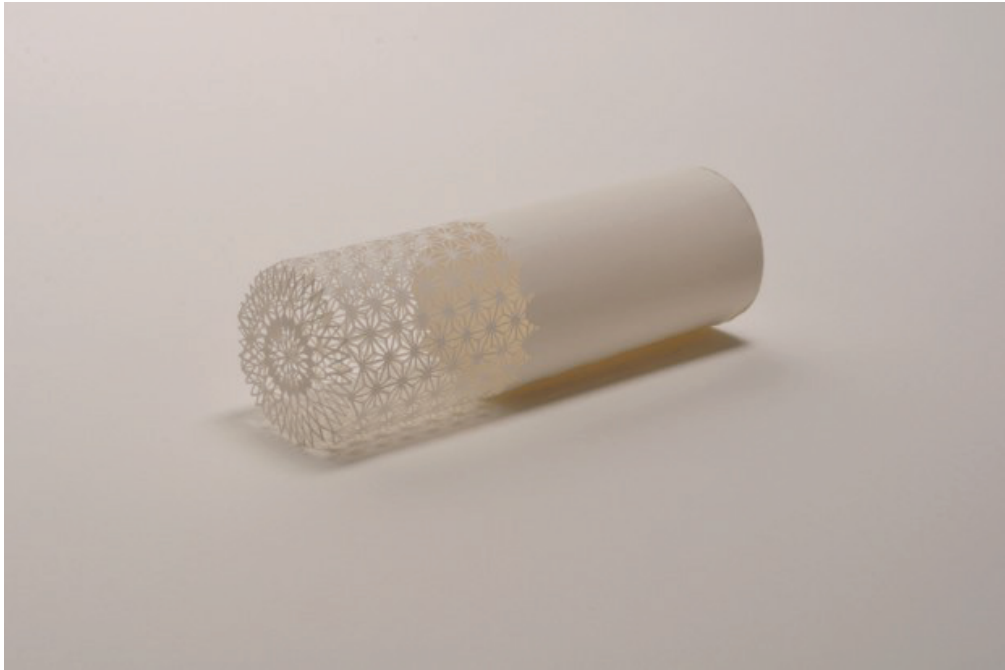


Q&A with Ashley Yeo



Ashley Yeo completed her MA at Chelsea College of Fine Art in 2012. She currently lives and works in Singapore.

In what way did art school help in the development of your practice?

It definitely built a strong foundation for me, that's what I feel. Going through the processes of experimenting, and having critiques does help a lot to keep me going and continue making different things. It provided a base through the process of research, guidance from mentors and experience of actually having tried things out and knowing what kind of works and what don't. Burning out does happen but when you are surrounded by people making art, and it's a healthy competitive environment, as students, we just kept going. The real difficulties as an artist started when I graduated, but I feel that what I've learnt in art school keeps me grounded.

Did your practice change during Art School?

I only really started learning and making art during my BA years (three years) so it was more of a development for me. But when I entered the MA course, I felt that that was very critical and it changed my thinking, and how my works finalized in the end. Personally, I think MA studies was really hard for me, there was a lot of questioning and reflections and existential angst going on. But I feel that's crucial to a growing student (as an artist). Maybe because there was a change in environment as well, from Singapore to London.



Do you find drawing therapeutic in any way?

Yes, in a way it is meditative for me. Of course not all drawings are smooth sailing and the thinking process before the making is the hardest. But the act of drawing and seeing it comes through on paper makes me calm. Through drawing and even making my paper cuts as well, for me that is a kind of a coping mechanism to deal with the world. To spend time and effort to make something beautiful and meaningful. The doubting and the questioning of whether it is good enough or not comes after that.

What kind of artwork would you make if you had a warehouse of artists working for you?

I think it would be a waste of their capability if a warehouse of artists were working for me.

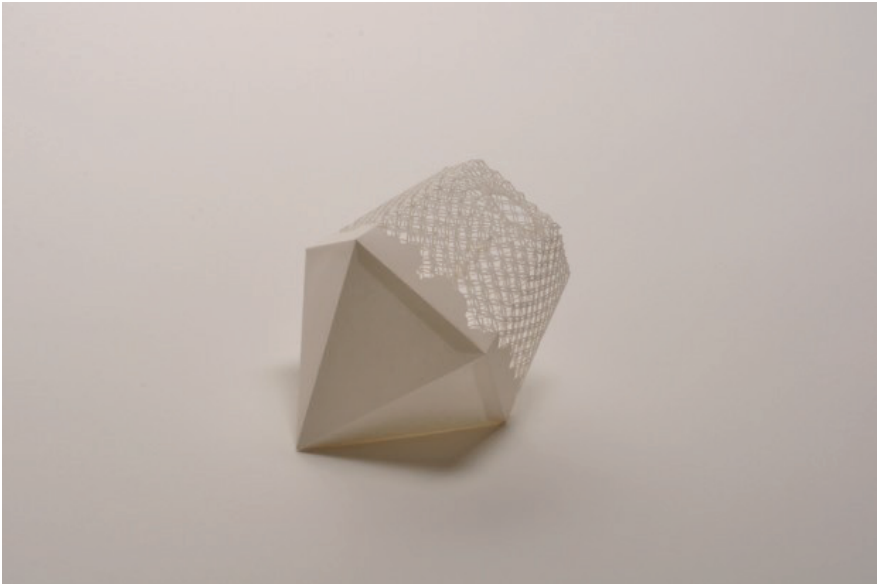
Is it important for the viewer to understand the meaning of your work?

