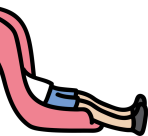
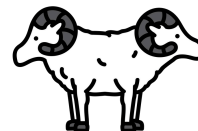
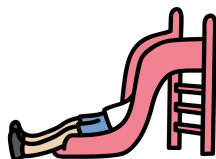
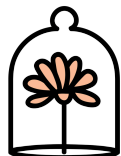


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CONTEMPORARY ART IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

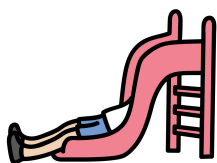
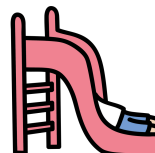
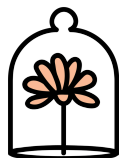


LEARNING GALLERY

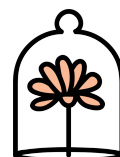
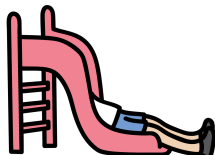
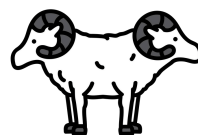


EDUCATORS' RESOURCE

This resource is designed for educators with the aim of fostering meaningful discussions on contemporary art between them and their students.



EZZAM RAHMAN



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HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This educators' resource is designed for use with students before, during and after your visit to the Learning Gallery at the Singapore Art Museum.

It shares key concepts and ideas associated with the exhibition to facilitate your visit and complements lessons conducted in school. This includes suggested guiding questions and activities that students may explore in the gallery, at home or in class, wherever relevant.

You may customise your visit by choosing your own preferred exhibition route.

For additional support, please refer to the additional notes for educators and facilitators when addressing the social and emotional learning aspects of the artworks during your discussion.

INTRODUCTION

LEARNING GALLERY

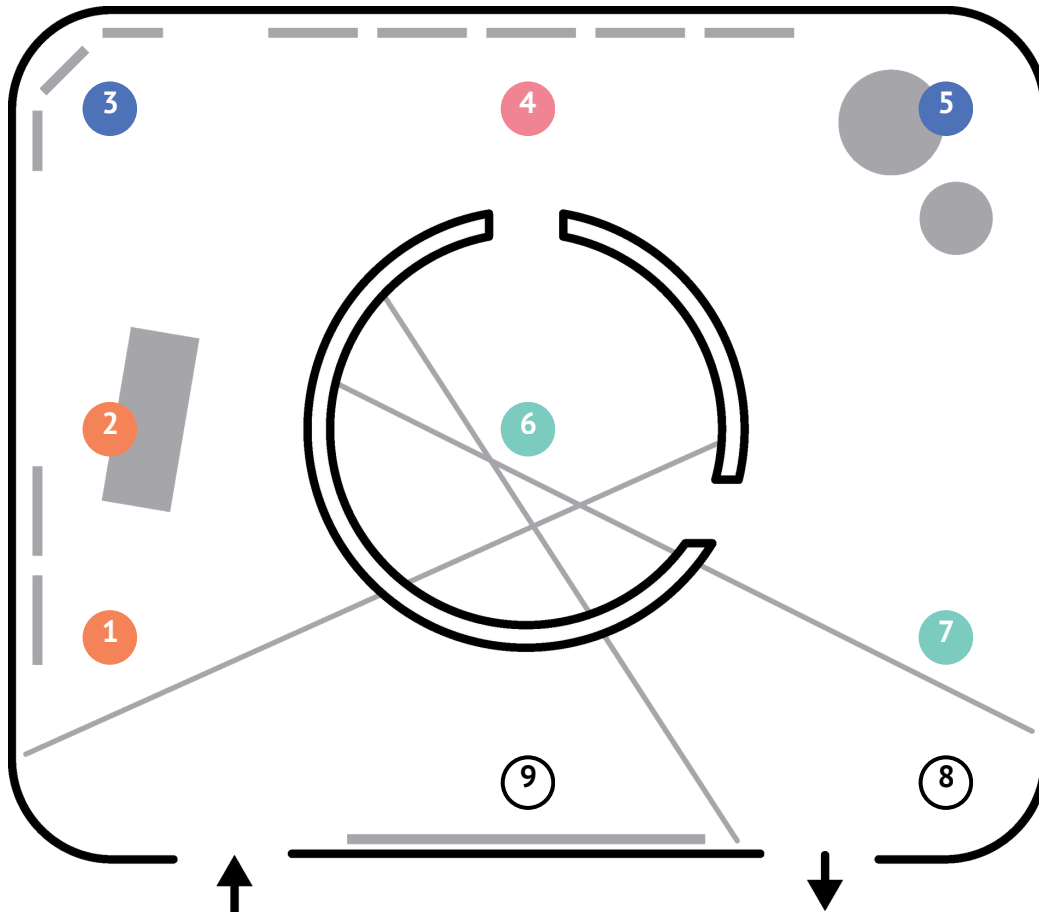
Art and childhood share a natural connection.

