

HIB NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER FROM HENRY BUTCHER ART AUCTIONEERS



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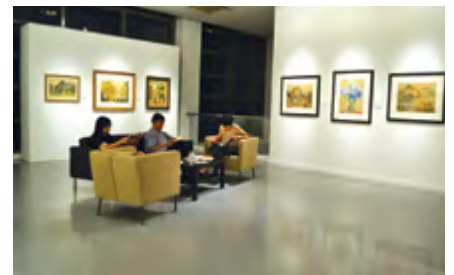
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Nanyang: A Private Selling Exhibition

by Sarah Abu Bakar



NANYANG

A PRIVATE SELLING EXHIBITION

Curate celebrated the best of Nanyang art in a unique and almost sold-out show titled *Nanyang: A Private Selling Exhibition*, which showcased some of the finest masterpieces by pioneering Malaysian and Singaporean artists. The travelling exhibition greeted art enthusiasts across the crossway from 31 July to 3 August 2014 at artspace@222, Singapore, and returned home to Kuala Lumpur from 6 August until 22 August 2014 at Curate, SENI Mont' Kiara.

Nanyang or 'Southern Seas' is a term originally coined in the late 1920s by literary intelligentsia to indicate contemporary Chinese narratives written based on local subjects. A synthesis of Eastern and Western art, the Nanyang style reflects the tropical mood of the region.

This exhibition was a survey of works by a selection of artists who had advocated the spirit of regionalism in depicting scenic landscapes of a new and faraway

homeland and adoringly captured local essences by incorporating Chinese art with Western techniques.

Aimed to highlight connections and coherence, this show aimed to encourage viewers to develop their own understanding of the Nanyang style thus promoting continuity emotionally and culturally in preserving the history of our region. This exclusive exhibition also provided an opportunity for discerning collectors to acquire and possess a precious piece of history.

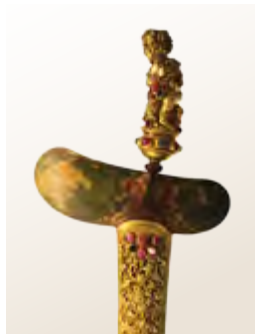
Masterpieces by first generation Chinese artists such as Lee Cheng Yong and Khaw Sia were displayed alongside artists and/or graduates affiliated to the prestigious Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts namely Yong Mun Sen, Tan Choon Ghee, Kuo Ju Ping, Khoo Sui Hoe, Ho Khay Beng, Tew Nai Tong and artists who have studied and practised art in the West such as Eng Tay, Chia Yu Chian and many more.

A Legacy: An Auction In Conjunction with Malaysia Day

by Sarah Abu Bakar



A FAMILLE ROSE TURQUOISE-GROUND KAMCHENG AND COVER ACHIEVED RM21,280.



UNDATED BALINESE KERIS ACHIEVED RM26,880.



'FLOWERS AND BIRDS, 1978' BY ZHAO SHAO'ANG ACHIEVED RM67,200.

**A
LEGACY**
AN AUCTION IN CELEBRATION OF MALAYSIA DAY

Henry Butcher Art Auctioneers (HBArt) presented a special auction in conjunction with Malaysia Day titled *A Legacy: An Auction In Celebration of Malaysia Day* which was held on Sunday, 21 September 2014 at Sime Darby Convention Centre in Kuala Lumpur. On offer were eclectic arrays of cultural artefacts and artworks ranging from Straits Chinese ceramics and the heritage arms, Keris a current representation of Malay sovereignty originated from the Nusantara archipelago to paintings in oil and watercolour by Malaysian and Asian artists as well as Chinese ink calligraphy and literati paintings. The introduction of live online bidding was launched during the sale, attracting new bidders internationally.

Featured at HBArt auction for the first time was a varied collection of well enamelled Famille Rose pink, green and turquoise ground porcelains from the late 19th century, decorated with phoenix and peonies symbolic of nuptial bliss, wealth and honour. Ranging from the lower estimates of RM600 to RM2,000, these beautifully enamelled ceramics consisting of bowls, saucers, cups, spoons, joss stick holder and kamcheng had spectacularly excited collectors of Nyonya ware with competitive bidding across the sale room from bidders who were present and absent globally. One of the most highly sought after items was the kamcheng (estimate RM2,000 - RM4,000) which achieved a staggering RM21,280.

"We are pleased to be the first and to have launched live online bidding today because collectors from far and wide were able to participate at the comfort of their home. We have reached untapped territories with this addition of bidding convenience", remarked Mr. Lim Eng Chong, Director of Henry Butcher Art Auctioneers.

Another highlight at the auction was an ensemble of 20 historical Keris namely from the 12th to 13th century Modjopahit Java; 15th century (or earlier) Java; 15th century Bali; 14th to 15th century Madura, among others

that went under the hammer at attractive lower estimates of RM800 to RM2,500. Finely handcrafted in wealth of materials such as ivory; chendana wood; and silver and bronze grit inlaid with precious stones are some of the artefacts on offer provided discerning collectors an opportunity to preserve a part of the region's history. An undated Balinese keris achieved a whopping RM26,880 to a successful room bidder.

