

Creativity transcends national boundaries

2015 promises to be a year with a commingling of ideas, concepts and movements in the region with Art Stage Singapore kicking off the calendar

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Art Stage Singapore 2015

Artist: Various

Date: 22-25 Jan 2015

Venue: Marina Bay Sands

Sands Expo & Convention Centre, Level B2, Halls D-F, 10 Bayfront Avenue, Singapore 018956

Afficionados of the imagination are invited to experience the finest works from talents around Southeast Asia at the region's premier art festival, taking place later this month in Singapore. With robust participation from Malaysian galleries, including G13, Ode to Art, and Wei-Ling Contemporary, Art Stage Singapore 2015 (ArtSS) will also feature a public artwork project by 16 local artists.

"Contemporary art from Southeast Asia has been, and continues to be, of immense interest and significance. Its diversity, present not only among the countries that make up the region but also within each city. It poses a challenge for anyone attempting to understand it as one region, and it is also what motivates an enduring fascination for our art," says ArtSS Southeast Asia Platform curator Khim Ong.

In organising the range of pieces showcased in the platform, Ong presents individual works as biographical sketches of the artists, providing an entry point for an understanding of Southeast Asian works besides forming an introduction to emerging strategies on the scene.

"In 2015, we are delighted to have a strong contingent of Malaysian artists at the fair, demonstrating that Malaysia's vibrant contemporary art scene has caught international attention. It is certainly the most interesting platform in Asia for Malaysian galleries to showcase their global reach," says ArtSS founder and fair director Lorenzo Rudolf.

As a featured artist in the Southeast Asia Platform, Sabah-born filmmaker Chris Chong Chan Fui explores new frontiers in visual forms with *HEAVENHELL*, a six-channel video installation examining the Koganecho district of Yokohama, whose reputation for crime was such that it formed a backdrop representing the biblical concept of Hell in Akira Kurosawa's *High and Low* (1963).

Commissioned by the Koganecho Area Management Center, *HEAVENHELL* depicts an infamous red-light street across two time periods, showing the audience both the area's seedy past and present recovery through a variety of shots in vintage Cinemascope format.

On a more intimate scale, Chong Ai Lei of Johor brings

Chong Ai Lei brings an appreciation of the feminine form with an air of intimacy to her compositions



RIGHT AND BOTTOM: *HEAVENHELL* depicts an infamous red-light street across two time periods



an appreciation of the feminine form without the nudity which so often accompanies it in the industry. Set in everyday environments which reflect the subjects' personalities, primarily bedrooms, Chong utilises relaxed poses without a trace of self-consciousness to convey an air of familiarity to her compositions.

She evinces a superlative eye for lighting, as seen in the recent *Feel Good Time*, where her model stands out in photorealistic detail against a near-impressionistic background of grass blades and leaves. A laptop and magazine sit nearby, both essential implements to today's wired generation of media consumers.

"From the perspective of Malaysian collectors, Singapore is well positioned as the central point of the region for stakeholders to come together to view the best of Southeast Asian art through its numerous private galleries, and the annual Art Stage Singapore event held in January," says former National Art Gallery Board of Trustees member Pakhruddin Sulaiman.

In addition to the Southeast Asia Platform, this year's event launches ArtSS's Video Platform, exhibiting an overview of video art to the present day. Joining Chris Chong, talents like Angela Tiatia (Samoa), Hiroko Okada (Japan) and Santiago Sierra (Spain) expound on the merits of the mode, which is currently gaining popularity among collectors.

ArtSS 2015 will be open from noon to 7pm on weekdays throughout the fair's duration, with one-day passes priced at S\$32 (RM85) and four-day passes for S\$64 (RM169). The event will also see the debut of the Joseph Balesstier Award for Freedom of Art, dedicated to artists and curators with contributions to the ideals of freedom or liberty, in conjunction with the US Embassy in Singapore.