Both involve freedom, curiosity and fearless exploration. Many of us first create art as children, a time when we learn about the world and shape our emotions, beliefs and memories. What if we could return to that childlike spirit, open to discovery and unafraid to try something new?

This second edition of the Learning Gallery invites you to look beyond the everyday. Explore possibilities, experiment with different ideas and materials, and venture outside the familiar.

The artworks here span diverse mediums and explore themes of identity, home, nature and the environment, people and places, space and memory. They ask meaningful questions about life and inspire new ways of seeing and understanding contemporary art.

EXHIBITION LAYOUT



- 1 HAN SAI POR
Shelter
Land Deterioration
- 2 HAN SAI POR
Black Forest
- 3 DAVID CHAN
Animal Roulette
- 4 NGUAN
Untitled, from
the series 'Singapore'

- 5 EZZAM RAHMAN
Here's who I am, I am what you see
- 6 CHEN SAI HUA KUAN
Space Drawing 5
- 7 CHEN SAI HUA KUAN
Space Drawing 14
- 8 PROGRAMMES CORNER
Cloud Library
RE-Material
- 9 INTERACTIVE WALL

ARTIST

EZZAM RAHMAN

b. 1981, Singapore

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ezzam Rahman is a multi-disciplinary artist with an interest in the body and the use of common, accessible, yet unconventional media in his art practice. Working across a wide repertoire of media, he creates works that are autobiographical, time-based, and ephemeral, encouraging viewers to think deeply.

Ezzam is an adjunct lecturer in the University of the Arts Singapore. He was a joint winner of the Grand Prize for the President's Young Talents and the People's Choice Award by SAM, the Goh Chok Tong Youth Promise Award by Yayasan Mendaki, Young Artist Award by the National Arts Council Singapore, the Most Promising Award for PULSE Awards, Thailand. In 2021, Ezzam served as the artistic director at The Substation, Singapore and was subsequently invited by the National Institute of Education, Singapore for the Visiting Artist Programme.

ARTWORK



Installation view of *Here's who I am, I am what you see*, 2015. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

HERE'S WHO I AM, I AM WHAT YOU SEE

2015

Artist's skin and nails, adhesive, second-hand furniture and glass bell jars

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

- This adapted installation by Ezzam Rahman presents delicate flowers encased in glass covers resembling stupas from temples. In this version, they are displayed on two wooden tables, whereas the original artwork consists of five.
- At first glance, the flowers look soft and beautiful. But when you look closer, you will see they are made from something surprising — dead skin from the artist's feet.
- The artist made the flowers from skin that came off during foot grooming. The usage of such unconventional materials challenges the norm and pushes the boundaries of what defines artistic media. The flowers represent how beauty and life do not last forever, they wither as time passes.