No. but I feel a lot of viewers tend to view my drawings as “technical” or “too beautiful” and they miss the point of feeling or experiencing the work, which is what I would like to pull through in my works.



I feel the way in which your work is made is very patient, delicate and peaceful, even though the subject matter is quite dramatic. Is your mood affected by the subject matter when drawing?

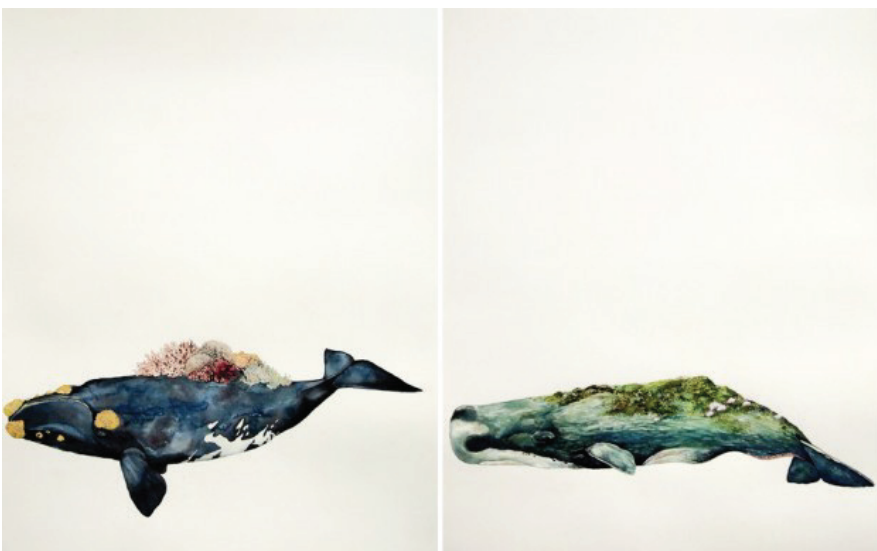
I think most of my subject matter are affected by my mood when I'm thinking about how to proceed making a new work, though I tend to prefer making works that are less personal. If I am affected, it would have come before the making of the work. The thinking process goes through all kinds of moods. But when I'm drawing, its pretty straightforward. however if I realize that the subject matter does not work, I will stop making it.



Is there a link between your drawings and your sculptures?

Personally, I think there is. I have some tutors and viewers who state otherwise, but there is a link. Or I wouldn't be making them because otherwise, there's too much thinking and reflections going on with so many different things. It messes me up pretty quickly. I get stressed easily. I make them because it makes sense to make them.

For me it's the action of making. To spend time and energy on my work, to create something fragile, delicate. I am aware it is not obvious to everyone, and that's okay. Its all in the "sensing", for me personally. There is too little time for these kind of things nowadays though.



Whales often appear in your work. What interests you about the whale for you to paint, draw and sculpt them? And will they appear again soon?

Yes, whales! I love them. majestic creatures. So silent and graceful and majestic. but what got to me was what happens when they die. "whale fall"—how a whale carcass sinks to the bottom of the ocean, and in return their death provides food for half a century within a ten mile radius and it creates a whole new ecosystem. There are creatures in the bottom of the ocean that exists only because of whale falls. I think this whole process is really beautiful, how their death create a whole new environment for survival.

I think about whales frequently, yes I do wish to make something to do with whales again, I have a triptych that's 5 m long with the whale already outlined.

How would you like your work to develop?

Something that people would spend time to look at and think about... something more critical perhaps? Personally I feel that my works are still inadequate in some ways. I am thinking hard about it and physically I feel constricted because I stop making works, thinking too much, doubtful that they will be good in any way. But works only become good if we keep making it. That's what I would like too, never stop making art with a passion. Whether its good or not, I should probably think about that 5 years down the road... maybe that's not very responsible, but that's another thing.
