COMMON LINES AND CITY SPACES
The **Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)** was established as an autonomous organization in 1968. It is a regional centre dedicated to the study of socio-political, security and economic trends and developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geostrategic and economic environment. The Institute’s research programmes are the Regional Economic Studies (RES, including ASEAN and APEC), Regional Strategic and Political Studies (RSPS), and Regional Social and Cultural Studies (RSCS).

**ISEAS Publishing**, an established academic press, has issued more than 2,000 books and journals. It is the largest scholarly publisher of research about Southeast Asia from within the region. ISEAS Publishing works with many other academic and trade publishers and distributors to disseminate important research and analyses from and about Southeast Asia to the rest of the world.
COMMON LINES AND CITY SPACES

A Critical Anthology on Arthur Yap

Edited by Gui Weihsin

INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
Singapore
## CONTENTS

_Acknowledgements_  
vii

_About the Contributors_  
ix

1. Common Lines and City Spaces: Introduction  
   Gui Weihsin  
   1

2. The Transformation of Objects into Things in Arthur Yap’s Poetry  
   Gui Weihsin  
   14

3. “the same tableau, intrinsically still”: Arthur Yap, Poet-Painter  
   Boey Kim Cheng  
   42

4. “go to bedok, you bodoh”: Arthur Yap’s Mapping of Singaporean Space  
   Angus Whitehead  
   73

5. On Places and Spaces: The Possibilities of Teaching Arthur Yap  
   Eddie Tay  
   96

   Zhou Xiaojing  
   114

7. “except for a word”: Arthur Yap’s Unspoken Homoeroticism  
   Cyril Wong  
   133

8. “a long way from what?”: Folkways and Social Commentary in Arthur Yap’s Short Stories  
   Angus Whitehead and Joel Gwynne  
   151

_Index_  
191
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would not have been possible without Shirley Geok-lin Lim, who initiated the idea and encouraged me to take up the editorship of this collection. Jenny Yap and Fanny Yap have shown us much generosity; not only did they give us permission to reproduce images of Arthur Yap’s rarely seen paintings, they also spoke at length with some of our contributors regarding their brother’s life and family background. We are extremely grateful to both of them for their time and invaluable assistance. Ho Chee Lick also kindly granted his permission to reproduce some of Yap’s paintings currently in his possession, as did Peter Schoppert and William P. Mundy with their own respective images. We would also like to thank Shamsuddin Akib, Irving Goh, Patricia Wong, Angelia Poon, Kevin Tan, James Tan, and Tang Chee Onn, for their help, advice, and support in various ways during the research and writing of the essays collected in this volume. Triena Ong and Stephen Logan at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies have been most helpful and patient editors, guiding us through the twists and turns of the entire process.

My thanks also goes out to my colleagues at Eastern Illinois University and the University of California Riverside, particularly Miho Nonaka, Charles Wharram, Suzie Park, and Traise Yamamoto, for their encouragement and support during some particularly strenuous times.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of Arthur Yap. Unlike some of the contributors, I did not have the opportunity to meet him either personally or professionally, but I have learned — and continue to learn — so much from his writing and from the meeting of scholarly and creative minds in the process of putting this collection together.
ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Boey Kim Cheng is Senior Lecturer in the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle in Australia. He is the author of several poetry collections including *After the Fire, Days of No Name, Another Place*, and *Somewhere Bound*. His poetry and critical essays have also appeared in numerous anthologies and journals.

Gui Weihsin is Assistant Professor of English at the University of California, Riverside. He is the author of *National Consciousness and Literary Cosmopolitics: Postcolonial Literature in a Global Moment*. He has also published essays in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing, Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, and *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory*.

Joel Gwynne is Assistant Professor of English at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. He has published articles on modernism and contemporary postcolonial literature, and is the author of *The Secular Visionaries: Aestheticism and New Zealand Short Fiction in the Twentieth Century* (2010). He is currently writing a book on sexuality, popular culture and postmillennial women’s writing under contract with Cambria Press.

Eddie Tay is Associate Professor of English at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where he teaches Children’s Literature, Reading Poetry and Creative Writing (Poetry). He is the author of three collections of poetry, *Remnants, A Lover’s Soliloquy* and *The Mental Life of Cities* (winner of the 2012 Singapore Literature Prize). His research monograph is entitled *Colony, Nation and Globalisation: Not At Home with Singaporean and Malaysian Literature*. 
About the Contributors

**Angus Whitehead** is Assistant Professor of English at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. He has published numerous articles and notes on William Blake, Catherine Blake, Frederick Tatham, Frances Burney, Ignatius Sancho, Mary Seacole, Charlotte Smith and William Cowper. He is currently writing a micro-biography of William and Catherine Blake, 1803–31, based upon unpublished archival research. He is also exploring ways in which the resources of the “William Blake Archive” might be utilized in literature in English lessons in Singaporean secondary schools.

**Cyril Wong** graduated with a doctoral degree in English Literature from the National University of Singapore. He is author of twelve poetry collections, one novel and a volume of short stories. He is a recipient of the National Arts Council’s Young Artist Award for Literature (2005) and the Singapore Literature Prize (2006).

**Zhou Xiaojing** is Professor of English at the University of the Pacific in California. She is the author of numerous articles on Asian American poetry and two monographs, *The Ethnics and Poetics of Alterity in Asian American Poetry; Elizabeth Bishop: Rebel “in Shades and Shadows”*; as well as a contributing co-editor of *Form and Transformation in Asian American Literature*. Her recent monograph *Inhabiting Otherwise: Urban Space in Asian American Literature* is forthcoming from University of Washington Press.