development Authority (MDA) of Singapore required Loo and his production sponsor, The Necessary Stage theatre company,⁹ to apply for a licence of approval by submitting a detailed script, which Loo was legally not allowed to depart from during the actual performance.¹⁰



Figure 3.1 Loo Zihan in *Cane*, The Substation Theatre, 2012

Source: Photo by Samantha Tio. Reproduced courtesy of Samantha Tio.

Second, the re-enactment of Ng's original piece formed only part of Loo's performance, as *Cane* was divided – in Loo's terminology – into six 'Accounts'. The actions in these Accounts included: Loo's recitation of news reportage of Ng's performance and the resulting legal actions against the artist; readings of the trial affidavit by artist/scholar Ray Langenbach in which the state charged Ng with committing 'an obscene act' (Loo 2012a); video footage of the Chicago performance of *Cane* and of Ng's original performance; a post-show dialogue; and, of course, Loo's live re-enactment of Ng's original action. Third, Loo altered an action in Ng's original performance, the details and significance of which I shall elaborate upon later in the chapter.

Loo declared during his performance that his 'main interest in the re-performance of this piece lies in using [his] performing body to recuperate the public memory of *Brother Cane*' (Loo 2012a). But Loo observes that, try as he might to expose the meaning and effects of Ng's original piece, he finds it to be an impossible task, as the 'centre' of the performance that was Ng's work cannot be replaced (Loo 2013). What exactly was the 'centre' of Ng's original piece that Loo was trying to recuperate? How was the impossibility of his attempt productive to dialogues surrounding the subject matter to which the performance(s) refer?

To answer these questions, we have to refer back to the original performance of *Brother Cane* by Joseph Ng. William Peterson provides a detailed description of the case: in November 1993 the 'pretty police' posed as gay men to entice males searching for sexual partners. Once sexual intent was established, the men were arrested and subsequently incarcerated, caned and denounced in the news media. One of those men eventually committed suicide in response to the public shaming by the state (Peterson 2003). Details of Ng's performance were recorded in the affidavit that was read by Langenbach during Loo's 2012 re-enactment: Ng had placed 12 tiles on the ground in a semicircle, then on top of each, copies of the news article entitled '12 Men Nabbed in Anti-Gay Operation at Tanjong Rhu', a block of tofu and a plastic bag of red paint. Ng proceeded to dance with a *rotan* cane while muttering, 'Three strokes of cane, I will give them three strokes of cane'. He eventually splattered the tofu and red paint by hitting the blocks with the cane. Ng uttered, 'I have heard that clipping hair could be a form of silent protest' before walking to the rear of the performance space, pulling down his briefs and performing an action invisible to the audience. He then walked to the centre tile and placed a small amount of pubic hair on it. Ng proceeded to declare while smoking a cigarette obtained from the audience: 'Sometimes silent protest is not enough'. The performance ended with him stubbing out the cigarette on his arm (Loo 2012b: 43–4).¹¹

Most mainstream media were quick to condemn Ng's performance. Relevant news articles from 1994 were excavated by Loo in 2012, with the artist reciting selected passages from them in *Cane*. They include the following statements:

The performance may be exploited to agitate the audience on volatile social issues, or to propagate the beliefs and messages of deviant social or religious groups, or as a means of subversion.

Obscenity is shocking because it violates our sense of shame [...] some artists are so isolated from the rest of the world that their ideas never undergo a reality check.

Notwithstanding the artistic reasons offered in defense, what Ng did was clearly disgusting.

(Loo 2012b: 36–40)

The terms used to describe Ng's performance – 'deviant', 'obscene' and 'disgusting' – I argue, were in fact implicit references to queer

sexuality. Paradoxically, the press's focus on the work's supposed vulgarity, with the emphasis placed on the level of artistic freedom that artists should be allowed, glossed over the impetus behind this 'protest performance', which highlighted the entrapment and punishment of the 12 men, and the larger context of gay sexuality and LGBTQ rights in Singapore.

