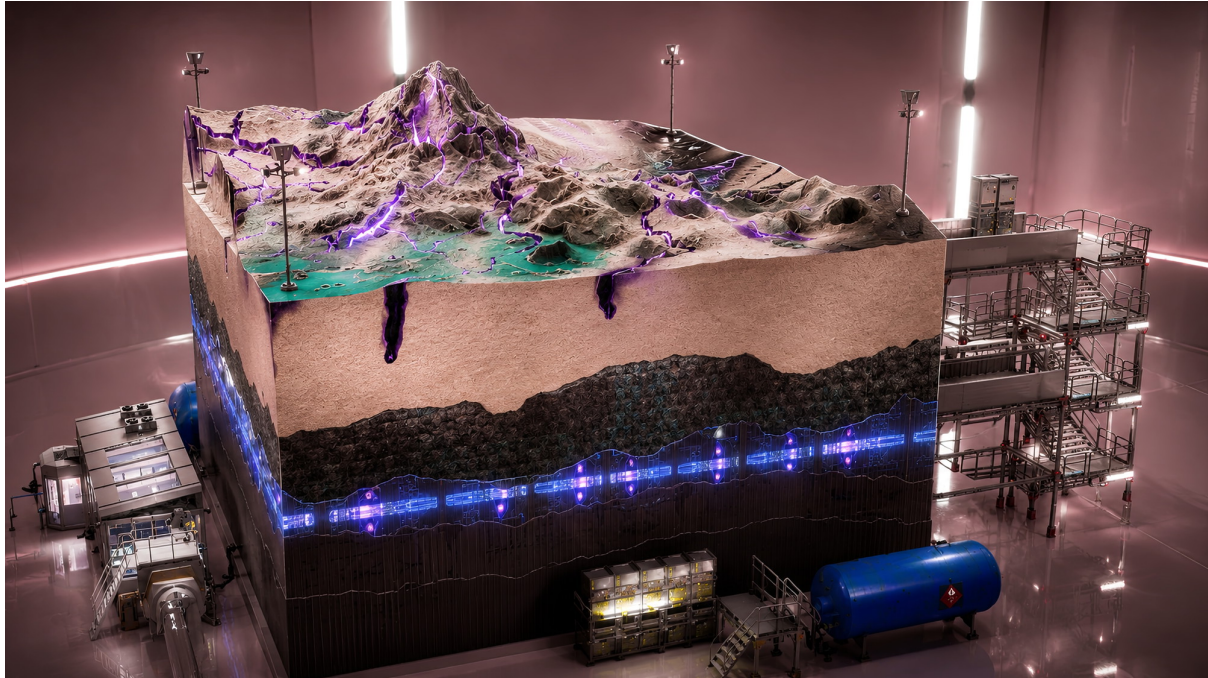


e-flux Agenda

Islands in the Net

Padimai Art & Tech Studio



Fyerool Dharma, *XO*, 2026. Rendering. Courtesy of the artist.

July 9, 2026

Islands in the Net

A meeting place for Southeast Asian Futures: Everyday life in the age of AI, data and memes
July 17–November 16, 2026

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Padimai Art & Tech Studio presents ***Islands in the Net: Southeast Asian Futures in the Age of AI***, a group exhibition bringing together web-based and data-native artworks, archives, and cultural projects to consider Southeast Asian futures in an age shaped by artificial intelligence, data extraction, and memetic culture.

Featuring **Heman Chong**, **Fyerool Dharma**, **Ho Rui An**, **WeiWei Hsu**, the **MIT's Cyborg Psychology research group** and the **Advancing Humans with AI (AHA)** research programme at the **MIT Media Lab**, **Grace Quek**, **Bussy Temple**, and **Emotional Technologies Lab**, the exhibition approaches Southeast Asian Futurism as a way of thinking about technological development

in the present.

Curated by **Kathleen Ditzig**, **Ryan Ho**, and **Joshua Comaroff**, the exhibition takes its title from Bruce Sterling's 1988 science-fiction novel, written before the launch of the World Wide Web and at the end of the Cold War. Turning to the early 2020s, ***Islands in the Net*** considers a world in which data has become a primary resource and the international order is increasingly defined by networked infrastructures. Corporations operate as political actors; nations become platforms; information circulation constitutes political reality. Sovereignty is metabolic, culture is memetic, and agency is distributed across the infrastructures through which value, identity, and information are produced.

Within this context, islands such as Singapore occupy a distinctive position: high-tech data havens indispensable to the global economy through the mobilisation of finance, logistics, and information. An 'Island in the Net' is therefore both a networked state and an archipelagic condition of relational being. The exhibition explores what it means to live within systems that predict, organise, and monetise behaviour, and how artistic practice might reconstitute agency within them.

