

phunk Studio's *Eccentric City: Rise And Fall* (in collaboration with Keichi Tanaami)



Generation Next

What defines the next wave of Singapore artists? We look at what the show *Future Proof* has to offer



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HEADLESS mannequins waiting for aliens. Loaves of bread with crystals growing on them. A city made of glass. A room of chiming clocks. A superhero — melting. It all sounds like some weird, trippy vision of the future, alive with possibilities.

In a sense, that's exactly what ongoing exhibition *The Singapore Show: Future Proof* offers.

Presented by the Singapore Art Museum — in parallel to another exhibition of contemporary Asian masterpieces, *The Collectors Show: Chimera* — *Future Proof* showcases the works of 25 emerging Singapore and Singapore-based artists spread across SAM's 8Q wing and the lawn of its main building, as well as over at *The Substation*.

Described by museum director Tan Boon Hui as a "slightly speculative show", *Future Proof* aims to offer not just a snapshot of the local contemporary art scene today but perhaps a peek into what its future could very well look like.

In doing so, show curators David Chew and Khairuddin Hori have assembled an unusual roster of so-called "post-millennium" artists, a motley mix ranging from familiar names like Vertical Submarine, phunk and Donna Ong, to relative unknowns like Ruben Pang and Gerald Leow. They have also democratically embraced practitioners from other fields like design, architecture and street art; and have given audiences a fair mix of newly commissioned works and previously exhibited ones, some of which may have been overlooked due

to the increasing number of exhibitions taking place every year. The result is a showcase that feels fresh and makes a timely statement about this new generation of Singapore artists.

A new wave
So how exactly would one define this new wave of artists? Going through the works in *Future Proof*, one senses a kind of collective artistic ethos that seems very much different from the previous generation of contemporary art practitioners.

The in-your-face intensity often



Clog 2's *The Asunder*

Chun Kaifeng's ¥ € \$



Speak Cryptic's Ka-Khe

Melissa Tan with one of her pieces comprising *Under The Blanket Of Bedrock*



Ruben Pang's *Justice, Theatre No 12*



Ang Sookoon's *Your Love Is Like A Chunk Of Gold*

ascribed to artists connected to seminal '80s and '90s groups like *The Artists Village* and *The 5th Passage* is seemingly replaced by presentations that are more subdued — even the ones dealing with certain critical issues. Instant, visceral reactions to art are sometimes eschewed for more contemplative, introspective experiences.

Grace Tan and Randy Chan's sombre *Building As Body* sees *The Substation's* facade concealed under black and white strips for three months, echoing a mourning shroud as it highlights the "invisibility" of the respected arts space in today's hip, commercialised scene.

Bruce Quek's *Hall Of Mirrors* installation is an almost detached, clinical look at tragic events in the region, playing up the irony of regularly occurring deaths translated as mere statistics via tinkling sounds.

Chun Kaifeng's miniature model of Marina Bay Sands critiques its status as a symbol of capitalism, while another transforms the Singapore Flyer into a prison of sorts — even as the grey, black and white tones of the works project a sense of calm.

Ditto for Charles Lim's *Inside Outside*. A commentary on Singapore's maritime boundaries, its presentation — comprising

mostly of a series of photographs of buoys taken on both sides of the imaginary borders — is most effective on a conceptual level.

The devil-may-care, rough-edged works that are synonymous with previous generations are nowhere to be found in a show that features some intricately crafted "finished" works, such as Ang Sookoon's crystals-on-bread sculptures, *Your Love Is Like A Chunk Of Gold*; Donna Ong's haunting glassware installation *Crystal City*; and Melissa Tan's layered paperwork images of rock formations fashioned with the use of incense sticks.

Times they are a-changin'

Perhaps these major differences in craft and approach can be simply attributed to the changing times.

Chew pointed out that contemporary art had initially emerged during a moment of "nation-building". "The 'trauma' that comes with it was reflected in the arts of that time," he said. A more uneasy relationship with newly formed arts institutions on issues like funding and censorship, for example, affected much of the output of performance art in the '90s.

Nowadays, as artist Ong pointed out, "it's a different climate". "Most of us have had grants and scholarships; artists have had close relationships with the National Arts Council. Back then, artists had a hard time finding studios." In comparison, for example, Ong and a number of other artists in *Future Proof* have moved in to their new work spaces at the relatively new Goodman Arts Centre.

That semblance of economic stability over the past few years has also encouraged a proliferation of concerns that artists dealt with, said Chew.

The inherently political took a backseat as artists explored other issues, including personal identity, for example, as seen in the video documentation of performance artists Lynn Lu and Andree Weschler, graffiti artist Speak Cryptic's staircase mural looking at his Baweanese

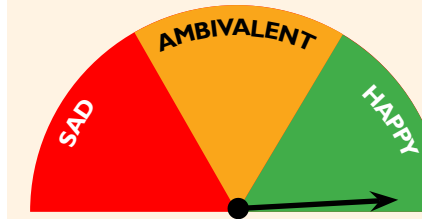
roots, and Dawn Ng's series of mini-works done to cope with adjusting to her new home in Paris.