Loo's embodied revisiting of the piece in 2012 is a testament to the loosening of discriminatory practices in line with the state's neoliberal agenda, while also being a visceral reminder of the continued legislative criminalisation of queer lives. *Cane's* performative slippages and the subsequent critical feedback generated reveal its missing 'centre' as the absencing of queer lives and the arguable lack of 'liveness' in Loo's version of Ng's original piece. First, the scripted nature of the performance and its dependence on governmental licensing revealed the increasing sophistication of the censorship mechanism of the Singapore state and the continued policing of the artist's voice. Direct censorship is no longer implemented, but the artist is obliged to self-regulate in order to obtain a performance licence. Loo argues that:

It would be simplistic in judging that the fact that I can stage *Cane* means that the country has liberalised. My intention in presenting this work is to make transparent that it does not equate. The fact that I can stage *Cane* just means that I am *allowed* to speak about it.

(Loo 2013)

Second, the 'liveness' of Ng's performance art piece, first staged in the public space of a shopping mall, is now relegated to an enclosed theatre space and sanctioned by a state licence. The video recording of Ng's piece reveals there were startled gasps from the audience when Ng broke the tofu blocks and red paint with sharp slaps of the cane (*Brother Cane* 1994).¹² Ng's performance, part choreographed and part improvised, ignited a genuine sense of shock. There was something at stake in Ng's performance that Loo's re-enactment could not reproduce. In comparison, *Cane* was criticised by Ho Rui Ann for its lack of liveness and its supposed narcissism – a form of 'therapeutics of the self' (Ho 2012b: 78) – to cathartically purge Loo's personal demons in his negotiation of his identity as a gay Singaporean man. This criticism refers to a particular action that departed from Ng's original performance: while Ng had snipped his pubic hair in private, Loo pulled down his pants and confronted the audience with full frontal nudity.

Loo revealed how the media authorities had expressed discomfort with the original act during the licensing approval process; he therefore altered the act in part to appease them. At a more agential level, Loo also justifies his modification, stating:

By not replicating Joseph's (Ng's) piece exactly, I guess it is also a form of protest, a refusal to allow authorities to co-opt Joseph's original action. [...] If cutting hair is a form of silent protest – and there is no hair left to cut – how can the protest still happen?

(Loo 2013)

Disagreeing with Ho Rui An's criticism, I argue that Loo's act of substitution has to be read within its historical and political context, where his questioning of the political efficacy of the act of protest manifests the complexity of the state's current control mechanism towards LGBTQ rights and media censorship. While the permitted staging of *Cane* creates the appearance of a loosening of censorship laws and an openness by the state to negotiate the criminalisation of queer lives, Loo's performance, as analysed below, also embodies how these conditional allowances can depoliticise the potential radicalism present in the original.

Loo observed during his performance a palpable wariness among the audience of the performer's intent; some even sniggered at his act of genital exposure (Loo 2013). The passivity of the audience at Loo's performance is in contrast to the reception of the original piece. In addition, both the post-show dialogue session and published essays remained focused either on issues of arts censorship, or the state's prosecution of Joseph Ng and performance art. The essays focused on an aesthetic deconstruction of Loo's performance, but the basic premise of the work, as in 1994, had again been submerged.¹³ The omission of the critical link between Loo's overtly visceral performance with its political and social context reads oddly to me, as I view Loo's confrontational stance via his nude body as a merging of Ng's act of protest with Loo's own position as a queer Singaporean artist engaging with the present state of queer subjectivity in Singapore. The artistic licence taken in appropriating Ng's original gesture is in some way a form of self-censorship. But in appropriating Ng's original act with his full-frontal nudity, Loo was also in Louis Ho's words, 'recuperat(ing) Ng's protest against the victimisation of gay men, a detail generally lost to popular view by the moralistic cacophony eclipsing the afterlife of the original work' (Ho 2012a: 108).¹⁴ Loo himself states that he wanted to

make visible 'something that wasn't addressed [...] or justice that wasn't delivered' (Loo 2013).

