

EVERYDAY PRACTICES

“My art is doing time, so it’s not different from doing life or doing art, or doing time. No matter whether I stay in ‘art-time’ or ‘life-time,’ I am passing time.” The artist Tehching Hsieh thus describes his durational performances, which turn the banality of life and the passage of time into medium and subject for his art.

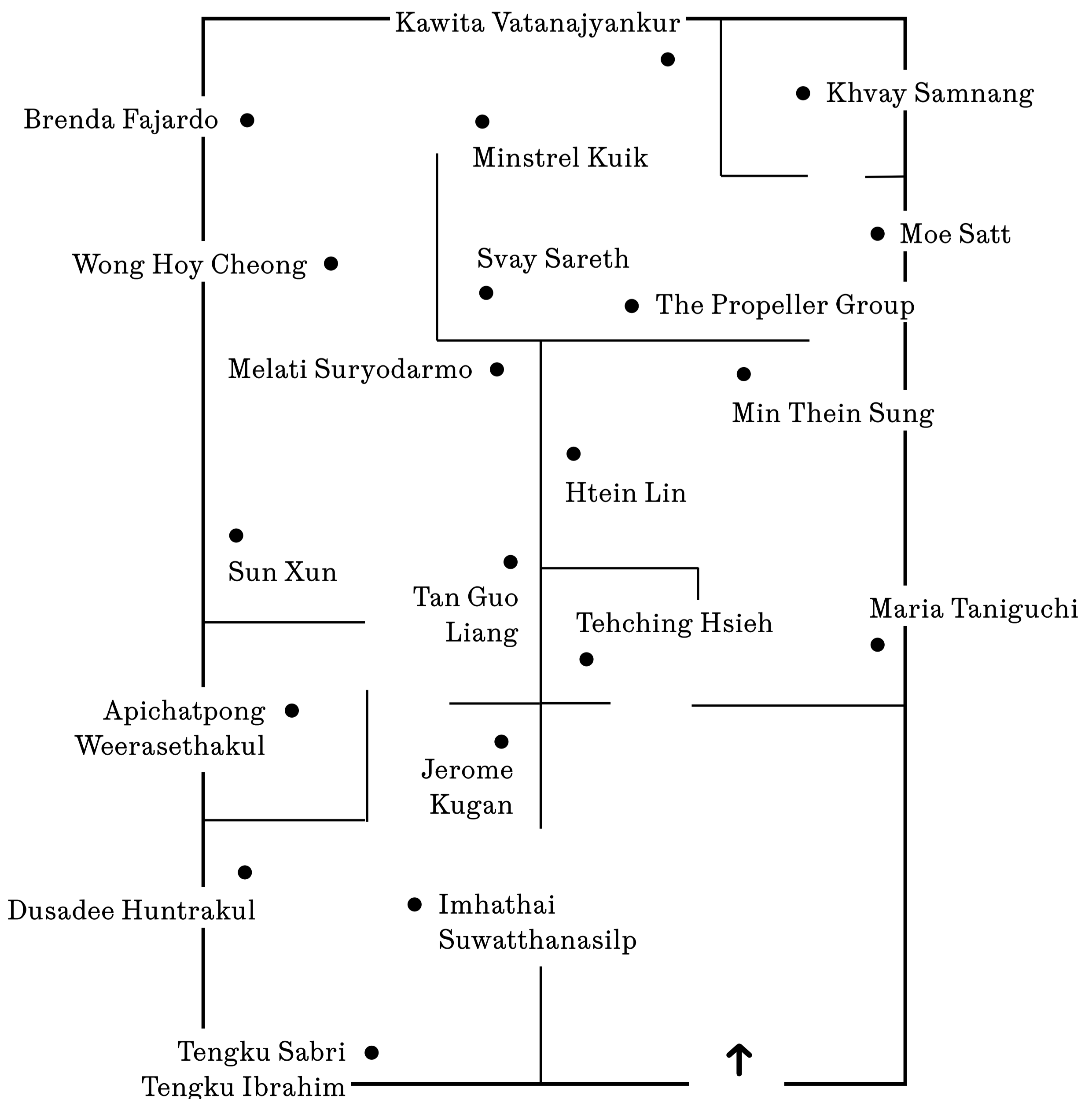
Building on Hsieh’s philosophy, the exhibition *Everyday Practices* examines the inventive ways artists have appropriated quotidian routines and lived experiences to express powerful statements of resilience and endurance. Through their works, we witness ongoing conflicts, humanitarian crises and asymmetrical power relationships. In this context, the gestures that the artists have employed, by dint of

repetition, reveal themselves as small acts of resistance that return agency to the individual. Art, as we see here, offers a means of sense-making and coping in the face of adversity.

