

“Reset”.  
live in an acutely changed world  
cities are not just buildings  
and monuments, Humans are  
social animals. We are naturally  
new  
shape  
what our future looks like,  
set the stage – a “reboot”

### A Fairer and More Equal Society

“reset” to emerge  
be indiscriminate about  
the gulf between the haves and the have-nots Globally,  
Singapore, it’s always been at the top  
ensure a meritocratic system that works for the good of all.  
markets are incredibly powerful – they inject transform  
and better lives. But free  
anxieties and stresses technological change and foreign competition, and  
we see a continued stretching.  
We don’t want to frontload  
a conveyor belt  
for life

cognitive abilities, value  
merit academic  
and cognitive abilities. But  
craft artisans technicians creativity and  
imagination artists human touch care  
keep our lives going – allied health workers, contractors,  
security guards, F&B operators, transport workers honour  
dignity and respect they deserve.

### A Greener Singapore

standstill this year, around the  
world Satellites high above our planet  
The natural world began to heal. economic activities  
cannot go back to the status quo ante.  
the existential emergency of  
a greener sustainable.

Singapore. We are one of the world. We are the water loop, every last drop of water. promise is not what it will mean for us today. It's movement, a better shape for our future

### A Stronger Spirit of Solidarity

one silver lining societies rise and fall. What is it to thrive, while others to go into decline? “asabiyyah” – the bond that exists in a community. lose social anchors and advance their own individual interests. things fall apart. view the narrow prism of social and political tribes – our own points of view. confirmation bias reinforces a hollowing out of the centre intensified these divisions a crisis like this can lead to renewed strength. for a more acute sense of shared memories and common destiny. So which path will apply to Singapore? I am confident that we will prevail and emerge stronger from this crucible. And I do not say this lightly.

My Singapore Kaleidoscope artefact is a found-and-blacked-out poem titled “Reset”. It combines found poetry drawn from everyday speech with blackout poetry: where poets draw attention to common words in unusual ways. It draws from Minister for Education Mr Lawrence Wong’s [speech at the IPS Singapore Perspectives Conference 2021](#). I chose this speech as it was a wide-ranging, forward-thinking speech that offers a macro view of Singapore’s immediate priorities, particularly in education. Yet, the language used in the speech also offered poetic possibilities, subtly drawing my attention to the affective nature of even the most formal of language. Found and blackout poetry offered me the chance to linger on the creative possibilities in the language we use to talk about Singapore, and discuss our concerns, fears, hopes and dreams about Singapore.

The first stanza charts a relationship between the self, Singapore and the world. The title, “Reset”, is followed by a call to the individual to ‘live in an acutely changed world’. It draws attention to the precarious stops and starts of living within an interconnected world. As Professor Tommy Koh’s video sharing tells us, ‘the world still belongs to the big powers’. Yet, the poem also encourages us by reminding us that ‘We are naturally / new’, and that with each crises we have the opportunity to ‘shape what our future looks like / set the stage – a “reboot”’. Indeed, for me, the Singapore Kaleidoscope was an opportunity to see with new eyes and a renewed sense of purpose. As a budding educator, I constantly ask myself, “How do I encourage my students to think deeply and analyse critically, while with a profound sense of hope anchoring their inquiry?” The notions of “Reset” and “Reboot” encourage us to constantly take stock of our position, while daring us to grasp opportunities with boldness.

The second section, “A Fairer and More Equal Society”, engages two key Singapore Kaleidoscope strands: Singapore’s Society, Culture and Heritage and Singapore in the World: Regional and Global Opportunities and Pressures. It recognises the global ‘gulf between the haves and the have-nots’ as a salient force pressuring the world, particularly in the wake of COVID-19. The poem juxtaposes markets in the way ‘they inject transform / and better lives’, even as they ‘free / anxieties and stresses technological change and foreign competition’, which results in a ‘continued stretching’. Similarly, during my experiential learning journey on the Southern Ridges trail, I thought about the possible stratification of Singapore society, with each layer of ever-modern buildings overshadowing the last. Within Singapore’s rapid cycles of renewal and redevelopment, who will surge ahead, and who will fall behind?