Was the 'centre' that Loo was trying to grasp recovered? Or was it again submerged? Some might argue that the fact that the piece was 'permitted' to be staged, combined with the lack of debate on the performance's original impetus, could be read as evidence of 'progress' on LGBTQ rights claims, when it is no longer necessary to belabour the state of legislative discrimination towards gay men. I argue instead that the very circumstances in which *Cane* was staged (which resulted in a version that was paradoxically more bodily explicit yet ideologically sanitised than the original) and the subsequent responses of the audience and critics (absenting or making circuitous references to those 12 men) expose the ways in which dialogues on the rights to freedom of expression had bled into, and at times substituted or obscured, dialogues about LGBTQ rights. The alteration of the aesthetics of the original, performed under Loo's own admitted self-censorship, also complicates any easy assumption of 'progress'. The artist's omission of Ng's snipping of pubic hair, on the one hand, signalled a bowing down to state mechanisms and the continued repression of marginalised artistic and sexual subjectivities. On the other, the transmutation of the original gesture to one of the nude performer's direct gaze at the audience concurrently challenged the onlookers to confront the 'justice that wasn't delivered' (Loo 2013), with Loo's performance exposing the complicity of both artists and audience in reinforcing the status quo.

What, then, does a performance like *Cane* reveal, and how does it relate to the state of queer-rights claims in contemporary Singapore? The neoliberal economic ambitions of the country have in part enabled Loo to confront the marginalisation and legal discrimination of queer lives in a public performance. Yet the elements of its production also betray its limits, within which queer sexuality is obliquely acknowledged alongside the conditionality of necessary containment by the Singapore state. This in turn is manifested by the continued existence of Penal Code 377A and a vetted performance in a black-box theatre.

Analysing the conditionality of 'supporting the freedom to love': The sanitisation of queer rhetoric in *Pink Dot*

The dialectical politics of the simultaneous allowance for and containment of queer subjectivities can also be read in the phenomenon of *Pink*



Figure 3.2 The formation of the pink dot at Pink Dot, 2013
Source: Reproduced courtesy of Pink Dot Sg.

Dot, an LGBTQ grassroots campaign (Figure 3.2). Beginning in 2009, each year Pink Dot has gathered people dressed in pink in an open field to form a dot promoting queer solidarity. Starting with about 1,000 people in attendance, the event has since grown in size to 21,000 attendees in 2013 (Pink Dot Singapore 2014). Pink Dot takes place annually in Hong Lim Park, the government's designated public Speaker's Corner, where Singaporeans and permanent residents can gather to voice political opinions peacefully without the threat of arrest.¹⁵ Thus, the spatial designation of Pink Dot manifests Singapore's conditional freedom of speech, where only in a designated area of 2.3 acres can citizens speak in an official capacity in the open about contentious issues without fear of political prosecution. Tellingly, Pink Dot's slogan of 'supporting the freedom to love' is indicative of the carefully chosen and non-antagonistic stance of the organisers to appeal to the general public and prevent a crackdown by state forces.

The dialectic of Pink Dot's media campaign exemplifies Ara Wilson's idea of a critical 'queer regionalism', with queer subjectivities being 'constituted by conditions and flows within the geopolitically constructed region of Asia' (Wilson 2006: n.p.). Wilson shares similar views with Lim and Yue in their insistence on looking beyond western hegemonic lenses. All three theorists see the importance of factoring the specificities of local political dynamics into our attempt to understand what constitutes queer in Asia. For example, spokesperson Paerin Choa's description of Pink Dot as a campaign that is 'non-confrontational and aimed at changing the hearts and minds of Singaporeans who are primarily conservative' (Choa 2013) is mingled with the campaign's cautious use of global queer discourses. Pink Dot's website's preamble states: 'Most LGBT Singaporeans are afraid to come out of the closet. This stems from a fear that the simple act of telling the truth can potentially pull them apart from the people that they love' (Pinkdot SG 2014: n.p.). The western-centric term 'coming out of the closet' is immediately tempered by references to love and family, appealing to the perceived emphasis among Singaporeans on Asian-orientated familial and communitarian values.

Another example of this localised form of hybrid queer discourse is a promotional video that portrays 'wholesome' Singaporean LGBTQ individuals striving to gain acceptance. Three narratives are pieced together in the 2013 Pink Dot campaign video titled 'Home', directed by Boo Junfeng: a young transgender woman of Malay descent faces prejudice from the public; one half of a middle-aged gay couple of Chinese descent is denied visiting rights when his partner is dying in the hospital; and

a young woman of Indian descent faces disapproval when her family finds out about her lesbian relationship. The video is set to the song also titled 'Home' by musician Dick Lee, first composed in 1998 to commemorate Singapore's 33rd national day.¹⁶ The final scene shows the three protagonists gathering at Pink Dot with their family members, all dressed in pink. The sentimental and non-threatening aesthetics of the video utilise tropes endorsed by the state: one being the emphasis on respecting Singapore's racially diverse population and the other a reference to national patriotism as signalled by the musical underscoring of 'Home'. Thus, Pink Dot performs its appeal for the recognition of queer subjects through muted rights discourses carefully couched within the state's dominant rhetoric of a conservative Asian society predicated on a cohesive family structure, which supposedly extends to ensure social cohesion and national solidarity.