In the two-dimensional segment, over 140 artworks featuring pioneering Nanyang artists such as Khaw Sia; Kuo Ju Ping; Tan Choon Ghee; and the son of Father of Batik Art - Chuah Seow Keng inheriting Dato' Chuah Thean Teng's legacy went under the hammer alongside established names like AJ Rahman; Jehan Chan; Keng Seng Choo; and Lye Yau Fatt as well as underrated talents Johari Alias; Alex Leong; Rohaizat; Ong Wah Peng and more.

Also on offer were the ancient art of Chinese calligraphy and ink painting with themes depicting misty landscape, flower-and-bird, folk art, animals representing prosperity, bamboo trees, blossom flowers and tropical nature are among the subject matters illustrated in ink on rice paper mounted on scroll. Well established Chinese ink painters and calligraphers such as Zhao Shao' Ang which both pieces achieved RM67,200 (estimate RM60,000 to RM80,000); Luo Tuo's 1980 Landscape was sold for RM44,800 (estimate RM6,000 to RM10,000); Malaysian Dato' Chuk Mor's collaborative calligraphy fetched RM8,400 (estimate RM5,000 to RM8,000) and many more were featured in this collection.

A gold mine for discerning collectors of antiques and fine paintings, *A Legacy* aimed to promote the heritage of collecting for the betterment of the generations to come in preserving historical artefacts and the conservation of history.

Public Art Programmes by Henry Butcher Art Auctioneers

by Sarah Abu Bakar



Henry Butcher Art Auctioneers (HBArt) presented a series of Public Art Programmes in conjunction with a calendar of events namely *Nanyang: A Private Selling Exhibition* which was held in Singapore (31 July - 3 August) and Kuala Lumpur (6 - 22 August) and *A Legacy: An Auction in Celebration of Malaysia Day* which was held on 21 September 2014.

PICTURING NANYANG: A ROMANTIC PERSPECTIVE OF THE SOUTHERN SEAS?

The objective of this forum was to discuss the history and the works of pioneering artists of Malaysia and Singapore who have forged and claimed an identity of its own. Known as Nanyang or 'Southern Seas', the term was originally coined by literary intelligentsia of the late 1920s to represent contemporary Chinese narratives written based on local subjects of the region.

Held on 16 August 2014, the topic was presented by artist and art writer Kelvin Chuah alongside Emelia Ong Ian Li, art historian and educator. Kelvin Chuah began the seminar by tracing the origins of landscape painting in Malaya particularly by maritime travel artists and adventurers of the East India Company. The practice of watercolour painting in Malaya in the 19th century was advocated by Sir Frank Athelstane Swettenham (1850 - 1946), the first Resident General of the Federated Malay States who illustrated the topography of virgin Malayan lands. Kelvin also provided examples of early activities

of immigration in Malaya such as the historical postcard depicting *The Chinese Hairdresser* circa 1910 and Yong Mun Sen's illustration of *A Boy and His Bull*, a symbolic piece representing adversity and hard work. A brief description of Kelvin's current practice was also shared with the audience, documenting and archiving artwork images of Nanyang immigrant artists from China which derived mainly from Penang.



PAUL GAUGUIN, *Where Do We Come From? Who Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897 - 1898)

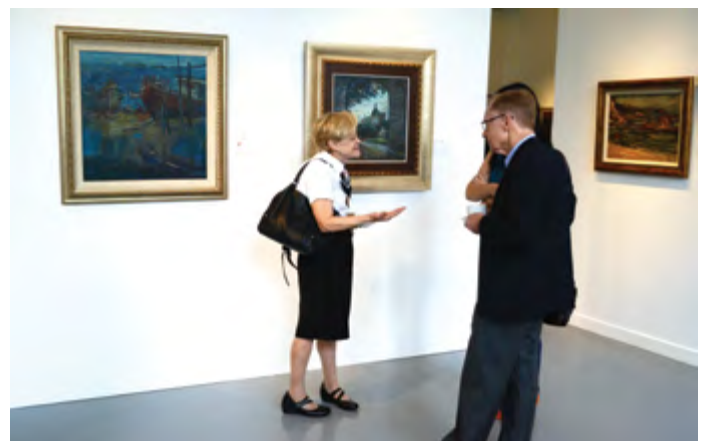
The term Nanyang is known as a regional Chinese diasporic phenomenon in a particular archipelago - Southeast Asia - demonstrating multi-modernities and multi-modernism in their way of life. Nanyang artists of the first generation are described as deriving from the period of the 'Golden Generation of Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA). The romantic aspect of Nanyang is parallel to the French Post-Impressionist painter Paul Gauguin's *Where Do We Come From? Who Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897-1898), idealising and idolising simple primitive living, away from Western civilisations. Kelvin also played an interview clip by

a prolific art historian and collector of Chinese art Michael Sullivan (1916 - 2013) commenting on Cheong Soo Pieng's work. In response to one of the questions discussed concerning the relevance of Nanyang style with modern day context and society, Kelvin brought to light the work of Singaporean contemporary filmmaker Ho Tzu Nyen, who had adopted the work of Cheong Soo Pieng titled *Tropical Life* (1959) in his short film *Episodes of Singapore Art, Episode 1, Cheong Soo Pieng - A Dream of Tropical Life* (2005). Such reference manifests the importance of history in present day cultural context.

