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## Media Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## DesignSingapore Presents: 'Visions of the Future'

**10 Dec 2020 – 7 Jan 2021 | National Design Centre, 111 Middle Road**

*DesignSingapore Council presents a curated showcase of seven designs by eight emerging Singapore designers, presented online and at the National Design Centre. Each design has been hand-selected for its visionary approach to current issues, and has also adapted to the pandemic reality we currently live in.*

**Singapore, December 2020** – DesignSingapore Council's (Dsg) Visions of the Future imagines future trends in the wake of the pandemic, through seven designs that look at the improvement of health and wellbeing through rituals and practices, sustainable processes, new materials and safety through design. Through Visions of the Future - and its wider work - Dsg aims to recognise and support good designs and designers for their role in impacting society, economy and quality of life through innovation and growth.

The participating designers were selected through an open call held by Dsg in late 2019, and were mentored throughout the process by Wendy Chua and Gustavo Maggio, founders of the Singaporean multi-disciplinary design practice Forest & Whale.

*"It is a joy to see our young designers' in-depth design research and creative responses to the pressing concerns of today. From transforming the act of soapmaking into a meditative ritual, to empowering the elderly to hold onto their fading memories, these young designers provide a fresh perspective to everyday issues – and those brought anew in the current climate - that anyone can appreciate. We are most excited to present this intimate show to the world, both at the National Design Centre and on a digital platform for all to enjoy."* – said **Mr. Mark Wee**, Executive Director, DesignSingapore Council.

## Design in a Pandemic State of Mind

As cities begin a slow return to some semblance of normality and the initial alarm to the public health crisis subsides, people begin to grapple with what it means to live in a pandemic state of mind. The effects of quarantine fatigue and isolation linger; we see the repercussions in the cognitive decline of seniors with dementia and the rise in mental health cases of anxiety and depression. How might design help us to thrive despite the challenges of the moment and reimagine hope in such dire times?

*“All seven works help us to imagine life in the new normal through the lens of design, from safeguarding our wellbeing from our unconscious behaviours to coping with isolation, from repairing cultures that subvert the use-and-throw consumers’ mindset to rethinking production systems through processes and materials. As in Oliver Sacks’ quote, the most creative ideas are usually conceived against the backdrop of huge upheavals.” – said Ms Wendy Chua, Co-Founder, Forest & Whale.*

From memory stimulation therapy using new technologies to design probes that aid us in overcoming conditioned reflexes—such as touching our face mask unconsciously—the exhibition highlights the significance of design in safeguarding our health and wellbeing. Beyond the immediate needs of the crisis, it explores the intangible but deeply rooted cultural beliefs that anchor one in a future filled with uncertainties. Through new interpretations of rituals of repair and mindfulness, design plays a pivotal role in building financial, mental and emotional resilience.

The seven works presented in Vision of the Future illuminate the opportunities in the crisis by imagining new rituals of living in the new normal. Through innovations in craft, technology and materials, the designers illustrate a hopeful future—better by design—despite the pandemic.

Exhibits and a full programme of discussion panels and podcasts will be available on the dedicated microsite <https://visionsofthefuture.sg/>.

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For more details on the design projects and some thoughts from the designers, please see Annex A. The profile of the designers can be found in Annex B.

## **About the DesignSingapore Council**

DesignSingapore Council's (Dsg) vision is for Singapore to be an innovation-driven economy and a loveable city through design by 2025. As the national agency that promotes design, our mission is to develop the design sector, help Singapore use design for innovation and growth, and make life better in this UNESCO Creative City of Design. The Dsg is a subsidiary of the Singapore Economic Development Board. For more information, please visit [www.designsingapore.org](http://www.designsingapore.org).

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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## Annex A: Project Details

You can download the high-res pictures [here](#), and the exhibition booklet [here](#).



