

An oil painting of a shirtless man with dark hair, looking upwards and to the right. He is positioned in the foreground, looking out of a large window. The window reveals a lush, green landscape with trees and a building in the distance. The painting style is expressive, with visible brushstrokes and a rich color palette of greens, blues, and earthy tones. The man's skin is rendered in warm, golden-brown hues, contrasting with the cooler tones of the outdoor scene.

PRESSURE POINTS

HARIDAS
CONTEMPORARY

LUCAS TAN

Haridas Contemporary is a gallery founded by Christiaan Haridas that aims to support and grow alongside Singapore's burgeoning contemporary art scene. The gallery endeavors to create a home for emerging and mid-career Singapore and Singapore-based artists, while maintaining a satellite program with regional artists.

With 17 years of experience in the Southeast Asian art market, Christiaan hopes to advocate for promising art practices that are sensitively crafted and offer interesting entry-points into the stories and concerns of contemporary life.

The gallery is committed to supporting artists throughout their artistic careers by seeding opportunities for exhibition, dialogue, and professional counsel. Haridas Contemporary will rally for exciting local practices to be recognised across regional and international platforms.

ACUPRESSURE: ON *PRESSURE POINTS* BY LUCAS TAN

by Siew Guang Hong

Apply pressure to the scalp, an introduction

If you have ever passed by a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) clinic, you may have noticed posters with anatomical diagrams displayed on the walls. These are acupressure charts illustrating the meridian system: a network of channels through which vital energy (qi) flows, originating from East and South Asian alternative medicine. According to this tradition, numerous “pressure points” are spread across the entire surface of the body, each believed to influence other organs when pressed or manipulated.

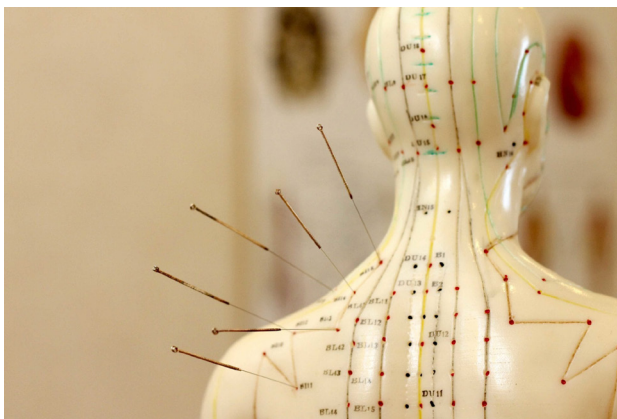


Figure 1: Acupuncture on a model featuring pressure points¹

¹ “Acupuncture Points: Charts and Meanings”, Won Institute of Graduate Studies, <https://www.woninstitute.edu/acupuncture-points/#> (accessed 21 March 2026)

Lucas Tan's debut solo features a suite of 14 new paintings, with compositions inspired by different experiences connected to his life. Depicting scenes of physical intimacy, late-night suppers, and his actual baptism (drawn from the artist's personal archives), the exhibition does not immediately seem to relate to pressure points. In fact, the show's title suggests less a literal TCM context and more how the artist approaches his work. Using this terminology implies the meridian system as a metaphor: just as distant points across the body remain connected — massaging between the thumb and index finger can relieve headaches — isolated moments in Tan's paintings echo each other across the exhibition. Moreover, each piece reflects on overlapping and contrasting pressures he faces as a young gay artist in Singapore, from family and societal expectations to those exerted by friends and peers within the art scene. Capturing these fragments of his life in painting is like massaging a sensitive pressure point and activating the flow of qi through Tan's lived experience.