Emelia Ong commenced her insightful presentation by emphasising that categorising the Nanyang-style as an art movement is not a useful descriptive term as its 'guidelines' are diverse. Though its prominence are observed through the indicators of style namely subject matter, form and meaning which provide a set of solutions composing of local themes corresponding to a particular issue, these artists were faced with artistic challenges - their roots in Chinese style of painting and an inclination towards Western technique - forced them to explore a new meaning. The symbolic incorporation of naturalism

in Chinese painting and the Western perspective through their mode of painting offer a refreshing identity.

The notion of Romanticism in Nanyang-style began in Bali - a comparison to the way the Dutch had idealised the noble savage by glorifying the savageness of the natives in the Orient - which is an emotional act rather than rational, static versus progressive. An inspiration from Gauguin who had escaped Western civilisation and materialism to the exotic life in Tahiti in 1891 is debatable, though Chen Wen Hsi, Cheong Soo Pieng, Chee Chong Swee, Liu Kang traveled to the Island of Gods in 1952 in search of a regional visual expressions, which Bali has to offer in all its experiential, divine cultural aesthetics and exoticism nature. Another example of a Chinese artist at the time who had devoured the taste of Southeast Asia was Lee Man Fong (1913 - 1988). Emelia concluded her presentation by approaching one of the questions - 'Is Nanyang art a movement of its own? If so, is it comparable to Mooi Indie of Indonesia (c.1930s) and/or the Romantic period (1820 - 1900) of Filipino art?' - by stating that some of the artists were heading that way.



'Is Nanyang art a movement of its own? If so, is it comparable to Mooi Indie of Indonesia (c.1930s) and/or the Romantic period (1820 - 1900) of Filipino art?'



THE PLEASURES OF COLLECTING NYONYAWARE

The iconic Penang Nyonya, Lilian Tong - Museum Director, Pinang Peranakan Mansion & Vice President, Penang Baba Nyonya Association - was invited to speak at a Public Art Programme with the topic *The Pleasures of Collecting Nyonyaware*.

The objective of this forum was to discuss the history of the Straits Chinese also known as Peranakan or Baba and Nyonya in Penang, Malacca and Singapore and the pleasures of collecting the quintessential Straits Chinese ceramics.

Held on 20 September 2014 in conjunction with *A Legacy: An Auction in Celebration of Malaysia Day*, which featured a collection of finely enamelled late 19th to

early 20th century Straits Chinese ceramics for the very first time on 21 September 2014, the forum was held with an aim to cultivate collectors' passion for Nyonyaware.

The Straits Chinese home is a connoisseurship uniting social history with material culture - an opus of art and beauty that transcends historic, artistic and cultural boundaries - weaving a European, Anglo-India, Arabic, Malay, Asian and Chinese composition.

Lilian Tong transported the audience to the world of Peranakan showcasing the historical wealth of objects used by the unique family households from kitchenware, homeware to attire, architecture and food. At the end of the presentation, guests savoured a delectable array of freshly made Nyonya kuehs, multi-coloured sweet delicacies, the pride of Nyonya cuisine.



Spontaneous #1 by CONJOIN

by Sarah Abu Bakar

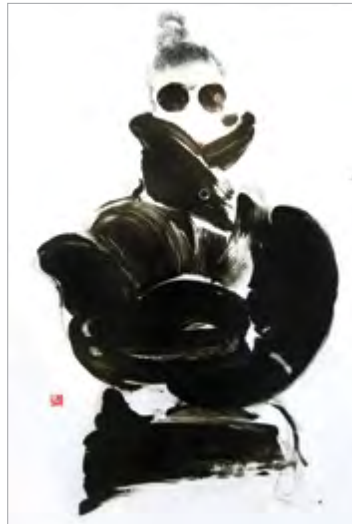
SUPPORTED BY ARTEMIS ART

CONJOIN

con-join 'kuan-join, kuan-join
vi. to combine practitioners from various creative disciplines into a single movement

SPONTANEOUS #1

CELINE WONG



T.W.CHANG



C.C.KUA



NICHOLAS CHOONG



The Kuala Lumpur contemporary art scene has recently welcomed a new art collective named Conjoin with great gusto. Comprising of four talented individuals CC Kua, Celine Wong, Nicholas Choong, and founder T.W. Chang, also known as Skinner, their first project, *Spontaneous #1* was held at a pop-up space in Publika hosted by Artemis Art from 27 July to 17 August 2014.

CC Kua (b.1991) is an illustrator and graphic designer by profession whose artistic intuitions and erratic thoughts are subliminally expressed on paper, producing an illuminating and humorous journey of her wilding inner thoughts.

Illustrator and educator Celine Wong (b.1990), also known as Lihua, incorporates the ancient art of Chinese ink painting into her modern fashion-themed artworks exploring the beautiful female figures and human features with calligraphy resulting in a sultry and bold body of work.