ARTWORK

- Flowers are a common motif in art, and Ezzam chose them for their short-lived nature. The lifespan of flowers symbolises:
 - The ephemeral nature of life.
 - The idea that everything can diminish in an instant.
- Each piece of skin is like a record of time that marks the artist's presence on Earth.
- The artwork makes us think about how we live our lives and what we leave behind.
- The effort and care it took to collect the skin and preserve them adds a personal and emotional layer to the artwork. In the end, the artwork reminds us to appreciate the present.
- It also explores the paradox between absence and presence. While the artist is physically absent from the space, he remains present through the material of his own body.



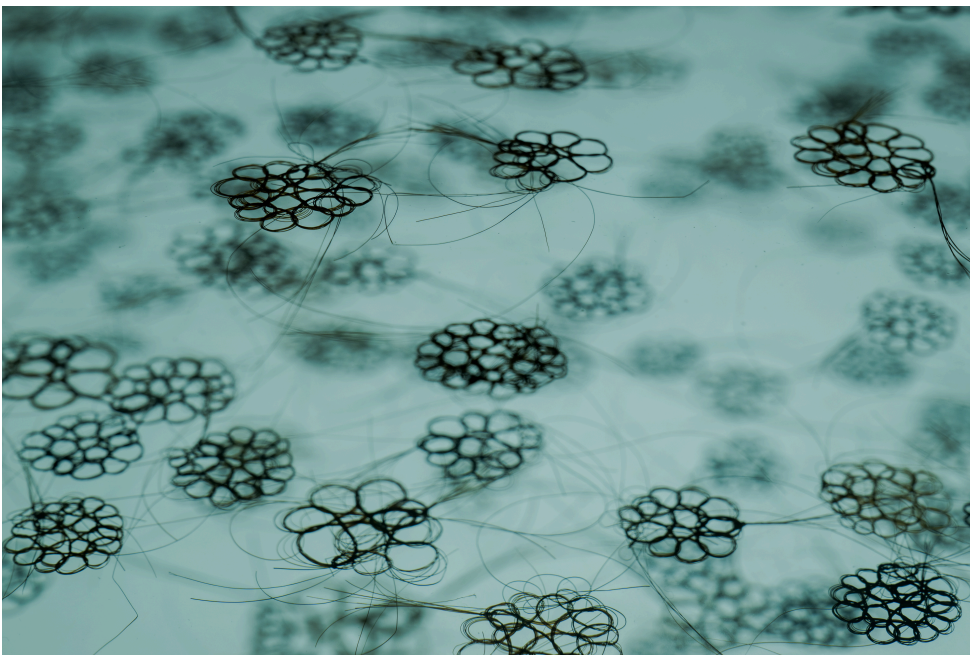
DID YOU KNOW?

- Ezzam's art often carries a visceral and unexpected quality, using unconventional materials like human skin.
- His unique approach began over a decade ago while he was an undergraduate. He recalled feeling very anxious the night before a presentation. The stress resulted in him beginning to bite and clip his nails and tough skin around his fingers and feet.
- Using just a pair of scissors and adhesive, he created his first dead skin sculpture, shaped like a fish bone. His professor initially thought it was a real fish bone from dinner leftovers! She was even more intrigued and shocked after he shared the medium used.

PRE-VISIT QUESTIONS

- Think about a time when you saw an artwork made from surprising or unusual materials. Look into what materials were used. Which one do you find the most interesting? What kind of artwork would you make using that material?
- What other parts of the human body could be used to make art? Explain your choice.
- Explore artists who use parts from the human body in their work.

IMHATHAI SUWATTHANASILP



Installation view of *The Flower Field*, 2012. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

The Flower Field

2012

Hair, bed frame, acrylic sheets and LED lights

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

In a field of bright white light, thousands of delicate flowers seem to float, creating a peaceful, dream-like scene. On closer inspection, the flowers are actually handspun balls of hair, taken from cancer patients, survivors and donors from the Hair for Hope charity program. These hairballs are arranged on a lightbox made from a repurposed bed frame. The backlit strands serve as a tender tribute to human resilience. Through her careful craftsmanship, Imhathai Suwatthanasilp sends a message of hope for a brighter future.

