



# WINGSPAN

THE YALE-NUS ALUMNI NEWSLETTER  
ISSUE 12



**HOME SWEET HOME**  
We check in with our  
alumni living together





# MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

*Trisha Craig, VP of Engagement*

Dear Friends,

What an amazing past month seeing so many of you! Aly and I loved catching up with UK-based alums and some current students in London. Then dinner with DC-based Kingfishers really brought it home that our alumni are out in the world, making a difference as we heard some compare tales of working on the Hill. A meet-up in New Haven over, what else, pizza made me confident about the strength of the YNC community for years to come as I saw the amazing advice and friendship on offer from alums to students. Finally, back in Singapore, I hosted dinner where alums got to debate US tech policy towards China with Yale Jackson School colleagues Ted Wittenstein, a former intelligence officer, and Andrew Makridis, the former COO of the CIA.

This was also the best way imaginable to end my time at Yale-NUS. After a professionally and personally rewarding journey of 9 years with the College and as residents of Elm, my husband and I are bidding farewell to Singapore. Rest assured, Alumni Affairs is in the excellent care of Aly, Adlin, Cole, and Freya. The team has Reunion on May 25 all set and they're eager to see you there. The Yale-NUS Club is now established, and our Exco is excited about the opportunity to meet you during Reunion. They'll also be taking on the role of penning Wingspan's welcome message, ensuring you'll hear from them regularly. We have always envisioned an expansive, global YNC community and I'm proud to be part of it. Stay in touch!

Warmly,  
Trisha

*Trisha*



# IN THIS ISSUE



**LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION | 7**  
We catch up with our alumni making waves in entertainment



**LIVIN' LA VIDA | 10**  
Come find out what it's like for alumni living together



**POST-PHD LIFE | 15**  
We chat with two alums about their lives after graduate school



# CIPE'S CORNER

*Nilanjana Pal, Director of CIPE*



Hello Kingfishers,

For the first time in a few years, I find myself (deliberately) grounded on campus during spring recess and not staffing a LAB. This gets me reminiscing about this unique programme, which represents everything I love about Yale-NUS; the intellectual openness to exploring questions with a new lens, the willingness to peek outside the classroom to better understand a topic, and the deep camaraderie between staff, faculty and students, which have made every LAB assignment so meaningful for me. What comes to your mind as you recall your LAB or Week 7 experiences? Did one of these projects redefine your comfort zone? Would you repeat that experience if you could?

Since 2022 when we opened LABs to alumni, we've had about 15 alumni join these programmes (and look forward to welcoming more to our 3 LABs this summer). I hope this experience has helped build stronger links between the current classes and this group. A sincere thanks to all alumni who have returned to campus to lead workshops, participate in career info-sessions, serve as mentors and foster community in a variety of ways. It has been wonderful to see you at YNC again, albeit, in a totally different avatar, and we welcome your continued participation!

Though BrewHouse is no longer operating its cart outside my office window in Elm (they've moved to the Agora), I hope you'll let me buy you a cup of coffee when you are back on campus next. Till then, take care.

Nilanjana and the CIPE team



We had a number of alums join us for LABs, including this one on "Navigating the Arts Ecosystem in Singapore".



Yale-NUS College

# Alumni Reunion

2024

Saturday, 25 May 2024

Yale-NUS College

**Register Now!**



# EXCO'S CORNER

*Tinesh Indrarajah, Vice President*



It is the start of my first spring season here in the United States and just as it is nice to see new flowers blooming, our work as the Yale-NUS Club Exco is similarly bearing fruit after months of work behind the scenes. We are looking forward to announcing our formalization as an official society in Singapore really soon (fingers crossed!) and finalizing our plans for Alumni Reunion on May 25th!

I'm also excited that we had the opportunity to meet for the first time as a full Exco team in-person at Yale-NUS at the end of March. There was a lot of great energy and ideas during the retreat! We were also incredibly grateful to all of you who turned up to the Meet The Exco event at Shiner's Diner to learn more about the Club and we hope to have more opportunities to engage all of you.