Drawing from the collection of Singapore Art Museum, *Everyday Practices* brings together artworks by diverse artists across different generations and geographies in Asia. They affirm that the collective strength found in individual actions cuts across cultural practices and conditions. The question that is universal to us all is: “In the face of life’s challenges, how do we go on going on?”

FLOOR PLAN

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Tehching Hsieh

One Year Performance 1978–1979

1978–1979

Artist's statement, poster
and silkscreen print on paper

Gift of Hallam Chow

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

On 30 September 1978, Tehching Hsieh locked himself in a holding cell measuring 353 × 274 × 243 cm within his New York apartment. Constructed from pine, it had only a wash basin, light, pail and single bed. There he pledged to remain confined and in solitude for a year, during which he would not talk, read, write, listen to the radio nor watch television. The public was invited to visit him on select dates. This became the first of Hsieh's five year-long durational performances, in which preset rules foreground the element of time and endurance. The severity of this performance is matched by the meticulousness of its documentation: Hsieh made notches on the wall and arranged for photographs of himself to be taken daily to mark the passage of time. The wall scratchings are presented here as a silkscreen print, alongside the artist's statement and a poster indicating the public viewing dates. These components emphasise that it is Hsieh's time and experience that constitute his artwork.

Maria Taniguchi

Untitled

2017

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Is this a painting or sculpture, an abstract or representational work? Maria Taniguchi's untitled canvas subverts these conventional categories of art. The painted plane is propped against the wall at an incline, insisting on its three-dimensionality. Follow the brickwork covering the surface; the pattern runs on, seemingly endless. It is a visual and conceptual device that Taniguchi has devised to connect this painting to the others in the series. Over and over, she painstakingly outlined each brick in pencil and washed it with black acrylic. The paint's varying dilutions create subtle tonal shifts, annotating the monochromatic surface with temporal records of Taniguchi's process. The brick, a modular building block in our everyday environment, and Taniguchi's steady production carry associations to labour.



Htein Lin

Soap Blocked

2016

Soap and a poster

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Hundreds of household soap blocks are arranged to form a map of Myanmar in this installation, with the red-coloured ones marking where political prisoners have been held in the country. On closer look, a tiny figure is carved into each soap; hunched over and trapped within the rectangle. They hark back to when Htein Lin was incarcerated for political dissent in Myanmar and had produced artworks using common items he had at hand, which included such soaps and prison uniforms. The soaps are of the Shwe Wah brand, which means Golden Yellow in Burmese, referring to the country's nickname, the Golden Land, thus named for its innumerable glittering pagodas. According to Htein Lin, it was for decades the only brand of soap available in Myanmar, as the country was isolated under a military regime: "It was a kind of brainwashing, the way we lived in the dark." This installation amplifies the collective helplessness the Burmese often faced under military rule.



Min Thein Sung

Time: Dust

2017–2019

Dust on canvas and cotton

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Min Thein Sung transforms a pollutant in our everyday environments — dust — into art, allowing the fine particles to accrue on canvases under the tropical humidity of his studio in Yangon, Myanmar. Under conditions determined by the artist, the dust coalesces into precise geometrical shapes. Tonal gradients arise where the dust has settled thickly and then disperses into lighter textural layers. As a result, the playful shapes seemingly dance and waver, a quiet ode to the unstoppable march of time. Min Thein Sung seeks to create poetic works, such as this series, that offer us respite in the present moment, sharply contrasting with the troubled political history of his country.



