

INTERVIEW with COLA's winning project *Honk! Mobile App* submitted by SUTD-MIT International Design Centre.



1. This project has a sweet and nostalgic feel with its heritage approach. What inspired you to start the project in this direction?

I am a cultural anthropologist, and this all started with a social research study I conducted with several colleagues to understand the social conditions of Singapore's waste and recycling sector. We surveyed over 300 households and conducted long interviews with different stakeholders in the waste and recycling sector. During the study, I recognized two things: first, the karung guni continues to play a crucial role in recycling and reuse, diverting waste from landfill; and second, the karung guni faces a lot of challenges today due to changes in the built infrastructure, people's habits (especially young people), and the restriction of international recycling trade. Along with my colleagues, we began to wonder whether the smartphone-based software pioneered for taxi-booking and food delivery could play a role increasing the efficiency of informal recycling trade. We don't need to use technology and design to displace traditional people and practices, like karung guni, we can use technology and design to make tradition a solution for the future.

2. How do you feel this project has helped people love our city more, and how would you want to continue it?

First, Honk! has helped people to love Singapore more through providing a model for how recycling can be made more fun, convenient, and connective. Second, Honk! has helped people to see the importance of the traditional karung guni in facing today's critical

environmental problems. Often, waste and recycling workers are overlooked, but it is crucial to direct love towards waste and recycling work as a part of loving our city.

I hope to expand the impact of this project through partnering with businesses and organizations already established in the waste and recycling sector, who can support the expansion of Honk! app into broader applications.

3. How did you find out about COLA and what attracted you to apply for it?

I first heard about COLA from a colleague, an architect, who had applied for it in a previous year. I really like the idea of a project set up to encourage and promote love for the city.

4. What advice would you offer to potential applicants who are keen to start their projects?

Do what you love and care about because this will translate into love for the city.

5. What do you hope to see transformed in Singapore for similar areas of sustainability?

Other areas where this could be used include improving food waste recycling, and it could be used to build connections between food waste sites and urban farming or gardening sites.