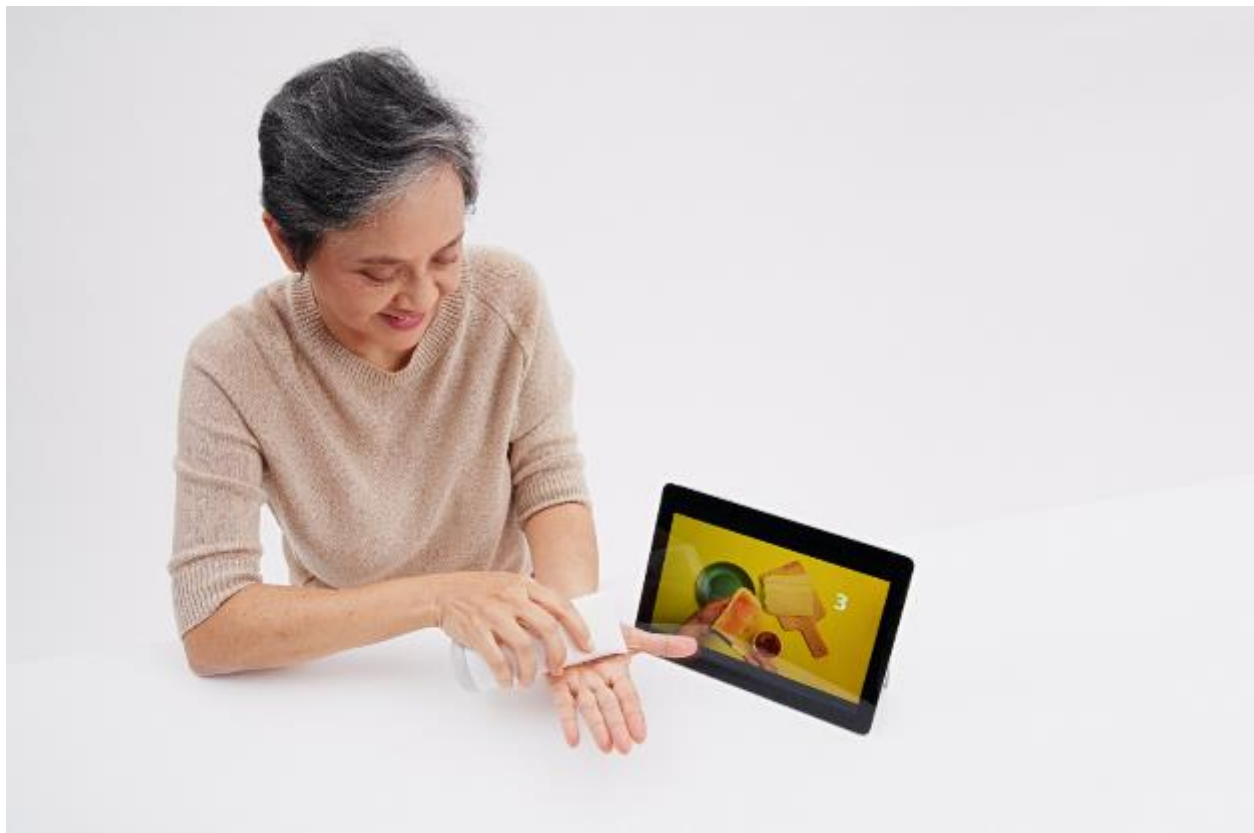
*Above: 'Mass Production of Happiness' by Yingxuan Teo – a device that can be used to create 100% natural soap*

### **'Mass Production of Happiness' by Yingxuan Teo**

'Mass Production of Happiness' by Yingxuan Teo is a project which envisions a near future where plastic packaging is eliminated from the cosmetics industry, with single use plastic being replaced by entirely sustainable 'make your own' systems. Yingxuan Teo has designed a soap-making device which can be incorporated into an everyday routine. The device uses natural ingredients, for example the Aloe Vera plant, therefore avoiding the harsh chemicals that are often used in everyday soap products and as an antidote to burgeoning plastic waste due to the pandemic. The design is a call for more sustainable practices in our daily sanitising procedures due to the public health crisis.

Yingxuan says, “The end goal of a product isn’t necessarily its function – it can also be the thoughts/emotions it stirs in the user. Hence, the product isn’t the apparatus itself but the happiness it brings when the user completes the ritualistic process.”

