

Arts x Tech Lab: The Colonel and the Hantu

The Idea

Use extended reality technology to present multiple narratives from Singapore's history against a single backdrop, and across the three worlds – sky, earth and sea – common in Southeast Asian folklore.

The Story

According to the *Hikayat Abdullah*, one of Farquhar's first acts in Singapore was to push a cannon up to Bukit Larangan (later Fort Canning Hill) (Sky) and fire it, so that locals would no longer see it as haunted.

However, his time as Resident was difficult: while managing the city (Earth), he had to deal with plagues of rats and centipedes, and was even stabbed in the chest by a madman. Raffles eventually fired him, and he sailed away (Sea), leaving behind his Eurasian wife and children. Maybe Bukit Larangan was cursed after all.

Project Team



TUSITALA
Producer



HELLOHOLO
XR Partner



Audio partner



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The Colonel and **THE HANTU**

by Ng Yi-Sheng

They called it Bukit Larangan, the Forbidden Hill.
They said it was haunted by spirits.
Every day, hundreds could be heard on its slopes,
chanting their stories, beating their drums.

When they told me this, I laughed.
I was William Farquhar of the East India Company.
What had I to fear?
"I should like to see your ghosts," I told them.

So I gathered my men.
As the sun rose high in the heavens,
we hauled our cannon to the hilltop.
And there we lit the fuse.

Twelve times, we sounded the cannon.
Twelve times, the people below
saw how we had triumphed over their petty superstitions.

In the clearing smoke, we raised our flag
above the graves of the ancient kings.
How proud I was in that moment.
And how little I knew of my future.
The truth is, the hill was cursed.
Everything forbidden has its price.
The ghosts of this island would haunt me forever.