It has been a rewarding experience thus far working to iron out the details that will ensure our Yale-NUS community will continue to have the support and space to gather, mingle, and enjoy each other's company post-closure. Being part of this wonderful community is something that is close to our hearts, and we seek your active participation at not only Alumni Reunion 2024, but also in organizing bonding events throughout the year.

As an Exco team, we strive to be your listening ears, so please get in touch with any of us to share your ideas, suggestions, and feedback or drop us an email at [yncexco@gmail.com](mailto:yncexco@gmail.com).



Our Meet the Exco event at the Shiner's Diner was so successful that we sold out of Ad-lins in just 30 minutes!



# LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION! LOOKING AT CREATIVE ALUMNI ENDEAVOURS

From succeeding at the Signal Awards to completing a month-long tour, Kingfishers in media have had a very busy and successful past month. We reach out to the founders of the podcast, Comic Sans, and the creator of Mail Ordered, a comedy-clown show, about their newfound success with these endeavours.



By *Suman Padhi* ('25)

## COMIC SANS

Starting out as a labour of love, Comic Sans is a podcast for “folks who love comics and also for folks who don’t know anything about them.” Myle Yan Tay ('19) and Nathaniel Mah ('20), the co-hosts of the podcast, “...wanted to make a podcast that’s a fun time for you, whether you’ve read all of The Sandman or don’t know the difference between Marvel and DC.” It is produced by Andas Productions, which is a joint-venture by Roshan Singh Sambhi ('18) and Scott Lee Chua ('20).

Mah ('20) recalls that the idea first came to him when “[Tay] had posted something on social media where he encouraged people to reach out to him with comic-related questions because there was nothing he loved talking about more than comics. That sparked the idea for a conversational podcast between him and a complete comic-noob such as myself.” Yan Tay ('19) retorts that such a post doesn’t exist: “I don’t know what [Mah] is talking about”. Fellow alum, and Comic Sans art director, Isabel Fang ('20) came up with the name Comic Sans, from where everything began.

Recently, they were awarded both the Listener’s Choice Award and won first place for the Best Buddy Podcast at the Signal Awards, a presti-



/// Myle Yan Tay ('19) and Roshan Singh ('18) attended the Signal Awards ceremony to pick up their accolades

gious honor awarded to creative podcast pioneers that ‘raise the bar’. Though entirely unexpected, the team was overjoyed to receive the award, especially in any industry where “outside of probably 0.5% of people...nobody’s really raking in the money.” The ceremony itself was for many podcasters like themselves who



were “passionate about the story they’re telling and the medium itself.”

Though heavily lauded, Comic Sans still remains a labour of love, and with many other commitments and the physical distance, it can be difficult to balance all these responsibilities. The team agrees that this balance is crucial, and call Comic Sans a much needed reprieve from their day jobs. Alongside the creative aspects of the podcast, Chua (‘20) writes,

“ *Never lose sight of why you started a project in the first place. For us, Comic Sans was always, and will hopefully continue to be, about having fun and creating something that others will enjoy.* ”

Nathaniel Mah (‘20)

## MAIL ORDERED

Mail Ordered is a comedy-show created by Shanice Stanislaus (‘17) “about a poor girl from a fictional village in Southeast Asia who arrives in North America as a mail-order bride looking for a husband who can buy her for \$100,000.” Combining a half-Singaporean and Canadian creative and production team, it premiered at a small community arts festival in March 2022 in Calgary, Canada, and later went on to win the ‘Pick of the Fringe’ Award at the Vancouver Fringe Festival in September 2022. Since then, the show has been on a multi-city tour across Canada, performed at a small screening in New York City, and has won even more accolades including the Patron’s Pick in Toronto and the Jester’s Cap Emerging Artist Award in Calgary.