She was inspired to work on this piece from ‘How It’s Made’ videos. “These addictive and satisfying videos which show objects/food going through different industrial machines are so fascinating. They also help many better understand processes, make sense of and appreciate our environment/products around us. I really wanted to create a mini factory which reproduces/evokes the same kind of satisfaction and happiness we get from watching ‘How It’s Made’ videos”.



*Above: ‘Rewind’ by Poh Yun Ru*

### **‘Rewind’ by Poh Yun Ru**

‘Rewind’ by Poh Yun Ru is a cognitive stimulation therapy tool for people with dementia – who rely heavily on repetition in everyday life via sounds, smells and sights in order to retain memory.

A motion-tracking tool produces visual and audio feedback through a paired device and asks the user to relate personal memories which they associate with the images and sounds that appear on the screen.

Due to their vulnerabilities to the coronavirus, older people are encouraged to stay at home, even to a state of near isolation with little physical contact with their families. The lack of suitable activities while being confined at home also contributes to the rapid deterioration of their cognitive faculties. Poh Yun Ru has designed these new activities to engage the mental agility and acuity in response to this. She believes that “Design is to include, involve and connect people.”



*Above: 'Pneumatics Touch' by Sheryl Teng – Feeling protected in a textile made of 'air'.*

## **'Pneumatics' Touch' by Sheryl Teng**

Taking an experimental approach to pneumatics (a branch of engineering that makes use of pressurised air), Sheryl Teng seeks to investigate how air can “come to life” in the form of a pneumatic textile, which responds to the needs of the user and the environment - creating the 'Looft' collection.

Using a battery-operated handheld heat sealer and pleated fabric, Teng produced an inflatable, stretchy resilient material made up of multiple compact air pockets that can be used for a variety of purposes. The resulting series of clothing, objects and protective cases that Teng created serves to reimagine the system and application of pneumatic objects, utilising its thermal insulating properties. The innovative series comprises thermal wear, a laptop case, a space partition and applications to a wingback chair and lamp.

"Trained as an industrial designer and having always been fascinated by fashion and the relationship between clothing and human identity, I saw my final year project at Division of Industrial Design as an opportunity for me to work on a project to converge the two. With air being such a commonly available “resource”, and my discovery of a low-cost, handheld heat sealer and TPU coated textile, I delved in a series of pneumatic textile experimentations.

Pneumatics' Touch - the LOOFT Collection, from being extremely cost effective in its making with the textile and handheld heat sealer, to the concept of being utilitarian clothing for man, object, furniture and space, is a projection of how industrial design can value add to conventional garment construction.

As we spend the majority of our time in isolation in the current climate of fear and anxiety, we reevaluate our relationship with objects and space around us. A well-designed environment provides sanctuary to the anxious minded. Pneumatics' Touch - the LOOFT Collection explores how pneumatic textiles can provide such an environment by evolving from a gentle veil to a reassuring shell."



*Above: 'Ji Jian Wu: A belief, A blessing' by Lin Qiuxia*

**'Ji Jian Wu' (吉简物/ Ji Jian Wu: A belief, A blessing) by Lin Qiuxia**

Lin Qiuxia presents contemporary artefacts of belief as vessels for hope under the invisible threat of the coronavirus.

Originated from the ancient divination rituals of Chinese geomancy, each object by Lin Qiuxia is designed to maintain the Feng Shui meaning associated with its traditional counterpart. Like amulets, these contemporary artefacts are vessels that carry one's hopes and wishes to bring forth good fortune and ward off ill health, assuaging fears and easing anxieties. Qiuxia says, "Design to me is to bring new perspectives to cultural legacy."





*Above: 'Canvas' by Ng Luowei and Mervyn Chen*

### **'Canvas' by Ng Luowei & Mervyn Chen**

'Canvas' offers a visionary approach to the 'make do and mend' culture which fell out of fashion as goods became cheaper. Designers Ng Luowei and Mervyn Chen have repurposed quick-drying liquid rubber paint to become a material that can be used to restore and repair worn-out shoes in creative patterns. Shoe repair is democratised, and unique works emerge in every attempt to breathe new life into old favourites, thereby reducing the number of shoes that are unnecessarily thrown away each year. The work recalls old repairing cultures in the frugality of the impending economic recession due to the pandemic.