Apply pressure to your temples, a section about content

“Pressure Points [...] comes from my own social life and relationships, from nights out, hanging around after drinking, small moments of closeness, distance, longing and awkwardness. A lot of it starts from wanting to belong, and wanting to be seen, both as a person and as an artist.”¹

What kinds of scenes make up *Pressure Points*? When visitors first enter the exhibition, they are greeted by a painting of the artist being baptised as a baby (Figure 2). Referencing a photograph from his family album, Tan notes that he looked disgruntled, probably feeling confused or uncomfortable being dunked in water. This is ironically fitting, considering the artist would grow up to be very irreligious and queer. The event depicted in *Initiation* was therefore painted by Tan to hold symbolic meaning, foreshadowing the pressure to conform to the circumstances he was

1 Correspondence with the artist, 26 January 2026

born into and his conflicting reactions to that pressure. The artwork in front of the gallery begins the show with its central and recurring themes of placemaking and belonging—topics that Tan repeatedly reflects on.



Fig. 2: *Initiation*, 2026, Oil on wood panel



Fig. 3: *Artificial Flavouring*, 2025, Oil on wood Panel

This premise also involves a clear sense of exposure. While Tan’s work has always been inspired by autobiography, excavating his family archive creates a more personal tone, revealing his willingness to show vulnerability through his narratives. Let’s look at several paintings included in this presentation. One is a sequel to an early work painted in 2025 (Figure 3). In it, *Mechanical* depicts a supposed lover lying in bed, appearing limp with skin that shines like plastic or metal (Figure 4). The scene draws on Tan’s past experiences and incorporates creative elements, portraying the figure as a glamorous object of desire. Tan hopes for a connection through this figure, seeing only the glossy exterior of the man. *Residual* shows a scene that’s more grounded in reality: the morning after a casual sexual encounter, with a man looking out the window from the perspective of someone lying in bed (Figure 5).

The piece explores the disconnection many gay men feel in hookup culture², as the awkwardness between the two men creates distance—the standing figure gazes toward an exit avenue. Although their narratives differ slightly, both *Mechanical* and *Residual* depict Tan finding various ways to cope with his longing for—and difficulty in—romantic connection. They reveal an emotionally raw admission of his uncertainty about intimacy.



Fig. 4: *Mechanical*, 2026, Oil on Pinewood



Fig. 5: *Residual*, 2026, Oil on Pinewood

It is difficult not to feel a sense of familiarity with Tan's work. Though deeply personal, Tan's experiences resonate with broader patterns of queer life, where it often seems that romance is doomed from the outset. A traditional happy ending is pursued in environments lacking acceptance, and intimacy is often built around fleeting moments of closeness. Tan is still quite young, but the pressure remains: how much longer will his youth last, and will he ever find someone to belong with?

² This is widely studied across multiple studies. For a comprehensive overview, see Kristian Møller, "Intimacy collapse: Temporality, pleasure, and embodiment in gay hook-up app use," *First Monday* 27, no. 1 (January 2022), <https://dx.doi.org/10.5210/fm.v27i1.10812>

However, Tan's paintings do not solely focus on romantic dead-ends. In other parts of the exhibition, he explores other forms of closeness that have supported him: friendships and shared nightlife rituals. Belonging can come through romantic partnership but also via temporary alignments of people who feel connected.³ This sense of reconciliation is especially clear in his portrait of Ada Blaque Heart, a local drag queen, in a club (Figure 6). As her friend and the mother of her drag family⁴, including her in the show feels like a longing to return to familiarity and find comfort in places not usually regarded as home.



Fig. 6: *Heart*, 2026, Oil on Wood Panel

Some artworks also subtly explore feelings of community. *Loose* is painted from a photograph Tan personally took of two drunk men sitting outside a gay club (Figure 7). The relationship between the two is unknown to Tan, who notes they could have been friends or something more. Perhaps they were strangers who met for the first time that night and tried to care for each other while inebriated. Tan depicts them with gestures that are caring but ambiguous, full of potential. A similar ambiguity appears in *Second Serving* (Figure 8), which shows another man cooking a simple meal

³ Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Duke University Press, 2006.

⁴ A drag mother is an experienced drag queen who mentors a newer performer ("drag daughter"), teaching them skills like makeup, performance, and costuming

for Tan after a night at the bar. Queer people often live in a world that demands compromise, and magic can happen when they find each other, even if just for a moment.



