In his critique of consumption, Jean Baudrillard contends that the consumer no longer relates to a particular object in its specific utility, but to a set of objects in its total signification. Thus, increasingly, when consumers make their purchases, they do not simply select goods and services purely for their functional or utilitarian values, but are buying into the significations of these commodities in the construction of their self-identities.

Objects of intellectual property (IP), in particular copyrighted works and trademarks, represent far more than a bundle of legal rights. They are invariably associated with a set of cultural narratives and semiotic meanings which are ultimately consumed. In this Lecture, David Tan explores how the encoded narratives in certain objects of IP may be read as polysemous texts that invite playful semiotic recodings, culture jamming and poststructural disruptions. It also suggests how audiences who engage with works of copyright and trademarks via such textual signification may avail themselves of a number of defences under the current legal regime.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Professor David Tan is Vice Dean (Academic Affairs) and Director of Intellectual Property at the EW Barker Centre for Law & Business at NUS Law. David holds PhD, LLB (First Class Hons) and BCom degrees from the University of Melbourne and an LLM from Harvard. He has been a regular visitor at Melbourne Law School and the University of Hong Kong Faculty of Law teaching courses in intellectual property and popular culture.


David is also a well-known fine art and fashion photographer in Singapore, whose works have appeared in Harper’s Bazaar, Elle, Marie Claire, Vanity Fair, Time and L’Officiel. He has had six solo photography exhibitions, which include collaborations with Cartier and Versace.