Luowei says, "As it is my belief that design should have meaning beyond functionality, I aim to provide a new perspective towards things we have grown familiar with and subconsciously accept. Therefore, a design that shifts the conventional routine of worn and discarded to accentuate and

make better. This is a start to nudge users to adopt different behaviours from their familiar routines curating a lifestyle that positive the well-being of oneself”.

Mervyn says, “I have a huge interested in fashion, but I also know it can be one of the ugliest industries when it comes to sustainability. Inspired by custom streetwear culture, this project shows that we can design experiences where the responsibility of sustainability can also be in the hands of the consumer.”



*Above: Soap Tattoos, by Kevin Chiam and Nacho Vilanova, dissolve upon contact with water to reveal animal prints to bring enjoyment while handwashing*

### **Design Probes by Kevin Chiam**

Our conditioned reflexes and unconscious behaviours, such as our tendency to touch our face mask, can place us in harm’s way. Through design probes that nudge behavioural change, Kevin

Chiam innovates design solutions to overcome our worst inclinations and safeguard our health and wellbeing.

Soap Tattoos – created to bring delight to children in the repetitive sanitising process of “the new normal” – dissolve upon contact with water to reveal animal prints, while ‘Echo’ is a response to building fire fatalities of those dismissing emergencies as false alarms; it is a fire alarm system that uses an imminent bursting balloon to motivate occupant evacuation.



*Above: 'Echo' – a modular fire system by Kevin Chiam*

Kevin says about his design pieces, “I feel that the designs are thoughtful probes that challenge our perception of everyday archetypes and motivate behaviour changes. I was deeply inspired by the human psyche and how we react to seemingly familiar stimulus or triggers. Design helps us to identify, map and unravel the complex factors, their relationship and how they contribute to wicked problems. With a clearer understanding, design can simultaneously drive innovations based on opportunities found within the mapped spectrum.”



*Above: 'Grained Tea Boat' from 'Phenomenal Wood' by Jasmine Quek*

### **'Phenomenal Wood' by Jasmine Quek**

The 'Chun' collection by Jasmine Quek – part of her wider 'Phenomenal Wood' project – is a modern reinterpretation of traditional teaware that is used in the Chinese *GongFu* tea ceremony. The contemporary tea set, that explores new interpretation of familiar materials, brings a ritual of mindfulness into our homes in times of quarantine fatigue.

'Grained Tea Boat' was created from a block of hemlock wood that was sandblasted to naturally remove its softer, more water-absorbent earlywood. This formed gaps between the harder latewood that remains undisturbed to create naturally sculpted slats that allows the tea to seep through during the ritual of rinsing the tea leaves and warming the tea pot.




'Inked Tray' adorns a stain akin to traditional Chinese painting. By simply rubbing steel wool across the surface of vinegar-coated wood, a chemical reaction that permanently alters wood's

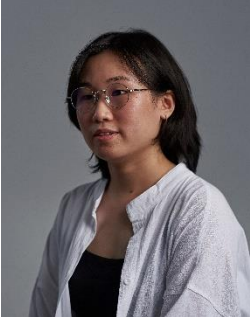
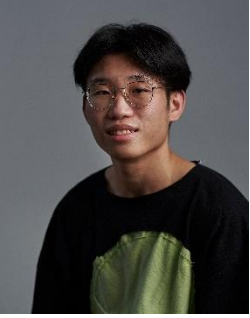


colour along the grains as the vinegar dries off, forming a natural pattern that the guest can appreciate during the tea ritual.

Jasmine says, "I feel like the design pieces demonstrate how wood is an organic, versatile material that has the potential to present unforeseen outcome. I am always very intrigued by the way wood behaves. It is a living material that reacts to its surrounding environment. Chun collection was a result of my study on wood as a material and celebrates on the innate characteristic of wood".

"In these difficult times, I see design as a way to communicate vital information either through its shape, colour and/or texture," she adds.