WONG HOY CHEONG



Installation view of *Tapestry of Justice*, 1999–2004 Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Tapestry of Justice

1999–2004

Thumbprints, petals and leaves

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Over 10,000 photocopied thumbprints are woven into this delicate tapestry, mixed with leaves and petals from plants like the hibiscus (Malaysia's national flower), rose and beech. The artist created this installation as a response to the Reformasi movement in the late 1990s, which focused on addressing social injustices. In the span of six years, the artist collected these thumbprints which symbolises both criminal evidence and personal identity. This work highlights the extreme difference in how thumbprints can be used and the power of collective action to push for a change.

VIEW AND DISCUSS



ELABORATION AND EXPLANATION GAME

- Divide students into groups of four. Each group observes and describes different parts of an artwork.
- Observation Rounds:
 - First Person: Identifies a specific part of the artwork and describes what they see. (Example: “I see flowers on two tables.”)
 - Second Person: Adds more detail to the first observation. (Example: “The flowers seems a bit yellowish in colour and softly lit within a glass dome shaped like temple stupas.”)
 - Third Person: Expands further with additional details. (Example: “The colour looks natural and not painted on. All the flowers are covered with temple stupas. They are being placed on two round tables”)
 - Fourth Person: Adds even more depth. (Example: “Line works can also be observed on the petals. The round tables are made of wood.”)
- Rules:
 - Only describe what you see — no interpretations yet!
 - After the first round, move to the next part of the artwork and repeat.
- Question Round:
 - After describing, each group discusses follow-up questions about their observations. (Example: “Why did the artist choose to present the flowers on the table? What mood does it create?”)
- Summarise thoughts as a group.



CLOSER OBSERVATION

- During your visit, do explore our Re-Material Cart section. Look through a microscope to see the artist's dead skin that was used to create the artwork. What do they look like through a microscope?
- Draw it in the box below.

POST-VISIT QUESTIONS

- How does using human skin instead of traditional materials change how you feel about these flower sculptures?
 - What do you think the artist is saying about beauty by making flowers from something most people find unpleasant (dead skin)?
 - Imagine this artwork displayed differently, in a medical lab or a jewellery case. How would that change what the artist is trying to communicate with the work?
 - How does Ezzam's deliberate use of fragile materials that decay serve as a commentary on the passage of time and the transient nature of memory?
 - When an artwork uses organic materials, what are the optimal environmental conditions (temperature, relative humidity) for preserving the work to slow further degradation?
 - What are the key biological components in living things that signify “life” (e.g DNA, sensory neurons) that may remain to remind people of one’s presence?
 - When these components are identified as the medium of an artwork, does the work become less of an object and more of a subject?
-

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



ACTIVITY 1 — MEMORY GARDEN

- Show images of Ezzam’s work and discuss:
- “How can everyday materials become art? What might ‘flowers’ that represent you look like?”
- Have students brainstorm materials that represent personal stories and bring them to class.
- Students will have to use the materials they collected to construct their flowers and decide how they will want to showcase their flowers.
- Write an artist statement and do a gallery walk with the final products.

ACTIVITY 2 — WHO DECIDES ART’S RULES

- Divide students into teams, have them research for examples, and debate with evidence.
 - Should artists be allowed to use human body parts (skin, blood, hair) in their artwork?
 - Should artists stick to “proper” art supplies, or can anything be art material?
 - Does shocking material (e.g. bodily fluids, decay) make art more meaningful or just emotive?
- For a creative twist, ask students to propose a new artwork using an emotive material and justify it.

FIND OUT MORE!

