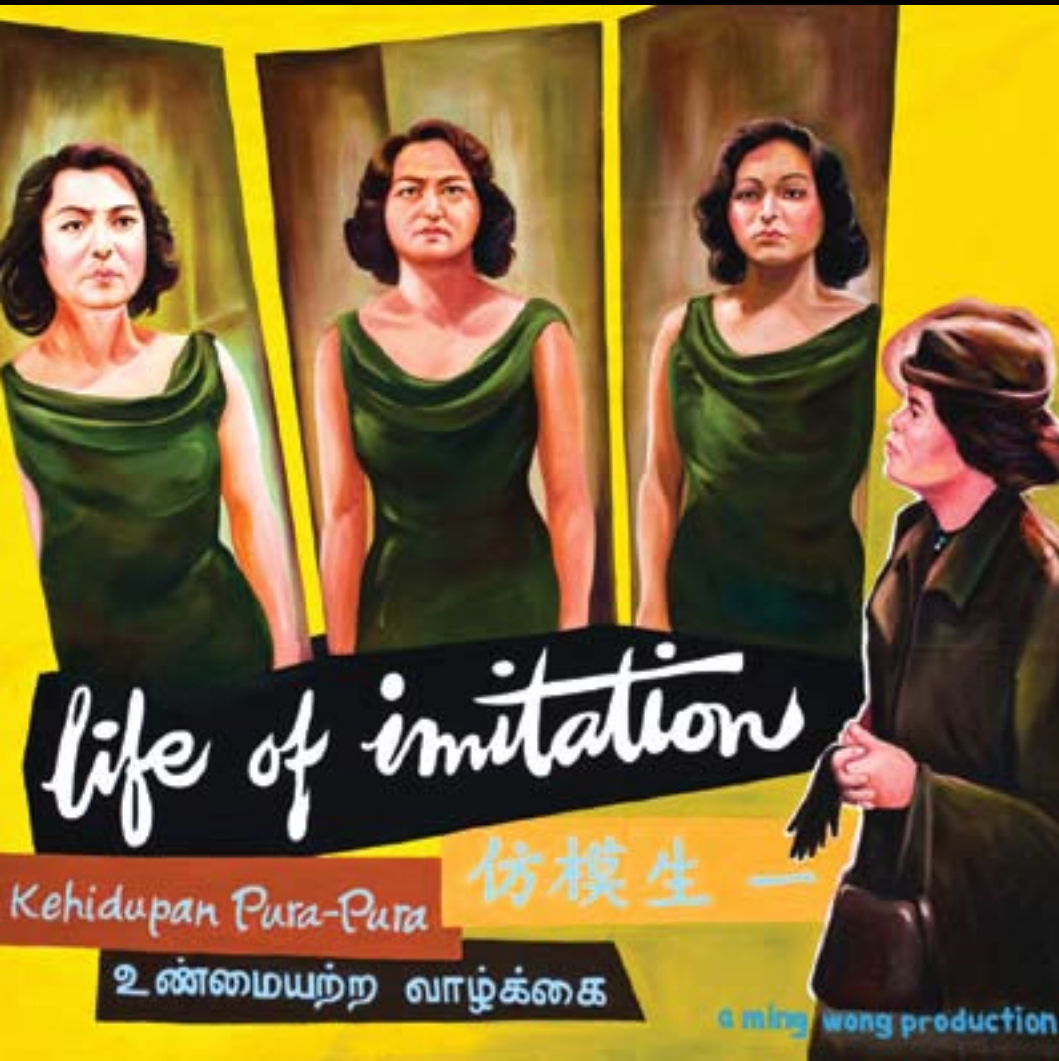


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CLASSIC CONTEMPORARY

CONTEMPORARY SOUTHEAST ASIAN ART FROM
THE SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM COLLECTION

29 JANUARY TO 2 MAY 2010



ADVISORY: THIS PUBLICATION CONTAINS IMAGES OF A GRAPHIC NATURE

Akan Datang • விரைவில்



ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

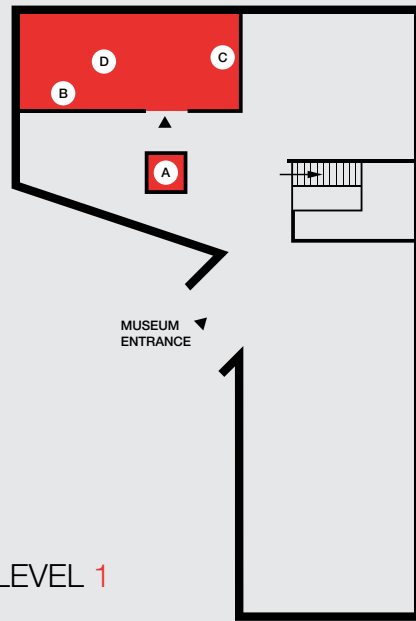
Classic Contemporary shines the spotlight on Singapore Art Museum's most iconic contemporary artworks in its collection. By playfully asking what makes a work of art "classic" or "contemporary" — or "classic contemporary" — this accessible and quirky exhibition aims to introduce new audiences to the ideas and art forms of contemporary art. A stellar cast of painting, sculpture, video, photography and performance art from across Southeast Asia are brought together and given the red-carpet treatment, and the whole of the SAM 8Q building is transformed into a dramatic stage for these stars and icons. Yet beneath the glamour, many of the artworks also probe and prod serious issues — often asking critical and challenging questions about society, nation and the history of art itself.

Since its inception in 1996, SAM has focused on collecting the works of artists practicing in the region, and many of these once-emerging artists have since established notable achievements on regional and international platforms. This exhibition marks the start of SAM's new contemporary art programming centred on enabling artistic development through the creation of exhibition and programming platforms, as well as growing audiences for contemporary art. *Classic Contemporary* offers an opportunity to revisit major works by Suzann Victor, Matthew Ngui, Simryn Gill, Redza Piyadasa, Jim Supangkat, Nindityo Adipurnomo, Agnes Arellano, Agus Suwage, and Montien Boonma, among others. A full programme of curatorial lectures, artist presentations, moving image screenings and performances complete the classic contemporary experience.

FACING PAGE: **Chatchai Puipia**, *You Inside, Are You Still OK?* (detail), 1997, Oil on canvas, 240.3 x 279.7 cm, Singapore Art Museum collection.

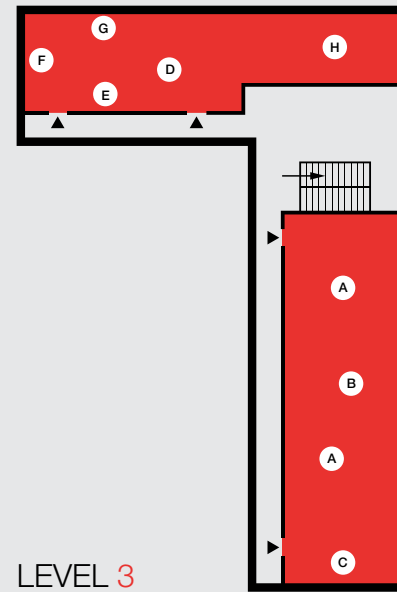
FRONT COVER: **Vincent Leow**, *Money Suit*, 1992, Paper collage and cotton suit, 88 x 55 x 7 cm, Singapore Art Museum collection.

