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Press Release



Singapore Art Museum's new contemporary art wing, **8Q sam** presents *At Home Abroad*, the second major installation of Singapore contemporary art after its inauguration last year. *At Home Abroad* focuses on the mobile nature of contemporary art practices today and features homegrown artists whose art practice spans across international realms. The exhibition opening will be officiated by Guest of Honour, Ms Jane Ittogi, Chair, Singapore Art Museum, on Thursday, 5 March 2009, 7pm, 8Q sam. Media preview led by the curators will be held on the same day at 11:00am at 8Q sam.

Works on display in *At Home Abroad* would have been in one way or another connected with international platforms – some were commissioned specifically for a show abroad while others were developed during artist residencies and then exhibited to foreign audiences. Often, Singapore audiences may not be aware of these works nor have they seen them, hence *At Home Abroad* presents this rare opportunity to bring these works “home”. Some of the works are therefore shown for the first time in Singapore while others are reconfigured for their presentation in the exhibition. The 'home-coming' of these artworks adds a new dimension to local art discourse, in particular on the migratory nature of contemporary art practice. *At Home Abroad* will present works Jason Lim, Ming Wong, Sookoon Ang, Zulkifli Mahmud and Choy Ka Fai / Theatreworks (Singapore).

For more information, visit www.singart.com

Annex A

About the artists and their works



Jason Lim

“Last Drop”, 2005 onwards

Presented in Japan, Germany, Singapore, England, Malaysia, Chile, China, Spain, Italy, France, Canada and Thailand

For Jason Lim, performance art is cumulative, in that each prior performance informs the next. The work he will present at 8Q sam has a long lineage, dating back to its first performance in 2005 at the *Nippon International Performance Art Festival* (NIPAF) in Japan. Since then, it has traveled to various venues across the globe, and will ‘come home’ to Singapore where a live performance will be presented at the exhibition opening of *At Home Abroad*.

Jason Lim relies on a few, constant elements for all his performances of “Last Drop” – glass tumblers, and water. What distinguishes each performance from the next is its venue; for the artist, setting informs content and the particular energies of each place affects the configuration of elements and of course the mental and physical processes of the performing body. With these raw materials, the artist weaves

rhythm, percussion and tension. Like the title of the work, Jason's performances are fluid and organic in their response to each site's specificity, never pre-rehearsed nor predictable.



Ming Wong

“Angst Essen / Eat Fear”, 2008

Exhibited at Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Germany, 2008

“Angst Essen” (translated as “Eat Fear”) is a continuation of Ming Wong’s preoccupation and fascination with world cinema, and issues of identity and alterity. Born out of his residency at the Kunstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin, “Angst Essen” is a re-working of German director Rainer Fassbinder’s much-feted film, “Angst Essen Seele auf” (Fear Eats The Soul), 1974, which narrates the relationship between a German cleaning woman and her Moroccan lover, and the social prejudice they encounter.

In his work, Ming re-enacts key scenes from the original movie, and plays all of the roles himself. The effect is disorienting, especially when Ming speaks his lines in halting German. Occasionally the film is uncanny, when digital montages allow for Ming’s self-multiplication. The actor in drag may prove entertaining, but the film is also marked by a certain fragility and pathos, particularly in the light of the consideration that Ming produced this work during a period of heightened xenophobia in Germany. For all the cultural homogeneity that globalisation likes to lay claim to, Ming’s body of works suggests that various inextricable tensions still exist for individuals wanting to come to terms with foreign languages, cultures and social mores, and that identity is more tenuous than ever.