Fig. 7: *Loose*, 2026, Oil on Pinewood



Fig. 8: *Second Serving*, 2026, Oil on Pinewood

Tan's vulnerability extends beyond personal relationships. Some works also explore identification, reflecting the artist's desire and self-imposed expectations to be recognised both as an individual and as a painter. Most notably, *Left Field* shows the artist nude, astride an anonymous corporate worker who is positioned like a horse (Figure 10). The piece symbolises Tan's ambitions and dreams as an emerging artist, striving for success in a career that is quite unconventional in Singapore⁵, rather than following more traditional professional paths. By expressing these aspirations so openly, the work also acknowledges the pressures they bring, revealing both the drive to succeed and the risk of failure. In artistic contexts, the pursuit of recognition can invite scrutiny, where ambition might be misinterpreted as insincerity or "selling out." Tan incorporates this tension into *Left Field* through a literary reference to *The Emperor's New Clothes*, depicting himself nude as a

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Pursuing an artistic career in Singapore is relatively uncommon due to economic and social pressures

commentary on the fragile nature of artistic self-belief. For Tan, aspiring toward success involves a certain necessary delusion—the willingness to move forward despite uncertainty about how one’s work will ultimately be judged.

Apply pressure between your thumb and index finger, a section about process and expression

Why does Tan paint the way he does? As a young artist just beginning his career, it’s clear that the themes in his work explore experiences unique to his current time. We can also expect him to continue evolving beyond his first solo exhibition. However, examining Tan’s artistic journey reveals a consistent refinement of his compositional sensibilities. What often draws people to Tan’s work is its distinctly cinematic quality, partly shaped by his engagement with image culture.

A digital native, Tan collects a wide range of visual material in his daily life—fashion editorials, model lookbooks, publications, illustrations, magazines, music videos, films, and even stock images circulating online. These references include technical details of framing, focus, and lighting, as well as the direction of gestures and the use of narrative tropes. A collage of these sources is influenced by Tan’s perspective and re-staged with models—often his close friends—for photographs. Apart from a few paintings like *Loose* and *Typhoon*, most of Tan’s works are based on these constructed images. Even when he paints from chance encounters, the photographs are taken on the spot because they remind him of something he previously archived. Essentially, the paintings serve as both a visual diary and heavily mediated collages filled with emotional intensity. Like watching a movie, the frozen scenes in Tan’s paintings come to life through the viewer’s familiarity with what they are meant to convey—belonging uniquely to the artist but also resonating with a broader cultural imagination.

This is evident in works like *Mechanical* (Figure 4) and *Pigeonhole* (Figure 9), where “frozen” moments are composed as if in mid-scene, with perspectives that suggest the viewer is entering the frame or viewing it through a cinematic lens, as if the camera is zooming in from above. The mise-en-scène in these works is enhanced with colour grading and diffused light to evoke a softly sentimental atmosphere. Conversely, some paintings employ chiaroscuro more in line with the smooth tonal transitions found in photography, moving away from its Baroque origins of stark contrast and moral drama towards a more ambiguous mood. Similarly, Tan emphasises specific focal points while simplifying or blurring other areas, mimicking the selective focus of a shallow depth of field in photography.



Fig. 9: *Pigeonhole*, 2026, Oil on Pinewood

Quite striking is *Left Field* (Figure 10), as discussed earlier in the essay. The work is notably isolated within the exhibition for its departure from naturalism, with the models posed stiffly and theatrically, resembling a tableau or editorial spread. Tan also opts for a more limited colour palette with saturated colours. While several visual influences contribute to the painting's esotericism⁶, it is impossible to ignore its direct connection to Charles O'Rear's rolling greens photograph *Bliss* (Figure 11), taken in 1996 and famous for appearing on many Windows wallpapers in the early 2000s. Tan's white clouds against a blue sky, combined with the lush, overly-perfect field, resemble a painterly version of *Bliss* used as a backdrop in a photoshoot. Interestingly, the artist did not initially recognise the image as a photo of a real place. For his generation, *Bliss* was already ingrained in the public mind as digital stock and had shifted from being a record of reality. Its pristine, overly vivid appearance made it seem dream-like and aligned with *Left Field's* themes of ambition. Curiously, other photographers attempted to recreate the image, but the land has been heavily developed for agriculture and no longer looks the same. In an indirect way, the background in Tan's painting functions as a broader metaphor for dreams and artistic pursuit.