EXHIBITION PLAN



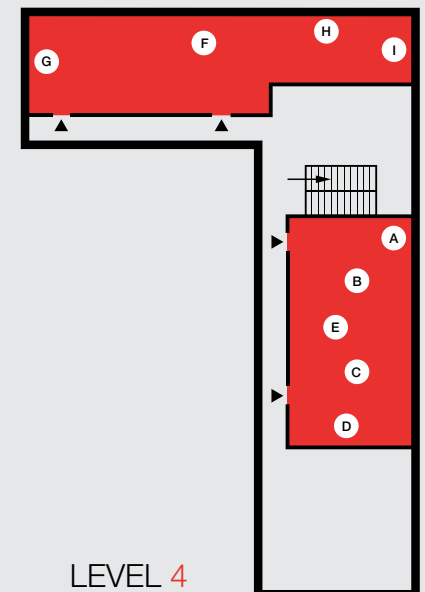
LEVEL 1

- A Handiwirman Saputra,
Cemani Telur, Tai Kapor
- B Agus Suwage,
Cinder Mata A La Indonesia
- C Chatchai Puiipia,
You Inside, Are You Still OK?
- D Sopheap Pich,
Cycle



LEVEL 3

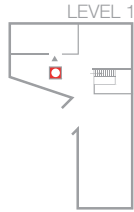
- A Montien Boonma,
The Pleasure of Being, Crying, Dying and Eating
- B Matthew Ngui,
Self Portrait: Interrogation of an Image
- C Arahmaiani,
I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Legend
- D Simryn Gill,
Washed Up
- E Vu Dan Tan,
Beauty will Save the World
- F Redza Piyadasa,
May 13, 1969
- G Manit Sriwanichpoom,
Waiting For the King (Sitting)
- H Vuong Van Thao,
Living Fossils



LEVEL 4

- A Jim Supangkat,
Ken Dedes
- B Agnes Arellano,
Three Buddha Mothers
- C S. Chandrasekaran,
Visvayoni (Shiva-Sakti in oneness)
- D Nindityo Adipurnomo,
Hiding Rituals and the Mass Production II
- E Amanda Heng,
Another Woman
- F Tang Da Wu,
Tiger's Whip
- G Suzann Victor,
His Mother Is A Theatre
- H Salleh Japar,
Mechanised Learning
- I Vincent Leow,
Money Suit

HANDIWIRMAN SAPUTRA (B. 1975)
CEMANI, TELUR, TAI KAPUR



2008
Mixed media: fibre resin, Blu-Tack, taxidermied chicken
171 x 110 x 110 cm

The world of objects is the starting point for Handiwirman Saputra's artistic creation. An adept painter and sculptor, Saputra employs surprising combinations of artistic media and strategies of representation to transform everyday objects. The results are often unusual and startling, as everyday items take on new symbolic or ambiguous meaning. *Cemani, Telur, Tai Kapur* (translated as 'Chicken, Egg, Chalk Shit') skews proportions of scale by presenting a dramatically enlarged egg next to a regular-sized, taxidermied chicken. The work playfully overturns our expectations and also functions as an ironic commentary on society's obsession with size. *Cemani, Telur, Tai Kapur* makes fun of the idea that 'bigger is better', for in this case, the only chicken capable of producing such an egg is a dead one.

Saputra is a member of a major artist collective known as the Jendela Art Group, which became well known in the mid-1990s. While many equate Indonesian art with strong socio-political commentary, the approach of the Jendela Art Group presents a fascinating alternative in their focus on formalist concerns. Their three-dimensional works, of which *Cemani, Telur, Tai Kapur* is a prime example, are often sophisticated and even clinical in finish, and defy easy contextual interpretation. Saputra's art, like that of his fellow Jendela members, has drawn conflicting opinions. On one hand, its formalism has been critiqued as being merely a manipulation of forms in a way that appeals to the sensation-seeking market; on the other hand, this approach to art suggests a contemporary response to the perceived demise of the 'grand narratives' of Indonesian art. In this respect, Saputra and the Jendela Art Group's practice makes an important contribution to contemporary art discourse and debate.



CHATCHAI PUIPIA (B. 1964)
YOU INSIDE, ARE YOU STILL OK?



1997
Oil on canvas
240 x 280 cm

The Thai contemporary painter Chatchai Puipia is well known for using images of his own face and body to depict his own personal experiences and reactions towards society. His self-portraits express his dissatisfaction with the social situations of the present day and are filled with expressions of confusion, loss and alienation. Within his paintings, he often uses facial gestures as a way to convey his own ambivalent attitude towards contemporary Thai society.

You Inside, Are You Still OK? is associated with Chatchai's 1995 Siamese Smile series. The image of the Siamese smile is a traditional expression arising from the *mai pen rai* ("never mind, it's OK") attitude. Chatchai's work often critiques the superficiality of this 'smile', which is also used to hide one's true feelings in order to maintain an appearance of social harmony. The artist has an image that could be easily drawn from the abundance of tourist literature and promotional materials that promote 'Thailand as the land of smiles'. As depicted by the artist, however, the smile in this powerful painting becomes tainted. Tense facial muscles pull the curled lips into a half grimace. Is this the truth beneath the smile? Chatchai's painting therefore questions the contradiction between this 'smile' and the challenges facing society today, which does not have easy solutions.



AGUS SUWAGE (B. 1959)
CINDERA MATA A LA INDONESIA
(SOUVENIR FROM INDONESIA)



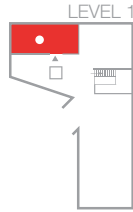
1996
Mixed media
58 x 43 cm (set of 6)

Since the 1990s, Agus Suwage has steadily used images of himself as the central icon of his work. Yet his self-portraits are never direct representations or executed in the realist style. Instead, he often portrays himself caught in mid-gesture or in a pose, and the portraits are in essence performances with symbolic and dramatic qualities. This suite of six mixed-media drawings were created in 1996, before he became the art market favourite he is today. This was two years before the Indonesian Reformasi (Reform) period of 1998, which marked the end of the New Order government under President Suharto and signalled the promise of a more liberal political and social environment. Agus' work in the period leading up to Reformasi was marked by increasingly explicit commentaries and critiques on Indonesian society and culture. Like his fellow artists during this period, Agus' work reflected a passion and conviction that art (and artists) could change the world for the better, literally. He often used wicked humour and satire as a way to evoke a reaction in the viewer, rather than direct expressions of outrage and anger. His own face and body, as depicted in his drawings, canvases and sculptures, were used to express struggles over identity, social values and democratic ideals.