Sookoon Ang

“White Green”, 2006

Exhibited at *Longing Balloons Are Floating Around The World*, Berlin (Germany) and *Mushroom Arts*, New York (USA)

Sookoon Ang is an example of a Singapore artist who has spent the majority of her time living and developing her work abroad, and who has rarely exhibited in her home country. She pursued her studies in New York, and was subsequently invited to artist residencies in Shanghai and Amsterdam. Her work “White Green” is similarly nomadic in nature: it comprises two ceramic-tiled TV monitor boxes, on which a video capturing everyday moments in a Shanghai park play. It has been installed on a gallery floor on top of a billowing piece of canvas in Berlin, and in New York, has taken on yet another incarnation by being installed atop a patch of grass. The design of the TV boxes was inspired by the television sets in Singapore community centres; the videos that they house were taken during the artist’s time spent in Shanghai.

Quite fittingly, this work first showed at the Green Pavilion in Berlin as part of the ‘exhibition-in-progress’ *Longing Balloons Are Floating Around The World*. The venue was a temporary building comprising two mobile office containers surrounded by a wooden structure; the exhibition format itself is designed to be in a state of continuous change. Its title is also evocative of a certain nomadic and dream-like trajectory tinged with a sense of longing or pathos that characterizes much of Sookoon’s works. Seeking to address both the physical and metaphysical realms in her art, Sookoon’s work often takes on a surrealistic quality. “White Green” will be installed at 8Q sam in a new incarnation from its predecessors, giving rise to a whole new set of resonances with a new public.



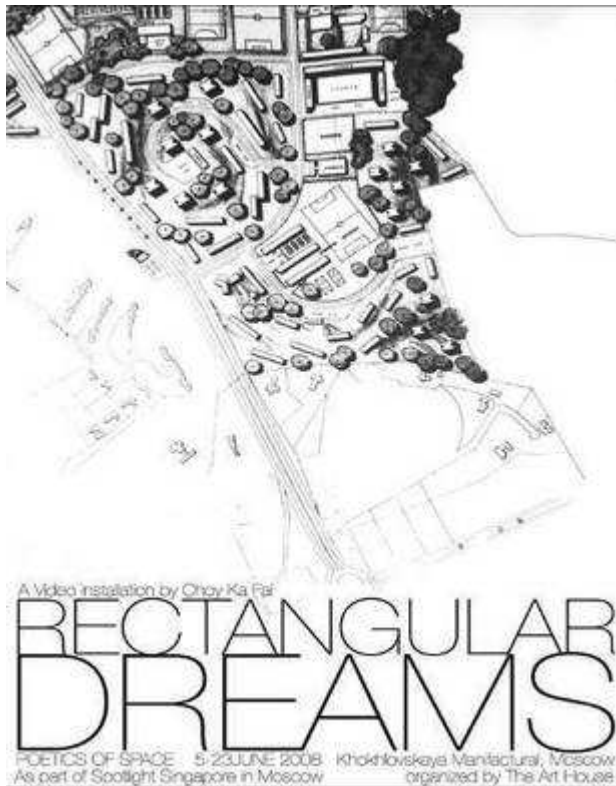
Zulkifle Mahmod

“False Securities”, 2005 onwards

Presented in Singapore, Ogaki Biennale (Japan), and Shanghai (China)

Zulkifle Mahmod’s art seeks to create an all-enveloping environment, in this case a soundscape, into which the participant can immerse himself or herself completely in the experiential art of listening. “False Securities” is a collection of sounds recorded with binaural headphones during the artist’s flaneur-like meandering through various neighbourhoods and cities. This technology, which makes use of microphones placed in the ears, reproduces accurately the effect of hearing a sound in person. Several conceptual artists work with ‘found objects’; in the same vein, sound artist Zulkifle Mahmod works with his found objects in the form of his field recordings. These recorded sounds of the artist’s environment are then interjected with electronically processed sounds to create soundscapes at once familiar yet unfamiliar; soothing yet startling.

For his installation at 8Q sam, Zulkifle will present soundscapes gleaned from the streets of Little India, Chinatown and other busy or urban thoroughfares in Singapore, together with recordings from various performance venues in Ogaki, Japan.



