

EDUCATORS' RESOURCE

Robert Zhao Renhui

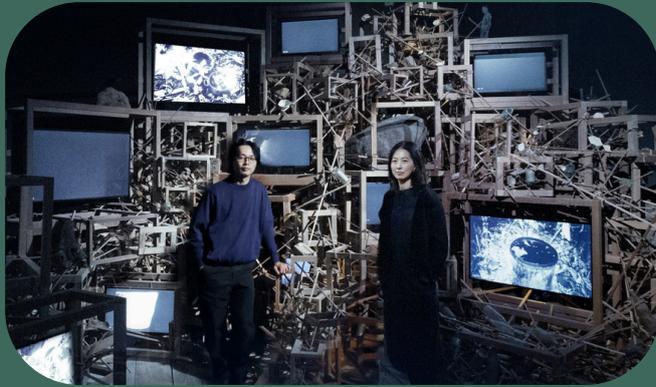
SEEING FOREST



This educators' resource features selected artworks and guiding questions with printable activities suitable for visitors ages 8 and above.

Robert Zhao Renhui. *Buffy*. 2024. Image courtesy of Robert Zhao Renhui.

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Singapore Pavilion artist Robert Zhao Renhui and curator Haeju Kim with *Trash Stratum* (2024). Image courtesy of Robert Zhao Renhui.

Robert Zhao Renhui (b. 1983, Singapore) is an artist who explores the connections between nature and culture.

Working with various art forms, Zhao focuses on the diversity of living beings and objects, and how these contribute to our shared understanding of the world.

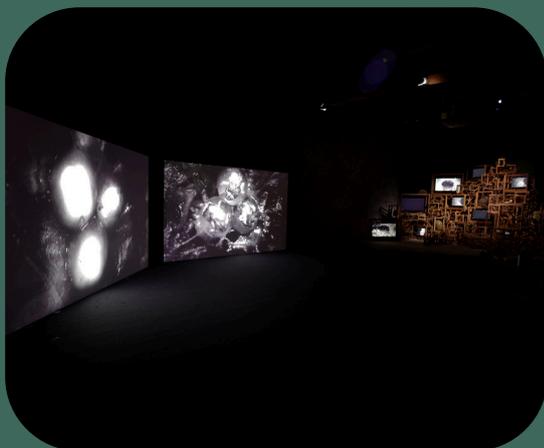
THE VENICE BIENNALE

The Venice Biennale is an international art event that takes place every two years in Venice, Italy.

Artists from all across the world showcase their artworks and it is where *Seeing Forest* was first exhibited.



Installation view of *Buffy* (2024) and *The Owl, The Travellers and The Cement Drain* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at the Singapore Pavilion at Biennale Arte 2024. Image courtesy of Robert Zhao Renhui.



Installation view of *The Owl, The Travellers and The Cement Drain* (2024) and *Trash Stratum* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at the Singapore Pavilion at Biennale Arte 2024. Image courtesy of Robert Zhao Renhui.

The biennale is an important cultural event where visitors can experience a wide range of contemporary art from different countries.

Seeing Forest is the 11th edition of the Singapore Pavilion at the Biennale Arte.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION



Installation view of *Trash Stratum* (2024), *Buffy* (2024), and *The Owl, The Travellers and The Cement Drain* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Seeing Forest invites us to explore lesser-known parts of Singapore's urban landscape- secondary forests, such as those in Bukit Panjang and Gillman Barracks, through artist Robert Zhao's decade-long research.



Installation view of *Trash Stratum* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

The exhibition encourages us to reflect on the relationship between nature and cities, reminding us of the importance of protecting and appreciating our environment, especially in today's rapidly changing world.

A secondary forest forms after human activity, like deforestation, disrupts the land. New plants and animals return during regrowth. These forests play a crucial role in restoring ecosystems and providing habitats for various species.



Installation view of *Buffy* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

TRASH STRATUM



Installation view of *Trash Stratum* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Trash Stratum showcases how humans and nature are always connected to each other.

From broken pieces of glass, to rubbish left at the bottom of a river, *Trash Stratum* reminds us of how secondary forests are ever-changing spaces and how they store pieces of human history in this process.

The cabinets made of stacked wooden boxes are also symbolic of how humans continue to collect objects of importance.



Detail view of *Trash Stratum* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

🔍 OBSERVE

- What do you notice about the objects featured in the artwork?
- How are these objects different from the everyday items in our lives?
- Why do you think the artist included photographs and objects from the forest in the artwork?
- How do these items help tell the story of secondary forests?

A GUIDE TO A SECONDARY FOREST OF SINGAPORE



Installation view of *A Guide to a Secondary Forest of Singapore* (2024) and *Trash Stratum* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

A Guide to a Secondary Forest of Singapore is an imaginary map created by the artist. This map represents his decade-long exploration and research into Singapore's secondary forests. The map showcases both natural and man-made elements, from Albizia trees that were planted by humans and an old concrete drain left behind from the British colonial period.

