

THE *IMPORTANCE* of BEING



AN EXHIBITION BY ERNEST ZACHAREVIC

16 DECEMBER 2023 - 10 MARCH 2024

Fri, Sat, Sun — 12pm - 7pm

blankcanvas.my
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2, Argus Lane, 10200
George Town, Penang

Floor Plan

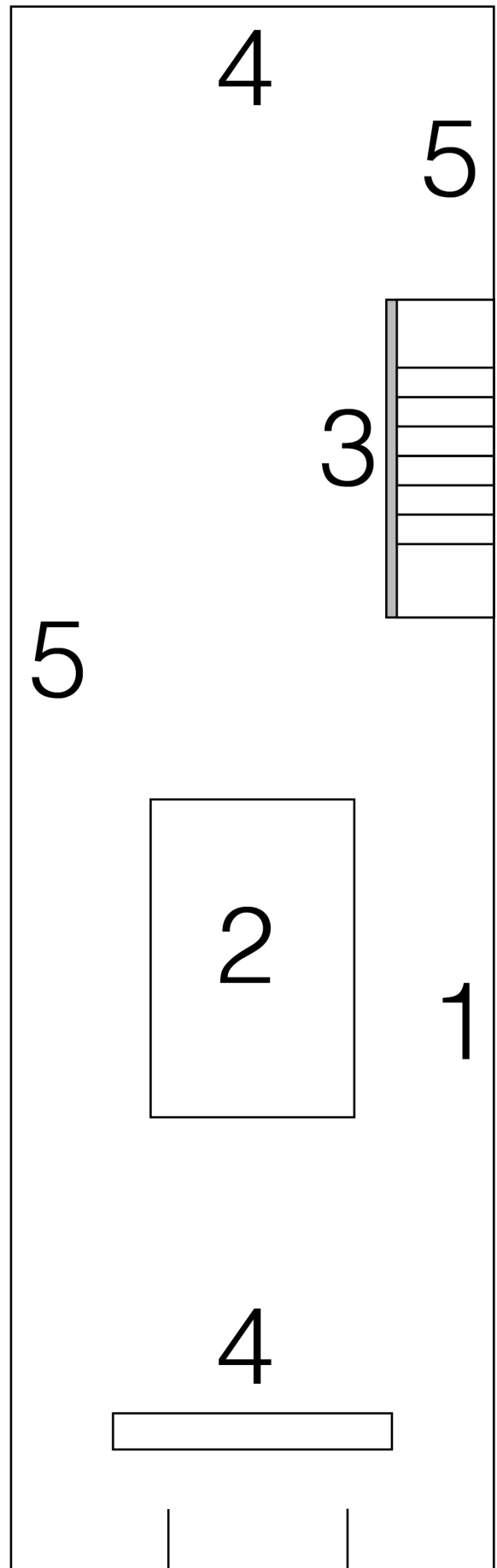
1 *One and Three Paintings*
Oil and acrylic on canvas, readymade
object, hand painted text on a gallery wall
2023

2 *Round & Round & Round*
Sound installation with found objects
2023

3 *2.0*
Bicycle wheel on a chair on a robotic
vacuum cleaner
2023

4 *Painting of a Painting*
Oil and acrylic on canvas, readymade object
2023

5 *Ready F-ing Made #0001 - #0025, #10000*
Readymade objects
Various sizes
2023



Overview

The Importance of Being is Ernest Zacharevic's solo show at Blank Canvas. The title of the show is typical of the artist's sense of humour – self-referential, irreverent and multi-layered. More than just a witty reference to Oscar Wilde's satire, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, however, the title also implies the existential questions raised in this show.

In this show, instead of producing what is conventionally called "art" (i.e. painting and sculpture), the artist explores the nature of art. While renowned for the heartwarming street art murals he created for the 2012 George Town Festival, the artist this time presents to Penang an assemblage of works which expands our notions of what is art and what does art mean to each of the artist and to the audience.

The works reflect Joseph Kosuth's assertion in his seminal 1969 essay, *Art After Philosophy*, that "Works of art are analytic propositions. ... A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying that a particular work of art *is* art, which means, is a *definition* of art." The works downplay colour and form (the morphologies of what is traditionally understood to be 'art'), and focus on objects instead.

In emphasizing objects, these works play around with various tropes of conceptual art, including found objects, 'readymades' (as coined by Marcel Duchamp), and appropriation. Indeed, at least two of the works in the show pay direct homage to Kosuth and Duchamp, luminaries of conceptual art. '*One and Three Paintings*' can be traced to Kosuth's 1965 work, *One and Three Chairs*; while '*2.0*' is reminiscent of Duchamp's 1913 work, *Bicycle Wheel*.

Yet, the works in *The Importance of Being* extend beyond their original inspirations and are more than just intellectual exercises in art history. They are experimental manifestations of the artist's attempts to articulate through objects his own thinking around and about art, such as what it means to be an artist, what art means to him, and what his art could mean to others. And, the artist has injected his personal stamp on these works. In his hands, the bicycle wheel is now ambulatory, able to perambulate around, and to leave its traces within, the confines of the gallery. On the other hand, in '*Round & Round & Round*', the rickshaw, for so long a part of the artist's physical surrounds, is anchored in the gallery albeit with a nostalgic soundtrack generated by its endlessly spinning wheels. The pants in '*One and Three Paintings*' are the artist's own, marked with the physical memories of his art-making. And in making '*Ready F-ing Made*', the artist has had to buy objects which are literal copies of his street art murals.

At once conceptual but also profoundly personal, these works in *The Importance of Being* are, literally and metaphorically moving. Why then, are these works 'art'? In Kosuth's estimation, these works are 'art' because they question the nature of art. And in the parlance of conceptual artists such as Donald Judd and Duchamp, it is also because the artist presenting these works says they are 'art'.



