

envelop
kwodrent x farmwork

fabricworks

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2494

dear visitors,

envelop is both a project and spatial installation with two components:
the presentation of new fabricworks from the kwodrent series + dialogue and
collaboration with FARMWORK.

this exhibition is an attempt to share and discover new possibilities in design. we see
the presentation as a whole to express the beauty and integrity in the physical works
as well as the intangible working method.

the design of this publication echoes the spirit of the collaboration and it can be read
in both directions.

design inspires and has the ability to transcend boundaries and differences.

please enjoy!

32-28
FARMWORK / 2494

27-22
dialogue
kwodrent x FARMWORK with lilian chee

21-18
biography

17-4
kwodrent / fabricworks
with photography by darren soh

3-2
enveloping cherry blossoms and cartesian coordinates
cyril wong

1
foreword
h.e. mr. miles kupa [australian high commissioner to singapore]

when grace approached us to collaborate on envelop we were intrigued by her proposal
- a process-driven project in conversation with an artist, with an emphasis on manifesting
concept and technique. the intention was brilliant since it was also perfectly aligned with the
collaborative ideals of FARMWORK.

although the traditional materials of buildings are bricks, mortar, steel and glass, the
architect's primary medium of expression is ostensibly paper. we doodle, sketch, and draw on
this medium. we produce representations of buildings we dream, first on paper, for the builder
to make. what we love about grace's work is her methodology which is derived from a very
tactile relationship with her medium, in her case fabric, in order to discover its inherent logic.
that's the opportunity we saw in this partnership – to produce architecture by negotiating
between two very different methods of working: one via media-based representation, and the
other via systematic and hands-on manipulation of the material itself.

paper is a fantastic material. as much as we love computers and 3d modelling software, our
first step in translating an idea is usually through sketches on paper. perhaps technology
is not yet intuitive enough. but there is something incredibly beautiful about the immediacy
of pencil and paper. it just works. it may be to do with what we like to call the "thingness" of
architecture. paper is mundane, neutral, common but also tough, structural, unforgiving.

using folded sheets of standard, white a4 sized paper, we have attempted to explore the
relationship between idea, representation, media and object. we used the architect's common
medium - paper - to conceive, draw, and then make the installation which is essentially 2494
drawings physically folded and strung together. the drawing is thus both representation and
object, both imagined and real.

we cannot say for certain how this process will inform future work but it has prompted us to
rethink how we make, and also to realize that folding paper is surely hard work!

lilian chee

an architectural writer, theorist and designer, and one of the founding editors of WORM. she was trained at the bartlett school of architecture in london and at the national university of singapore, where she is currently an assistant professor. her research revolves around notions of domesticity and the role of individuated subjectivity in architectural productions. she has published on sylvia plath and sigmund freud's london houses, on alternative spatial production of singapore's raffles hotel, and on artist simryn gill's photographs of malaysian domestic interiors. amidst researching on domesticity in recent singapore film, she is also working on her new garden, which she shares with her husband and their two jack russells.

willie koh

[b.1976, singapore] was first schooled in architecture and later, filmmaking. in between, there was work, love and life. his short films were shown in singapore, rotterdam, hungary, australia, hong kong and indonesia. right now, he is preoccupied with this abstract idea of 'synchronicity' and how to be a 'better' person.

darren soh

native singaporean darren soh is an independent photographer specialising in architectural, landscape and travel work. his work has appeared in *monocle*, *time*, *travel+leisure* and *wallpaper**. in 2004, darren published his first monograph titled 'while you were sleeping', a collection of nocturnal landscapes from singapore. the body of work was subsequently exhibited at the esplanade theatres by the bay. darren's landscape work is in the permanent collection of the national museum of singapore and is also collected by numerous private collectors from around the world. darren has been collaborating with kwodrent since 2004.

charmaine toh

founder and director of protocol. she has conceptualised and managed events in both singapore and australia and occasionally feels compelled to write reviews of art exhibitions.

cyril wong

the author of seven poetry collections and a recipient of the singapore literature prize in 2006. his commentaries on visual and performance arts have appeared in *broadsheet*, *white fungus* and the *straits times*.

