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EXPERIENCE SINGAPORE

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COOPERATION PROGRAMME



Nine days in a week

Some of the highlights from Singapore Art Week 2015



Creative collaborations

Singapore artists link hands with international counterparts



Managing disasters in the 21st century

Seminars to prepare regional nations

State of the Arts

Singapore's thriving artistic and cultural scene

Ed's Note

Dear readers,

"Art is a nation's most precious heritage."
– Lyndon Johnson, former United States President



↑ **Nine days in a week** pg6

Indeed, Singapore has been ramping up efforts to embrace its precious heritage — the arts. Apart from our revamped, spanking new visual arts spaces, we are also devoting many efforts to build up the "software" of our art and cultural scene by cultivating a more supportive landscape for the creative talents. **State of the arts** (page 3) outlines the various efforts to bring arts closer to all Singaporeans.

Our multi-faceted arts scene was showcased to the world during the Singapore Art Week 2015 held in January, which was the third and largest edition of this annual event. Tens of thousands of connoisseurs and art enthusiasts had a splendid feast of the best contemporary

art and the burgeoning gallery scene in Singapore. Flip to **Nine days in a week** (page 6) to read more on some of the key highlights of Singapore Art Week 2015.

In addition, our creative talents lived up to Singapore's reputation as a cosmopolitan hub by regularly linking hands with their international counterparts to create greater cross-cultural dialogue. Read about some of 2014's most significant international projects in **Creative Collaborations** (page 8).

Finally, **Managing disasters in the 21st century** (pg 10) features our regular showcase of the Singapore Cooperation Programme. In this issue, we share with you snippets of two international seminars in Singapore on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

We hope you enjoy reading this 'artfully created' issue of *Experience Singapore*!

Teo Lay Cheng

Director
Public Affairs Directorate
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore

Keep in touch!

Share with us your memories, photos and experiences in Singapore under the Singapore Cooperation Programme.
Email us at mfa@sgmfa.gov.sg

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SINGAPORE

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Focus
SHOW AND TELL

State of the ARTS

SINGAPORE'S ARTS AND CULTURAL SCENE IS
GAINING PROMINENCE AS INTEREST GROWS
AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR
THE ARTS SECTOR INCREASES.

WORDS BY
FAIROZA MANSOR



The arts landscape in Singapore is thriving, its vibrancy evident from multiple angles. From the Singapore Arts Week to showcasing of local contemporary talents at the international stage, Singaporeans and visitors can look forward to a calendar filled with exciting events.

Contributing to such a vibrant arts and cultural scene is Singapore's efforts to cultivate a more supportive landscape for creative talents. Creative infrastructure is mushrooming, with more spaces and buildings being dedicated to the practice and showcasing of art. More government-driven incentives in the forms of funds, policies and schemes are giving the arts sector and its practitioners a boost. There has also been a significant increase in the number of arts programmes and institutions aimed at nurturing and inspiring future artists.

ARTISTIC RENEWAL

Buildings and spaces dedicated to art have of late become markers of a changing Singapore arts scene. The most high-profile of these is National Gallery Singapore, set to open in November 2015. Housed in the refurbished City Hall and Old Supreme Court buildings — both gazetted as national monuments in

1992 — National Gallery Singapore spans a total of 64,000 square metres, making it the largest visual arts venue in Singapore and one of the largest in the region.

Dedicated to modern visual art and with a focus on South-east Asian art from the 19th century onward, National Gallery Singapore was rebuilt at an estimated cost of S\$532 million. Corporate sponsors have since come on board to ensure the Gallery's sustainability. These include United Overseas Bank Group (UOB). The new UOB South-east Asia Gallery will occupy 2,000 square metres across three levels at the Old Supreme Court wing, where more than 400 works will be displayed. UOB's donation will also go towards research and presentation for the museum's 8,000-strong South-east Asian modern art collection — the world's largest.

DBS Bank too has donated S\$25 million, as well as 26 works from its own collection. The gift was supplemented by the Government's Cultural Matching Fund. National Gallery Singapore has also forged partnerships with companies such as Keppel Corporation which donated S\$12 million for its Keppel Centre for Art Education, and technology firm Accenture which will help to develop the gallery's digital technologies.