Tom Tandio, a renowned collector of contemporary Indonesian artwork, has been appointed ArtSS 2015's regional director



Santos utilises mundane objects to examine the structure of everyday assumptions

2hide

Artist: José Santos III

Date: 22 Nov 2014 — 8 Jan 2015

Venue: Pearl Lam Galleries Singapore
9 Lock Road #03-22, Gillman Barracks,
Singapore 108937

GIVEN its shared history with Malaysia, it's often educational examining how Singapore has evolved its own unique identity. This is particularly apparent in its embrace of the arts, turning it into a regional hub of sorts and accounting for the abundance of Singaporean exhibitions in these pages.

The timbre of the scene down under is characterised by an inclination towards experimentation, with more latitude given towards abstract, absurd or surreal interpretations. This is seen in the oeuvre of Filipino talent José Santos III, whose latest body of work can be found at Pearl Lam Galleries in the solo exhibition *2hide*.

A clever play on the form and function of dictionary definitions, the exhibit's name alludes to the dual connotations of the word "hide", with the verb denoting concealment and the noun describing an external skin or covering. This is reflected in Santos' theme, which utilises mundane objects to examine the structure of everyday assumptions.

In works such as *Paperweight1*, *uncovered* and the delightfully titled *Why Axis*, he depicts inanimate objects, often portrayed with heavy layerings or wraps, with tears offering tantalising glimpses into their inner workings. Compositional techniques vary from photography, digital intervention and painting to print and collages, as a testimony to Santos' growth over the past five years.

Earning recognition in the international circuits of Denmark, China, Hong Kong, Bangladesh and New York, his oeuvre betrays an uncommon fascination for and talent with texture, and while a little quixotic for the intermediate crowd, art lovers with a patient penchant for inward scrutiny may benefit from a perusal of his portfolio.

Santos' compositional techniques vary from photography, digital intervention and painting to print and collages



Poesy's Art Gallery

Artist: Poesy Liang

Date: 11 Nov — Dec 2015

Venue: G9 MiCasa Shoppes, MiCasa All Suites Hotel,
368 Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur

A POP-UP gallery in the fashionable end of Embassy Row, Poesy's Art Gallery is the brainchild of multifaceted Malaysian-Taiwanese entrepreneur, humanitarian and all-around bon-vivant Poesy Liang. With admittance by appointment only, the space primarily caters for the upper crust, though newcomers are also welcomed through a series of one-on-one workshops.

Open till the end of 2015, the gallery will feature five exhibitions of Poesy's work, showcasing her roots in traditional Chinese calligraphy while incorporating modern elements, such as her love of cats and architecture. The full moon is also a theme, drawing from a resonance with the classic Teresa Teng number *The Moon Represents My Heart*.

In addition to numerous charitable pursuits, such as founding Helping Angels, an international volunteer group that organised the celebrated Bald Empathy Movement (BEM), Poesy is best known for her *Rooftop Cats* series, a whimsical exploration of metropolitan skylines featuring everyone's favourite felines.

"As part of BEM, I toured a number of countries, and the plan was to shave my head bald at the end, at the Cannes Film Festival. I was on tour for nine months, entirely self-funded, until the money ran out!" says Poesy. "So I went to the art store, picked up some supplies, and



PHOTOS BY SHARILAMIN

A common theme in Poesy's work is her love of cats and architecture

started painting on the sidewalk. That's how it all started."

Poesy also offers one-on-one arts mentorship to the public through her Paint a Gift of Love programme, to be launched this Christmas and designed to open the benefits of art engagement to a larger audience.

"I've been drawing since I was two years old, and my parents encouraged my gifts in that direction. By the time I was six, I was mentoring under working artists acquainted with them, learning about water colours, landscapes, carving and more. I just thought it would be nice to share that experience," she says.

Workshop participants are guided through expressing their inner visualisations on a one-foot square canvas board over three hours, with a starter kit of acrylic paints and brushes. Given Poesy's warm, personable approach and sincere passion for her medium, anyone with the slightest interest in the arts is encouraged to join. ✪



LEFT:
Poesy's work showcases her roots in traditional Chinese calligraphy while incorporating modern elements

BOTTOM:
A multifaceted personality, Poesy is a Malaysian-Taiwanese entrepreneur, humanitarian and all-around bon-vivant