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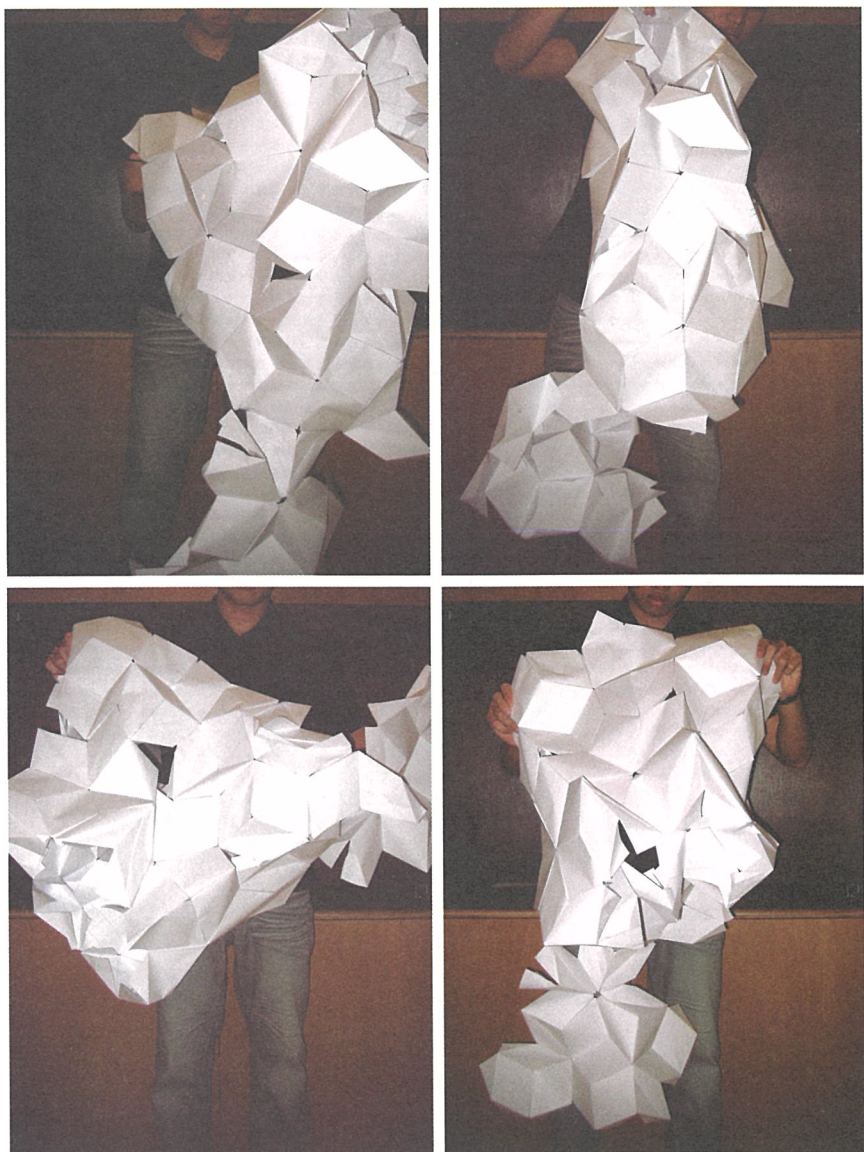
look out for the upcoming Contact Singapore events:

eCareers@Singapore [september 2008] - a virtual recruitment fair where overseas talent can interact with singapore-based employers.

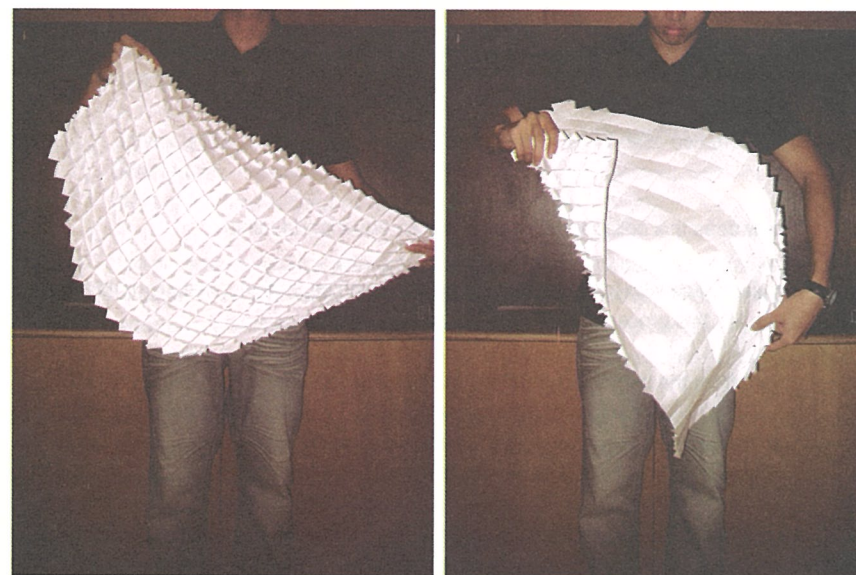
Careers@Singapore [october 3 2008] - a career fair in melbourne where singapore-based companies in technology, healthcare and biomedical, and professional services industries will be in melbourne to hire graduating students and working professionals.