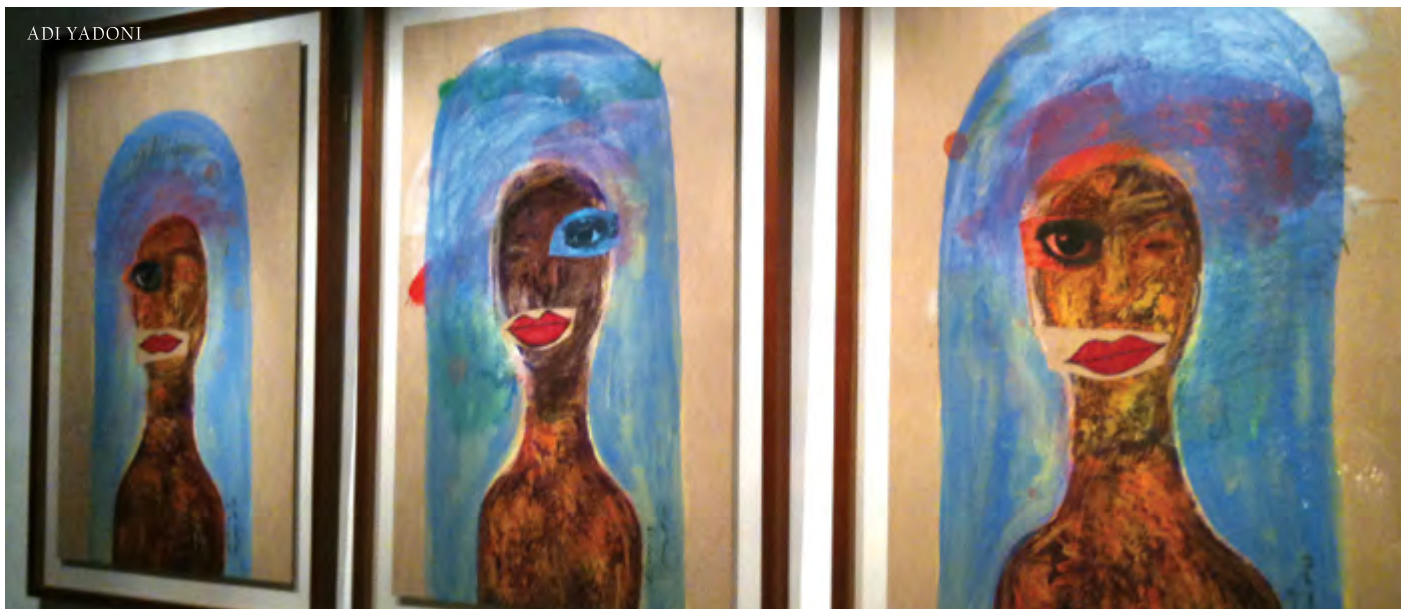
Multi-disciplinary artist Nicholas Choong (b. 1977) has been involved in a myriad of creative disciplines from a graphic designer, photographer to sound engineer, music producer and a DJ. An expressionist artist, Nicholas creates abstract works of art in large scale employing an array techniques such as washes, jagged cuts, contrasting play of colours on canvas.

A self-taught artist, founder T.W. Chang, fondly known as Skinner (b. 1978), graduated with a BA (Hons) in Computer Science and has been actively involved in the Malaysian art scene since 2005. His intricate ink drawings from his iconic *Dark Forest* and *Smoke* series paved his way to recognition.

With a common aim to bring together imaginative minds from diverse creative disciplines to create quality art, the works of art collective Conjoin are mind-blowing, honest, witty and above all, spontaneous.

Tiga Malam (Three Nights)

by Sarah Abu Bakar



Held from 4 to 20 September 2014 at Alliance Française de Singapour, *Tiga Malam (Three Nights)* is a group exhibition showcasing an eclectic body of work by three contemporary Singaporean artists Rosihan Dahim, Sunar Sugiyou and Adi Yadoni. Comprised of paintings on paper; canvas works; video installation; and sculpture, the exhibition's aim to reveal varying degrees of artistic expressions situating within the Southeast Asian context offers an exhilarating impression to its viewers.

Rosihan Dahim's surreal body of work consists of dreamlike paintings, installations and sculptures using symbolic traditional references such as *wayang kulit* and *keris* in his paintings; eggs and egg trays in sculptures creating an otherworldly experience within the familiar objects. A graduate from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, his first major solo exhibition was at the National Museum Art Gallery in 1980. Since then, Rosihan has exhibited in numerous exhibitions locally and abroad. He received the High Commendation prize at the Australian Art Award in 1985 and went on to receive the Honourable Mention in the Philip Morris Art Award in 1995 and 1996. More recently, he was named Ocean Artist of the Year in 2010 and awarded second prize in the Voice of the Ocean international art show.