*“Along with the accolades, we had sold-out houses and had many glowing reviews from theatre critics all across Canada with many of them comparing me and the show to Sacha Baron Cohen’s work. This one being my favourite by Toronto theatre critic Glenn Sumi: ‘One of the funniest and sharpest fish-out-of-water entertainments since Sacha Baron Cohen waved an American Flag as Borat.’”*

The initial workings of Mail Ordered began in Stanislaus’ (‘17) artist residency as part of the Centre of Artistic Development in Calgary, Canada in January 2022. Coming from Singapore, she wanted to create work that would bring in “stories from Southeast Asia to Canada.” From what began as a panicked and frenzied decision to wear a costumed wedding

“working on a project together with friends is also one of the best excuses to keep in touch regularly.” Whilst it can be hard to manage the timezones, “it’s a pretty joyous experience, recreating the feeling of meeting in a Common Lounge or Buttery and brainstorming, laughing, being excited about the work we’re making together” which has been “nothing short of thrilling, fulfilling, and an absolute privilege to behold.”



Shanice with fellow Kingfishers who came out in full force to support her show when she staged it in New York City!

dress for a devising session, she sold the idea of mail-order brides to Aaron Coates, the then-director of the residency and now director of Mail Ordered, and created the protagonist Lila.

Having worked with former mail-order brides, as a teenager, in retail stores and in impoverished parts of Cambodia, Stanislaus was very familiar with the stories of mail-order brides “who were being sold as a form of human trafficking,” and in her work, she wanted to convey “their circumstances through theatre.” As a clown artist, she “wanted to use humor to address serious issues” and to create a show “that was interactive, surprising, and had a Singaporean-Canadian collaboration,” which Mail Ordered accomplished.





Although highly rewarding, Stanislaus ('17) expresses the many difficulties with being on the road for long stretches at a time during her tour like sleeping on a new bed every other week, living out of your luggage, and even a bout of food poisoning. Fortunately blessed with inviting and warm hosts, she admits that she really only felt the "exhaustion from touring when I finally returned home to Singapore...while on the road, the adrenaline of performing, doing

tech rehearsals, press interviews, and performing this super fun show to new audiences every night did keep me excited and going."

She hopes to bring Mail Ordered to more festivals and countries beyond Canada, currently in the process of planning its next steps. But even beyond Mail Ordered, she wants to produce and write similar shows, widening the possibilities of what she can create and draw inspiration from!

*“ I thought that I had to wait for opportunities to come to me to legitimize myself as an artist. I always knew my voice and my craft were different. I decided to take the leap one day and try putting my work out there and along the way how fulfilling it can be to put your own voice out there...Most importantly, take risks, you never know... you might just make the next hit show at a Fringe Festival! ”*

Shanice Shanislaus ('17)



# LIVIN LA VIDA: YALE NUS' ALUMS NAVIGATING ADULTING TOGETHER

From maintaining traditions to navigating adult responsibilities, Yale-NUS alums share their experiences of transitioning from college suitemates to post-graduation roommates.



By *Siddharth Mohan Roy ('25)*

## EMMA, HUNTER & VALERA



/// [From left to right] Hunter, Emma, Valera ('22) photographed together on a skygarden in Cendana

Hunter Davis ('22) and Valera Arakeylan ('22) have been suitemates since their first year, with Emma Grimley ('22) joining them in her final year. As graduation approached, they knew one thing for certain: "suiteing together was a delight, and living alone is unaffordable." Their shared experiences as

suitemates made them accustomed to each other's quirks and habits, forming a bond that extended beyond Yale-NUS.

Transitioning to managing household expenses and bills proved to be their biggest challenge, as they humorously mentioned about the disparities between dorm life and apartment living.

Despite the challenges, some things remained constant. Emma, Valera, and Hunter continued their annual YNC traditions. However, they made a conscious effort to infuse these traditions with a sense of "intentionality." For example, they hosted Halloween and their annual Thanksgiving dinner with a whole turkey—"which proved surprisingly difficult to track down."

Their favorite spot—the "Bathuzzi" (a playful nickname for the swimming pool, derived from Bath and Jacuzzi)—is an "architectural wonder" in their eyes. Its unconventional shape sparked conversations about its design, and their shared appreciation for the "Bathuzzi."

