



Installation view of **BERNY TAN's** *Talismans for Disentanglement*, 2021, pearl cotton thread and calico, dimensions variable, at "Sewing Discord," Jendela (Visual Arts Space) at Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay, Singapore, 2021. Photo by See Kian Wee. Courtesy Aesthetics of Care.

Berny Tan SINGAPORE

Our perceived reality is constantly shaped by the language we use. To become more aware of her own thought patterns, Singaporean artist and curator Berny Tan employs

data visualization to translate emotions and relationships into a rational, systematic forms.

One early example is her *Study of conversational patterns in phone calls to my grandmother* (2014), in which Tan categorized the topics of her and her grandmother's weekly talks with different-colored threads. The four quadrants of a two-axis alignment chart are labeled with "worry," "guilt," "apathy," and "security" and the allocated threads are each marked with repeated expressions such as "Did you cook?" and "Have you eaten?," with their length signifying the duration of the conversations. While Tan found it difficult to engage with her grandmother, the saturation of data around "security" reflects words' effects on one's peace of mind.

Tan's more recent embroidery works explore the possibilities of rewiring our beliefs through language. For her installation *Talismans for Disentanglement* (2021) at Singapore's Jendela arts space, she collected spells from the public and embroidered them in red threads on yellow fabric, referencing Taoist paper charms. In a dimly lit room, 30 talismans hung from the ceiling and rotated in the air. On their right sides are imperative statements addressing an action taken by "you," while the linked threads at their backs evoke the calligraphy of a fantastical, lost language. Mirroring the Taoist talisman's function as evidence of communication between the mortal and the divine, each sentence is a warning or an attempt for change.

For her large-scale installation *a shapeless mass; a network of times* (2022), Tan transformed the mezzanine space of the Science Centre Singapore into a meditative area with 128 hexagonal lanterns suspended in the air. Weaved with the public's recollection of the recently redeveloped Jurong Lake Gardens, these lanterns crystalize their collective memory. Through these translations between memories, objects, and texts, Tan demonstrates how even the most rigid data carries its own subjectivity, and how there's spirit in each word that we express toward ourselves and others.

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