Moe Satt

(1) *Bicycle Tyre Rolling
Event from Yangon:
Bogyoke's Bronze Statue*

(2) *Bicycle Tyre Rolling
Event from Yangon: Bank
of Innya Lake*

(3) *Bicycle Tyre Rolling
Event from Yangon:
Independence Monument*

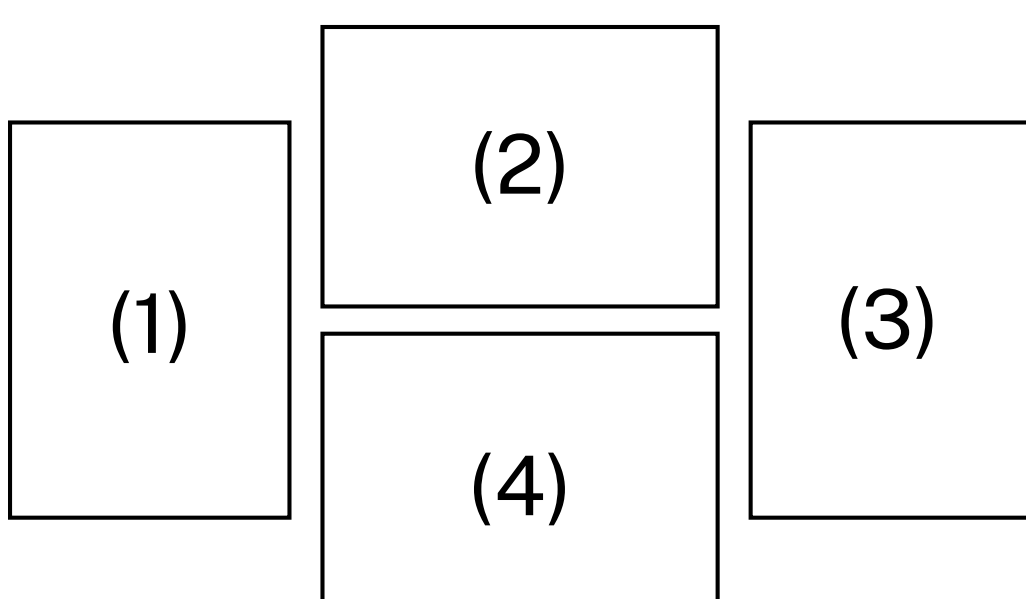
(4) *Bicycle Tyre Rolling
Event from Yangon: Kan
Daw Gyi Park*

2013

Prints on Dibond

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

In this series, Moe Satt playfully rolls a bicycle tyre across various sites in his hometown of Yangon, Myanmar, engaging in a Burmese childhood game called *gwe hlain*. This innocence of play conceals sociopolitical commentary that is embedded within the photographs' symbolic codes. This game was popular when Myanmar was under General Ne Win's military regime, and the photographs were shot at sites significant to Myanmar's political history, such as in front of a bronze statue commemorating the Burmese revolutionary hero Bogyoke Aung San. Moe Satt is also notably dressed in the traditional Burmese attire favoured by politicians. He wears a *gaung baung* (headgear), a *taikpon* jacket over a collarless shirt, paired with a *longyi* (a length of cloth wrapped around the waist). His sartorial choice is ironic as ordinary citizens, like himself, are largely excluded from political participation.



Khvay Samnang

Untitled

2011–2013

Video: high definition,
five channels, each 16:9 aspect
ratio, colour and sound (stereo),
14–23 sec

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

In Cambodia, the illegal sale of state-owned lakes to private investors has displaced thousands of families. Land reclamation and urban development at these sites have eradicated once-thriving communities, sparking protests against exploitation and inadequate compensation. These have been swiftly subdued by the government.

Evading security, Khvay Samnang entered five such lakes in the nation's capital, Phnom Penh. Standing partially submerged, Khvay Samnang would perform the symbolic act of upending a bucket of sand over himself. Cascading over his head and shoulders, the sand obscured Khvay Samnang's identity. This futile gesture, documented in these videos, captures the powerlessness of the resettled communities, resigned to their fate.



The Propeller Group

Static Friction: Burning Rubber

2012

Video: single channel,
16:9 aspect ratio, colour and
sound (stereo), 3 min 46 sec;
print on paper mounted on Dilite

Collection of the artists

Collision: Urban Sporty Mover

2012

Vinyl decals and polyurethane
varnish on aluminium panel

Gift of Hallam Chow

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

The Propeller Group is known for deploying the language and strategies of street culture, popular culture and media communication. Their works explore Vietnam's political, ideological and cultural histories, the aftermath of the Vietnam War, and broader themes of mass cultural production and consumption.

In *Static Friction: Burning Rubber*, a rider attempts a dramatic motorcycle stunt called the burnout. Each spin of the wheels generates plumes of smoke and draws trails of black rubber on the asphalt. A modest scooter is used here, the kind commonly seen on the streets of Vietnam. It is an unusual choice as the stunt is typically performed with luxury motorcycles of higher engine capacities known for their showiness and agility. Regarded as symbols of socioeconomical status, these flashier motorcycles have legislation restricting their ownership, and are unattainable by most Vietnamese. In this context, the performance takes on a new light, as an expression of defiance and reclaiming power.