In foregrounding the campaign with sanguine appeals to desexualised love, familial relations and social acceptance, Pink Dot might appear to be skirting claims to legislative rights. However, the history of Pink Dot demonstrates crucial links between this campaign and Penal Code 377A. Interest in Pink Dot was rejuvenated after a faction from Singapore's Christian right objected to the abolition of the code and began campaigning against the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), an organisation committed to 'gender equality' and 'diversity'.¹⁷ In conversation, Choa stated that Pink Dot is not actively promoting legal change, but he concurred that, 'legal change is a by-product of what we are trying to achieve' (2013). While the legislative recognition of queer subjectivities might be hinted at, it is never openly demanded. When prodded on the paradoxes and discrepancies of his repeated insistence that Pink Dot is apolitical, Choa's concession reinforced and repeated the campaign line, saying 'we hope to bring about political change by first changing hearts and minds of Singaporeans' (2013).

The nature of Pink Dot's queer politics, similar to those of Loo's *Cane*, is an example of Audrey Yue's 'illiberal pragmatics', where compromises are made to carve out spaces for LGBTQ subjectivities in Singapore (Yue 2012). The contradictions of declaring Pink Dot an apolitical political campaign are further evidenced by the potential depoliticisation of its radicality through its imbrication in neoliberal corporatisation. Choa (2013) described how 'Pink Dot suddenly became legitimate' after a slew of corporate sponsorship followed a publicity partnership with Google in 2011 that was initiated by Singapore-based Gayglers.¹⁸ Pink Dot subsequently received national and international news coverage.¹⁹ This

corporate legitimization again points to the state's conditional acceptance of queer lives with a view to honing its cosmopolitan image to increase its international economic competitiveness.

The support of well-heeled Gayglers that sparked the mutually beneficial partnerships between Pink Dot and its various sponsoring corporations, the relegation of 'appropriate' LGBTQ identities to the realm of normative 'Asian family values', and the subtle control of the campaign via the restriction of its potential for growth through designating the event to the finite space of Hong Lim Park all point to a sanitisation and shrewd regulation of LGBTQ lives and subjectivities in a way deemed acceptable by the Singapore state.²⁰ It begs the question of what kinds of rights claims are left out in queer subjectivities enabled by economic mobility and consumption, as well as normative familial and nation-building rhetoric.

In the continued existence of Penal Code 377A, Loo Zihan's summoning of the ghosts of 12 criminalised men in *Cane* and Pink Dot's circuitous campaign for legal rights embedded within a call for social acceptance are embodied examples of the complex processes of LGBTQ rights claims in Singapore. Influenced by, and yet not being able to be fully encapsulated by western-orientated 'global' queer discourses, these case studies manifest articulations and reactions to queer subjectivities problematised by the state's economic objectives. These aesthetic and social performatives are hybrid and transcultural discourses that expose both the agential and complicit nature of rights and cultural work. Importantly, we need to think about what these two case studies expose about the particularities of LGBTQ rights claims in a neoliberal Asian country like Singapore, and the political costs of relegating queer subjects to 'acceptable' and limited spaces of consumption, normative social structures and regulated artistic representation. The performances in *Cane* and at Pink Dot reveal the necessary successes and failings of their attempts at advancing queer rights claims in Singapore, opening up spaces of discussion that re-emphasise the work that still needs to be done.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Loo Zihan and Paerin Choa for their generous contributions to this project. Thanks also to Professor Peter Eckersall and Professor C. J. Wanling Wee for their patient academic guidance and astute feedback.

