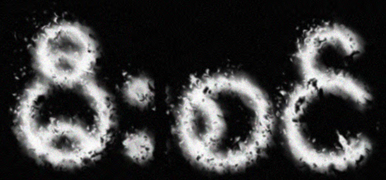
School of Arts

> [Myanmar] [Burma] [?]
> April 13 2022 WEDNESDAY
> The 13th Waxing of Tagu, 1383 m.e.



Fire
Fire tower
Stage lights

look/watch/judge

act/dance

Trans: play it by ear
-to deal with the situation as it develops,
rather than planning in advance.

Hence, the literal meaning in Burmese is: to act according to the stage lights—to “dance” to the fire.

A fitting spirit to embody as an art school founded under the most dysfunctional circumstances.

Backdrop

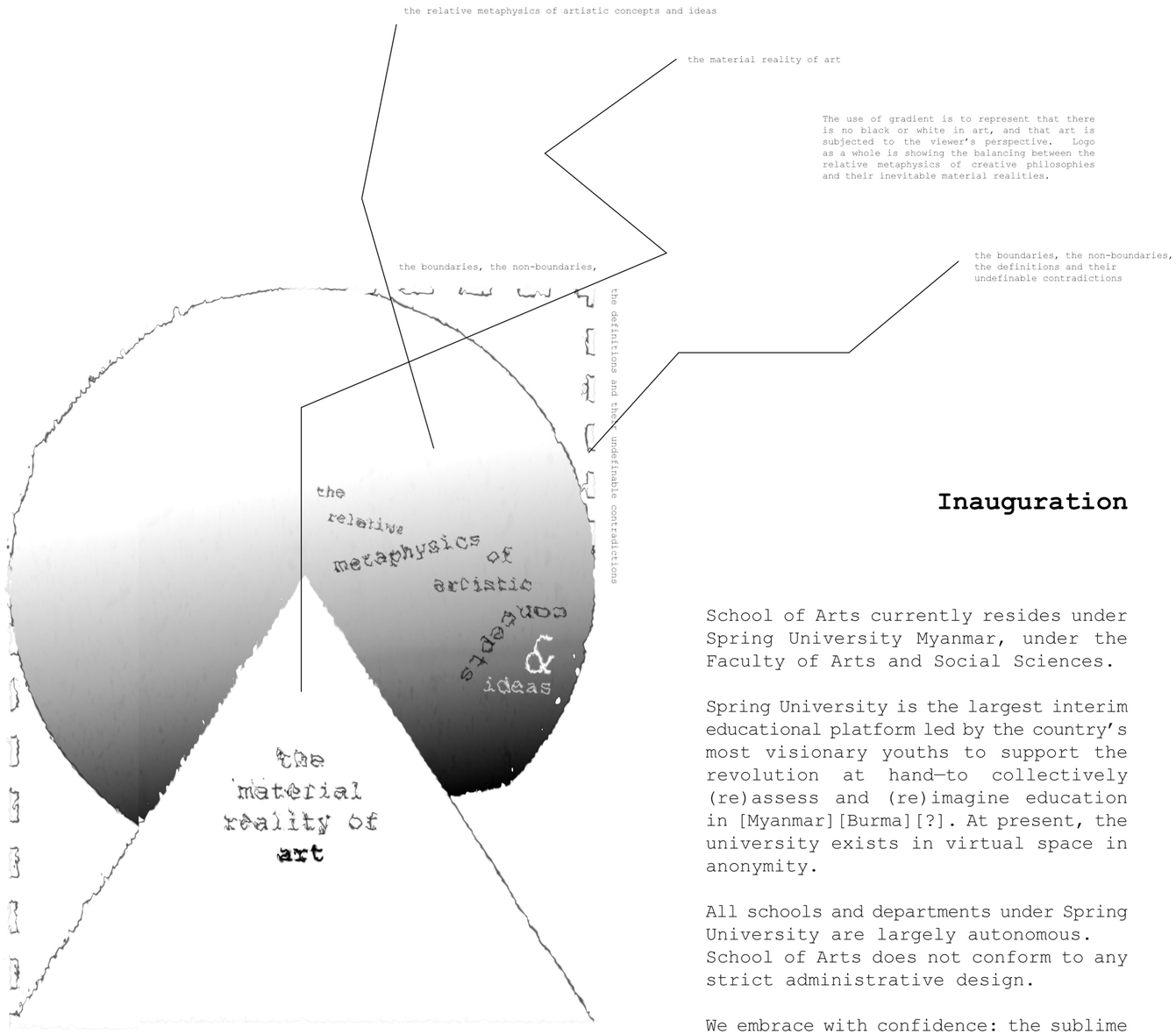
A revolution

That questioned everything: law, authority, religion, humanity, legacy, democracy, academia, right, truth, culture, justice, institution, gender, politics, freedom, unity, hatred, compassion, Buddha, art, nation, propaganda, revolution…

On February 1st 2021, the world turned upside down for [Myanmar][Burma][?]—what to call it even when this is over?

Night raids, arsons, bombs, guns, arrests, tortures, deaths, covid, oxygen, internet cuts, power cuts. Today is different from tomorrow. Tomorrow is different from today. Live one day at a time. Continue.

Dance to the fire.



Inauguration

School of Arts currently resides under Spring University Myanmar, under the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Spring University is the largest interim educational platform led by the country's most visionary youths to support the revolution at hand—to collectively (re)assess and (re)imagine education in [Myanmar][Burma][?]. At present, the university exists in virtual space in anonymity.

All schools and departments under Spring University are largely autonomous. School of Arts does not conform to any strict administrative design.

We embrace with confidence: the sublime essence of experimentation, and the reactionary impulses towards the socio-political conditions—the fires beyond our control.

The university recognizes the importance of such a space to exist: to remind ourselves that all definitions and systems are not absolute.

Manifesto (0.0)

(0.1) School of Arts (SOA) firmly believes that "Art" is a cultural construct that inherently reflects the social, political and economic conditions of its making.

(0.2) SOA is a safe space that enables the learning, sharing and exploration of different artistic, scholarly, and interdisciplinary methods and ideas.