The suite is made up of monochromatic self-portraits paired with iconic items and symbols associated with Indonesia's history and culture, and the title of the suite translates as 'Souvenir from Indonesia'. The drawings utilise elements of kitsch, with borders of gaudy wrapping paper and each drawing presented as if it were a poster or postcard. Each drawing is titled at the bottom with a made-up Latin name as if labelled by an anthropologist. For example, the drawings include 'Hipokritus Sapiensis' (Hypocritical Human), 'Homosapiens Sadismus' (Sadistic Human) and 'Primatakorup Sapiensis' (Primitive Human). While each drawing may be seen to poke fun at a particular human feature or aspect of society, by titling the suite as 'Souvenir from Indonesia', the artist may also be commenting on the nature of contemporary Indonesian society. This early suite of six drawings contains features that recur in Agus' later canvas works. For instance, the pose of each drawing contrasted with the text and culturally loaded visual symbols serve to draw attention away from the artist's image *per se* towards the social and political conditions that generated these elements. He is the brunt of his own joke here; yet when Agus uses his own image, it is not just to express something of his own individuality, but rather to refer to every man/woman and his/her condition within contemporary society.



SOPHEAP PICH (B. 1970)
CYCLE



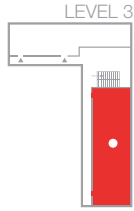
2004–2008
Rattan and wire
420 x 25 x 90 cm

In Pich's observation of Cambodian society, the human stomach struck him as a theme that was symbolic of people's concerns, in that one was anxious about either filling it or curing it of its diseases. *Cycle* takes the shape of a stomach as a starting point to symbolise society in general. The connection of two stomachs suggests ideas of strong family ties or a society held together by simple means. It also represents fragility, controlled chaos, movement, and the ambiguity of interior and exterior spatial perspectives. As such, *Cycle* can also be seen as a metaphor for identity and one's relationship with the larger community, as Pich prompts audiences to consider if they are outside looking in, or vice versa.

Often considered the most well-known and significant Cambodian contemporary artist, Pich was first trained in painting at the University of Massachusetts. Feeling that his paintings did not connect with the Cambodian people, he began experimenting with commonplace materials familiar in Cambodia, developing the style of rattan and wire sculptures that now dominate his work. He has exhibited extensively, particularly in Cambodia and the United States. He recently participated in the 4th Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale (2009) and the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (2009).



MATTHEW NGUI (B. 1962)
SELF PORTRAIT:
INTERROGATION OF AN IMAGE



1999
6 plywood panels, camera with stand
244 x 122 cm (each panel); Installation dimensions variable

The subject of the self-portrait stretches far back into the long history of art and remains one of its most intriguing themes. In a self-portrait, the artist turns away from depictions of the external World and the Other, and instead redirects hand and eye to examine, interrogate and represent the Self. This process not only captures facial likeness, but also creates metaphors for how we perceive images and the person.

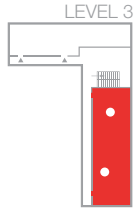
In *Self Portrait: Interrogation Of An Image*, Matthew Ngui — who is known for his use of anamorphosis — applies the technique to his self-portrait, which is stretched across six panels that rest on the floor. As a result, his image is broken up and distorted, and comes into focus only when seen from a specific angle. The strategically placed surveillance camera captures the consolidated image and relays it to a separate space. Incoherent from every angle except for the single viewpoint determined by the artist, the anamorphic image fascinates because it also requires the active involvement of another eye — the human or digital — for the image to become recognisable. Beyond an optical trick, Ngui uses anamorphosis as a conceptual device and a metaphor about the subjectivity and contextual nature of seeing and of being. Importantly for the artist, the work invites audiences to participate by inscribing their thoughts about art, the country and the Singaporean identity on the grey portions of the image. If this is done, the portrait becomes clearer; if not, its coherence as an image deteriorates. By encouraging viewer participation in the creation of the final 'self' image, the work also raises questions about authorship and identity.

Matthew Ngui has gained critical attention for his conceptually driven and site-specific public artworks, which often employ the use of anamorphosis. His mid-career retrospective exhibition, *Points of View*, was shown in Sydney, Perth and Singapore in 2007–2008. In addition to participating in major international exhibitions such as Documenta X (1997), the 49th Venice Biennale (2001) and *Cities on the Move* (various venues, 1997–1999), Ngui is also the Artistic Director for the 3rd Singapore Biennale (2011).



MONTIEN BOONMA (B. 1953–2000)

THE PLEASURE OF BEING,
CRYING, DYING AND EATING



1993

Mixed media: ceramic, cloth, bronze installation
Variable dimensions

Montien Boonma is known for his sculptures and installations, which combine traditional and organic substances with other industrial materials. Buddhism plays a central part both in his artistic and spiritual practice. The themes of impermanence and the enquiry of the nature of the mind can also frequently be seen in his works.

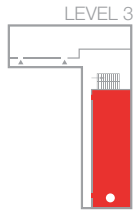
The Pleasure of Being, Crying, Dying and Eating is an installation of hundreds of ceramic bowls that form a pagoda-like tower. Appearing both precarious and stable at the same time, the use of fragile porcelain in this structure presents a quiet elegance that reflects a calm and contemplative mind. The bowls are reminiscent of the Theravada tradition in Thailand, where monks, as part of their monastic vows, adopt a simple life without belongings and use an alms bowl to get their daily provisions and food from laypeople. This follows from Boonma's earlier series of drawings *Drawing for Training the Mind*, where the artist drew alms bowls daily as a form of meditative practice. In the artist's words, "For me [the shape of a monk's bowl] is organic and geometric and ambiguous. The bottom of the bowl is curved so it can stand by itself without support from anything underneath. Monks always hold the bowl...When I think about the space in the bowl, I prefer to be inside this space which is separated from the outside world. I would like to place my mind inside the bowl."

The routine human condition of eating and dying is reflected in the jaw-bones, bone-shaped chopsticks, false teeth and a dark red table cloth, which symbolise heaven and wealth.

One of the most significant contemporary artists to emerge from Southeast Asia, the late Montien Boonma first taught as a painter at Bangkok's Silpakorn University, and also studied sculpture at Paris' Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. His sculptures and installations reflect both his devotion to Buddhist spirituality and his desire to develop a language of contemporary Asian art. He was influenced in part by his contact with the Arte Povera movement in Italy and the works of Joseph Beuys. Before his premature death at the age of 47, Boonma exhibited extensively, mounting eighteen solo exhibitions and participating in such high-profile festivals as the 51st Venice Biennale (2005), the 1st and 4th Asia Pacific Triennials of Contemporary Art (1993, 2002), and the 1st Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale (1999).