Sunar Sugiyou produces figurative paintings by adopting Javanese traditional figures namely *kuda lumping* - a horse dance drama; *wayang kulit* characters; disfigured forms and distorted figures and incorporating modern texts such as "Relak lah bro..." and "Always No One" in his artworks. One may recall the works of Indonesian artist Heri Dono in

Sunar Sugiyou's method of creating pleasantly grotesque paintings. He graduated from the St. Patrick's Art Centre (now known as LASALLE College of the Arts) in 1987. His first exhibition was at the Shell Discovery Art Exhibition while he was still a student in 1986. Subsequently he received the High Commendation prizes in the Australian Art Award of 1987 and IBM Art Awards in 1988. Sunar has shown in numerous exhibitions locally and abroad and his works can be found in the National Heritage Board Collection as well as in private collections.

The works of Adi Yadoni though diverse in mediums are similar in style - abstract drawings on paper and sculptures and an epic video installation with the song *Tiga Malam* on repeat - project a certain out-of-the-ordinary quality in his multi-disciplinary art practice. He studied fine art at LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore and University Of Western Sydney, Australia. A multi-disciplinary artist, he is adept in various mediums and a recipient of the IBM Art Award and Philip Morris Art Award. His works have graced many exhibition spaces in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia and Europe. One of his renowned projects is the establishment of Kaki 5 Galerie & Café - a space that functions as a platform for aspiring artists and filmmakers to converge and exchange new ideas. As a filmmaker, his work ranges from social drama series for television to info-education programs to music videos. His critically acclaimed documentary film *Reflections of the Misunderstood Mat Rockers* was the first Singaporean documentary to be selected in the main programme of the 15th Singapore International Film Festival in 2002. The film has travelled to many film festivals in Asia and Europe.



SUNAR SUGIYOU

AN INTERVIEW WITH CURATOR SYED MUHAMMAD HAFIZ

Describe the significance of the Indonesian song 'Tiga Malam' by songstress Lilis Suriani and the inspiration for the exhibition and its title.

The song was actually the starting point for the three artists. While they were catching up and mulling over their third collaborative show, Adi was humming the tune and they eventually agreed to use the song title as the title for the exhibition. The song is actually quite popular with the older generation here and in Malaysia and Indonesia of course. I think for Malaysia, Siti Nurhaliza did a cover of the song too so I have no doubt that contributed to its recent popularity too!

How do the art practices of the participating artists complement one another for this show?

Actually their respective artistic practices cannot be more different from each other! However I think what brings them together is the desire to push themselves in their respective practices. Individually they have been participating in other exhibitions and done solos but I think the group dynamics between them, perhaps, brought about a willingness to be more adventurous and a certain cheekiness, I would add...

What is the current state of contemporary art in Singapore and do artists respond to political and social affairs in Singapore? In other words, what themes and subject matters do Singaporean contemporary artists explore in their works?

I think that's a big question to answer in a few sentences but I shall try. From your question I sense that you're looking at artists / practices from the last few years or so? I think most artists here do respond to political and social affairs. The main difference I guess, in comparison to Malaysia and Indonesia for example, would be the visual language they adopt.

If you mean 'political' in the context of art works featuring political figures or statements, then of course you would not see much of that here. Having said that, I think artists here have been more subtle or nuanced in their approaches to making political or social commentary through their art. There are also artists who are more engaged in the other mediums like photography, performance art, etc. so they might not be as visible as painters. This visibility is of course, in the context of auctions for example, where paintings tend to still dominate market demand.



ROSIHAN DAHIM



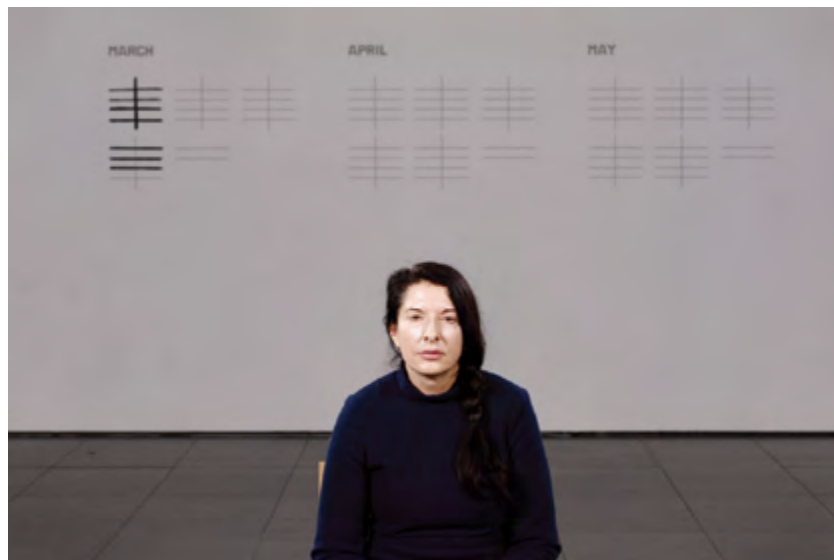
SUNAR SUGIYOU



ROSIHAN DAHIM

Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present

by Joyce Shih



“People don’t understand that the hardest thing is to actually do something which is close to nothing.”