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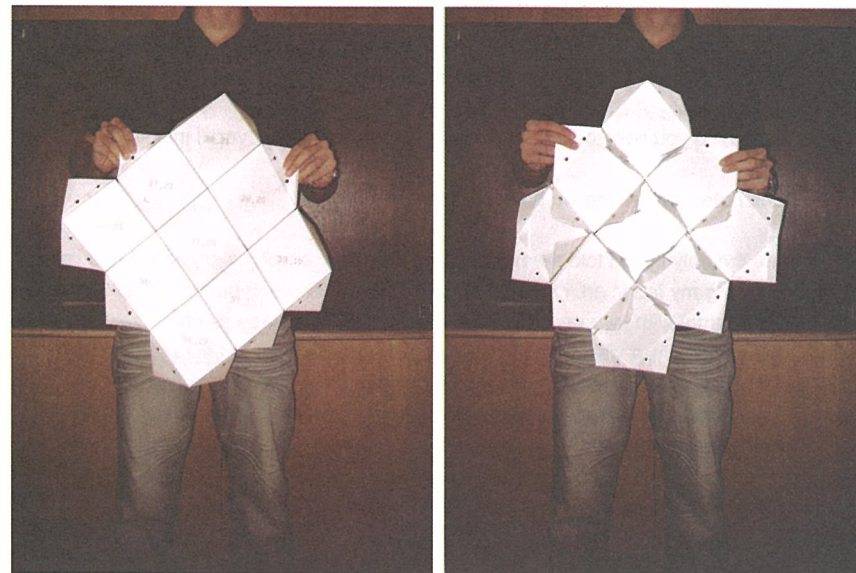
process model 1
concept model exploring the initial idea of folded a4 sheets coming together



process model 2 [top]
form-finding models looking at how varying quadrangles coming together can create a natural curvature



process model 3 [bottom]
detail of connections on reverse side



lilian chee [phd], assistant professor, department of architecture,
national university of singapore

grace tan, principal, kwodrent

peter sim, director, FARMWORK

torrance, associate, FARMWORK

lilian how does this collaboration work? is it an equal partnership?

peter it was grace who initiated the conversation with us. in that sense, i would say that she led this process.

grace right from the beginning when we talked about collaborating, i felt strongly that FARMWORK should not exhibit their portfolio. instead, the idea was for us to come together to create something for this occasion. it's a very organic process of working. the eventual paper structure is purely farmwork's.

peter not really because it's made through a process of working, thinking and talking with you. if it weren't for your input, perhaps we wouldn't have done that.

torrance so in that sense, rather than producing our own thing, FARMWORK's paper structure is really reacting to grace's method.

lilian grace, do you see yourself as a kind of arbitrator to the overall installation?

peter she hated everything we presented to her. [laughs]

grace no. the only thing i told them was, look, it's a very small gallery space and i'm showing my fabric art. i thought that FARMWORK's contribution had to be in equilibrium with kwodrent's pieces. it should never be about two entirely separate things. ideally, a visitor who's not from a design background should be able to immediately feel that everything comes together as one although practically the installation consists of two separate components – the fabric art and the architectural space.

lilian did the original brief for this exhibition demand a collaboration?

grace no, there was actually no brief, i mean i wanted to show these things and i could've just done another of my own shows. but for me there's no point in doing that.....

peter i think grace could have done a solo exhibition of her own portfolio but she intentionally wanted to use this event to work through ideas with another practice. it's quite a brave, if not risky, experiment for her.

torrance we were keen to work with grace because her methodology is almost architectural. she works both systematically and intuitively with materials. for example, she intentionally uses rectangular pieces of cloth, tears by hand rather than cuts the fabric, and her work constantly emphasizes the handmade.

peter we are intrigued by how grace meticulously records her stitching points. it's highly mathematical. but at the same time, she's very hands-on with the fabric she's working with.

grace one is working with something one is usually very familiar with. but this collaborative exercise is not superficial. it's not that i've finished this thing, and now i hand it over to you and you collaborate with it. the whole process is about how ideas are translated between the two parties.

peter yes, we're also inspired by the idea of 'design' as a verb. design is not just a product you see at the end. it's more process-driven.

grace it's a means to an end....

lilian tell me a little more about your new work.

grace i'm showing n. 243. it's a set of 7 pieces. the new work is different from the previous collections in that it moves away totally from functionality. it behaves more like fabric sculpture. i created these purely out of experimentation with the material. they are not meant to be worn. when arranged, each forms a circular shape but in its original structure, it's actually a strip of fabric, consisting of four panels with one stitch line that joins the four panels together.

lilian so what do you call these pieces?

grace i call them fabricworks.

peter actually how would you describe what you do?

grace now i tell people i'm both a designer and an artist. i do commercial jobs, like uniform commissions. i consider those jobs as design work. but kwodrent is not a fashion label. i didn't expect myself to be doing what i am doing now. but just last year i told myself i would still make these functional pieces but i also wanted to use the work to purely express my ideas. when things are purely expressive for me, that's art. a designed object can be art, but art may not always be design. that's how i see the difference. but at the same time, i'm trying not to pigeonhole what i do. i would rather say that this is my work and my intention is to make this, and it's an experiment. if you are buying it, it's up to you to decide if it's a fabric sculpture or installation or an artwork or something purely derived from clothing.

lilian if FARMWORK has gained from engaging your methodology and vocabulary, how has working with an architectural practice influenced you?

grace i've gained from the whole experience... obviously with FARMWORK's contribution, the moment you enter the gallery, you're hit by this whole spatial composition. i think that's what i wanted. i mean someone could just go in and look at my work. that's good enough too. it has its own merits. but the paper sculpture is like a cloud formation which is suspended from above while my work seems to be growing from the ground. so you almost have this earth-sky landscape. for me, it's visually evocative but it's also a key experience to absorb the work. together, we've made a landscape which grounds the fabric pieces and the paper sculpture.