Hard-edged graphics are reflected and rotated along axes of symmetry in *Collision: Urban Sporty Mover*. The resulting radial pattern is a riotous display of collisions and forces of impact. Reminiscent of comics, the graphics also borrow the designs of vinyl decals that are prevalent in bike and car modification cultures. This use of popular culture as powerful artistic expression evokes the Pop art movement, where traditional views of fine art are undermined by elements of mass production and commercialism.



Svay Sareth

Mon Boulet

2011

Video and metal

Video: single channel, 16:9
aspect ratio, colour and sound
(stereo), 8 min 25 sec

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

In May 2011, Svay Sareth, a survivor of the Khmer Rouge regime, dragged a giant metal ball from his home in Siem Reap to Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Titled *Mon Boulet* – which means “my ball” in French, or colloquially “my burden” – the 250-kilometre journey through the streets and back alleys of Cambodia took 6 days. The metal sphere weighed 80 kilograms. This arduous feat recalls the forced labour practices exacted by the genocidal regime, where men were harnessed to carts and made to toil in fields. The trauma of this brutal period in history persists in Cambodia today. Svay Sareth’s endurance, magnified by the continuous rolling of the ball, shows the indomitable resilience of the human spirit.



Minstrel Kuik

Domesticated Politics

2015

Digital print on fabric

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

In *Domesticated Politics*, nine DIY flags are hung on a line, like laundry. They are made in the proportions of the Malaysian national flag but are sized closer to pillowcases. Follow the sequence of images printed on the flags: they show Minstrel Kuik folding and ironing the flags of political parties used in Malaysia's general elections held in May 2013. With each deliberate crease, Kuik abstracts the political iconography printed on the campaign flags, rendering them — as she says — “mute.” Folded away, the flags are “kept immobile” and removed from circulation. Through this domestic activity, Kuik seeks to “feminise, to soften the once exuberant, masculine and heroic objects.”

Kuik continues to develop works using the political paraphernalia leftover from these elections. They were originally collected by Kuik's university students for a photography assignment that did not eventualise. Disappointed by the election results, and haunted by the material, Kuik was compelled to action.

Kawita Vatanajyankur

The Dustpan

2014

Video: single channel,
9:16 aspect ratio, colour,
2 min 8 sec

The Basket

2014

Video: single channel,
16:9 aspect ratio, colour,
2 min 13 sec

Wet Rag

2014

Video: single channel,
16:9 aspect ratio, colour,
1 min 54 sec

The Robes

2014

Video: single channel,
9:16 aspect ratio, colour,
4 min 17 sec

Can you identify a dustpan, rag, clothes basket and line of laundry in these videos?

In these works from the TOOLS/WORK series, Kawita Vatanajyankur contorts her body into these familiar objects from our everyday lives. The sheer incongruity of seeing a person transformed into a utilitarian object appeals to our sense of humour, which is amplified by the saccharine background colours. This comedy belies the series' dark undercurrents, for Kawita can be seen as objectifying her body and dramatising the violence inherent in quotidian tasks associated with femininity. As she suspends, swings and strains her body to her physical limits, she mirrors the pressure on women to conform to societal stereotypes.

Brenda Fajardo

Baraha ng Pilipino (*Card of the Filipino*)

1997

Ink and tempera on paper

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Originating in mid-15th century Europe as a game, tarot has evolved as a tool for divination and spiritual guidance. Each tarot card bears symbolic imagery laden with meaning that alters, depending on the card's sequence and placement. Brenda Fajardo uses them not to foretell the fates, but to interpret Philippine history in four periods: Pre-Spanish, Spanish, American, and Filipino and post-Marcos. She crafts her own deck, incorporating indigenous Filipino motifs and folklore. Each drawing in this series features tarot cards arranged around a central illustration of socio-political events, such as the Ferdinand Marcos government's military rule. Through this juxtaposition, Fajardo retells and reclaims her country's history.