Notes

1. The original performance, titled *Brother Cane*, took place at the Parkway Parade Shopping Center in Singapore. It was presented as part of The Artists' General Assembly (AGM), an interdisciplinary arts festival and forum on alternative art organised by Singaporean arts collectives 5th Passage Artists Ltd and The Artist Village. After *Brother Cane*, 5th Passage was prevented from obtaining a public entertainment licence for future unscripted performances.
2. Some of the most prominent productions include an adaptation of Martin Sherman's *Bent*, staged by local bilingual theatre company Toy Factory, and the plays *Mardi Gras* by Hareesh Sharma and *The Asian Boys Trilogy* by Alfian Sa'at, produced by The Necessary Stage and W!LD RICE theatre companies. A trilogy of plays, *Invitation to Treat* by Eleanor Wong, depicting the life of a successful lesbian Singaporean lawyer, written in the 1990s and early 2000s, was staged in 2003 by W!LD RICE.
3. In light of accusations of the lack of adherence to international human rights norms, Asian governments have asserted their right to national sovereignty, argued for cultural relativism and emphasised 'second-generation' rights to development over 'first-generation' emphasis on civil and political rights. The debate reached a climax at the Bangkok Declaration Meetings in 1993 during which the governments of Singapore and Malaysia led the argument for the inapplicability of universal human rights within Asia's specific context. Their grounds were that so-called 'Asian Values' supposedly lead societies to work on the basis of communitarianism instead of individualism. Various scholars have written at length about this topic. For more information, see Leena Avonius (2008).
4. The words 'homosexual', 'gay' and 'queer' are not used interchangeably in this chapter. 'Homosexual' and 'gay' are used when these are the terms employed by the particular person quoted. I use the word 'queer' and the acronym 'LGBTQ' in all other contexts.
5. Offord cites as his sources the newspapers *Australian Financial Review* and *Sydney Morning Herald*.
6. Lim demonstrates this statement with his analysis of Singaporean playwright Alfian Sa'at's series of plays, *The Asian Boys Trilogy* (2005, 2014). He argues that Sa'at's plays queer the narrative of Singapore's national history, highlighting an historically and politically contextualised queer subjectivity in a country where queer lives are legally marginalised yet culturally accepted as a strategy of Singapore's neoliberalisation and global economic expansion.
7. Glenn Mitoma suggests that we utilise Homi K. Bhaba's theory of hybridity to think of human rights as discourses formed through cross-cultural negotiations, thus moving human rights from being read as a neocolonial framework originating from western historical circumstances, to occupying an 'in-between space' where 'the meaning of culture is negotiated and enunciated' in their particular contexts.
8. Loo first re-enacted Ng's *Brother Cane* in a performance class at the Nanyang Technological University in 2007; the second re-enactment took place in a showcase of his graduate work at the University of Chicago in 2011.
9. *Cane* was presented as part of the Singapore Fringe Festival, produced and curated by The Necessary Stage in 2012. It was sponsored largely by mobile company M1.

10. The MDA is involved in approving media content available for public consumption, including live public performances.
11. These performance details can be obtained both from the online video of *Cane* and the performance score in the booklet *Archiving Cane* that accompanies Loo's installation of the same title exhibited at The Substation, Singapore, in December 2012.
12. I watched this video of *Brother Cane* at the Asian Art Archive in Hong Kong in June 2013.
13. Besides Ho Rui An's essay, which critiqued the lack of 'liveness' in Loo's re-enactment, Ng Yi Sheng's 'Becoming Joseph' focused on the state of arts censorship in Singapore, and Bruce Quek's 'Real Meat' and Guo Jie Si's 'Number 12' looked at *Cane* through the lenses of embodiment, aesthetics and ontology. These essays are collected in the *Archiving Cane* booklet.
14. Of the essays collected in the *Archiving Cane* booklet, Louis Ho was the only author who highlighted the original impetus of *Brother Cane* and the political implications of Loo's re-enactment.
15. Singapore's Penal Code declares that 'an assembly of five or more persons is designated an "unlawful assembly" and [...] whoever is guilty of rioting shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to seven years and shall also be liable to caning'. For more information, see: <http://statutes.agc.gov.sg>.
16. This video can be viewed at: <http://pinkdot.sg/pink-dot-2013-drives-the-message-home-with-new-campaign-video/>.
17. In 2009, a faction from the Christian right staged a procedural takeover of AWARE's executive committee during the organisation's annual general meeting. This was seen as the Christian right's attempt to use the organisation as a platform to influence society's viewpoints on LGBTQ communities; one of the ways was by attempting to change AWARE's sex education syllabus. While AWARE has stated that their viewpoint of 'homosexuality' is 'neutral', the Christian right wanted to make the stance into a negative one. While this 'coup' was eventually reversed through a no-confidence motion and a second election, supporters and members of the LGBTQ communities in Singapore were shaken enough by this attempt to narrow spaces for LGBGQ subjectivities to take action, and Pink Dot was one of the results. For more information, see: <http://www.we-are-aware.sg/2009/05/08/saga-per-the-economist/>. For more about AWARE, see: <http://www.aware.org.sg/about/overview/>.
18. Gayglers are self-termed LGBTQ Google employees.
19. Pink Dot has been featured in the local newspapers as well as in the international press, including CNN, Reuters and BBC.
20. At present, Pink Dot's corporate sponsors also include banking conglomerate J. P. Morgan, audio branding agency The Gunnery, the hotel group PARKROYAL and contact lens specialist Cooper Vision.