After a long day at work, you can find them in their living room. "It's comforting to return



“Remember that living on your own (without the help of cleaning assistants) can be more challenging. Ideally, you want to live with people with whom you know you can have productive discussions about housework, etc. There’s also no ‘right answer,’ but whether you’re living with friends or new roommates, it’s crucial to cultivate good relationships with them. You want to feel relaxed when you come home!”

home and engage in completely random, silly, or even intellectual conversations,” they expressed.

In their professional lives, Emma works as a research assistant at the Singapore Management University, while Hunter works in business development and sales at a Korean financial services company and Valera leads Freshman Academy. Although they have pursued different paths, their YNC background provided a common ground for meaningful conversations. Their diverse perspectives and shared experiences allowed them to intersect different aspects of their day jobs, enriching their professional growth and personal connections.



/// The architectural marvel “Bathuzzi” pictured above  
/// Courtesy of Hunter, Emma, and Valera ('22)





## NISHA, PRAYOG & WISHA

After tossing their graduation caps into the air at Yale-NUS, the decision to continue their journey as roommates was a no-brainer for Nisha Selwyn ('22), Prayog Bhattarai ('22), and Wisha Jamal ('22). Nisha and Wisha had already shared a suite during their time at YNC, so extending their college adventures into the real world felt like the natural progression for them.

Their years of friendship had made them intimately familiar with each other's living habits. Also, as self-proclaimed "hopelessly indecisive" young adults, they mastered the art of making major life decisions through the power of mild opinions (or, more accurately, through open communication and house discussions).

Since moving in together, they've eagerly embraced some new traditions—particularly their monthly game and movie nights. These gatherings have become their most anticipated events of the month. Each time, the atmosphere fills with excitement and joy, fueled by Nisha's playful techniques during UNO, much to the amusement of Prayog and Wisha. As

they dive into horror films, their collective amusement only grows, finding endless entertainment in Nisha's animated reactions.

Living under the same roof has also revealed a wealth of shared interests and passions. From weekend hikes to impromptu cooking sessions, they have discovered new ways to bond and create lasting memories together.



Wisha, Nisha, and Prayog ('22) photographed in their apartment, celebrating a birthday



While their Yale-NUS experiences certainly laid the foundation for their friendship, the real world has a way of humbling them. Living in Cendana might have instilled a sense of entitlement in them, but the realities of adulthood quickly brought them back down to earth.

As an all-alumni household, their apartment has evolved into a central gathering place for suite get-togethers, RCA reunions, and casual meetups with friends from Yale-NUS College. They've even welcomed some alumni friends for overnight stays on occasion - and there was even one instance where someone they had met at an Experience Yale-NUS Weekend crashed at their place, highlighting their connection to different facets of the Yale-NUS community.



*“ To the Yale-NUS crew eyeing post-grad roomie life, we recommend living with your besties, talk shit, have fun. ”*

### ANGELA, FREDERIKA & LYNN



/// [From left to right] Angela, Frederika, Lynn ('23) are pictured here

Lynn Drescher ('23) and Fredrika Aakerman ('23) forged a friendship in their second year and maintained their bond throughout their time at Yale-NUS. They frequently bonded over their experiences as international students in Singapore and their mutual passion for environmental issues. Meanwhile, Lynn and Angela Hoten ('23) grew closer while living together and embarking on road trips during their semester abroad at Yale. Although Angela and Fredrika were aware of each other, their friendship flourished when Lynn initiated their connection during their final semester at Yale-NUS.

Drawing on the skills they honed as suitemates during their time at Yale-NUS, Lynn, Fredrika, and Angela approach decision-making and responsibilities with a sense of teamwork and trust. While they have clear roles in essentials like bill payments and maintenance, they remain flexi-



ble when it comes to chores, understanding that everyone’s weeks may look different. They chip in and pull extra weight as needed, recognizing that caring for their apartment is a collective effort that requires grace, patience, and open communication.



Among the many cherished memories they’ve created together, one stands out—the moment their families met for the first time during graduation weekend. Bringing their Australian, Swedish, and German families together over a meal at an Indian restaurant was an “iconic moment” that symbolized the coming together of cultures and the formation of a new family unit. Since then, they’ve hosted each other’s loved ones multiple times, strengthening their bond as flatmates and dear friends.

