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## SKIN @ OZASIA REVIEW

Written by James Murphy (/blog/James-Murphy) | Tuesday, 04  
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**You can never really understand an asylum seeker until you consider things from their point of view... Until you climb inside of their skin and walk around in it.**

'SKIN', a joint Malaysian and Australian production by Terryandthecuz, seeks to invoke empathy for asylum seekers within the hearts of audiences by forcibly transporting them into the desperate plight faced by a stateless person. Obviously, the level of discomfort that the performers could inflict is limited, but even a diluted people-trafficking experience was sufficient to demonstrate the relative comfort of our lives in comparison to the unknown alien faces that flash across our nightly news.

Immediately upon entering The Maj Gallery, standard forms were thrust into the faces of ticket-holders; intimate personal information was sought, as was your waiving of legal liability. Never underestimate the oppression of bureaucratic processes.

What happened next could amount to cruel and unusual punishment for Generation Y and under; wallets, keys and smartphones were stripped from your person and swiftly stored in a zip-lock bag.



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As an iPhone addict, I was practically convulsing on the floor in a cold sweat within five minutes of this terrible deprivation. We were then allocated a number and coldly herded like sheep into holding pens until ultimately arriving at a processing centre that oozed hostility. The whole experience successfully imbued in me a tangible sense of powerlessness. As an uncoordinated, introverted perfectionist, the processing centre was like Dante's Inferno.

OzAsia Festival Insights - SK!N with TERRYANDTHECUZ



"Star jumps", they barked. I squeezed out three flailing limb movements. My feeble efforts were scribbled onto my form. "Onto the scales!" Luckily I had been cutting the carbs, so I was confident with that. "Squat down!" Oh no, my tight hip flexors. My physical capabilities were then marked onto a chalkboard like I was a hog on the way to slaughter. Immigration officials then loudly discussed my finances and family heritage in full earshot of fellow travellers; this felt like a strip search to me. Based on my answers, I was allocated into a group that I perceived to be the lucky one. Others were blindfolded and marched off, giving me a small glimpse of survivor guilt. I didn't stand up and protest the treatment of others though; I was in survival mode.

After being crammed like sardines into a shipping container, normality returned for a while. Lithe Malaysian dancers, with shivers and spasms, conveyed the relentless compulsion to conform under authoritarian rule; the gradual breaking of the spirit. As the interpretative dance concluded, my less fortunate compatriots were shipped off on the back of a truck whilst I was delicately massaged and fed chocolates. All my self-righteous posts on social media were for nought; when all is reduced to us versus them, my own survival and comfort is what really matters.


There is no greater tragedy than the unexamined life; 'SK!N' exposed all my fictions, flashing a spotlight on the darker reaches of my soul.

★★★★★


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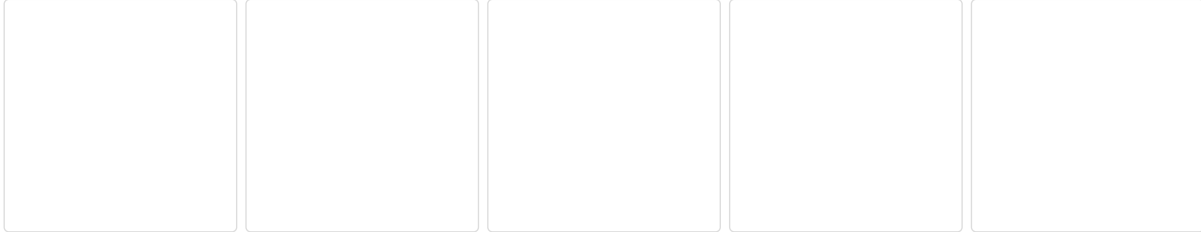
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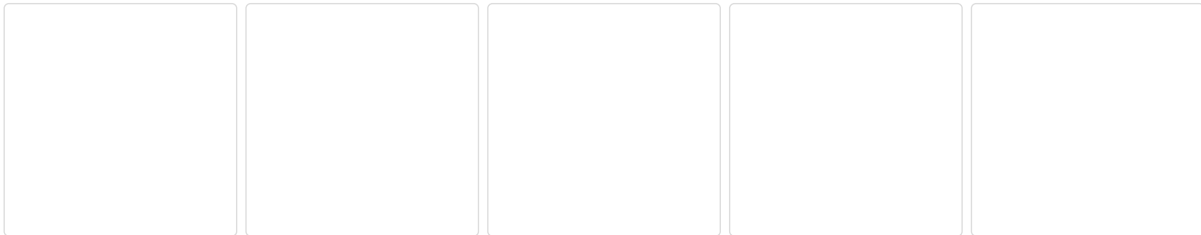
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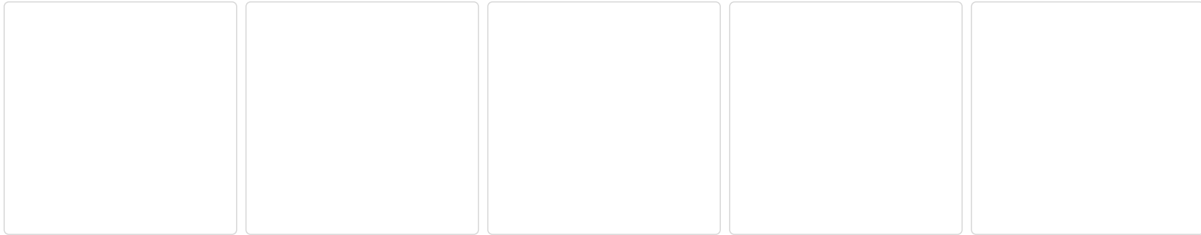
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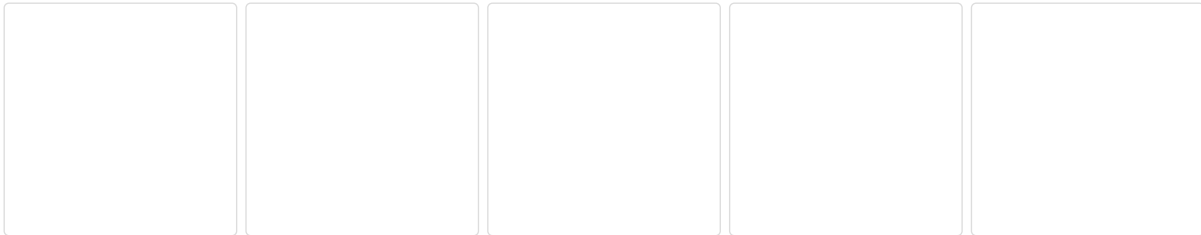
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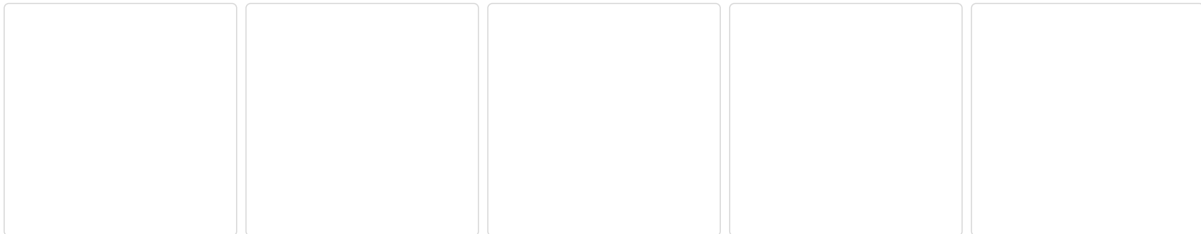
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