Meanwhile, the historic Victoria Theatre and

With a steadily growing art landscape, arts and culture have been brought closer to all Singaporeans, regardless of age, gender, race or religion.



↑ **The National Gallery Singapore, spanning 64,000 sq m, is one of the largest visual arts venues in the region.**

Concert Hall complex reopened to great fanfare in 2014 after extensive renovation. Similar enthusiasm from the arts community is expected when refurbishment of the Asian Civilisations Museum is completed later this year. As a result of the development of National Gallery Singapore and Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall, Government funding for the arts and cultural sector rose to S\$677.3 million in 2013, up from S\$541.4 million in 2012.

Also opening its doors this year in May is the new Singapore Pinacothèque de Paris at the refurbished Fort Canning Park's Fort Canning Centre, former home of the Singapore Dance Theatre. Pinacothèque

de Paris, founded in 2007, is the largest private museum in Paris and has presented shows featuring masterpieces from artists like Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet, Edvard Munch and Pablo Picasso. The Singapore Pinacothèque is the museum's first branch outside Europe.

ON THE GROUND

More Singaporeans are open to exploring a career in the arts than before, with a growing number of students enrolled in arts courses. According to the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY)'s annual Cultural Statistics 2014 report, the number of students enrolled in full-time tertiary arts courses rose from 4,492 in 2012 to 5,409 in 2013. Pre-tertiary School of The Arts (SOTA) also saw enrolment rise to 1,070 in 2013 from 934 the year before.

The public's appetite for art has also gained significantly, as visitor numbers at public museums and heritage institutions hit a record high in 2013, when about 3.2 million people flocked to public museums. The rise in visitorship was attributed to the Government's decision in May 2013 to allow free entry to these museums for Singaporeans and Singapore Permanent Residents.

Meanwhile, community events such as the PAssionArts Movement continue to be popular. Established by the People's Association with the support of MCCY, the PAssionArts Movement comprised 14,000 arts and culture events spread across 86 venues. The second edition of this nationwide programme to widen arts

and culture's appeal by bringing it to the heartlands also experienced a boom. Some 100,000 residents took part in 2013, up from 85,000 in 2012.

As a universal language which invigorates our community and public spaces, art is also an important tool to bridge gaps and connect all of us, thus helping to forge a stronger national identity.

With a steadily growing artistic landscape, arts and culture have been brought closer to all Singaporeans, regardless of age, gender, race or religion. We can certainly look forward to more opportunities to foster, and be immersed in, a more vibrant arts and cultural scene in Singapore.



In Singapore
ART ATTACK



NINE DAYS

Singapore has deservedly earned its reputation as Asia's leading arts hub, as these highlights from Singapore Art Week 2015 show.

IN A WEEK

WORDS BY WANDA TAN

Tens of thousands of connoisseurs and casual art enthusiasts alike had a fruitful January attending a mix of art fairs, exhibitions, talks, art walks and lifestyle events. Held all around Singapore, the Singapore Art Week 2015, a joint initiative by the National Arts Council (NAC), the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and Singapore's Economic Development Board, featured a myriad visual art works from acclaimed artists all over Asia and beyond in this third and largest edition to date. A record 51,000 visitors attended Art Stage Singapore, while other key events such as the Aliwal Urban Art Festival and Art After Dark drew a combined total of almost 46,000 people.

"Singapore Art Week showcases our multi-faceted arts scene to the

world — from the best contemporary art and vibrant visual arts institutions, to the burgeoning gallery scene. It kicks off the landmark year for Singapore's visual arts scene," said Ms Carrie Kwik, STB's Executive Director of Arts, Entertainment and Integrated Resorts. Echoing Ms Kwik's remarks, NAC's Deputy CEO Mr Paul Tan applauded Singapore Art Week as "a wonderful opportunity for Singaporean artists to be presented alongside their regional and international counterparts".