– Marina Abramović

Known as the “grandmother” of performance art – Marina Abramovic is a name that usually receives mixed responses because of the controversy surrounding her work. Matthew Akers’ documentary film, *Marina Abramovic: The Artist is Present*, on the same entitled retrospective of her work at MoMA The Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2010 provides an eye-opening insight into the grueling process behind producing her work, and in turn a better understanding of the under-appreciated genre of performance art itself.

While the film exposes a vast expanse of her life, from her childhood, to her love life and career, the main focus is on the centerpiece of her show where she sat immobile, gazing into the eyes audience members who took turns sitting across from her. The piece took place during opening hours of the museum for three months where she performed for a total of 736 hours. As with all her other works that almost are always about testing the limits of the human capacity physically and mentally, this piece did no less. As Abramovic puts it herself: “People don’t understand that the hardest thing is to actually do something which is close to nothing.”

One thing that is obvious from the film is the subtle but evidently effective confrontational nature of Abramovic’s work, especially in her works with Ulay, a former partner who we are introduced to as the film captures their reunion. As he explains: inaction, silence, and fasting are highly discredited in Western society and it is these three elements which are central to a piece he did with Abramovic in the eighties and are again characteristic in *The Artist is Present*. By directly presenting audience members with what we try to avoid, she makes us question the reasoning behind these conventions and change the way we respond to social norms.

As Akers catches audience members moved to tears, we learn that by patiently sitting passively but attentively Abramovic is giving them a simple but unique opportunity – a moment for each individual to forget about social customs, and an experience that transcends time and everyday life itself. She explains “When they’re sitting in the front of me, it’s not about me anymore [...] I’m just the mirror of their own self.” In an age where we are taught to work harder and go higher, she forces us to slow down and to reflect on the bigger picture of our lives – a basic principle that should be our priority but is in fact overlooked and buried under all

our other unnecessary worries. The piece is a prime example of how simple in nature, yet deeply emotionally effective performance art is in creating an intimate connection between the artist and the audience member, in some cases more so than traditionally accepted forms of art.

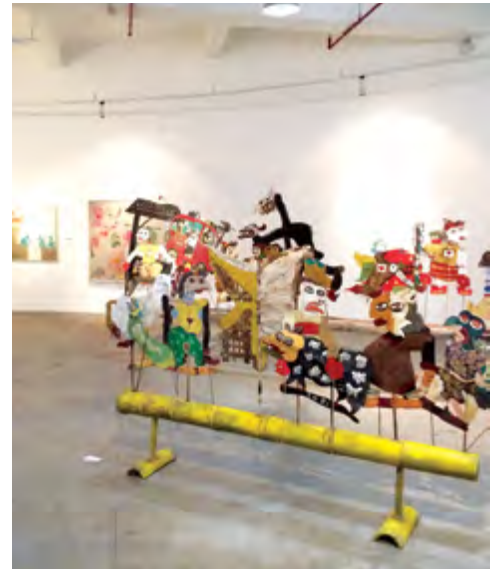
Even though performance art has been well established and recognized since the 1960s, there is an air of skepticism that still clouds the genre to the general audience, especially with works that are more radical, like Abramovic’s. As a hub of a diverse range of cultures, South East Asia boasts an extensive variety of performing arts in the form of dance, theatre, music, and even shadow puppetry, that reflect centuries worth of tradition. Whilst the performing arts have always been prominent, as a region with a much shorter history of fine art it comes as no surprise that performance art is still relatively new and in the stages of development. Although similar in terms of delivery and presentation, there is a clear distinction between performing and performance art in which the latter is a dramatically delivered form of conceptual art that aims to convey a content-based meaning. Performing arts on the other hand, usually has the intended purpose of entertaining an audience.