The second section also touches on the role of arts and culture in Singapore, something which has become increasingly important to me. The poem reads, ‘But / craft artisans

technicians creativity and / imagination artists human touch care / keep our lives going –’. In this (literally) breath-taking gesture towards a range of human creative effort, I wanted to capture the sense of promise and possibility that lies ahead for all of us to seize, as we chart and shape the culture of our collective future. I was also inspired by Ms Kng Mian Tze’s video sharing that framed arts education as a democratic platform that rewards organic participation. One of Ms Kng’s essential questions was the need to ‘unpack the rich content the curator has researched’ for the diverse audiences that visit the National Gallery Singapore, including teachers and students. Her understanding of art’s egalitarian function dovetails with the poem’s assertion of the need for creative endeavour, where ‘creativity’, ‘imagination’, ‘touch’ and ‘care’ all ‘keep our lives going’.

The third section, “A Greener Singapore” captures my growing interest in Singapore’s ecology and biodiversity, as prompted by the strand of Nature and Biodiversity in Singapore. As part of the submission for assignment #1, the video reflection log, I recall the late Professor Lee Sing Kong explanations of the effort, research and ingenuity that goes into mangrove reforestation. Indeed, as the poem states, there is a growing awareness of ‘the existential emergency of / a greener sustainable / Singapore. We are one of the world’. The idea of being ‘one of the world’ reminds us that our actions have consequences we may not be able to predict, much less control. It also reminds me of the urgency of making the climate change message accessible and relevant to students, as A/P Winston Chow spoke at length about during Symposium #2. Personally, I liked the contrast in the poem between ‘standstill this year’ and where ‘promise is not what it will mean for us today. / It’s / movement, a better shape for our future’. While the world has come to a halt, we have also been afforded precious time to chart our next moves and actions in a more sustainably-minded way as we move into the future.

The final section, “A Stronger Spirit of Solidarity”, ties into the third strand of Singapore in the World: Regional and Global Opportunities and Pressures. At Symposium #1, A/P Bilveer Singh invited us to consider how all the pressing issues facing Singapore are ‘political and can be politicised’, as they relate to questions of how to manage the collective problems that we face, with unequal impacts, costs and benefits to all of Singapore’s citizens. A/P Singh then asked frank questions of the viability of Singapore’s current politics and political system. In a similar way, my poem asks, ‘What is it / to thrive, while others go into decline?’ The poem points to the threats and divisions that seem to have characterised much of the 2000s, of ‘the narrow / prism of social and political tribes’, and where ‘confirmation bias / reinforces / a hollowing out of the / centre’. I particularly appreciated the echoes of W. B. Yeats’ “The Second Coming” latent in Minister Wong’s speech – where ‘things fall apart’, with a ‘hollowing out of the / centre’. Ultimately, there is a remarkable candour in his question, ‘So which path will apply to Singapore’? It acknowledges and creates space for the uncertainties that regional and global pressures have placed upon Singapore. It accommodates the stresses and ‘stretches’ placed upon everyday Singaporeans. Yet, there is also a sense of hope, that we can and must ‘prevail and emerge stronger / from this crucible’.

Indeed, a crucible is a vessel in which materials (commonly metals) are subjected to extremely high temperatures. Figuratively speaking, materials are decomposed before they are recombined to create something new. In the same way, this poem reconfigures the original speech into an altogether more dramatic speech act; retaining its original language even while amplifying its dizzying peaks and dramatic valleys. Blackout poetry is a liminal form, standing between both original speech and invented poem. Singapore too, stands perpetually at the threshold between its past and future selves, where we will find creative possibilities only if we embrace this Janussian position. There is creativity in crisis: ‘And I do not say this lightly’.