ARAHMAIANI (B. 1961)
I DON'T WANT TO BE
PART OF YOUR LEGEND



2004
Video
11 mins

Arahmaiani is one of a few women artists from Indonesia who have actively explored gender issues in their work, often with a strong feminist slant. In this video work, Arahmaiani re-works an episode from the epic *Ramayana*. The female protagonist, Sita, is abducted by the evil King Rahwana and subsequently rescued. However her partner, Rama, doubts her chastity, and Sita has to undergo a test of fire before she can be reunited with him. Arahmaiani's video draws on the aesthetics of traditional *wayang* theatre, as well as the artist's own poetry and haunting vocals, to dramatise Sita's expression of anguish at this test. In this contemporary re-telling, Sita laments: "Is it possible I could make a bargain with Fate and not become part of your legend?". The 'legend' refers not just to the *Ramayana* epic; more pointedly, it questions male attitudes towards women enshrined in traditional stories such as this one.

Arahmaiani is a key figure in the contemporary Indonesian art scene, best known for her socially-oriented performance and installation art. The daughter of an Islamic scholar father and a Javanese mother who practiced Hindu / animist traditions, Arahmaiani has had to navigate between different cultures and religions from an early age. As part of her praxis, the artist has chosen to adopt a nomadic lifestyle, encountering and exploring the difficulties of communication across — and even within — cultures. Much of her art reflects these resulting tensions, for instance, between Islamic teachings and Western education. Her work is often provocative and critical of religious as well as political issues, and Arahmaiani has experienced run-ins with fundamentalists as well as authoritarian regimes.

One of Indonesia's most widely travelled artists, she has participated in the Venice, Sao Paulo and Gwangju biennales and the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, as well as major exhibitions such as *Cities On The Move* (1990 onwards), *Traditions/Tensions* (1996) and *Global Feminism* (2007).



SIMRYN GILL (B. 1959)
WASHED UP



1993–1995
Found glass objects sandblasted with text
Variable dimensions

If meaning resides in words and objects, what can they tell us about their significance, what do they fail to convey, or where might they reveal new insights?

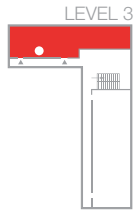
In Simryn Gill's *Washed Up*, an installation of glass shards form a wavy cluster, in the same form of shoreline debris piles that are created as the tide rises and ebbs. These pieces of found objects, which the artist gathered from the beaches of Singapore and Malaysia, appear as fragments of former objects that may have travelled in unknown vessels or been discarded from other shores. We may guess at what they were and where they came from, but we cannot possibly know their individual former pasts. History, like meaning, is an arbitrary concept. Having inscribed each of the fragments with words, Gill leaves it up to the viewer to attempt to find meaning — or non-meaning — in the objects' various configurations.

Washed Up also addresses the issue of location versus relocation, which touches upon the politics of identity and geography — something that the artist, a Singapore-born Australian resident who is of Malaysian-Indian background, is known to negotiate with in her artistic practice.

Once described as the quintessential post-colonial artist, Simryn Gill possesses both a trans-cultural background and a deep engagement with the history of colonialism in Southeast Asia. Through the use of objects, text and photographs, her art traces the effects of history on culture and landscape as she questions the logic and consistency of established systems of knowing. She has exhibited widely across Asia and internationally, at institutions such as the Tate Modern (London) and the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art (Helsinki). She has also participated in the 2nd Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art (2001), the 26th Sao Paulo Biennale (2004) and the 13th Biennale of Sydney (2002).



VU DAN TAN (B. 1946–2009)
BEAUTY WILL SAVE THE WORLD



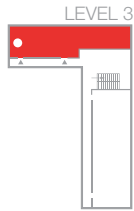
2003
Recycled cardboard and Chinese ink
168 x 36 cm each, suite of 12 sculptures

Vu Dan Tan's approach to art-making is that of a craftsman. Tan often recycles the discarded materials, symbolic of a consumer society and turns them into works of art, often infused with humour and playfulness. A quote from Dostoevsky's novel — "Beauty Will Save The World" — written in different languages, provides the name for this suite of 12 cardboard figures, each representative of a female form. Voluntarily ignoring the rules of aesthetics, the artist invites the viewer to find the definition of beauty beyond the world of appearances.

One of the first experimental artists in Hanoi, Tan worked with found objects and other commonplace materials, allowing him to unleash his creativity without being limited by cost. At the same time, his use of the discards of consumer culture offers a stark social commentary, in contrast to his sometimes light-hearted creations. He has exhibited widely in the region and worldwide, including high-profile festivals such as Documenta X (1997) and the 2nd Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (1996). In addition to his artistic practice, Tan co-founded Salon Natasha with his wife, Natalia Kraevskaia. The first private and independent gallery in Hanoi, it has fostered the growth of experimental and contemporary art in Vietnam.



REDZA PIYADASA (B. 1939–2007)
MAY 13, 1969



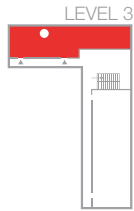
2006 (remake of the 1970 original which was destroyed)
Acrylic on plywood and mirror
182 x 123 x 123 cm

On May 13, 1969, Sino-Malay riots erupted in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Leading up to this explosion of violence were simmering racial tensions, which were played up by various political parties in the lead-up to the Malaysian general elections. The conflict claimed several lives and the sight of burnt-out residences and shophouses left a permanent mark in Redza Piyadasa's mind. *May 13, 1969* was the artist's response to the incident of the same name, and it was the first time that political issues were featured in his art. The work comprises an upright coffin, with the Malaysian flag painted over its surface. It is a reminder of a painful moment in Malaysian history that made clear the fragility of ethnic relations.

Artist, critic and educator, Piyadasa is considered one of the most important figures in the Malaysian art scene. One of the first few artists in Malaysia to embrace Conceptual Art in the 1960s and 1970s, he championed the 'New Scene Movement', which aimed to introduce more conceptual or investigative modes of art-making in contrast to existing aesthetic values. As a Muslim convert of Sri Lankan descent, Piyadasa's work often reflects on the difficult question of cultural and national identities. Many of his works are deliberately ambiguous in their representation of these issues, forcing viewers to pay attention and think about the *bumiputra* (indigenous)/non-*bumiputra* contexts that emerged in post-1969 Malaysia.



MANIT SRIWANICHPOOM (B. 1961)
WAITING FOR THE KING (SITTING)



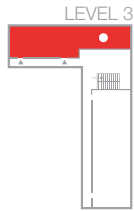
2006
Gelatine print
60.5 x 50.5 cm each
Edition 1 of 9 (Set of 13)

Known for his photography and video works, Manit Sriwanichpoom is an artist whose practice addresses the social and political issues of modern Thailand. In *Waiting For the King*, the artist captures the attitude of Thai society and its relationship with its revered king, Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX). In Thailand, where the monarchy is maintained alongside its elected government, King Adulyadej remains a key symbolic figure for Thai people. The images were taken on 5 December 2006, the King's birthday as well as Thailand's National Father's Day. The year was particularly significant as it was the 60th anniversary of the King's coronation. At that time, tens of thousands of people from the different provinces of Thailand gathered on the Royal Ground for a glimpse of the king as his motorcade travelled past to the Grand Palace.