But the biggest difference that has seemingly affected the local art scene has been the most visible one these past few days, with the recently concluded *Art Stage Singapore* and the slew of other exhibitions surrounding it. "There's the infiltration of the art market into the scene. The climate really has changed and we should recognise that," said Khairuddin. As artist Lim pointed out: "Four years ago, I never even thought about selling my works. Now everyone's talking about it."

Indeed, even as the works at *Future Proof* wonderfully underscore the diversity of forms, approaches and concerns of this new wave of young Singapore artists, perhaps the most telling change can be seen in the fact that many of the artworks are as well-made as they are primed for a curious collector or a keen museum. And, in many cases, they actually already are.

As Bob Dylan once sang, the times they are a-changin'.

The Singapore Show: Future Proof runs until April 15 at the Singapore Art Museum at 8Q, 222 Queen Street, SAM Front Lawn and *The Substation*. For details visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg.



STATE OF THE ARTS: The second edition of *Art Stage Singapore* rolled into town with an amazing array of adventurous contemporary artworks from the region (and a performance by the Gao Brothers that had strangers hugging each other). It also whipped up a storm with dozens of exhibitions and a handful of auctions swirling around it, including the Sovereign Asian Art Prize exhibition featuring a great many artists in Singapore, and the Singapore Art Museum's show featuring works from collectors. The museum also opened *Future Proof*, a survey show comprising the local art scene's emerging artists. Elsewhere, two remaining Circle Line MRTs opened, housing the works of three local artists; more details were revealed regarding future commercial art space Gillman Village (where an exclusive performance of Ho Tzu Nyen's recent Venice Biennale video installation piece was presented during *Art Stage*); the Esplanade announced its wish to add medium-size spaces to its existing theatres; and the National Museum Of Singapore held the Asean Museum Directors Symposium that included talks and free film screenings. MAYO MARTIN

ARTSGUIDE

DANCE
Giselle

First staged in 1841, this classic ballet piece comes alive courtesy of the renowned Paris Opera Ballet. Jan 19 to 21, 8pm, Esplanade Theatre. With a 3pm matinee on Saturday. Tickets at S\$60 to S\$200 from Sistic.

The Heroines Of Raja Ravi Varma

Apsaras Arts presents a production that bring to life a selection of heroines as depicted in Raja Ravi Varma's paintings by way of bharatanatyam dance and abinaya (mime and storytelling). Jan 20 to 21, 8pm, Esplanade Theatre Studio. With a 3pm matinee on Saturday. Tickets at S\$25 from Sistic.

MUSIC

Enchanting Expedition

Pianist Albert Tiu performs works by late 19th and early 20th century composers in a series of concerts held at the Dreams & Realities exhibition of Impressionist works. Jan 19 to 20, 8pm, National Museum Of Singapore, Exhibition Galleries. Tickets at \$45 from Sistic.

THEATRE

F'Friends

Six scenes, six couples, six rooms. This play by Jocelyn Chua looks at the stories of intimacy and love that takes place across different flats. Jan 18 to 21, 8pm, Play Den, The Arts House, 1 Old Parliament Lane. With a 3pm matinee on Saturday. Tickets at S\$25 from www.bytes.sg or box office.

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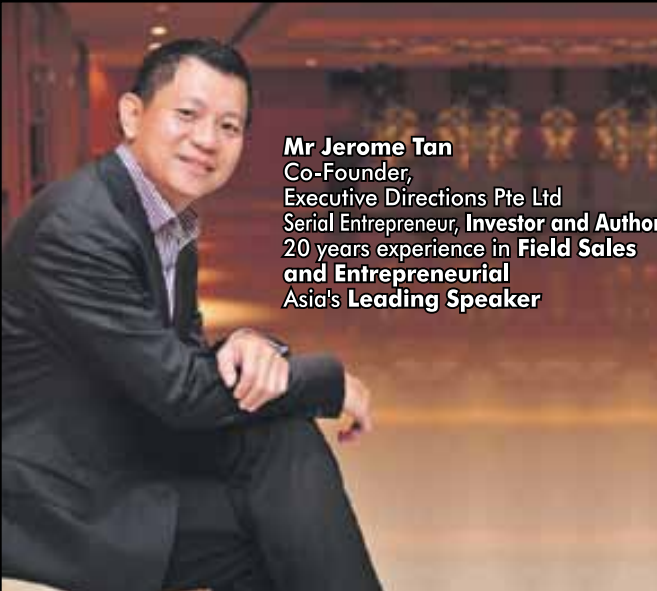
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Venue: 10 Anson Road, #22-07, International Plaza (above Tanjong Pagar MRT)

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