ARTIST

- Chor Leng Twardzik Ching, “Ezzam Rahman: In Conversation with Twardzik Ching Chor Leng,” in *President's Young Talents* (Singapore Art Museum, 2015), 83-92.
- Chor Leng Twardzik Ching, “Negotiating Truths, Reality and Puns,” in *Reimagining Singapore: Self and Society in Contemporary Art* (Springer, 2023), 170-180, <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-99-0864-6>.
- Nafeesa Saini, “Artists to watch: Singapore artist Ezzam Rahman on using his dead skin as a medium for telling stories on legacy and life,” *Tatler Asia*, 11 January 2024, from <https://www.tatlerasia.com/lifestyle/arts/interview-ezzam-rahman>.
- Phyllicia Wang, “Art and sole: Artist Ezzam Rahman sculpts with skin from his feet,” *The Straits Times*, 19 January 2016, <https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/arts/art-and-sole-artist-ezzam-rahman-sculpts-with-skin-from-his-feet>.
- Singapore Art Museum, “Here’s who I am, I am what you see” (2015) by Ezzam Rahman,” last accessed 24 September 2025, <https://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg/About/Our-Collection/Heres-who-I-am-I-am-what-you-see>.

VIDEO

- Singapore Art Museum, “SAM Touch Collection | Ezzam Rahman”, *YouTube*, 26 February 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZV5ny5NsVnA>.

FIND OUT MORE!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Singapore Art Museum, “*Everyday Practices* Learning Resource,” last accessed 25 September 2025,
https://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg/-/media/SAM/Files/Exhibitions/Everyday-Practices/EVERYDAY-PRACTICES_Learning-Resource_Final.pdf?inline=1.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR EDUCATOR / FACILITATOR

If a student is feeling uncomfortable when talking about their emotions, you may consider the following suggested approaches:

1. ACKNOWLEDGE AND VALIDATE THEIR EMOTIONS

Let the participant know that you are concerned about their wellbeing.

- Verbal: “I hear you're feeling overwhelmed. It's okay to feel this way.”
- Non-verbal: Make eye contact, nod empathetically, and show that you're listening attentively.

2. ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Allow the participant to talk about their experiences (and beliefs) if they want to, but do not force them.

- Verbal: “What was that like for you?”
or “Can you tell me more about...?”

3. PARAPHRASE TO CLARIFY

Restate what you believe they are saying in your own words to ensure you are understanding their experience correctly.

- Verbal: “It seems like you were frightened and worried.”

4. OFFER A BREAK

- Verbal: “Would you like to take a short break?”
- Non-verbal: Gesture towards a door or a quiet area.

5. CHECK-IN PRIVATELY

- Verbal: “If you'd like to talk about this further, we can have a private conversation later.”
- Non-verbal: Discreetly approach the participant after the session.

6. GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

- Verbal: “Can I offer you some grounding techniques? Perhaps focusing on your breath or the sensations in your body might help.”
- Non-verbal: Demonstrate deep breathing exercises or guide the participant through the technique.

7. ADJUST THE PACE

- Verbal: “Let's slow down for a moment. We can revisit this topic later if you're feeling more comfortable.”

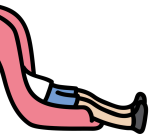
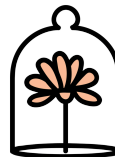
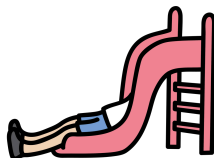
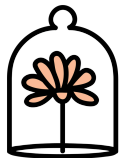
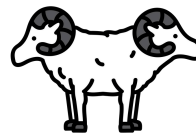
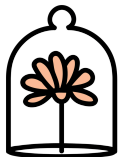
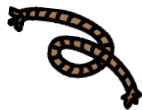
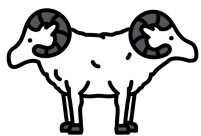
8. SHIFT THE FOCUS

- Verbal: “Perhaps we could shift our focus to a different topic for now and come back to this later.”

9. GET HELP IF NEEDED.

If the participant is in distress, do not hesitate to get help from a fellow teacher or school counsellor.

- Verbal: “I'm concerned about your well-being. Would you like me to get help from another teacher or a counsellor?”



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