

Introduction

The theme of ISSUE 3 is *Port of Call*. A port of call is a heterotopic site where nautical imaginings contain the mobility of nations, cultures, powers and maritime and economic trade over time. We know of this only through history, which maps the mobility of nations as geographical drawings onto the carapace of the earth. A port of call is simply a place where a ship anchors temporarily or as a destined final place. But its association reverberates through all other forms of travel (communal, personal, metaphysical and spiritual) including everyday activities indulged by a person. A port of call is also an allegory for a longing to locate oneself through a visit or a return. This longing is wrought with an archeology of hope, remembrance and futility. Both the nautical imagining and the allegory speak resolutely to the human condition.

Often the importance of ports to global trade and the nationhood only becomes apparent in politicised discourse found in foreign relations between nations. Moreover, port cities such as Singapore remain slightly more vigilant as this serves as their lifeline to survive as a nation. While travellers' tales and political discourse provides us with much fodder for consideration, the symbolic power of the port remains its quiet icon: the container. It symbolises the potent discipline of trade, its impenetrable nature and its containment of consumer fetish. The icon does not move. It is moved. The container masks or silences the inherently heterotopic nature of ports and we are confronted with disciplined and universally objectified systems of organisation.

In this journal we provide a platform to art writers, critics and artists to reflect on the theme. In keeping with the multifarious points of entries and exits inherent in ports, we have attempted a multifocal point through essays, interviews and photography to serve as an aide-mémoire to the ancient, yet most contemporaneous, of sites: the port.