(0.3) SOA is a space that supports not only aspiring artists and creatives, but also responsible and respectable audiences in order to sustain a healthy art-world ecosystem.

(0.4) SOA does not conform to any form of ideological extremism, be it the internal Burman Buddhist nationalism nor Western-centric and neo-colonial aspirations.

(0.5) SOA is ultimately a platform - an accessible platform for both traditional mediums of art and literature, and more experimental avant-garde art practices and scholarship.

Manifesto (1.0)

(1.1) We live in a world built around concepts that contradict. Art is one such concept that reveals contradictions. All concepts and definitions expire in due time. What is art now is not what art was then. This is a call to expand/question/update/disrupt these definitions.

(1.2) "We are late."
"Modernism arrived in [Myanmar][Burma][?] late."
"We still need to catch up."

We are late compared to who and what?
Abolish the imagined universal ideal.
The impractical and unrealistic expectations(of modernity/of art) must go.

This is a call to establish approaches to art, history and theory true to the realities of our condition.

(1.3) The shapes of our societies are not made of polar opposite ends but of triangles, circles, squares and hearts.

Abolish the dichotomies.

(1.4) Discrepancies between the values promoted through the art and the values the artist truly upholds must no longer be tolerated. If the artist presents notions of freedom and anti-oppression in their art but they themselves are oppressive in their communities, then their art has no meaning. Freedom of speech comes with responsibility and accountability.

(1.5) The art world is an ecosystem. Hence, all its characters from artists, art historians, curators, writers, journalists, gallerists, collectors, art handlers, security guards, the audience—anyone who knows (in their own terms) art and its values is equally necessary and important in keeping the balance.

(1.6) A country without proper support and understanding for the arts, culture, and research will always be vulnerable and insecure. We demand a respectable place for artists, thinkers and scholars in the new [Myanmar][Burma][?].