Sriwanichpoom is known to tackle other critical topics such as the violence of globalisation and the obscenity of conspicuous consumption. He has exhibited extensively worldwide, presenting his work at festivals such as the 6th Gwangju Biennale (2006), the 1st Pocheon Asian Art Festival (2005) and the 50th Venice Biennale (2003). Sriwanichpoom has also worked as a columnist for *Silpa Wattanatham*, a critical Thai-language magazine, where he wrote art criticism and addressed other issues of social concern, such as gender equality and state censorship.



VUONG VAN THAO (B. 1969)
LIVING FOSSILS



2007
Acrylic, stoneware, glaze
Variable dimensions, 72 pieces

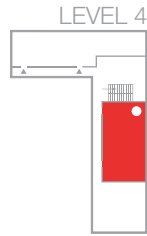
Vuong Van Thao's mixed-media work comprises replicas of 36 buildings located in Hanoi's historic and atmospheric Old Quarter. Each building was chosen by the artist for its traditional and historic architectural features. Thao encased his replicas in cracked resin blocks, to imitate the look of an aged fossil. The installation maps approximately the actual location of the buildings in the Old Quarter.

With rapid modernisation and mass culture threatening the historic and cultural authenticity of Hanoi's Old Quarter, Thao's work is a statement about the co-existence of old and new, historical discontinuity, and displacement. It is also a reaction against uniformity in the city's development; here the artist shares his vision of Hanoi, in which preservation seems to be the main concern.

A graduate of the Hanoi University of Fine Arts, Thao works primarily as a painter and installation artist, focusing on subjects such as traditional iconography and urban planning. Regarded as a rapidly rising star of Vietnamese contemporary art, Thao has exhibited widely in Vietnam and the Asia-Pacific, and was recently shortlisted for the inaugural Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize (2008). He is also one of the six co-founders of P-art House, which aims to foster a spirit of openness and collaboration in art.



JIM SUPANGKAT (B. 1949)
KEN DEDES



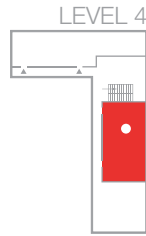
1975
Mixed media
61 x 44 x 27 cm

At the inaugural exhibition of the *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru* (New Art Movement), artist Jim Supangkat presented his re-fashioning of *Ken Dedes*, the legendary Javanese queen famed for her extraordinary beauty. Traditional accounts relate the story of how Ken Arok, an attendant of a local ruler, caught sight of his master's wife Ken Dedes, when the wind lifted her skirts and revealed a radiant light between her thighs. Thereafter, Ken Arok coveted Ken Dedes as his wife and murdered his master, fuelled by the belief that Ken Dedes possessed the power to confer on whomever married her the lineage of kings. In Supangkat's representation of Ken Dedes, the head and shoulders of the figure are sculpted in the classical Majapahit style. However, the body of the figure is replaced by a rectangular box, on which is drawn, in comic-book style, a torso of a woman that is bare-breasted and dressed in tight, unzipped jeans that expose her pubic hair. The lyricism of the Majapahit legend has given way to coarse contemporaneity.

A key work that was created at a pivotal point of Indonesia's evolving contemporary art scene, *Ken Dedes* proved extremely divisive for the art community with some criticising the work for its unseemly depiction of Indonesian culture. Others were more sympathetic to the artist's intention to make a strong social statement by portraying an image suggestive of the condition of contemporary, urban Indonesia – classical Java grafted onto Western vulgarity with little regard for transition or adaptation; a merging of two apparently disconnected and contradictory sets of aesthetic and cultural values. The debate that surrounded the reception of this work was in itself illustrative of the rapid social and cultural changes that had occurred in Indonesia, between two different generations of artists, art critics and audiences.



AGNES ARELLANO (B. 1949)
THREE BUDDHA MOTHERS



1996
Cold cast marble
83 x 76 x 60 cm; 134 x 80 x 82 cm; 141 x 72 x 84 cm

Agnes Arellano's trinity of life-size sculptures seethe with tension, potent vessels that embody complex notions associated with the female form, such as fecundity, sexuality and beauty. Summoning the power of ancient mythology and magic, literature, religion and symbolism, the sculptures also explore differing ideologies and beliefs in relation to women and their bodies. Drawing upon figure of the mother-goddess found in myriad belief systems around the world, the sculptures also build upon the notion of the White Goddess by noted-mythologist Robert Graves, as well as the writings of George Bataille.

The sculptures are hybrid forms, but nonetheless, evoke the archetypes of the maiden, mother and crone to represent different stages in the cycle of birth, life and death. Here, Arellano has invented a female pantheon that is invested with an ambiguity and hybridity that resonates with the contemporary experience.

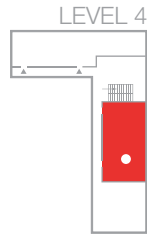
The central figure Dea is a fantastical self-portrait seated in meditation. The figure also resembles Mebuyan, the ancient underworld goddess of Bagobo and Manobo mythology, whose many breasts nurture the souls of unborn babies. The figure on her right is Vesta. It shows a young pregnant mother in a posture based on Hariti, a deity who protects children, but is known in Indonesia as a goddess of fertility. Intriguingly, Vesta's right hand holds her nipple — calling to mind a famous painting of the Renaissance in Western art — whilst a lizard, yet another symbol of fertility, clings to Vesta's back. The third figure, Lola, represents the crone. She is no longer fertile and seeks enlightenment through introspection as represented by her *jnana* (teaching) mudra, turned inwards.

Arellano has also made reference to people in real-life. In her own words, "By casting real mothers, my aim is to bring the divine dimension back into the familiar human figure — to stress the need to search for the sacred in everyday life."

Arellano is regarded as one of the Philippines' leading contemporary sculptors. She is known for her works that explore the power of the female body, although her practice does not sit easily within the categorisation of feminist art. She has participated in major international exhibitions, such as Traditions/Tensions: Contemporary Art in Asia (1996) and the 3rd Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (1999).



S. CHANDRASEKARAN (B. 1959)
VISVAYONI
(SHIVA-SAKTI IN ONENESS)



1988
Mixed media on saree
395 x 99 cm

The title of this work, *Visvayoni*, means 'thousands', referring to the iconic image of the lotus with a thousand petals. This image has been depicted here as a large circle with a central void, surrounded by smaller circles also representing lotus blooms radiating from it. The image has been painted onto a piece of yellow saree, the traditional unstitched cloth used by women from the Indian subcontinent. The vivid colours and dense mandala-like image bring an intensity and energy to the viewing of this work as if the viewer were contemplating a spiritual icon.