Wong Hoy Cheong

Tapestry of Justice

1999–2004

Thumbprints, petals and leaves

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Over 10,000 photocopied thumbprints are connected into a delicate tapestry, punctuated with leaves and petals from plants, such as the hibiscus (Malaysia's national flower), rose and beech. The artist conceived this installation to serve simultaneously as a work of art and a petition. This was during Malaysia's late 1990s Reformasi movement, when the redress of social injustices and other political issues held sway. For the next six years, the artist collected the thumbprints shown here to repeal the nation's Internal Security Act, which allowed for detention without trial. The dual symbolism of thumbprints is ironic – conventionally viewed as evidential of criminal activity, the thumbprint was also the most reliable form of personal identification before the advent of DNA sequencing. Fragile and hopeful, the tapestry emphasises the power of collective effort in effecting transformation.



Melati Suryodarmo

Der Sekundentraum

1998

Lambda prints

Collection of National
Gallery Singapore

Melati Suryodarmo was forced to confront her foreignness after migrating to Germany for further studies in 1994, prompting her frantic search for a new cultural identity. Her anxiety over adaptation and assimilation inspired *Der Sekundentraum*, which is loosely translated as “seconds of the dream.” In this performance, she surrounds herself with a sea of clothes that she had amassed within her first years of migration, bought by the kilo from flea markets. Repeatedly, she tidies the clothes into piles, only to mess them up again. Next, she dons layers of clothing, struggling and straining to pull them on even when they constrict and restrict her. Her actions reflect on the accumulation of life stories, experiences and situations that create rules, which are later destroyed.

Suryodarmo performed this hour-long work for the first time in 1998, in Hanover, Germany.



Sun Xun

Beyond-ism

2008–2010

Ink, colour and collage on paper, and video

Video: single channel, 16:9 aspect ratio, colour and sound (stereo), 8 min 8 sec

Gift of Hallam Chow

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

According to an ancient legend, the alchemist Xu Fu voyaged to the East at the behest of the Chinese Qin Dynasty emperor to search for the elixir of life. Xu purportedly landed in Japan instead and never returning to court, became the island's first emperor. Drawing inspiration from this tale, Sun Xun created *Beyond-ism's* dream-like world. He samples poetry by the Chinese communist revolutionary Mao Zedong, and other myths of China and Japan, using a storytelling technique to incorporate them out of chronology. Through blending reality and fiction, history and mythology, Sun contests the singular accounts of history we accept as truth, leading us to question the narrative devices employed in the construction of collective memory.



Tan Guo-Liang

Peripheral Ritual I–III

2018

Acrylic on aeronautical fabric
stretched over wood

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Peripheral Ritual I–III consists of three paintings that were created separately but are here presented as a triptych. Across the panels, thinned paint is allowed to flow, diffuse and spread without direct brush contact. This method, applied to the slightly water-resistant aeronautical fabric surfaces, produces stains and marks that appear accidental. They are, however, meticulously composed through a process akin to choreography. The artist describes his approach as using his “own body to respond to the painting as objects,” employing gestures such as shifting, tilting and turning. This physicality of the paintings is also asserted by the wooden stretcher bars that are visible through the translucent fabric. The amorphous hues evoke the appearance of bruised skin and suggest the body’s capacity to endure.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul

Blue

2018

Video: high definition,
single channel, 16:9 aspect ratio,
colour and sound (5.1),
10 min 10 sec

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

In *Blue*, actress Jenjira Pongpas lies on a bed in a forest clearing. A flickering spark ignites in the centre of her chest and slowly grows into a crackling, consuming conflagration. This fire, though illusory, evokes a profound emotional response as the camera lingers on the sleepless Jenjira into the night. Is it a flame of love that has caught her heart? Is it a pleasurable yearning or hungered irritation? Does “blue” denote a state of mind – a melancholy that weighs on the insomniac?

In the background, scrolled *likay* (Thai folk theatre) screens unfurl, hinting at alternate realities and vivid landscapes warmed by a crimson sun. Hot and cool, passion and placidity, these polarities exist super-imposed, as if in a feverish dream. *Blue* captures the primal magic of Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s cinema, evoking complex feelings from the most mundane of elements.

Jenjira is known for her roles in Apichatpong’s other films *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* and *Cemetery of Splendour*.