Fig. 10: *Left Field*, 2026, Oil on Pinewood

⁶ Surreal paintings like *The Son of Man* (1964) by René Magritte and later music videos directed by Tarsem Singh like Lady Gaga's *911* (2020) were also influential to the ideation of Tan's *Left Field*



Fig. 11: Charles O'Rear, *Bliss*, 1996



Fig. 12: Goldin+Senneby, *After Microsoft*, 2006

In both his naturalistic and theatrical paintings, orchestration and camera mediation are essential to Tan's approach. He partly attributes this to his immersion in an image-saturated culture, where ideas about what constitutes a happy or successful life often merge into neatly packaged scenes. Tan likens himself to the "director" of his paintings, creating images as if he were operating behind a camera. In this way, his practice echoes that of Cindy Sherman, who works extensively with staged scenes that are composites of real life. Although Tan's subject matter is deeply personal, the level of planning and production involved in creating these images introduces a certain distance, softening their immediacy with refinement and clarity. This could be likened to doing one's makeup and pretending to be natural, as in "woke up like this." The outcome is a tension between competing impulses: a desire for vulnerability and a wish to control how his life is perceived. Rather than diminishing the authenticity of the work, this tension probably enhances it, aligning the paintings with ongoing negotiations about what to reveal and what to conceal; pressures that shape Tan's lived experience and his aspirations for his art. In this way, the exhibition serves both as a reflection of embodied, emotional experience and as a performance of sincerity meant for all to see.

Apply pressure between your eyes, the conclusion

Imagine deciding to visit a TCM clinic for a massage. The therapy aims to promote healing, reduce muscle tension, and relieve strain. To avoid repetition, acupressure relieves pressure—and it truly does. Tan's *Pressure Points* are scattered openly and randomly across the gallery, resembling the body's pressure points, illustrating the artist's anxieties and stresses across various aspects of his life. From the pressure to conform in society, shown in works like *Initiation* and *Closed Doors*; to the stress of forming and maintaining relationships, depicted in *Residual*; to the drive for success and recognition, expressed in *Left Field*.

These tensions build up over time, much like the acid that accumulates in our muscles. Painting becomes a means of applying pressure to these tensions. Just as releasing acid from muscles eases physical pain, Tan's vulnerability—revealed in moments of desire and disappointment—acts as a cathartic release. What results isn't resolution but ongoing acts of negotiation: a continuous effort to understand oneself and find one's place among others.

About the Writer



Siew Guang Hong is an interdisciplinary artist-curator and writer with special focus on autotheory, new materialism and posthuman modality. He has managed and written for exhibitions with FOST Gallery, Art Outreach Singapore, I_S_L_A_N_D_S, Supper House and Institute of Contemporary Art Singapore. Notably, he was the winner of the 2024 LASALLE Award for Academic Excellence, and received the Winston Oh Travelogue Award in the same year. Prior, he was the recipient of the LASALLE Scholarship, TIF-SOTA Scholarship and David Marshall Scholarship.