Choy Ka Fai / Theatreworks (Singapore)

“Rectangular Dreams”, 2008

Exhibited at Spotlight Singapore, Moscow, 2008

Choy Ka Fai’s work takes its title from the rectangular layout and floor plans of its subject matter. The ubiquitous HDB (Housing Development Board) flats – public housing for the majority of Singaporeans - are iconic markers in Singapore’s cityscape as well as in its history of nation-building. These concrete dwellings are laden with their own socio-political histories and resonances, which have been amply explored in various media and artforms.

In creating this work, commissioned by The Arts House to be presented at *Spotlight Singapore*, a showcase of Singapore culture in Russia, Choy Ka Fai has opted for what he terms a ‘pseudo-documentary’ approach, tracing the history of HDB flats and imbuing their prosaic, uniform facades and spaces - which many have come to take for granted - with a visual poetics. At the same time, the artist raises questions about the aspirational declarations made by the city-state’s urban planners with regards to the ways in which the HDB would shape lives for the better.

Annex B

About Singapore Art Museum

Opened in January 1996, the mission of the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) is to preserve and present the art histories and contemporary art practices of Singapore and the Southeast Asian region. To date, SAM has amassed the world's largest public collection of modern and contemporary Southeast Asian artworks with a growing component in international contemporary art. The museum has presented shows covering both local and international art practices, traditional and cutting edge art expressions. Through strategic alliances with international arts and cultural institutions, SAM has been facilitating visual arts education, exchange, research and development within the region and internationally. Through forging collaborative partnerships and staging innovative programmes to engage different audiences, SAM aims to contribute to an enlarged role in the regional visual arts community and Asian art museology, as well as facilitating developments in art as well as the art sector in Singapore.

About 8Qsam

8Q sam is a contemporary art space with fresh, multi-disciplinary, interactive and community-oriented programming; a place where the public can directly experience the work and ideas of living artists in relation to its aesthetic and social context. It will be a venue for contemplation, stimulation, and discussion about contemporary art and culture and serves as a forum for discussion of these issues. Dubbed as "The Museum of Tomorrow", 8Q sam will showcase a diversity of cutting-edge experimental contemporary shows that focuses on art practice in the here and now from painting and sculpture, to installation, film and video, photography, new media, performance art and sound art by present and upcoming artists. Nationally, Singapore has not had an art space that would support such artistic diversity; 8Q sam will be the first. As well, the space offers special focus for children, including daily children's workshops, and a children's gallery. We work closely with educators to make contemporary art accessible to children from as young as 3 years of age.

Annex C

The Target Audience for 8Q sam

Audiences at 8Qsam are not only limited to the young. They are particularly open-minded, forward-thinking individuals who look beyond the traditional definition of art being drawing or painting. A large group is also curious about contemporary art. Their introduction to and/or interpretation of art encompasses a wide spectrum of modes but usually with one underlying feature: the expression, interpretation and appreciation of concerns that are not merely aesthetic, but also linked to cultural heritage, social, economic and historical threads.

A person walking into 8Q can be as young as 6 years old, eagerly awaiting the adventure of using chalk to write onto the walls of :phunk studio's site-specific installation "*From the Bottom of My Pencil Case*", or a 55 year old ex-student of Catholic High who "*pens*" his thoughts and reminisces his days at the school on the blackboard walls of this installation. They see the same art piece but the experience of the interpretation is made personal and individual to each member of the audience.

At 8Qsam, your 15 year old eagerly waiting to walk towards Kakehi Yasuaki/Naemura Takeshi's "*Through the looking glass*" and play air hockey with his own reflection in this interactive artwork or a 28 year old young lad who works in the offices nearby and comes over to relate to "*Masriadi is the Winner*" as he himself struggles to find meaning in perhaps an earlier episode encountered in his life journeys.

Hence, the audience at 8Qsam are not limited by the boundaries of age, income-level or social-economic status. The audience at 8Qsam has an insatiable need for art that represents an expression of themselves and allows them to be a part of it (i.e. interactive and meaningful to them). They are open-minded, wide-eyed and keen to erase boundaries and build elevated and alternative levels of understanding, opinions, and angles of perceptions.