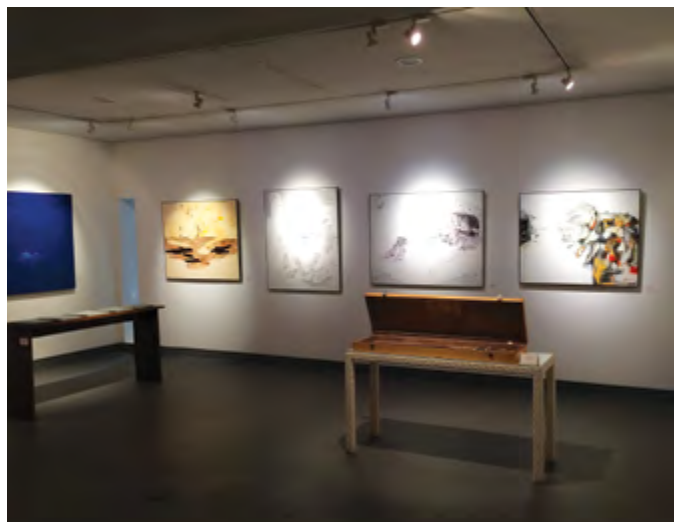
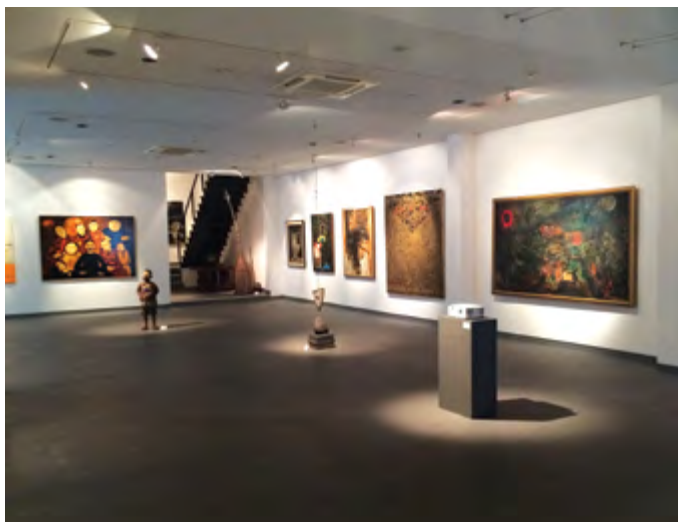
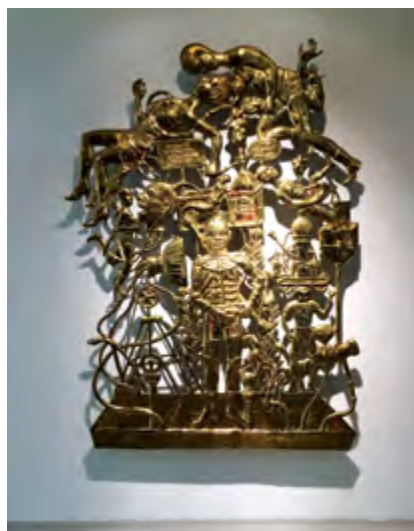
Because the essence of most contemporary art is to reflect on issues on the current state of life, performance art’s even more direct presentation of an artist’s response to such concerns makes it difficult to be accepted in some societies where censorship still runs high. This struggle is reflected through *Asia Art Archive’s* interview with Singaporean performance artist, Loo Zihan who spoke of the his gay rights performance *Cane*, revealing the effects of working with restrictions and regulations that aren’t implemented in Western countries.

While performance art is generally more accessible in the West, South East Asia has definitely seen a rise of interest and knowledge of the genre over the past few years with notable pieces by Indonesia’s Melati Suryodarmo, Singapore’s Loo Zihan, and Jason Lim, just to name a few. Festivals such as *Future of Imagination* and *Malacca International Contemporary Art Festival* are also helping to expose the audience to the style of work and will hopefully incur a wider interest and stronger appreciation for the underrated genre.



Art Happenings in Jakarta





Preventive Care Of A Collection

by Bettina Ebert & Rosario Marcelino | www.conservasianart.com

For the proper care of an art collection you should be aware of the agents of deterioration in order to avoid or minimize their effects through the implementation of a number of simple procedures. Agents of deterioration are external forces that act upon objects and cause their chemical or physical degradation. They may include some of the following: direct physical forces; theft, vandalism or careless transportation of the objects; fire; water; pests; pollutants; light levels; incorrect relative humidity and temperature.

DIRECT PHYSICAL FORCES

Responsible for various types of damage that can deform, puncture, dent, scratch and/or cause wear to all types of objects. These damages are generally related to improper handling, transportation and exhibition of the objects or, in rarer but more severe cases, catastrophic causes such as the collapse of a shelf or part of a structure of the building, earthquake, etc. Accidents have happened in many different situations, for example during an exhibition opening, when a champagne cork went flying through a canvas painting, leaving a hole in its wake. A crated painting shipped to an exhibition was pierced by the forklift truck that was supposed to safely transport it from the airplane to the cargo area. Heard of the Qing dynasty vases shattered by a visitor to the Fitzwilliam museum as he fell down the staircase? Or what about the 19th Century statue that was broken by a student while trying to take a selfie?

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide secure packing to minimise potential damages during transport by providing cushioning and protection;
- Whenever possible resort to specialized art handler's carriers for highly valuable or fragile items;
- Be aware of the risks involved with large numbers of visitors and secure your collection if it is on open display.

THEFT AND VANDALISM

May be intentional (theft of objects easy to carry, vandalism) or involuntary (misplaced or lost objects). Even the most famous museums have had high-profile thefts, so this should not be underestimated. There have been numerous famous cases of vandalism to works of art, including spray painting of a Picasso, graffiti to a Mark Rothko at the Tate Modern, and countless others. Rembrandt's *Night Watch* at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam was repeatedly slashed with a knife, while a sketch by Leonardo da Vinci in the National Gallery, London was shot at with a gun, resulting in severe damage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Photograph and inventory the objects and update the inventory regularly;
- Periodically check the locks of the outside and inside doors;
- Plan a round of inspection frequently/daily;
- Install outdoor lighting;
- Install security cameras, burglar alarms or employ security guards.

FIRE

Causes total or partial destruction of the works, chars, and leaves soot deposits and smoke residue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Periodically check electrical installations and existing air conditioning systems, no matter how sophisticated they are;
- Install an automatic fire detection and sprinkler system. Where this is

not feasible, implement minimal measures of fire fighting, including the installation of fire extinguishers, fire blankets and other means such as sand buckets, for example.