In addition to cherished memories, Lynn, Fredrika, and Angela have also embraced new traditions, such as Sunday evening prata dinners. Once a month, they hike down to their local 24-hour prata shop to indulge in egg pratas, curry, and Milos, using this time to catch up on each other’s weeks and recharge for the week ahead.

While their lives have taken different paths since leaving Yale-NUS, their shared experiences as liberal arts graduates and Environmental Studies students continue to influence their dynamic as roommates. As individuals with unique career paths and perspectives, they embrace diversity and passionate discussions, learning from each other’s ideas and holding each other accountable to keep questioning, expanding, and enhancing their understanding of the world.



/// A picture of a typical weekend breakfast in their apartment  
Courtesy of Angela, Lynn, and Frederika

“Align early on the basics, such as how you want to use and share the house and what noise and cleanliness levels you are comfortable with. You can be great friends, but if your friend wants to host parties on Tuesday nights or skip dishes for a week and you do not, you might not be great suitemates.”



# WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A PHD?

For some Kingfishers, Yale-NUS was merely the beginning of their academic journey, leading them to many other institutions where they dug deeper into their disciplines. Wingspan interviewed two alumni to find out what they are up to now that they have completed their PhDs.

By *Suman Padhi* ('25)

From their time here in Singapore, some alumni have gone forward in their pursuits in academia, enrolling in PhD programs and other graduate school courses. For Sherice Ngaserin Ng Jing Ya ('18) and Joan Danielle Ongchoco ('17), who completed their PhDs recently, their time at Yale-NUS strongly shaped their desire to keep learning and eventually begin a teaching career of their own. They went on to attend the University of Michigan and Yale University respectively to complete their doctoral studies in the fields of Philosophy and Cognitive Psychology.

## After completing your PhD, what are you up to now?

**Sherice:** I'm a Lecturer in Philosophy at Yale-NUS, where I'm living my dream of teaching philosophy in strange new formats. For example, I'm currently teaching a course I designed called Philosophy of Games, where students spend 50% of the course playing a philosophy-themed tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) campaign run by professional Game Masters.

**Joan:** I am currently a postdoctoral fellow in Berlin, but I will be moving to Vancouver in the summer to begin as an Assistant Professor at the University of British Columbia.



Joan with her parents during her graduation ceremony at Yale University





/// Sherice is pictured here during her Yale-NUS faculty photoshoot with everyone's favourite mascot, Halcyon!

**How did your academic experience (your major, your classes, your research) at Yale-NUS influence your decision to pursue a graduate degree?**

**Joan:** In my first years of college, I would spend Sundays hunched over a microscope, segregating fruit flies. Later on, I found myself doing independent studies on the philosophy of the self, on dance, and on human visual perception. Today, I am a cognitive scientist — and it is in this field that I have found a balance between my curiosity for the big picture questions and the fun of the process of trying to find an answer through experimentation.

**Sherice:** During PPT1, our professors taught us Śāntideva's argument about no-self and anger, leaving me frustrated and puzzled in equal measure. That puzzlement led to an all-nighter up in my suite where I reflected on my own relationship with anger. Taking Philosophy classes at Yale-NUS meant that moments like that happened constantly. And although interrogating myself in that manner was challenging and occasionally painful, I feel like I emerged better off from having pursued those threads.

I suppose I went to graduate school because I hoped to follow in my professors' footsteps and learn to ask the kind of questions that might lead a student into the same states of aporia that I experienced as an undergrad.

**What was your grad school journey like? What is your best memory of grad school?**

**Joan:** I look back and I remember only fragments, so many moments filled with joy or tears. But while the events themselves are blurry, I think all the best moments were with very particular people in graduate school — mentors and my closest friends. Them, I remember very well. These were people who watched me grow over the years, learned about the things I love, helped me through darker times.