LUCAS TAN

Left Field, 2026, Oil on Pinewood, 150 x 100 x 5.5 cm



LUCAS TAN

Pigeonhole, 2026, Oil on Pinewood, 80 x 120 x 5.5 cm



LUCAS TAN

Closed Doors, 2026, Oil on Pinewood, 80 x 120 x 5.5 cm



LUCAS TAN

Greener, 2026, Oil on Pinewood, 120 x 80 x 5.5 cm



LUCAS TAN

Hermit, 2026, Oil on Pinewood, 80 x 120 x 5.5 cm



LUCAS TAN

Loose, 2026, Oil on Pinewood, 120 x 80 x 5.5 cm



LUCAS TAN

Second Serving, 2026, Oil on Pinewood, 120 x 80 x 5.5 cm



LUCAS TAN

Mechanical, 2026, Oil on Pinewood, 80 x 120 x 5.5 cm



LUCAS TAN

Residual, 2026, Oil on Pinewood, 120 x 80 x 5.5 cm



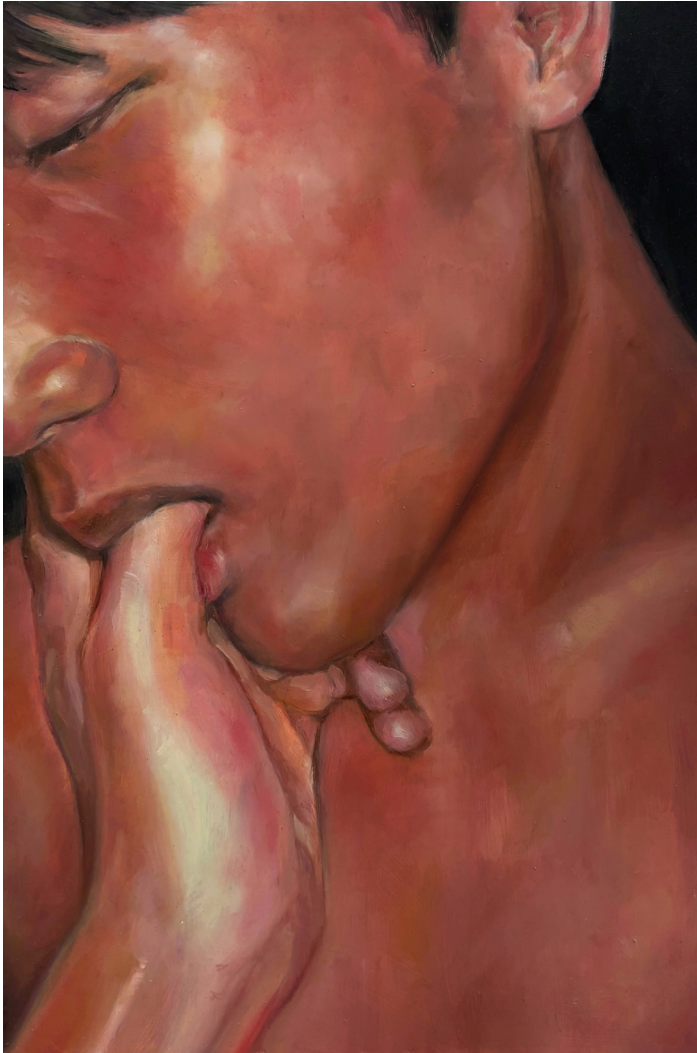
LUCAS TAN

Initiation, 2026, Oil on Panel, 40 x 50 x 2 cm



LUCAS TAN

Flushed, 2026, Oil on Panel, 46 x 30.5 x 2 cm



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LUCAS TAN

Heart, 2026, Oil on Panel, 30.5 x 46 x 2 cm



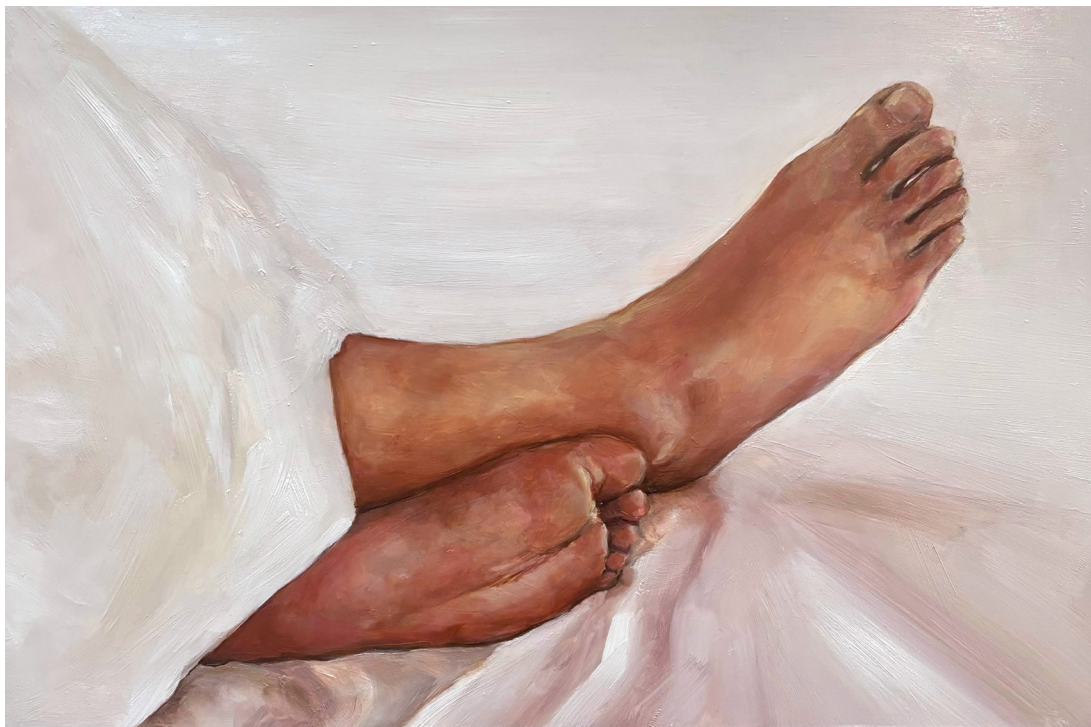
LUCAS TAN

Typhoon, 2026, Oil on Panel, 46 x 30.5 x 2 cm



LUCAS TAN

Peek, 2025, Oil on Panel, 30.5 x 46 x 5 cm



ABOUT THE ARTIST



Lucas Tan Yu Yang (b. 2000, Singapore) is a painter whose practice centres primarily within figuration capturing fleeting moments of privacy, intimacy and desire drawn from everyday life. Compositionally informed by audiovisual and textual literature, Tan directs a sense of yearning into his works that hold space for uncertainty and speculation. Something once felt or imagined, held just out of reach.

Tan holds a BA (Hons) in Fine Arts (First Class Honors) from Goldsmiths, University of London as conferred by LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore. Notably, his work has been exhibited in Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore; Haridas Contemporary, Singapore; Clifford Chance, Singapore; Alliance Française de Singapour, Singapore; and starch, Singapore.