WATER

Water poses a grave threat to objects and works of art, as it causes damage which may in some cases be irreversible: textiles (staining), metals (corroding), wood (swelling), stone (efflorescence) and paint layers (delaminating or buckling layers), for instance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Check for infiltration of rainwater or water from plumbing, broken or leaking pipes and flooding; remove all objects that may be affected immediately;
- Do not keep any objects directly in contact with the floor in order to protect them from possible flooding or leaks, as well as insects and mechanical shock;
- Air conditioning units have a tendency to leak - avoid hanging paintings directly underneath;
- Ensure windows are closed in case of heavy rainfall.

PESTS

These are biological agents that can cause damage to collections. They can be divided into three groups: vermin, insects and mould. Vermin may include birds or rodents that can gnaw at, or foul the objects with their excrement. Insects such as silverfish (paper), the common woodworm and termites (wood), and moths (textiles) cause progressive degradation in organic objects. This starts with small holes scattered throughout the object and may subsequently lead to severe loss of material, sometimes up to complete destruction. Mould can appear in various materials, such as paper, leather and wood, and can weaken or stain them (it is usually white or brown in appearance, often with a characteristic odour), preferably in the more hidden and less ventilated areas of the objects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Distribute insect traps throughout the storage and display area;
- Avoid food consumption around works of art, as crumbs provide a source of food for pests;
- Keep the storage area cool - cockroaches and many other insects prefer a warm environment, and will avoid your storage area if it is colder than the outdoors;
- Regularly check for insect frass and wood powder, which is a tell-tale sign of woodworm or termite infestation;
- Seal doors and windows;
- Keep objects that were recently acquired quarantined before putting them on display or in storage. This allows you to check for any possible infestation that might affect the remainder of your collection.



Figure 1. Side bar of a painting's strainer attacked by insects (left photo) and backing-board of a work on paper attacked by mould (right photo).

POLLUTANTS

Source can be external (industrial sources, domestic, transport-related or the incineration of waste) or internal (linked to the presence of visitors, the exhibition and construction materials, etc.). This includes gases (such as ozone, formaldehyde, nitric acid, sulfur dioxide), liquids (such as plasticizers, grease), and solids (such as dust, soot) which can be responsible for changes in object processes that may include, among other things, the acceleration of the natural processes of ageing and degradation, discoloration, corrosion and disintegration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Leave windows closed, particularly during hazy periods, to avoid pollution from external sources affecting the collection;
- Filter the recirculating air of the air conditioner system and change filters periodically;
- Wash hands prior to handling objects, or wear non-slip gloves.

LIGHT LEVELS

Light degrades objects continuously and irreversibly. There are two types of radiation that are particularly harmful – ultraviolet radiation and visible light – since both can disintegrate, fade and darken organic and coloured inorganic materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Use dim light, light only when needed and avoid heat resulting from the proximity of the light source to the object;
- Limit the lighting time so as to reduce the risk of fading/discoloration and accelerated ageing;
- Keep storage rooms in total darkness whenever they are not being used, and ensure extended completely dark periods for the most fragile objects by removing them from continuous display;
- When displaying the most sensitive objects (for example paper, textiles), natural light should be avoided. For less sensitive objects it will be possible to resort to natural light as long as it is controlled and filtered.

The sun must not shine directly on the objects, and windows should be covered with UV-film, blinds and/or curtains.

TEMPERATURE AND RELATIVE HUMIDITY

High temperatures increase the rate of degradation. Fluctuations in humidity affect fragile objects in particular, while wood may expand and contract, resulting in cracks and warping. Maintaining a dry and cool environment helps reduce the rate of deterioration of objects. Mould growth is a serious issue in the tropics, and can be avoided by maintaining an appropriate environment.



Figure 2. Example of a digital thermohygrometer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Keep relative humidity and temperature below 60% and 24° C respectively, if possible;
- Avoid large and rapid fluctuations in temperature and humidity;
- Run air conditioning or fans to circulate air throughout the space;
- Install dehumidifiers if necessary;
- Purchase a digital thermohygrometer to be aware of the environmental conditions in your storage and exhibition space;
- Plastics, electronic and photographic materials are sensitive to high temperatures and benefit from colder storage environments;
- Do not hang paintings or place objects along outside walls (these can get cold and wet);
- Move objects away from sources of direct heat.

Did You Know?

Egg Tempera



Art History

Every surviving panel painting by Michelangelo is painted in egg tempera.

Tempera or egg tempera is a permanent, fast-drying painting medium consisting of colored pigment mixed with a water-soluble binder medium (usually a glutinous material such as egg yolk or some other size). It is traditionally created by hand-grinding dry powdered pigments into a binding agent or medium, such as egg, glue, honey, water, milk (in the form of casein) and a variety of plant gums.

Photo courtesy of www.eggtempera.com

INVITATION TO CONSIGN

We are now accepting consignments for our forthcoming auctions. Please contact us to receive a confidential appraisal, and we are more than happy to assist you with any further queries.

ENQUIRIES

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