lilian it's common when working with another discipline for example, landscape architecture or art, that architecture, if nothing else because of its scale, could potentially overwhelm the partner's contribution. in some ways it requires a lot of confidence on grace's part not to be concerned that FARMWORK's installation might unintentionally do the same. is there any kind of tension there?

torrance no. right from the start, we worked strictly with grace's parameters.

peter i think we were very conscious of the balance that needed to exist between grace's pieces and our installation. and rather than competing, we conceptualized the installation as a complete experience, to be seen and felt in tandem with the fabricworks. it's not a white cube space where things are framed individually. we've tried to make a space where the two works – kwodrent's and FARMWORK's - may be appreciated as an overall composition.

torrance yes, and also even before the design was initiated, we began to think through the theme of the exhibition which is 'envelop'...

lilian and 'envelop' is a joint idea?

torrance we actually brainstormed over it.
peter
grace

torrance the word 'envelop' not only means to spatially enclose but also alludes to grace's method of working with regular, rectangular pieces of fabric.

peter i think 'envelop' works on several levels. one is the material, that is paper which we are using, and the other is suggestive of the act of encompassing.

lilian so the paper folds are emerging from the ceiling like clouds and the fabric folds are growing from the floor like land formations, and they come together to envelop the visitor?

grace yes, something like a scene from a chinese landscape painting... you know now how architects usually work on computers so they are very hands-off. but this installation is very tactile. naiyan [from FARMWORK] was forced to fold and join paper with his hands. so suddenly it's a very primitive, very organic, spontaneous and intuitive way of working that you can't achieve with the computer.

lilian grace, there's a kind of paradox in your work because you start working intuitively with a new material but you also have a predetermined set of rules which you put together to create these organic forms.

grace yes the pieces are controlled by all those regular stitch points, but it's also how you put them together, that's the organic bit. it's like chinese painting or calligraphy - you know all the methods but you have to also work intuitively. it's a combination of order and intuition which gives the ultimate form.

peter with this project, i think we were trying to reflect a parallel process. we chose to use a4 pieces of paper because it's something very common. we are transforming a 2-dimensional surface into a 3-dimensional object through folding. it's all very experimental because although we start with the a4 paper, we still need to figure out the exact geometry through making the installation itself.

torrance to be honest, we don't know exactly how this paper structure will manifest itself. it's happening as we make. in fact it is through conversation with grace that we realised the structure is spiralling down from the ceiling. but the exact shape is still pretty much intuitive.

grace you might only know when you are installing the paper structure on location.

peter hopefully not.

torrance that'd be too late, grace. [laughs]

lilian these fabric works are defying functionality. and fabric is something quite functional. fabric is clothing. it is traditionally functional. i'm wondering where FARMWORK sees itself in relation to the question of function?

torrance it's really an experiment for us to create something we imagine using certain parameters we know of grace's work. we have had the liberty of not dealing with function in this situation. it's a rare freedom.

lilian i wanted to ask FARMWORK two questions. art and architecture – how do you feel that the disciplinary constraints of architecture are enabling or disabling you from participating in art? because there are certain requirements of what an architectural practice does, and art doesn't really fit into architectural practice. the second question: architectural practice is a capitalist activity – it intends to make money. does engaging in art subvert this capitalist drive?

peter i think we are not artists, right?

torrance no, we are not artists.

peter we are architectural designers. we don't make art. i think that's what grace does. we are trying to enlarge the boundaries of the practice or to make unclear the definition what an architect or what a designer does, how a designer works in terms of processes, and how architectural language, programme and forms are developed.

lilian so are you questioning the whole premise of an architectural practice including its preoccupation with function, originality, genius, and design ownership?

peter [laughs] hopefully... i guess this particular design is an installation. it's not something we see ourselves doing as the only design activity in the long run.

torrance we are still very conscious about budget. so in that sense, we've not been able to subvert the capitalist trap.

FARMWORK / biography

peter sim
1974

trained in singapore and the uk, peter spent his formative architectural career working with scda and alsop architects on projects in the uk, singapore and china. after his time in the uk peter decided it was time to return to singapore in 2006 to do something special. he got together with the guys at FARM and started up FARMWORK.

peter believes that architecture and design should be clever, responsible and never too straightforward. he is also passionate about architectural education and teaches part time at the department of architecture in the national university of singapore.

peter heads FARMWORK as its principal. apart from good design, he loves fishing, dogs, and his wife, though not necessarily in that order.

torrance goh
1977

since he was a wee lad, torrance has held wide ranging creative interests, from music to the applied arts. he has endless positive energy and expends it by developing a wide range of interest and skills, being experienced in graphic, web and architectural design. torrance graduated with an architectural degree from the national university of singapore. his curiosity and adventurous spirit led him to work with alsop architects in their london and singapore offices.

the love of the local and the arts prompted torrance to start up the non-profit design and art society, FARM, in 2006. FARM facilitates and initiates a variety of programmes to encourage conversation, exchange and collaboration between singapore-based creatives.

torrance is an associate at FARMWORK. when taking breaks from design, he loves cooking and playing video games.

xu naiyan
1985

occasional FARMer, and a keen student of architecture, naiyan is full of creative energy and ideas. he brought to envelop an eye for detail, a knack for seeing logic in chaos, and superb folding skills. in this instance, he did most of the work.

naiyan also has an unhealthy interest in aeroplanes.

about FARMWORK

FARMWORK is a young, energetic, multidisciplinary practice that believes design can be both functional and fun.