EDUCATION

2024 Bachelors in Fine Arts - Lasalle College of the Arts

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2026 Pressure Points, Haridas Contemporary, Singapore

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2025 Everything and Nothing has Changed, The Independent People, Singapore
 2025 arrhythmias, Starch, London, UK
 2025 Small Things Brought Together, Haridas Contemporary, Singapore
 2024 Arcus Pride Art 2024: Pride Without Borders, Clifford Chance, Singapore
 2024 PULSE: A GROUP SHOW. Haridas Contemporary, Singapore
 2024 Of Placebos that Sing Sweet in the Mouth, Exhibition at Richard Koh Fine Arts, Singapore
 2024 The LaSalle Show, Exhibition at LaSalle College of the Arts, Singapore
 2024 The Molecular and The Divine, Exhibition at LaSalle College of the Arts, Singapore
 2024 slow brew, Exhibition at LaSalle College of the Arts, Singapore
 2023 Deciphering Realms, One Night Only, Exhibition at LaSalle College of the Arts, Singapore
 2023 THERE — HERE, Exhibition at Alliance Française de Singapour. Singapore
 2023 Where Cattails Grow, Exhibition at Straits Gallery Singapore, Singapore
 2022 Fluid Fringes, Exhibition at LaSalle College of the Arts, Singapore
 2021 Splinter, Curated by Nelly Tan, Starch, Singapore
 2019 WALKWAY (Art Space) Time Framed/Drawing Out Conversations, Exhibition at LaSalle College of the Arts, Singapore

HARIDAS
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Thursday to Saturday: 12 noon – 7 pm

Sunday: 12 noon – 5 pm

Wednesday by appointment only

Monday, Tuesdays & Public Holidays: Closed

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