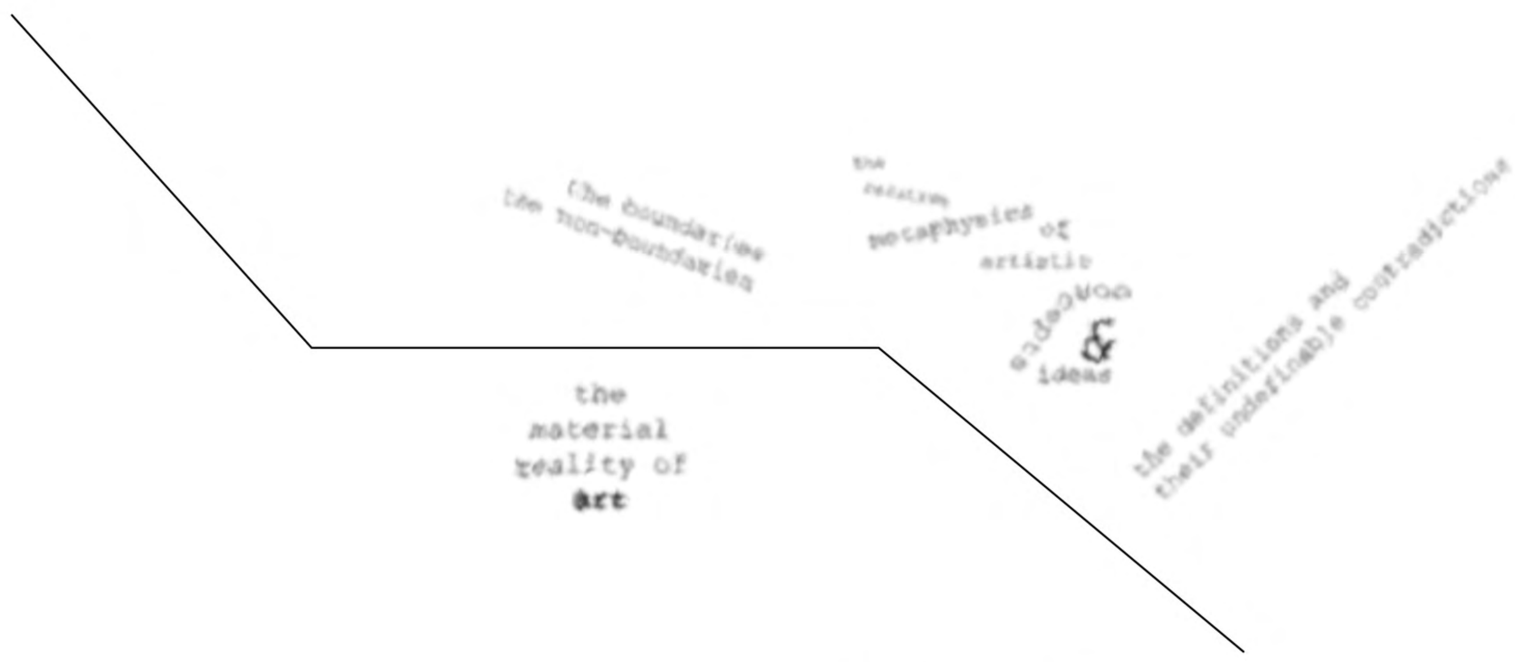
Consummation

Why art now?

Amongst guns, explosions, death and destruction?

A pointless question.
That comes from the assumption that art and culture are merely appendages of society.
It is dangerous to assume art as innocent.
Art goes beyond entertainment.

Art has a reflective quality, a human touch.
In crisis, reflections are important.
So that we do not lose who we are and where we are going.



Creativity ∝ Freedom is a flawed equation.
This is a story of how art persists under this apparent un-freedom.

The story might be ephemeral or everlasting.
Tomorrow, the stage lights might change.
The fire may shift.

But the story is worth telling.
And the dance is worth applause.

Today is different from tomorrow.
Tomorrow is different from today.
Live one day at a time.
Continue.

Dance to the fire.

FIN.