FARMWORK is brought to you by the people behind FARM. FARM is a singapore society which facilitates and initiates a variety of programs to encourage conversation, exchange and collaboration between singapore-based artists and creatives.

formed in 2007, FARMWORK is developing its very own collaborative design approach. tapping into FARM's network of singapore creatives, FARMWORK's architectural solutions integrate perspectives from art, fashion and media. here, architectural designers draw inspiration and work closely with an artist or designer from another field to create spaces of character and distinction. our work includes commercial and residential interiors, exhibition design, and architectural design. [however, we believe we have the talent to do much more, as long as it is interesting!]

we aim to make distinctive, fun and beautiful spaces!

www.work.farm.sg
farmers@farm.sg

FARMWORK / list of selected works and exhibitions

2008

baba house gallery, singapore
singapore pavilion at venice biennale 2008 [with re:act and designact]
residence at telok kurau road, singapore
hide and seek shop, singapore
woodcut table [with justin lee], singapore
kult office, singapore

2007

360° kiosks [with kevin lim], singapore
stiff chilli restaurant, singapore
between beside beyond exhibition [with michael lee], singapore

2006

ho wah travel shop [with justin lee], singapore

kwodrent / biography

grace tan
1979

born in malaysia and currently based in singapore, grace tan first started in fashion with song&kelly in 1999, designing and developing the womenswear line. in 2003, she set up design studio kwodrent and since then, it has emerged as a critically rigorous series of works that blur the lines between fashion, fine art and architecture.

with a strong interdisciplinary focus, grace has started developing an art practice derived from her design background. she is currently working on 8q-rate, the inaugural contemporary group exhibition at 8q singapore art museum and woman on woman: lace at fost gallery, singapore.

grace is also working on her first publication with WORM books, which will offer a critical analysis of kwodrent's process through a selection of essays by writers from a range of disciplines.

about kwodrent

the kwodrent series is a progressive and empirical body of works based on the study of rectangles, referenced to materials and construction methods. each piece of work is numbered and dated to form a chronological record of its development.

the series is defined and shaped by the pivotal working process, an intuitive and tactile approach derived from working hands-on without pre-conceived references. a fundamental aspect of the kwodrent series is the focus on the interdependency and inherent relationship between making and thinking, physical and abstract, as well as, analogous and digital.

www.kwodrent.com
contact@kwodrent.com

kwodrent / list of selected works and exhibitions

2008

woman on woman: lace, fost gallery, singapore
8q-rate, 8q singapore art museum
kwodrent: working process, fost gallery, singapore
series 5.2008, 2007 - 2008
4x5 photography project with darren soh / fullframephotos, model jobina tan

2007

utterbush exhibition, singapore design festival
dualcitysession null, design tide tokyo & singapore design festival
series 4.2007, 2006 - 2007
series 4.2007 at 59, london
series 4.2007 at asylum, singapore
portrait photography project with ming / surround, models laura miotto, marie ruppell
6x6 botanic photography project with darren soh / fullframephotos

2006

20/20 movement, london design festival
colour and contrast, chinese museum, melbourne
series 3.2005, 2005 - 2006
series 3.2005 at 59, london
series 3.2005 at michiko koshino autumn winter 2006 collection
series 3.2005 at asylum, singapore
series 3.2005 at forest/H55 studio, singapore
series 3.2005 at assin, melbourne
instruktions photography project with darren soh / fullframephotos, models marie ruppell, ashley leong

2005

20/20, singapore design festival
the dinner party, asylum, singapore design festival
aichi world expo 2005, singapore pavilion, nagoya
series 2.2004, 2004 - 2005
series 2.2004 at asylum, singapore
series 2.2004 at cose ipanema, melbourne
6x6 photography project with darren soh / fullframephotos

2004

series 1.2003, 2003 - 2004
series 1.2003 at cose ipanema, melbourne
february preview at objectifs, singapore
photography project with ming / surround

n. 214, date 07.04.2007
rakugan, constructed from 28 rectangles and 2624 stitch points

french silk chiffon, cotton thread and cotton webbing
arrangement dimension 11" x 9 1/2" x 6"



n. 215, date 10.23.2007
rakugan, constructed from 22 rectangles and 2304 stitch points

french silk chiffon, cotton thread and cotton webbing
arrangement dimension 9 1/2" x 7 1/2" x 6"



n. 246, date 06.07.2008
rakugan, constructed from 50 rectangles and 5580 stitch points

french silk chiffon and cotton thread
arrangement dimension 16" x 16" x 5" [approximate]



n. 244, date 04.18.2008
kollapsible, constructed from 40 rectangles and 3520 stitch points

swiss cotton organdy and cotton thread
arrangement dimension 13" x 15" x 6" [approximate]



n. 243, date 04.12.2008
piece 7 [6 1/8", 5 8/8", 5 7/8", 5 6/8"]
kollapsible, 7 sets of 4 rectangles and 352 stitch points arranged in a descending order

swiss cotton organdy and cotton thread
arrangement dimension 10" x 10" x 6"