Among the local artists invited to participate was Dr Ho Chee Lick, a first-time participant whose solo exhibition — titled *HOMAGE TO THE FAITHFUL* — comprised 50 drawings of diverse religious places of worship in Singapore.

Dr Ho's drawings were exhibited for



➔ Dr Ho Chee Lick

the duration of the festival at the National Library Building, a location the 64-year-old happily noted was "accessible to common folks in our society". Giving his take on the festival, Dr Ho told *Experience Singapore*, "Singapore Art Week is unique and meaningful in trying to make art a simple, genuine part of Singaporean life — for us to look at, express, question, accept and enjoy ourselves through art."

On the next page are some of the key events that took place during Singapore Art Week 2015.

Aliwal Urban Art Festival

17 JANUARY, ALIWAL ARTS CENTRE

As a testament to Singapore's growing street art scene, this nighttime festival held in the culturally-rich Kampong Glam conservation district (left) returned for the second consecutive year. Top urban artists took part in a wide range of activities including skateboarding and breakdance performances, live jam sessions and DJ sets, and graphic and graffiti art showcases.



Art In Transit Tour

17-18 AND 24-25 JANUARY, CIRCLE LINE MRT STATIONS

Singapore's Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) public transport network is famous for its efficiency, but did you know that the train stations are also aesthetically pleasing? This guided tour took visitors on a walking trail to discover the artworks displayed at stations along the Circle Line. These pieces by local artists offered a peek into the character and heritage of the different neighbourhoods in Singapore.



Prudential Singapore Eye

17 JANUARY TO 28 JUNE, ARTSCIENCE MUSEUM

This exhibition was devoted to Singapore's vibrant contemporary art scene, and part of the nation's year-long 50th anniversary celebrations. Made up of artworks from 17 innovative local artists, the exhibition will next travel to London's world-renowned Saatchi Gallery.



Gilbert & George

20 JANUARY TO 4 APRIL, ARNDT GALLERY

With an oeuvre spanning more than 40 years, this British duo are icons of contemporary art known for their bold, graphic-style pictures. The winners of the 1986 Turner Prize — Britain's most prestigious art award — presented their first Southeast Asian exhibition, *UTOPIAN PICTURES* at the ARNDT Gallery at Gillman Barracks.



Art Stage Singapore

22 TO 25 JANUARY, MARINA BAY SANDS EXPO AND CONVENTION CENTRE

Billed as Southeast Asia's flagship art fair, this marquee event returned for the fifth year in a row with a whopping 158 galleries from 29 countries. Featured were some of the best contemporary art from established and emerging artists within and outside Asia, as well as panel discussions and lectures.

Art After Dark

23 JANUARY, GILLMAN BARRACKS

The former military camp-turned-contemporary art enclave was the venue for this nighttime open house, where galleries premiered an array of new shows. An outdoor party with attractions like food and drink pop-ups and live music performances entertained visitors. The event also coincided with the conclusion of *DRIVE*, a four-month exhibition-cum-competition featuring a variety of outdoor art installations.



Joining Hands
THE ART OF FRIENDSHIP



↑ Ho Tzu Nyen
(Singapore) -
PYTHAGORAS

Creative Collaborations

SINGAPORE ARTISTS LINK HANDS WITH INTERNATIONAL COUNTERPARTS TO CREATE GREATER CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE. TEXT BY ASHUTOSH RAVIKRISHNAN

A part from invigorating the local arts scene, Singapore artists are also regularly linking hands with their regional and international counterparts to create greater cross-cultural dialogue. Several international projects are brewing this year to put the Singapore brand name on the international arts arena.

"[Artists from other countries] bring fresh perspectives into an evolving understanding of ourselves as complex cultural, emotional and intellectual beings," said Dr Susie Lingham, Director of the Singapore Art Museum which, together with the Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation, organised the recent Signature Art Prize.

Singapore artists looking to expand their audience can tap on the National Arts Council's various grants. With the council's assistance, local art has an opportunity to make its way to international film festivals, trade fairs and biennales.

→ Finalists, Judges and VIPs at the APB Foundation Signature Art Prize 2014 Awards Ceremony.