References

- Avonius, L. (ed.) (2008) *Human Rights in Asia: A Reassessment of the Asian Values Debate*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brother Cane* (1994) [Video]. Directed by Ray Langenbach. Singapore.

- Choa, P. (2013) Conversation with Melissa Wong. 14 January.
- De Clearq, G. (2007) 'Singapore Considers Legalizing Homosexuality: Lee', *Reuters*. 24 April. Available from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/04/24/us-singapore-lee-idUSSP5349120070424>
- Elegant, S. (2003) 'The Lion in Winter', *Time Asia Magazine*. 7 July. Available from http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/501030707/sea_singapore.html>
- Ho, L. (2012a) 'Loo Zihan and the Body Confessional', in Loo, Z. H and Ho, L. (eds) *Archiving Cane*. Singapore: Loo Zihan, pp. 95–113.
- Ho, R. A. (2012b) 'Making Life Again, Between Joseph Ng's *Brother Cane* (1994) and Loo Zihan's *Cane*', in Loo, Z. H and Ho, L. (eds) *Archiving Cane*. Singapore: Loo Zihan, pp. 73–85.
- Lee, W. C. (1994) 'Chronology of a Controversy'. Available from <http://biotechnics.org/Chronology%20of%20a%20controversy.htm>
- Lim, E. B. (2005) 'Glocalqueering in New Asia: The Politics of Performing Gay in Singapore', *Theatre Journal*. Vol.57, No.3, pp. 383–405.
- Lim, E. B. (2014) *Brown Boys and Rice Queens: Spellbinding Performances in the Asias*. New York and London: New York University Press.
- Loo, Z. H. (2012a) *Cane*. Available from <http://vimeo.com/37993908>.
- Loo, Z.H. (2012b) 'Cane 2012 – Performance Score', in Loo, Z. H and Ho, L. (eds) *Archiving Cane*. Singapore: Loo Zihan, pp. 43–4.
- Loo, Z. H. (2013) Conversation with Melissa Wong, 14 January.
- Mitoma, H. (2013) 'Human Rights and Cultural Studies: A Case for Centrality', *Culture Critique*. Available from http://www.cgu.edu/PDFFiles/Arts%20and%20Humanities/Culture%20Critique/vol1%20no1/mitoma_glenn.pdf
- Offord, B. (1999) 'The Burden of (Homo)sexual Identity in Singapore', *Social Semiotics*. Vol.9, No.3, pp. 301–6.
- Peterson, W. D. (2003) 'The Queer Stage in Singapore', in Lo, J and Huang, G. (eds) *People Like Us: Sexual Minorities in Singapore*. Singapore: Select Books, pp. 78–96.
- Pink Dot SG. (2014) Available from <http://pinkdot.sg/about-pink-dot/>.
- Singapore Statutes Online (2013) Penal Code 377A. Available from <http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/>
- Wilson, A. (2006) 'Queering Asia', *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context*. 14. Available from <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue14/wilson.html>
- Yue, A. (2007) 'Creative Queer Singapore: The Illiberal Pragmatics of Cultural Production', *Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*. Vol.3, No.3, pp. 149–60.
- Yue, A. (2012) 'Introduction: Queer Singapore: A Critical Introduction', in Yue, A. and Zubillaga-Pow, J. (eds) *Queer Singapore: Illiberal Citizenship and Mediated Cultures*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 1–28.