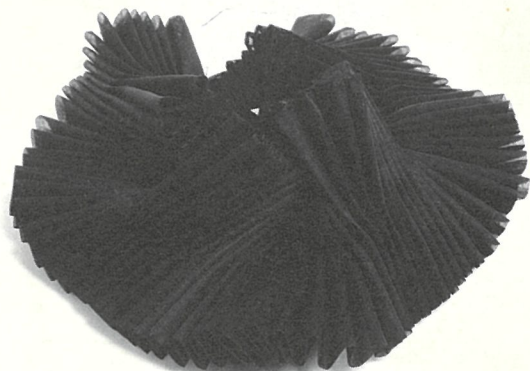
n. 243, date 04.12.2008
piece 6 [6 5/8", 6 4/8", 6 3/8", 6 2/8"]
kollapsible, 7 sets of 4 rectangles and 352 stitch points arranged in a descending order

swiss cotton organdy and cotton thread
arrangement dimension 11" x 11" x 5 3/4"



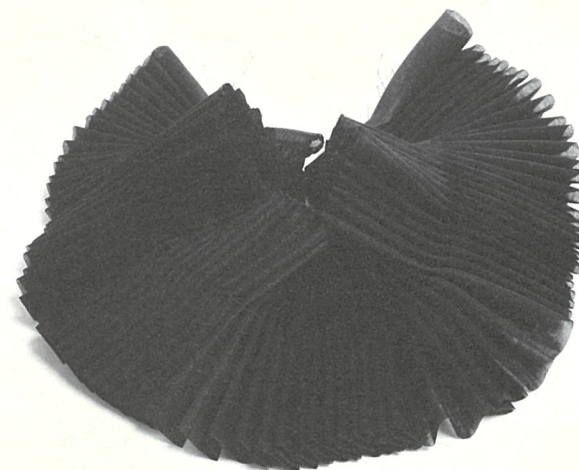
n. 243, date 04.12.2008
piece 5 [7 1/8", 6 8/8", 6 7/8", 6 6/8"]
kollapsible, 7 sets of 4 rectangles and 352 stitch points arranged in a descending order

black swiss cotton organdy and cotton thread
arrangement dimension 13" x 13" x 6"



n. 243, date 04.12.2008
piece 4 [7 5/8", 7 4/8", 7 3/8", 7 2/8"]
kollapsible, 7 sets of 4 rectangles and 352 stitch points arranged in a descending order

black swiss cotton organdy and cotton thread
arrangement dimension 14 1/2" x 14 1/2" x 5"



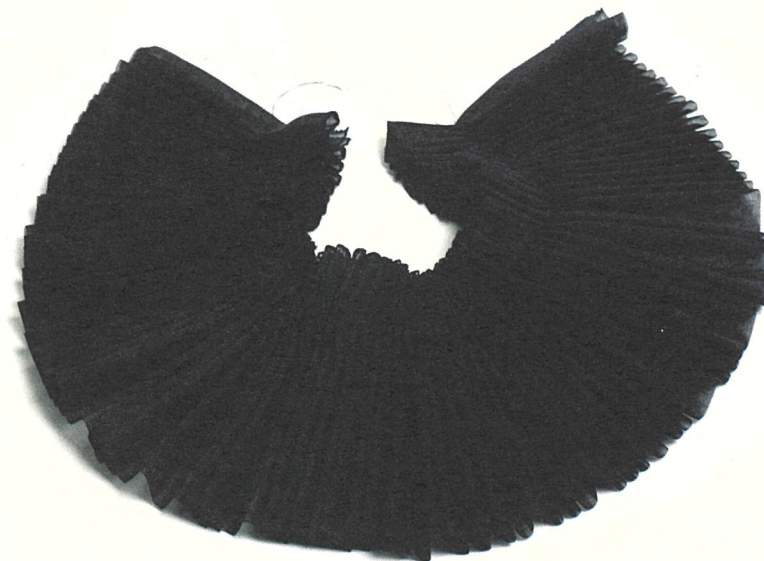
n. 243, date 04.12.2008
piece 3 [8 1/8", 7 8/8", 7 7/8", 7 6/8"]
kollapsible, 7 sets of 4 rectangles and 352 stitch points arranged in a descending order

black swiss cotton organdy and cotton thread
arrangement dimension 16 1/2" x 16 1/2" x 4"