Here's one memory that I'll share: My adviser, who was at the core of my graduate school journey, shared my love for Broadway musicals — but we always kept the science separate from our love for the theater. On my last day in New Haven, however, he took the entire lab to see *Six*, as a 'goodbye' present for me. We had dinner at a BBQ place, watched the show, then





Joan with her PhD supervisor and other members of her lab

had gelato in Times Square. It was one of the most memorable evenings of my time there, filled with a little talk of science here and there, but mostly laughter and excitement and lots of music, song, and dance. It was pretty magical, but in a lot of ways, it also captured so much of what my graduate school journey was like.

**Sherice:** It wasn't the smoothest journey due to the pandemic, and everyone who has been through a PhD knows how isolating and frustrating it can be, especially at the dissertation stage. But my department was full of supportive faculty, staff, and colleagues, and I'm very indebted to them for keeping me happy and mentally healthy throughout my five years there.

My best memory is a pre-pandemic one:

*“My dad always told me, whenever I published or discovered something, that my best work is yet ahead of me. If I really had to answer [What was your greatest achievement in graduate school?], I think it would be in the moments when I felt most disenchanting, and I would rediscover enchantment in books, stories, philosophy, and the company of the people closest to me.”*

Joan Ongchoco ('17)

Lunar New Year was approaching and I was feeling quite homesick, so I suddenly had the idea to co-host a steamboat party with my batchmate Glenn Zhou. We stocked up on ingredients at the Asian grocery store and taught our colleagues how to make dumplings. By the end of the dinner, a bunch of philosophers were lying on the floor because they were too full to stand!

### **Why grad school—what inspired you or motivated you to pursue these further studies?**

**Sherice:** I wanted to be a philosophy teacher. And the fun thing about graduate school is getting to do a lot of undergraduate teaching in an environment where your colleagues are also in their first few years of teaching. A lot of our time was spent



“ *Something I appreciated about my time in Michigan was how there was very little pressure to prioritise one research area over another. Though the majority of my research was in Buddhism and Plato, many of my favourite courses were Early Modern Philosophy courses. I ended up pursuing that interest by teaching Early Modern Philosophy and writing a fun paper about Anne Conway and atomism.* ”

Sherice Ngaserin ('18)

brainstorming about ways to engage and support our very sharp undergrads.

**Joan:** I still remember sitting in the common lounge of Cendana with Marvin Chun, who was then a mentor to me. This was around the middle of my junior year. He asked me what I wanted to do after graduating, and I gave him a list of the typical answers—consulting, NGO work, and so on. He then told me about the possibility of pursuing grad school, of being paid to ask questions and find answers, and he urged me to really consider it. I would not be where I am today without him, and all the other mentors who have kept me on this path.

### **Any advice for Kingfishers looking to do a PhD or considering applying for grad school?**

**Joan:** Try all the other careers that you are curious about first — and if you still find that you want to go back into research, then apply to grad school. This was arguably the best piece of advice that Marvin [Chun] gave to me then. This made the most difficult times during my PhD easier.



When my other colleagues were thinking of jumping ship to the industry, I knew that academia was where I wanted to be, because I had tried all the other jobs (e.g., consulting and NGO work) during college, and still felt myself drawn back to the work.

**Sherice:** If you're thinking about graduate school, my advice is to start reaching out to professors you trust within your discipline. Also feel free to reach out to any alums who have gone to graduate school -- there are quite a lot of us and most of us are happy to have a chat about it.



## **Calling all Kingfishers!**

We hope you have had a chance to visit the newly launched Legacy website! We invite you to share your content, and collaborate with us to make these initiatives truly special.

[Submit Your Stories](#)



# WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

## BE FEATURED

Want to be featured in upcoming issues of *Wingspan*? We're always on the lookout for interesting things that alumni are doing. If you are doing something cool or exciting that you want other alumni to know about, let us know! If you know a friend who is doing cool stuff but is too shy to blow their own trumpet, let us know as well!

## PITCH IDEAS

This newsletter is for alumni, and we also want to feature things that you are interested in. If you have an idea for a feature or an article, please feel free to write in as well, and we'll see if it's a good fit!

## SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

We want your feedback! Do you like the newsletter? Do you hate it? What do you want to see more of? And what do you want to see less of? Let us know!

You can contact us at [alumni@yale-nus.edu.sg](mailto:alumni@yale-nus.edu.sg).

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