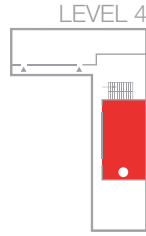
This work was famously exhibited in *Trimurti*, the landmark 1988 exhibition organised by the artist together with Goh Ee Choo and Salleh Japar. In *Trimurti*, the three artists sought to share their ideas of how contemporary art development could be rooted in Asian elements, rather than drawing solely from contemporary art development in the West. Chandrasekaran believed that the training and orientation of Tang Da Wu (and by inference, some of the artists from The Artists Village) were perhaps too Western-oriented instead of being rooted in elements from the region.

Trimurti is a Sanskrit word meaning 'three images', which indicates the integration of the three Hindu Gods of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva — who embody creation, preservation and destruction, respectively — into a single all-embracing force. The fusing together of different beliefs that was embodied in *Trimurti* was an expression of the three artists' desire to go beyond the cultural and ethnic boundaries that separated them while acknowledging that their art is rooted in their own personal cultural backgrounds.

Rather than utilising contemporary art (read: contemporary art practice from the West) as a universal language without ethnic differences, the three artists sought to find similarities and meeting points within their own cultural backgrounds within which new pathways for contemporary art practice could be imagined. The works in *Trimurti*, such as *Visvayoni*, are therefore created using indigenous materials, ethnically and religiously specific images, and philosophical concepts, but presented in contemporary forms such as installations, multimedia and performance art. See also Salleh Japar's work *Mechanised Learning*, elsewhere in this exhibition.



NINDITYO ADIPURNOMO (B. 1961)
HIDING RITUALS AND THE MASS
PRODUCTION II



1997–1998
Mixed media: rattan, human hair, plastic bag, paper, string
250 x 300 x 90 cm

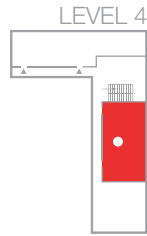
Nindityo Adipurnomo's art draws on issues of his native Javanese culture. In the 1990s, he began to explore the symbol of the *konde* — a traditional Javanese hairpiece — as a commentary on Javanese culture and tradition, and its place in society today. The *konde*, worn by Indonesian women as a decorative hairpiece especially during ceremonial events and special occasions, serves to signify the marital and social status of its wearer. It is associated with ideals of women's 'proper place' in society and erotic sensuality. For this reason, the *konde* is considered both sensuous and burdensome; on one occasion, Nindityo likened it to 'a prison'.

In the title of this work, *Hiding Rituals* alludes to women's practice of saving fallen hairs to be re-used in the *konde* to build up its volume. This was a ritual practised by the artist's grandmother and mother in private, in order to preserve their appearances and feminine mystique before men. In creating this work, Nindityo attached small plastic bags of his own hair to the rattan frays. He also worked with local basket makers to create this rattan *konde*, deliberately choosing to employ traditional crafts as a means to engage with the local community in the face of increasing commercialism and modernisation.

From an early age, Nindityo was fascinated with his native Javanese culture, and his art explores its tensions and traditions. In particular, much of his work critiques the position of women within traditional Javanese culture. The artist's choice of materials pits the traditional against the modern, and challenges viewers to reassess their assumptions about certain cultural issues. An important aspect of his practice is his collaboration with local craftsmen, who help him realise his works. This engagement allows the artist to share his ideas about tradition and culture with others, as well as receive fresh perspectives. Together with his wife, artist Mella Jaarsma, Nindityo founded Cemeti Art House in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 1988. Today, Cemeti continues to be a driving force in both the Indonesian and international art scene, championing contemporary art.



AMANDA HENG (B. 1951)
ANOTHER WOMAN

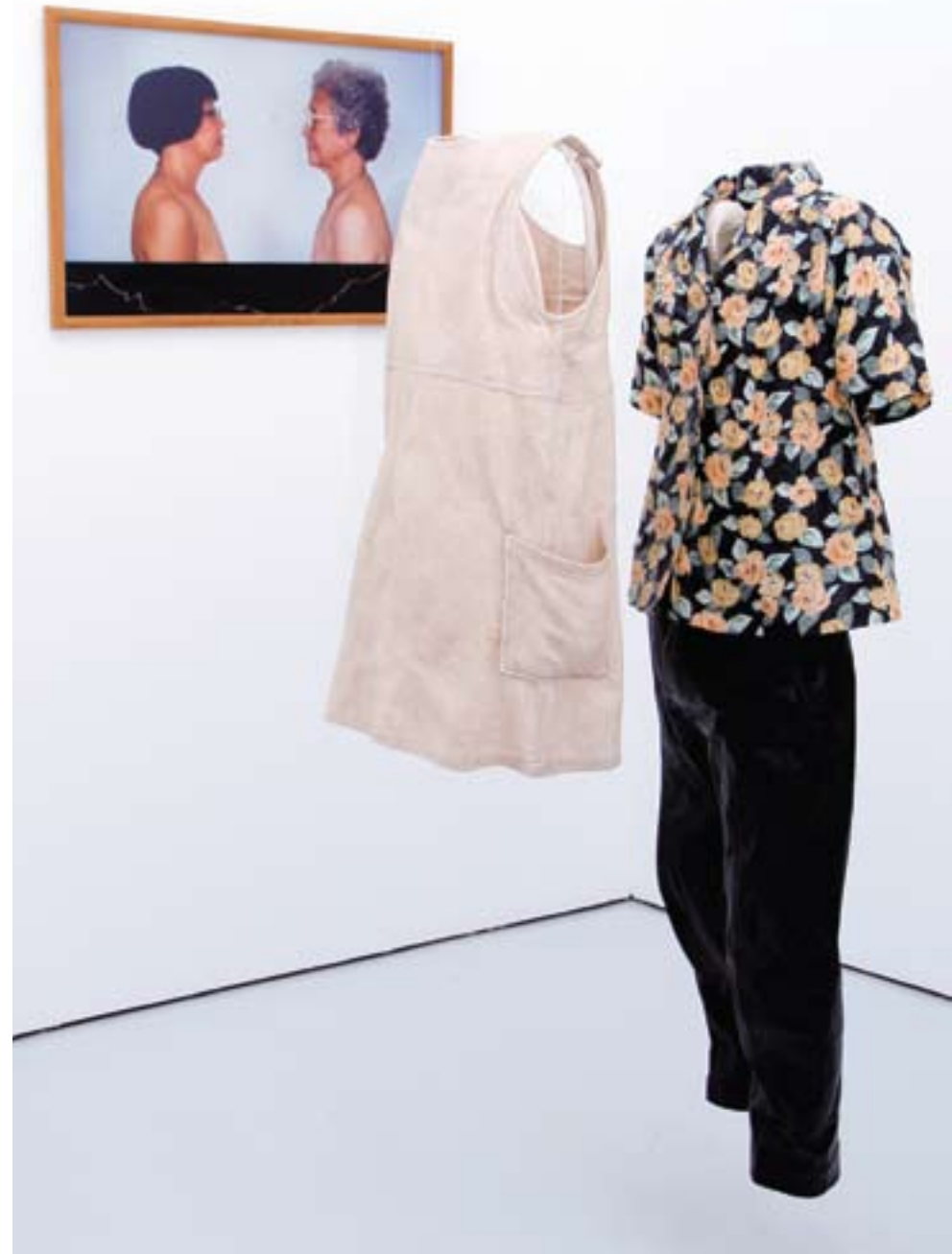


1996
Mixed media
Variable dimensions

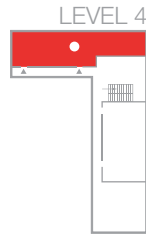
For Amanda Heng, personal identity is seen as a central source of imagery. *Another Woman* explores her relationship with her mother, and at the same time explores the positioning of women within family structures. In her work, Heng deploys photography and assemblages of objects as a means of investigating memory, and in the hope of acquiring a deeper understanding of her self-identity.

