Rirkrit Tiravanija: We Don't Recognise What We Don't See
8 April – 4 June 2023
STPI, Singapore

We Don't Recognise What We Don't See showcased works by Rirkrit Tiravanija from his second solo residency project with the STPI Creative Workshop. Curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, the exhibition explored the theme of extinction and the lack of visibility towards this phenomenon.

A selection of works from this project appropriated images from canonical Western Old Master paintings to critique the legacy of colonial conquests and the rationalism of European Enlightenment. They reflect on how such historical forces have contributed to the systematic objectification and classification of all living beings and colonial subjects, positioning the Western man at the top of this constructed hierarchy.

Other works foreground images of threatened and extinct animals, memorialising the lives of these creatures while simultaneously critiquing humanity's obliviousness to the ongoing loss of biodiversity. Crucially, the works in this exhibition required audience participation to be fully activated. For instance, what appears to be a blank sheet of paper reveals an image of an extinct animal only when illuminated with a UV torch—metaphorically underscoring how much remains hidden until we choose to see it. These participatory elements are characteristic of Tiravanija's wider practice of socially engaged art.

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