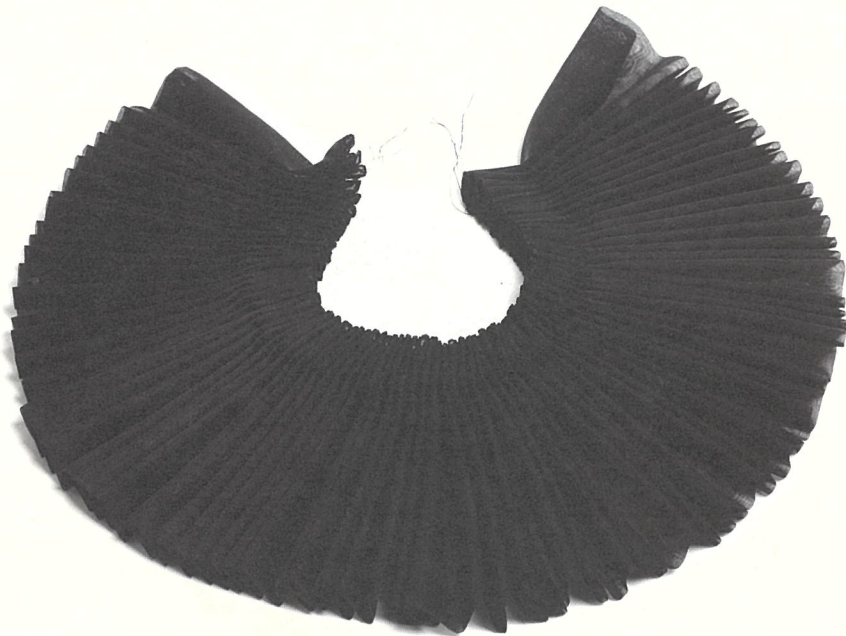
n. 243, date 04.12.2008
piece 2 [8 5/8", 8 4/8", 8 3/8", 8 2/8"]
kollapsible, 7 sets of 4 rectangles and 352 stitch points arranged in a descending order

black swiss cotton organdy and cotton thread
arrangement dimension 18" x 18" x 3"



n. 243, date 04.12.2008
piece 1 [9 1/8", 8 8/8", 8 7/8", 8 6/8"]
kollapsible, 7 sets of 4 rectangles and 352 stitch points arranged in a descending order

black swiss cotton organdy and cotton thread
arrangement dimension 21 1/2" x 21 1/2" x 1 3/8"



this exhibition is an extension of my solo exhibition [kwodrent: working process] held at fost gallery, singapore in may 2008. envelop marks a new chapter in my journey and it is not about defining the work as art or fashion, but as an expression and culmination of the pivotal working process. for me, it is about searching for the truth and beauty in each piece of work.

currently, i am working on a new development where the stitch points are translated into [x,y] coordinates after the work is completed. mathematics is a deductive science and it allows information to be presented in a logical and organised pattern. in this case, the mathematical exercise serves as a post-analysis study of the skeletal framework and more importantly, as a method to transform the tactile three-dimensional volume into a new language of numerical values, open to new interpretations.

n. 243

a development from the 'spiral' kollapsible neckpiece that was first presented in series 4.2007. the construction method requires layers of folded panels to be 'stepped' in a graded sequence with the stitch line as the axis. the single stitch line and the tension caused by the folds create a natural swirling effect. instead of making another complex piece of 'spiral' work, n. 243 is reduced to the minimal to bring out the inherent beauty in the construction and arrangement. this piece is almost technical, just like practising scales on the piano.

the set of 7 pieces is arranged in a descending order. it starts with the largest panel and is viewed from right to left [due to the sewing procedure]. each piece is constructed from 4 rectangles [panels] and 352 stitch points. in this installation, the largest piece lays totally flat on the horizontal surface, while the smallest piece is almost 'standing'. the horizontal surface serves as a reactive medium for the piece to come alive.

n. 244

similar to n. 243, n. 244 is another development of the 'spiral' kollapsible neckpiece in series 4.2007. it maintains the layered 'step' construction method and single stitch line. for this piece, the two ends are joined to form a loop. n. 244 is made up of 5 sections. each section consists of 8 folded rectangles [panels] and 3520 stitch points.

n. 246

part of the rakugan construction, n. 246 works with only 9 1/2" panels in five different pleat sizes - 1" x 3/4", 2" x 3/4", 2 27/32" x 3/4", 3 11/16" x 3/4" and 5" x 3/4". there are a total of 50 rectangles and 5580 stitch points in this arrangement. the rakugan series employs the same pleating technique as the kollapsible but differs in the sequence of layering, positioning of stitch points and joining method.

n. 246 is an experiment to produce an organic and intuitive form that is derived from a pre-determined set of rules. it is a 'slow' piece of work where time and patience are needed for the final arrangement to emerge.

n. 214

n. 215

these arrangements are the early formative works in the rakugan series and they are a development from the kiku [chrysanthemum] neckpiece. still working with the emotive and abstract imagery of flower, the rakugan is an expression inspired by the soft petals and bulbous spring blossoms.

rakugan is the name for a type of japanese pressed confection. interestingly, the japanese confection - wagashi, is a delectable poetic and artistic interpretation of the changing seasons and scenery.

all works are in possession of the artist.