The large photograph of nude subjects are of mother and daughter, which aim to explore the body's subject-hood. The body is seen as "the other woman", or the representation of women in general. What is important is not just the physical contact or touching of their bodies, but also the spaces between them. This installation of *Another Woman* is an alternative display of the original installation, which comprises of additional photographs and household objects.

One of the founding members of The Artists Village, Singapore's first contemporary art collective, Heng has maintained an influential presence in Singapore art since the late-1980s. Her work, which revolves around issues of collective memory, identity and gender, has been presented at a number of prestigious events and festivals, such as the 1st Singapore Biennale (2006), the 1st Women's Performance Art Festival in Osaka (2001), the 7th Havana Biennial (2000), the 1st Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale (1999) and the 3rd Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (1999). In addition to her artistic practice, she also conducts and organises numerous talks, workshops and other platforms of exchange, such as WITAS (Women in the Arts, Singapore), a collective of female artists in Singapore.



TANG DA WU (B. 1943)
TIGER'S WHIP



1991
Mixed media
Variable dimensions

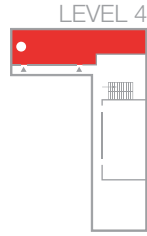
Tiger's Whip, one of Tang Da Wu's most well-known performances, was presented at the former National Museum Art Gallery of Singapore and Chinatown from 1991 to 1992. The title of the work refers to the tiger's penis, reflecting the Asian belief in the aphrodisiac properties of the animal's reproductive organ. The work also addresses the plight of poached tigers in the region for the purpose of its consumption for increased virility. During the *Tiger's Whip* performances, Tang used various symbolic objects such as a bed, a basketball and boat oars to represent the notions of intercourse, manhood and sexual prowess, for which the tigers have been sacrificed. The performances included eight white tigers as a representation of the spirits of the dead animals, while Tang played the various roles of the poacher, the tiger and the man who consumed the tiger's whip, making suggestive gestures of the work's themes.

The *Tiger's Whip* installation was inspired by Tang's performances on the senseless killing of animals and its unnecessary bloodshed. Comprising of a lone tiger spirit lunging at a rocking chair, a reference to lust-filled elderly man, the work was first shown as part of the National Sculpture Exhibition at the National Museum Art Gallery of Singapore in 1991. The exhibition was preceded by the 1st Sculpture Seminar within the same year, and drew much discussion on the development of the sculpture genre and contemporary art practices. In more recent times, it has been suggested that the installation could have been conceived with the participants of the seminar.

An iconic figure in the history of contemporary art in Singapore, Tang is well known for his landmark performances and as a founding member of The Artists Village, Singapore's first contemporary art collective, in 1988. Over the past 40 years, his practice has often touched upon certain themes, such as the collective manipulation of mythologies and narratives, the engagement with contemporary issues, and the importance of spontaneous play. Another important aspect of his work is his workshops, which engage a wide variety of audiences with his themes and concerns. He has exhibited widely, having participated in the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007), the 3rd Gwangju Biennale (2001) and the 1st Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial (1999).



SUZANN VICTOR (B. 1959)
HIS MOTHER IS A THEATRE



1994
Mixed media: human hair, motors, velvet,
bread, fishing line, iron woks, table and lights
Variable dimensions

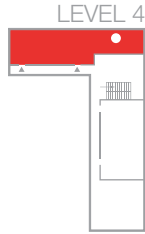
With its repetitive clanging of wok lids, glowing loaves of charred bread, and concentric circles of hair that graphically spell out parts of the female anatomy, *His Mother Is A Theatre* retains its full power to captivate the viewer, as well as to evoke the traumatic events of 1994 that shook the Singapore art scene and prompted the creation of this work. The then-Artistic Director of the artists' initiative 5th Passage Ltd., Suzann Victor was amongst those caught in the uproar surrounding the performance art event in which Josef Ng snipped off his pubic hair. It was a media-incited controversy that led to a decade-long ban de facto on state funding for performance art.

The installation may be seen as Victor's response to the prohibitions on performance art and to reclaim the human body — a subject that had become so charged and taboo in mid-90s Singapore that Victor sought alternative strategies for imaging the naked body. Within the context of patriarchal society, the subject is also tested against society's notions associated with the female form, including morality, power, desire, sexuality, art and obscenity. Thus, human hair — which is evocative of human sexuality and triggered the 1994 controversy — takes on a key role here. In the artist's words, "Hair, a product of the body, was itself used to 'write' the body, to spell itself, address its own function and declare its own presence in all its inner and outer nudity." *His Mother Is A Theatre* is a 'body' that performs by its very physical absence — and it performs with the visceral intensity of the body being assailed.

Starting her practice as an award-winning painter, Suzann Victor has gained widespread recognition for her dramatic installations — notably her chandelier series — that address issues such as abjection, the body machine and the post-colonial condition. She has exhibited on many major international platforms, including Thermocone of Art (2007), the 2nd Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (1996), and she was the first female artist to represent Singapore at the 49th Venice Biennale (2001).



SALLEH JAPAR (B. 1962)
MECHANISED LEARNING



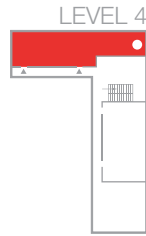
1993
Mixed media
95 x 59 x 51 cm

Produced in the early-1990s, *Mechanised Learning* was one of the earliest works in Singapore that offered a harsh commentary on education systems that emphasised rote learning at the cost of deeper understanding. The assemblage sculpture — comprising of readymade objects such as wooden desks, books, a plaster cast head and motor — is a reference to the unquestioning absorption of information. It is also indicative of Salleh Japar's interest in systems of knowledge, as well as his investigations into the production, dissemination and consumption of information within a post-colonial context. The subject of art education is also highlighted, as shown by the use of R.G. Collingwood's "The Principles of Art" — one of the books that is violently drilled in the sculpture — and a plaster cast head similar to those used in still-life art classes. The transfer of a colonial past takes on sinister overtones with the work's mechanical apparatus. Fundamentally, the work reflects the limits of rationalist inquiry as the basis for true learning.