## Annex B: Designers' Profiles

S/N	Designers	
1.	 <p data-bbox="289 619 527 682"><b>Kevin Chiam, Deloitte Digital</b></p>	<p data-bbox="594 310 1377 441">Kevin Chiam is a DesignSingapore scholarship recipient and recent graduate of the MA, MSc Innovation Design Engineering programme at the Royal College of Art and Imperial College in London.</p> <p data-bbox="594 478 1377 640">Kevin's work on the Folk's Kitchenware for the blind has won various international awards—most notably the James Dyson Award (National Winner, Singapore and International Finalist) in 2018—and has been presented at the Stanford Center on Longevity Design Conference among others.</p> <p data-bbox="594 678 1377 772">Upon his return from London, he has since be working in Deloitte Digital as an Interaction Designer and UX Researcher.</p>
2.	 <p data-bbox="289 1155 527 1249"><b>Poh Yun Ru, NUS Design Incubation Centre</b></p>	<p data-bbox="594 814 1377 976">Poh Yun Ru is an industrial design graduate from NUS. She is a socially-engaged product designer who seeks to create a positive impact on society by improving the lives of others through her work. She sees design as a methodology to develop intuitive and inclusive solutions.</p> <p data-bbox="594 1014 1377 1176">Her work on <i>Rewind</i> to aid elderly with more engaging Alzheimer's therapy reflects her philosophy on design. Over the past 2 years, she has been working with the NUS Design Incubation Centre to expand the effectiveness and reach of the project.</p>
3.	 <p data-bbox="289 1579 527 1680"><b>Lin Qiuxia, NUS Design Incubation Centre</b></p>	<p data-bbox="594 1264 1377 1291">Lin Qiuxia is an industrial design graduate from NUS.</p> <p data-bbox="594 1329 1377 1507">Inspired by her cultural roots, her works have translated traditional beliefs into contemporary objects. Reflective of her design ethos, she was also involved in the development of <i>Xian Cha</i> 现茶, a contemporary tea set that was awarded the Red Dot Design Award for Design Concept in 2019.</p> <p data-bbox="594 1545 1377 1724">Her showcased <i>Ji Jian Wu</i> 吉筒物 collection explores and materialises traditional Chinese beliefs into intricate porcelain ornaments. Over the past year, Qiuxia has been working with the NUS Design Incubation Centre to bring the collection to market.</p>

<p>4.</p>	 <p><b>Jasmine Quek, Vivita Singapore</b></p>	<p>Jasmine Quek is an industrial design graduate from NUS and has previously worked with Hans Tan studio as a designer. She designs through making and employs a raw, inquisitive approach in her process.</p> <p>Her works attempt to present new ways of looking at materials through breaking down the innate construct of everyday objects and materials. She has honed her aesthetics for haptic surfaces in the objets d'art she creates for collectors.</p>
<p>5.</p>	 <p><b>Mervyn Chen, NUS Industrial Design</b></p>	<p>Mervyn Chen is a current industrial design student from NUS. Delving into animation, film and production design at a young age, Mervyn is inspired by his passion for storytelling and fuelled the sense of purpose in his design approach.</p>
<p>6.</p>	 <p><b>Ng Luowei, NUS Industrial Design</b></p>	<p>Ng Luowei is a final-year industrial design student from NUS. As an experience and product designer, she is passionate to create designs that imbue meaning beyond functionality. Her work seeks to inspire change in user behaviours from their familiar routines, while bringing delight in that process.</p>
<p>7.</p>	 <p><b>Sheryl Teng, NUS Design Incubation Centre</b></p>	<p>Sheryl Teng is an industrial design graduate from NUS who holds a deep interest in materiality and tactile experimentation. Approaching fashion with an inquisitive mind, Sheryl is a meticulous designer-maker who brings a sensitivity to the body's silhouette to her craft. Her works negotiate and explore relationships between materials, people and objects.</p> <p>Over the past year, Sheryl has worked with the NUS Design Incubation Centre to incubate her project, <i>Pneumatics' Touch</i>.</p>

8.



**Teo Yingxuan,  
Benel Singapore**

Yingxuan Teo is a multidisciplinary designer based in Singapore. She graduated from Design Academy Eindhoven in 2018 and seeks to revive the joy of making what we use.

Mass Production of Happiness (2018) is a manifestation of her light-hearted, playful approach towards design. First exhibited during Dutch Design Week 2018, she intends for the collection to evolve in her reimagination of our ecosystem of industrial production.