Jerome Kugan

*The Internalised Self:
Apollo*

*The Internalised Self:
Atlas*

*The Internalised Self:
Ganymede*

*The Internalised Self:
Icarus*

2018

Watercolour and pencil
on used HIV-medication
packaging paper

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Ambiguous, androgynous figures devoid of genitalia and hair are depicted against crimson backgrounds, on recycled carton packages of antiretroviral drugs. The medication gestures to the artist's HIV-positive status, rendering this series deeply autobiographical. Striking dramatic poses, the figures mime the Greek myths of Ganymede, Atlas, Icarus and Apollo, after how they are typically portrayed in early history paintings: Ganymede, desired for his youthful beauty, was abducted by Zeus in the guise of an eagle, and became both immortal cupbearer and the object of Zeus's desire; Atlas, punished for siding with the losing side in the Titan-Olympian war, was burdened with the weight of heavens for eternity; Icarus plunged into the sea after soaring too close to the sun despite his father's advice; Apollo, god of the sun, whose charisma masked an egoistic, jealous and sometimes vengeful nature. The fates and symbolism of these four characters resonate with Kugan's sense of the tragedy and irony of his own predicament.



Imhathai Suwatthanasilp

The Flower Field

2012

Hair, bed frame, glass sheets
and LED lights

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

In this field of bright white light, thousands of intricate flowers seem to float. Ethereal and idyllic, they evoke a utopian realm of rest and reward, like Elysium. On closer look, the fuzzy flowers are found to be meticulously handspun balls of hair, specifically the hair shorn of cancer patients, survivors and donors in the Hair for Hope charity programme. These are arranged on a lightbox that Imhathai Suwatthanasilp had repurposed from a bed frame. Starkly backlit, the strands offer a tender tribute to the resilience of the human spirit. Imhathai dedicates her craftsmanship towards a message of hope for a brighter future.



Dusadee Huntrakul

He Was Out There All Alone Riding the Monsoon Waves Like a Champ

2015

Porcelain and graphite

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

The motif of undulating waves recurs in many of Dusadee Huntrakul's sculptures and drawings. They recall a time when Dusadee witnessed his late brother conquer towering monsoon waves while surfing in Phuket, Thailand. Dusadee felt a mix of trepidation and pride then; his own fear and vulnerability are symbolised in this sculpture by a flaccid penis. When read alongside the drawings, this work illuminates facets of Dusadee's struggle with loss. Beyond personal narrative, the work also comments on the tourism labour market: The monsoon rains mark Phuket's off-peak tourist season. However, it is only during this lull that workers in the industry can break for their own holidays, albeit contending with the weather and challenging surf.



Dusadee Huntrakul

*Again and Again We Are
Somewhere*

Gosh, We Are Fucked

*Surfing the Monsoon
Waves with the Fish*

2015

Graphite on paper

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Turbulent waves and frenetic scribbles cascade over this suite of drawings. A sense of disorientation and being adrift pervades them. An ambiguous figure looms in one drawing, hastily sketched as though to capture a fleeting impression.

This series portrays a charged emotional landscape, haunted by Dusadee Huntrakul's recurring dreams of his late brother. It also recalls memories of their time together on a surfing trip to Phuket, Thailand, during the monsoon season. Spontaneous, raw, and visceral, these drawings are not just visual expression for Dusadee but serve as a cathartic means of grappling with grief and memory.



Dusadee Huntrakul

Untitled

2015

Porcelain, found clay
and graphite

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

The motif of a rising swell is carried into this sculpture, alongside sweeping sinuous forms that show the artist's mastery of clay. Notice also the peculiar elements of mischief that the artist has incorporated here, such as the faeces of a gecko, a smiling pebble and eggs modelled from clay. It is said that these humorous details are symbolic references to the artist's personal narrative and broader concerns, such as when he would find the actual droppings on his works in the studio, and when his work was dismissed as terrible by his lecturer. They lead us to wonder: Do the abstract forms in fact portray a figurative subject? What is the value of art? Do all objects possess an intrinsic value?



Tengku Sabri Tengku Ibrahim

Kumpulan Lukisan-Lukisan Gelap (A Suite of Dark Drawings)

2015

Ink on paper

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Tengku Sabri Tengku Ibrahim did not allow a debilitating stroke in 2014 that left his left side paralysed prevent him from making art. He worked with a collaborator to create sculptures based on his sketches and instructions. With his right hand, Tengku Sabri began drawing, too.

This series of ink drawings, with their titles and artist's notes, chronicles Tengku Sabri's deeply personal journey. The drawings' dark, contemplative nature reflects the sombre reality of his condition, and the emotional and physical toll of illness. The series is a testament not only to Tengku Sabri's perseverance in the face of adversity but also of human strength.