Known for his innovative use of multiple media and contemplative works that draw upon Islamic thought and philosophy, Salleh Japar often explores the use of signs and symbols. He represented Singapore in its inaugural participation at the 49th Venice Biennale (2001) and has exhibited widely in the region and Australia.



VINCENT LEOW (B. 1961)
MONEY SUIT



1992
Paper collage and cotton suit
88 x 55 x 7 cm

Almost 20 years ago, some 60 artists and their friends gathered in a disused and dilapidated warehouse in Singapore, and watched as a man dressed in a curious outfit took on the persona of a toad, leaping around with his mouth stuffed with fake dollar bills. Today, Vincent Leow's *Money Suit* has endured as an iconic artwork, a 'relic' from the now-famous 1992 performance art piece entitled *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous: The Three-Legged Toad*. The latter refers to the Chinese superstition that a three-legged toad with a coin in its mouth will bring luck and fortune to its owner. Comprising a shirt, tie, jacket, shoes and top hat laminated with mock American dollar bills (which were lacquered after the performance), the suit was worn by Leow during his performance in which he impersonated the creature. The performance criticised a society obsessed with materialism and consumerism, mocking those who are entangled with superstitious beliefs in their pursuit of wealth.

An early member of The Artists Village, Leow was among those who pursued alternative ways of art-making since the late-1980s. He was also the founder of the artist-run alternative art space *Plastique Kinetic Worms* (now defunct). Once considered an *enfant terrible* after he drank his own urine in a performance art event in 1992, Leow is now regarded as one of Singapore's leading contemporary art practitioners and represented Singapore in the 52th Venice Biennale (2007).



“C IS FOR CONTEMPORARY” CURATORIAL SERIES

From Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* to *Beuys's One and Three Chairs*: “Contemporary art” means something more than “art of the present moment”. When anything can be an artwork, it raises a question central to the contemporary: “Why is a work of art a work of art?”

Based around five major features of Contemporary art, these curatorial talks will shed light on the sometimes bewildering range of works, styles and approaches of contemporary art today.

Date Tue, 23 Feb 10 – Tue, 23 Mar 10
Time 7:30pm – 9pm
Venue SAM at 8Q
Fees \$12 per session, \$50 for all five sessions.
Registration required. Please email nhb_sam_programs@nhb.gov.sg or call 63323220.

SESSIONS

Week 1 *Conceptual, by Joyce Toh.*
Date: Tue, 23 Feb 10, 7:30pm – 9pm
The term “conceptual art” covers a broad range of artworks, many of which do not look like conventional art objects. Is it all a big con job? This talk discusses the history of the genre, starting from Duchamp's *Fountain*, to claims that the form has been exhausted, and to its current expanded usage.

Week 2 *Crisis, by Michelle Ho.*
Date: Tue, 2 Mar 10, 7:30pm – 9pm
Adorno said, “To write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric.” The world wars and other crises of the first half of the 20th century galvanised artists to create, represent and manifest in new ways. This talk discusses the role of art in a world of crisis, and other critical forms and philosophies that emerged as response.

Week 3 *Controversy, by Tan Siu Li.*
Date: Tue, 9 Mar 10, 7:30pm – 9pm
Controversy, shock and provocation seem to be a given in contemporary art. Is this really the case? Drawing upon the work of artists who challenge the status quo, and discussing the part played by critics and institutions, this talk will examine the role of controversy in the contemporary.

Week 4 *Consumption, by Patricia Levasseur.*
Date: Tue, 16 Mar 10, 7:30pm – 9pm
Is art an object of consumption? In an age of mechanical reproduction, new technologies change the way art forms are produced, distributed and received. This talk will discuss the theme of consumption and consuming in contemporary art, covering genres such as film, photography and lithography, and art forms like Pop Art and New Media.

Week 5 *Cultural Contexts, by Tan Boon Hui.*
Date: Tue, 23 Mar 10, 7:30pm – 9pm
Although official restrictions on (performance) art in Singapore have loosened since 1994, some younger artists are moving away from grand defiant gestures and making instead coded, allusive works that need to be unravelled by a “discerning” audience. This has been accompanied by an increasing sophistication and complexity in installation work and generic form. This talk will discuss the contexts of and implications behind these developments in the Singapore contemporary art scene.

Inside Out: A SAM Party

The popular *Inside Out Party* returns with performance art exploring the interaction between you, the audience and them, the artists. Indie musicians and video art complementing experimental electronic sets of 8-bit sounds, funk, beat juggling and scratching by Sidabitball, Ikuma and Thugg help pump up the volume. Get inside out of contemporary music culture at SAM!

Date Sat, 20 Mar 10
Time 8pm – 1am
Venue SAM at 8Q (Second Floor)
Fees Free admission to galleries and activities.



Supported by: National Heritage Board Heritage Gala 2008

VISITOR'S INFORMATION

OPENING HOURS

Mondays to Sundays, 10am to 7pm
Fridays, 10am to 9pm

ADMISSION

Adult \$ 10
Student (with valid student card) \$ 5
Senior citizens (Non-Singaporeans) \$ 5
Groups of 20 or more: 20% off admission tickets for adults.

FREE ADMISSION

- On Open House Days
- For NHB Member Schools
- For Children below 6 years old
- For Seniors (Singaporeans & PR)
- On Fridays, 6pm to 9pm

MUSEUM TOURS AT SAM

English Tours
Mondays: 2pm
Tuesdays to Thursdays: 11am and 2pm
Fridays: 11am, 2pm and 7pm
Saturdays and Sundays: 11am, 2pm and 3.30pm

Japanese Tours
Tuesdays to Fridays: 10:30am

Mandarin Tours
Fridays: 7:45pm

ADDRESSES

Singapore Art Museum is located at
71 Bras Basah Road, Singapore 189555.

SAM (8Q) is located at
8 Queen Street, Singapore 188535.

WEBSITE

www.singaporeartmuseum.sg

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

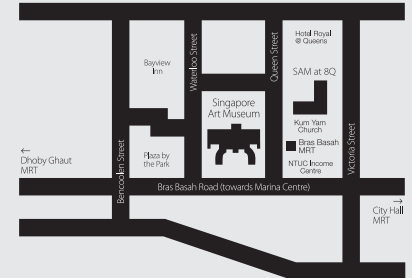
6332 3222

HOW TO GET TO SAM

By bus
SBS 7, 14, 16, 36, 111, 131, 162, 175, 502, 518
SMRT 77, 167, 171, 700

By MRT
2-minute walk from Bras Basah MRT station
(From 17 April 2010 onwards).
10-minute walk from Dhoby Ghaut / City Hall
MRT stations.

By car
Carparks available at Waterloo Street, Queen Street,
NTUC Income Centre and Plaza by the Park.



WHEELCHAIR ACCESS/LOCKERS

Lifts provide easy access to galleries.
Lockers are available for visitors' use.