The exhibition opens with **Heman Chong's** *Safe Entry (Version 2.0–2.7)* (2020), a painting of a QR-code interface referencing Singapore's national SafeEntry check-in system, introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic to record visits to public venues. The work leads to an hour-long video from Chong's *Ambient Walking* series, documenting a walk through Changi Airport Terminal 2 and uploaded to YouTube on April 30, 2020, the day before the terminal closed for renovation. Together, these works register a recent historical moment in which mobility, surveillance, public health, and data collection became inseparable.

Ho Rui An's *A History of Intelligence in ((South)(East)) Asia* maps the historical entanglements of intelligence, computation, and geopolitics across the region from the 1940s to 2025. Rather than treating AI as a technological rupture, the work locates contemporary machine intelligence within longer histories of empire, systems of measurement, and the

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Experimental mapping of space, **Ryan Ho** and **Emotional Technologies Lab** in collaboration with **Vignesh Sundaresan** have vibecoded a speculative platform that extends beyond the space of the exhibition that allows visitors to leave voice notes as traces on the net and expressions of affect that can energetically mark a space. The project is both an experiment in cumulative decentralised data collection and an interrogation of countercartography.

Foregrounding practices situated between geopolitical technology stacks, venture capital, and civic commons, the exhibition also considers how cultural and political subjectivity is produced through the memetic. **WeiWei Hsu's** web-based works *ASIA MAXXING* and *ICHING HEXAGRAM* propose fate as a complexity-management interface, asking how probability, self-optimisation, and cultural identity are increasingly shaped through computational systems.

The **Cyborg Psychology research group** and the **Advancing Humans with AI (AHA) research program** at the **MIT Media**

Lab present two projects exploring the future of human-AI interaction. *Future You* is an AI digital-twin platform that invites people into conversations with possible versions of their future selves. Rather than predicting the future, *Future You* is designed to help people reflect on long-term goals, make better decisions today, and strengthen their sense of connection to who they may become. *Future You* was created by **Prof. Pat Pataranutaporn, Chayapatr (Pub) Archiwaranguprok, Rachel Poonsiriwong**, and researchers at the **MIT Media Lab**, with support from **KBGTG** and **UCLA**.

Alongside it, the **Open Benchmark of AI Impact on Humans (ImpactBench)** evaluates leading AI systems through an AI Nutrition Label that makes visible their potential impacts on people and society, including dimensions such as accuracy, safety, fairness, learning, well-being, agency, and social relationships. Rather than measuring only technical capability, **ImpactBench** helps the public better understand how AI systems may influence human flourishing. The **Open Benchmark of AI Impact on Humans** is led by **Prof. Pat Pataranutaporn, Rachel Poonsiriwong, Chayapatr (Pub) Archiwaranguprok**, and members of the **MIT Media Lab's Advancing Humans with AI (AHA)** research program, in collaboration with the **Psychology of Technology Institute**, the **USC Marshall Neely Center**, and **UC Berkeley**.

In a special commission marking her return to the art world, software engineer, and pioneering performance artist **Grace Quek** collaborates with **DeepSeek** on *Art in the Age of Human Cloning* (2026). Revisiting a performance first staged at the University of Southern California in 1998, the work speculates clones of modern artists as content producers and virtual entities, opening questions around authorship, reproduction, and authenticity in the age of human cloning.

Bussy Temple, a Southeast Asian rave collective exploring the cathartic and cross-contaminating potentials of queer nightlife as a world-building practice, presents its web archive as an altar for collective orientation. On September 12, the collective will inhabit the exhibition space, inviting visitors to change their scripts, shapeshift, respond, and speculate new protocols for an Asian queer future.

Presented alongside a historical archive tracing the emergence of Southeast Asian Futurism in the 1970s through the work and network of **Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana**, the exhibition culminates in **Fyerool Darma's XO** (2026), an extension of his ongoing work *kædæluwær\$æk\$æk (A Xenographer's Index)* first presented at Malay Heritage Centre Singapore (2026). Imagining an expedition into *n**antara*, a parallel world of the Nusantara, the installation unfolds as a cinematic and virtual double of Padimai's physical exhibition space. Here, a worker responds to an AI's job listing, "Memory Diver", and enters a process of extraction. Narrated by a butterfly that remains in a room that no longer exists, the work asks what survives a system built to turn everything it encounters into data.

Islands in the Net is a liminal exhibition, existing between the virtual and the material, and between futures past, present, and not yet. It proposes Southeast Asia not simply as a region transformed by technological change, but as a place from which alternative trajectories of human-machine development can be imagined, tested, and incubated.

Founded and directed by **Vignesh Sundaresan** (Metakovan),

Padimai Art & Tech Studio is a Singapore-based artistic laboratory at the intersection of contemporary art, technology, and digital culture. Bringing together artists, thinkers, and technologists, it supports experimental practice, research, and new forms of digital production, archiving and exchange. ***Islands in the Net*** extends Padimai's programme by creating a shared space in which the infrastructures shaping contemporary life can be encountered critically, collectively, and through artistic experimentation.

For media queries, please contact Amanda Kelly at Pickles PR.