↓ Yao Jui-Chung and LSD (Taiwan) - *Mirage - Disused Public Property* in Taiwan.

These are some highlights of art collaborations between Singapore and other countries this year:

ASIA PACIFIC BREWERIES FOUNDATION SIGNATURE ART PRIZE 2014

14 November 2014 to 15 March 2015
(Singapore Art Museum)

Fifteen shortlisted works by artists from 13 countries and territories including Australia, Thailand and Vietnam were unveiled at the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) in early November 2014, as part of the Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Singapore Prize 2014.

In late January 2015, a multinational judging panel awarded Singaporean Ho Tzu Nyen's *Pythagoras* the grand prize worth S\$60,000. A complex video installation, *Pythagoras* explores the concept of concealed power.

The public was also invited to vote for their favourite piece, which would be awarded the People's Choice prize, worth S\$10,000. Taiwanese Yao Jui-chung + Lost Society Document won the award for their photo-video exhibition entitled *Mirage - Disused Public Property in Taiwan*. Organisers hoped that involving the public in such competitions would begin a lively public discussion about contemporary art in Asia.





DIVERSECITY

10 December 2014 – 28 February 2015
(National Museum of Singapore)

The third edition of DiverseCity, launched by the Singapore International Foundation, celebrated 27 Singaporean artists who acted as the country's citizen ambassadors to 146 cities across 40 countries, including India and Malaysia. Works such as sculptures and photographs were created under the concept of "Connecting Cultures, Collaborating for Change and Engaging Community". These works often underscore the cultural similarities that Singapore shares with other countries, while also highlighting its unique identity.

Ms Grace Fu, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for the Environment and Water Resources and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs, launched an exhibition of the artists' work at the National Museum of Singapore in December 2014. "Artists further the understanding of Singapore around the world," she said.

ART STAGE 2015

22 – 25 January 2015
(Marina Bay Sands, Singapore)

The fifth edition of Art Stage Singapore, one of the region's leading Asian art fairs, exposed 51,000 visitors to artwork from 152 galleries of 27 countries including, for the first time, Russia.

"I never knew much about Russian art prior to Art Stage 2015 and I found myself really moved by it. I'm glad [the organisers] brought in such diverse work," said Mr Zaim Zahari, 24, a public relations executive.

Other pieces on display included those by prolific Indian painter M F Husain and leading Singaporean artist Suzann Victor. To date, Ms Victor is the only female artist to represent Singapore at the prestigious Venice Biennale.

The fair also hosted a series of talks in collaboration with ARTNews, the world's oldest art magazine. These talks discussed a range of topics — from state funding to the place of criticism in regional art.



PACIFIC MIRRORS: NEW MUSIC FROM ASIA AND THE UNITED STATES

20 – 29 March 2015 (National University of Singapore)

A highlight of National University of Singapore's Arts Festival will be Pacific Mirrors, performed by the Asian Contemporary Ensemble (ACE).

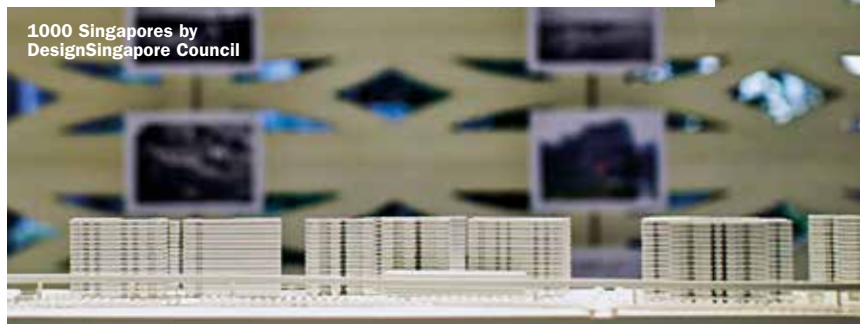
The ensemble will feature some of Singapore's most promising young musicians, including pianist Abigail Sin, tabla player Govin Tan, flautist Joyce Poh and accordionist Syafiqah 'Adha Sallehin. Joining them on stage will be members of the Japan-America Institute for New Music — which promotes musical relationships between various countries — and award-winning Japanese violinist Ryu Goto.