One and Three Paintings

Oil and acrylic on canvas, readymade object,
hand painted text on a gallery wall
214 x 149 cm
2023

Taking inspiration from Joseph Kosuth's "One and Three Chairs" this work is meant to blur the boundaries between the object and the various forms of its representation. In his work, Joseph Kosuth raises the question of what is more real – the object, the image of the object, or the idea of the object. Similarly, in this work, the artist questions our understanding of art itself. Is the painting of an object which has been painted on more painterly than the painted object itself – is one more of a painting that the other? And what does artificial intelligence have to say about this; perhaps the Chat GPT-generated text that is part of this work has a response.



Round & Round & Round

Sound installation with found objects

224 x 183 x 244 cm

2023

Previously used as a vehicle to sell pork, the rickshaw in this work was used subsequently to block trucks from entering a quiet residential alley. The rickshaw is now further re-purposed after the artist decided to move it into a gallery space. Stripping away its original intended (as well as subsequent) functions from the rickshaw, the object's sole purpose is now to be viewed as art.

Neither a sculpture nor a musical instrument, this work is an experience which engages viewers to play around the installation and to observe its component objects and the sounds they create. The immediately recognisable form of the rickshaw falls in sharp contrast to the chaotic setup of the entire work, further emphasising the feeling of nostalgia for the familiar.



2.0

Bicycle wheel on a chair on a robotic vacuum cleaner

134 x 45 x 71 cm

2023

Technologically superior to Marcel Duchamp's "Bicycle Wheel", this upgraded version is both a work of art and an artist at the same time. It is a sculpture that is also a machine that draws marks on walls around the room that it is placed in.

Random, yet intentional, the drawing is a form of mural that is designed to evolve throughout the duration of the exhibition.



Painting of a Painting

Oil and acrylic on canvas, readymade object

214 x 149 cm

2023

This is a painting of a painting of a fish painted by the artist Bibi Chun on an outfit that the artist has worn while painting other paintings. With the outfit displayed mirroring the painting this work highlights the contrast between intentional and unintentional mark making.



Ready F-Ing Made #0001 - #0025, #10000

Readymade objects

Various sizes

2023

The one thing to say about art is that it is one thing. Art is art-as-art and everything else is everything else. Art-as-art is nothing but art. Art is not what is not art.

Ad Reinhardt

The artist's most known work, painted on a Georgetown wall more than a decade ago, has been appropriated in a countless number of ways. From fridge magnets and keychains to live-scale mural replicas and even to clothing items, the painting of children on a bicycle can be found in souvenir shops and restaurants in Penang, the rest of Malaysia and, indeed, all around the world. While the original mural has nearly entirely faded through time, the image of the painting has nevertheless developed a life of its own. It lives on in infinite iterations. In an attempt to document these myriad forms of the capitalist appropriation of his mural, the artist has set out on an adventure to collect 9,999 different items containing his work. The collection comes accompanied by the video of the artist purchasing the objects in the various shops around Penang.

In an exhibition driven by the ideas of Joseph Kosuth, Marcel Duchamp, and other conceptual artists, this work contemplates the proposition that an artwork is no longer a work of art if it is repurposed into an object of practical use. But does this proposition also work the other way around?



Ready F-ing Made #0001
Nail Clipper/Bottle Opener
10 x 3 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0002
Beautiful Penang Playing Cards
5 x 8 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0003
Penang Malaysia Pouch
15 x 11 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0004
Komtar Canvas Bag
32 x 28 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0005
Penang Fridge Magnet
8 x 8 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0006
 UNESCO World Cultural Lighter
 3.5 x 5 cm
 2023



Ready F-ing Made #0007
 I Love Penang
 15 x 19 cm
 2023



Ready F-ing Made #0008
 Bottle Opener/Fridge Magnet
 8 x 9 cm
 2023



Ready F-ing Made #0009
 World Heritage Card Holder
 9 x 6.5 cm
 2023



Ready F-ing Made #0010
 Penang Malaysia Shot Glass
 5 x 6 cm
 2023



Ready F-ing Made #0011
3D Street Art Fan
20 x 31 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0012
Street Art Key Chain
3 x 7 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0013
Batik Street Art Pouch
11.5 x 8.5 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0014
Little Children Gold Sculpture
5 x 7 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0015
Penang Souvenir Plate
13 x 13 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0016
Penang Malaysia Kids Shorts
Size 3
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0017
Penang Malaysia Kids Singlet
Size 3
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0018
Lebuh Armenian Penang Magnet
6 x 6 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0019
Malaysian Flag Coaster
10 x 10 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0020
Pop Up Fan
24.5 x 24.5 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0021
Rainbow Malaysia Shirt
Size S
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0022
Penang Manicure Set
10 x 6 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0023
Penang Compact Mirror
7 x 7 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0024
Penang Malaysia Fan
33 x 33 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #0025
Street Art Notebook
10.5 x 6.5 cm
2023



Ready F-ing Made #10000

Film

Unspecified

2023

Team

Project Manager

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Project Advisor

Leong Kwong Yee & Alfred Cheong

Project Assistant

Mindy Tee

Communications

Marsya Mohd Johari

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Photographer

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Production Manager

Timothy Chan

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Kinetics

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Aboud Fares

Production

Low Zhi Kai

Tan Chun Feng (Wind)

Special thanks to

Sheena Liam

Allen Rickshaw Family

Alvin Neoh

Bibi Chun

Charlotte Pyatt

Hoo Fan Chon

LUMA

Masud Rana

Penang Art District

TLM Event

Tan Wei Ming

Trina Teoh

Vinnee Lim

12pm - 7pm
Free Admission
Fri, Sat, Sun

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