one's casual gaze could get lost in grace tan's voluminous, fabric creations. at the same time, while observing their repetitive folds and their enveloping structures, i also cannot help but think of idiosyncratic ways to wear them on my body or hang them from a ceiling. grace's beginnings as an artist first took prominent shape in the fashion industry [designing for song&kelly, which has only recently closed its doors] and the instinct for fashion still grounds her pieces in this exhibition, many of which look like they have shimmied off somebody's haute couture dress to possess a life of their own.

take n. 243 [kollapsible] for example, a set of seven, coolly black and embrative pieces laid out in order of decreasing size, which is a definite meditation on form and dimensionality; one small piece threatens to flatten against the table while the larger pieces fill out in contrast like burgeoning, alien clouds. grace has come a long way since she first decided to manipulate textiles by hand with just the humble rectangle in mind - a geometrical restriction that has resulted in designs both organic and contemporary, complementing the human body in unexpected ways.

another work, n. 215 [rakugan neckpiece constructed from 22 rectangles and 2304 stitch points], is a light pink, biomorphic wonder that longs to be touched and induces childhood sensations and memories. aside from an unmistakable passion for minute and tactile repetitions, grace has also shyly admitted that such plush pieces have been inspired in small part by japanese confections and flora associated with spring. indeed, playful associations that spring to mind include candyfloss, peonies, cherry blossoms et al.

every stitch in these sculptural flowerings is structurally essential to its construction [a single stitch out of place could unravel the whole object], and the artist has decided to translate each stitch with an obsessive degree of objectivity into a number on the cartesian coordinate system. these digits form an analogous skeleton of the work. what enters the eye as sensually organic shapes is shown to be predicated on an impossibly intricate system of coordinates; every stitch and fold that artist has done by hand has been meticulously accounted for - a process as painstaking as the making of the object itself. it is surely a celebration of contradictions in grace's artistic process, in which the simple, rhythmic act of connecting stitches can result in such luxurious complexities, in which the ungraspable nature of form can be calculated and reduced, if necessary, to points on a chart or graph. other than numbers and algebraic formulations, i am also reminded of fractals for their sense of the infinite in the shape of a conch or a coastline, a geometry of seeming chaos.

this marriage between art and mathematics is one of the indicators that grace is determined to not let her work be pigeonholed. since she started up her design studio, kwodrent, in 2003, the artist has been sticking fiercely to a multidisciplinary approach, obviating static demarcations that set fashion or design apart from the contexts of art, sculpture, and even architecture. in envelop, grace continues to work hard at unstitching these lines by evolving from past experiments and giving birth to lush and ambitious fabric sculptures that could hang just as well from a model's neck, from a blank wall, or stand out brightly [or darkly] against a display table. in accordance with the spirit of interdisciplinary dialogue, grace also asked FARMWORK, a singapore-based design studio to jump on board by working with the spatial dynamics of the gallery to respond to her works. they have designed an inspired paper sculpture that will hover over the gallery space.

this artist's desire to collapse boundaries is particularly precious when she is coming from a country that has, in a short time, turned the visual arts into a lucrative commodity [the singapore biennale this year was set to coincide with the formula 1 grand prix in the hope of impressing tourists with singapore's cultural diversity and depth]. fewer and fewer artists in the island-state are willing to break the mould for fear that they may not end up belonging anywhere; economic sustenance and career viability weigh more in importance than in artistic acts of wonder, renewal, and self-discovery. grace recognises the advantage of simply focusing on the work, her little adventures with a stitch that lead her to happy outcomes she does not expect.

the australian high commission in singapore is pleased to support the tour of the exhibition envelop: kwodrent x farmwork to the rmit gallery in melbourne for state of design, victoria's design festival.

envelop is one of the first initiatives under the new singapore-victoria memorandum of understanding (mou) on design, signed in december 2007 during the singapore design festival. the signing was one of many events held as part of the festival's australian showcase, ozmosis2007: directions in australian design, which was presented by the australian high commission.

the conclusion of the mou is an important development in the relationship between singapore and the state of victoria, and is aimed at enhancing our cultural, business and government links. both singapore and victoria have many young and promising designers, and the mou will give these designers an additional channel through which to showcase their work to new audiences.

following the success of ozmosis2007 at the singapore design festival, which brought the work of some 50 australian designers to singapore, it is wonderful to now see singaporean designers participating in australian festivals as well. we look forward to seeing more of these reciprocal design exchanges and collaborations in the future.

h.e. mr. miles kupa
australian high commissioner to singapore

dear visitors,

envelop is both a project and spatial installation with two components:
the presentation of new fabricworks from the kwodrent series + dialogue and
collaboration with FARMWORK.

this exhibition is an attempt to share and discover new possibilities in design. we see the presentation as a whole to express the beauty and integrity in the physical works as well as the intangible working method.

the design of this publication echoes the spirit of the collaboration and it can be read in both directions.

design inspires and has the ability to transcend boundaries and differences.

please enjoy!

1
foreword
h.e. mr. miles kupa [australian high commissioner to singapore]

2-3
enveloping cherry blossoms and cartesian coordinates
cyril wong

4-17
kwodrent / fabricworks
with photography by darren soh

18-21
biography

22-27
dialogue
kwodrent x FARMWORK with lilian chee

28-32
FARMWORK / 2494