



# Elisabeth Gunawan

## Where are you from?

Jakarta, Indonesia

## What was your background/what were you doing before RADA Theatre Lab?

I lived in Singapore, managing a multi-million dollar portfolio for Google during the day and performing experimental fringe theatre at night. You know, just like Batman.

## What made you interested in RADA Theatre Lab?

RADA Lab was by far the best training for me—rigorous, deep and honed me to become an independent actor and performer who takes risks. The winter before, I had applied to MFA auditions in the US and absolutely hated it. We were standing in line, given 5 minutes to perform our monologues, at times we were even given our rejection as we left the door. It really hit me that anyone who runs auditions like that have no clue how actors work. Even from the audition process, RADA was totally different - with a workshop style audition that allowed us to get to know the program, to be in process, and to learn.

## What has RADA Theatre Lab helped you learn about yourself as an artist?

It taught me the skill of transformation: through the body, through words and images. As an actor and performer, I transform into characters and transform spaces into stories. After all, I feel that creation as an artist is rooted in taking in the world (the nature we see, the stories of our families, the things we witness on the street), and transforming it into art.

## What is something you wish people knew about you as an artist?

That as a performer, I find dignity in indignity, beauty in ugliness, and the truth in fiction.

## How did you find creating your own manifesto piece for the Bloomsbury Festival?

It gave me the confidence to manifest the kind of theatre that really drew me in — full of contradictions and transgressions. I was fascinated by the beautiful and the ugly, the sublime and the horrific, the mythic and the banal. I believe that the theatre should feel like a kiss: it may be rough and tumble or soft as a whisper, but always sensual, irresistible and out of love for the audience.

## What are you looking forward to post RADA Theatre Lab?

I'm looking forward to a series of residencies I'll be conducting under the auspices of the Grotowski Institute with several physical theatre companies, including Flabbergast Theatre and Studio Matejka. These days, I am throwing a lot of my hopes, dreams, pitches and grant applications into the Black Hole™ and some of them are bound to come back someday...

## How has this past year changed how you think about theatre?

The past year has truly made me realize that theatre lives in the encounter between the audience and the performer. In fact, with the pandemic - we have been living for so long in the impotence of being makers of theatre in a world where no theatres are open. But then I realized, that in a way the last theatre still open on this earth is in our imagination, which we will always be able to engage and ignite even when we are not physically together. Last year, I created a piece of digital theatre titled Stampin' in the Graveyard alongside another Lab graduate, Jack Parris, that explored this very idea.

## If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one quality or ability, what would it be?

It would be nice to know how to ride a bike.

## How does it feel to join the legacy of RADA alumni?

Excited! The Lab is only a sapling, a few years old. I think we are all on a journey to build something that lasts.

## What song is stuck in your head these days?

Tankwa Town - Oliver Koletzki