"Music serves as an intimate connector between people across culture and country," said Mr Wong Kah Chun, artistic director of ACE.



Akalika 7

Photos: Jessica Farinet, DesignSingapore Council, Art Stage Singapore



1000 Singapores by
DesignSingapore Council

SINGAPOUR EN FRANCE - LE FESTIVAL

26 March 2015 to 30 June 2015 (France)

To mark 50 years of diplomatic relations between Singapore and France, a range of Singaporean contemporary art will be showcased in cities around France. The Singapour en France – Le Festival also commemorates Singapore's 50th year of independence.

Visitors will be treated to some of the best visual and performing arts, film and design Singapore has to offer. Several displayed works will be collaborations between artists and designers of the two countries — examples include 1000 Singapores by DesignSingapore Council in collaboration with Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine of Paris.



Managing Disasters in the 21st Century

Representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Small Island Developing States attended a series of seminars on disaster management.

TEXT BY ASHUTOSH RAVIKRISHNAN



↑ Unloading humanitarian supplies through a human chain.

Amid growing calls for a consolidated regional response to infectious diseases, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises, Singapore and the United States jointly held a seminar on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in September 2014 for 31 officials from Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states. The seminar was held under the ambit of the Singapore-United States Third Country Training Programme (TCTP) which is aimed at promoting sustainable development, connectivity, and building resilience in Southeast Asia.

Trainers and speakers from the Singapore Armed Forces, the US Pacific Command, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for

Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) introduced delegates to the disaster response landscape and processes, crisis action planning, management of international aid, as well as international guidelines for civil-military cooperation. Delegates also attended a regional conference of disaster relief stakeholders on "Building Civil-Military Capacity for Disaster Relief Operations" which included a tour of the Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre — a disaster relief coordination centre that supports and complements other existing mechanisms such as the AHA Centre and OCHA.

Singapore's Minister for Social and Family Development, and Second Minister for Defence, Mr Chan Chun Sing stressed the need to build domestic and regional disaster response capabilities

→ Participants of the Singapore-US course on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) discuss the region's changing needs at the Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC).



in concrete and practical ways at the seminar's closing address. He also urged the region to do more to strengthen coordination among militaries for disaster response.

"The most important thing you can get out of this conference is not just the theories and the philosophies, nor even the standard operating procedures. But it is the relationships that you have forged that will enable us to respond to the next disaster more decisively and more coherently," he explained.

RISK REDUCTION AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

As a small island city-state, Singapore has been sharing our developmental experience and expertise with our fellow Small Island Developing State (SIDS). A recent endeavour was a three-day seminar on disaster risk reduction and disaster management co-organised by the Singapore Cooperation Programme and the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).

Held in Singapore from 10-12 November 2014 and attended by 17 representatives from SIDS and inter-governmental organisations, the seminar on "Collaborative Approaches and Solutions to Disasters Management Challenges for SIDS in the Context of Sustainable Development" also comprised facilitators and participants from the United Nations, including UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries,

Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Mr Gyan Chandra Acharya as well as members of the private sector, academia, civil society, the World Bank and the UN.

Experts from the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) and Singapore's Civil Service College (CSC) also shared our approaches in responding to major disasters, which covered an in-depth case study of Singapore's management of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003. The seminar was well-received and praised for its relevance by delegates like Mr James Chang-Tave, Director for Development Control in Seychelles.

"The programme has provided me with [insights] on how Singapore has developed its resilience, responsiveness, and adaptation approaches to challenges in disaster management in the context of Sustainable Development," said Mr Chang-Tave. "The experiences of Singapore as a small country could be well adapted in smaller countries like the Seychelles, which has limited resources."

↓ Brigadier-General Desmond Tan recounting Singapore's experience in responding to natural disasters and humanitarian crises.



→ Officials attending briefings on Singapore's disaster management policies.

Look out for an upcoming course on "Disaster Risk Reduction" under the Singapore Cooperation Programme from 12 to 16 October 2015!