The map reflects the artist's personal experiences, using symbols to represent the places he explored and animals he observed with motion sensor cameras.

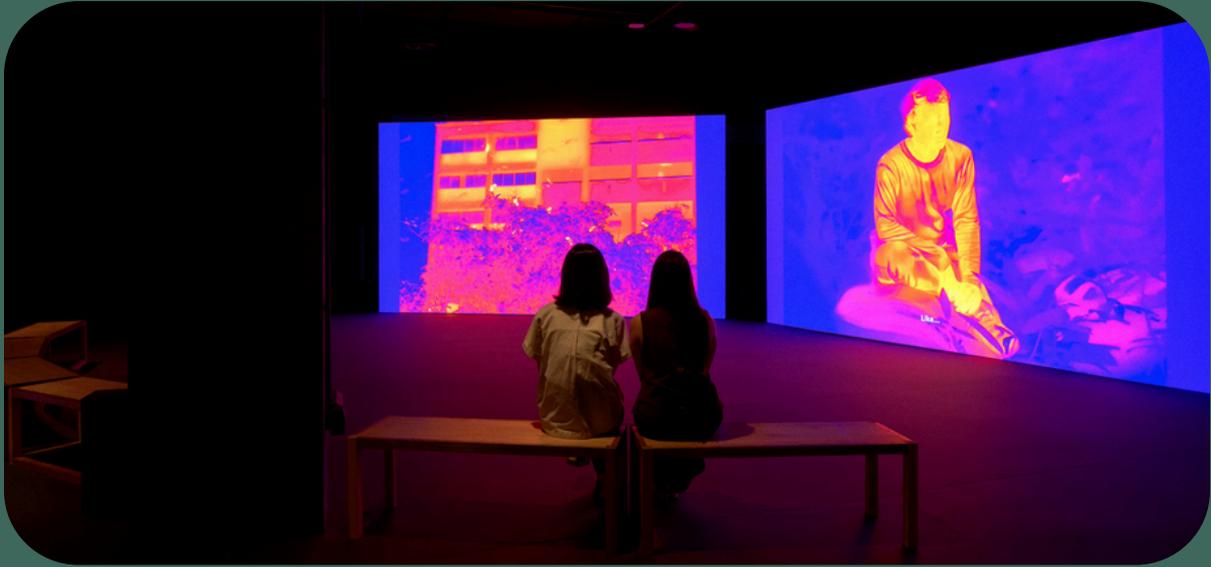


Installation view of *A Guide to a Secondary Forest of Singapore* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

🔍 OBSERVE

- How many areas on the map show you how humans have affected the forest?
- How do these areas blend in with the natural areas of the forest?
- What do you notice about the symbols on the map? How do these symbols represent natural and man-made things?

THE OWL, THE TRAVELLERS AND THE CEMENT DRAIN



Installation view of *The Owl, The Travellers and The Cement Drain* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

The Owl, The Travellers and The Cement Drain captures how nature and man-made objects co-exist in Singapore's secondary forests.

This artwork features items such as old tents, trash bins and pieces of history from the British colonial era and the Japanese occupation, which have been left behind in secondary forests.

By using two screens, the artist showcases how natural and human activities impact each other. It helps us think about how animals, plants and people share secondary forests and how these forests change over time.



Installation view of *The Owl, The Travellers and The Cement Drain*, as part of *Seeing Forest* at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

🔍 OBSERVE

- What do you notice about the man-made objects in the forest?
- How do these objects mix with nature?
- How do the animals blend into the forest? Do they look at home or out of place?
- How does the video show the forest changing over time? What does that make you think about nature and people?

BUFFY



Installation view of *Trash Stratum* (2024) and *Buffy* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

This artwork is named after the buffy fish owl image featured in this exhibition. This owl was observed drinking water from a cracked cement drain in Gillman Barracks. The image of the bird, with its back turned to us, evokes the saying by Greek philosopher Heraclitus, "Nature loves to hide."

The owl's mysterious pose reminds us that there is more to nature than meets the eye, and sometimes, the truth is hard to find or understand.



Detail view of *Buffy* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

🔍 OBSERVE

- Can you think of other examples where nature hides things from us?
- How do you feel when nature seems mysterious or secretive?
- Have you ever seen an animal in the wild that seemed hard to find or hard to understand? What was this experience like?

FOREST FINDS



Detail view of *Trash Stratum* (2024), as part of *Seeing Forest* at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark.
Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Pick an object from the artwork and imagine its story.

- Where did it come from and who might have left it behind?
- How would it impact the environment in secondary forests?

Write your thoughts in the space below.

A large, empty rectangular area with rounded corners, outlined by a dashed green border, intended for writing thoughts.

 ACTIVITY

SPOT THE ANIMALS

Search for the animals that can be found in secondary forests in Singapore!
Can you find them all?

(Hint: The names of these animals can be found at the entrance of the exhibition!)

S	C	A	X	X	J	J	B	E	V	T	R	B	O	M	X	P	P	E	C
O	M	M	B	N	I	C	A	T	I	I	N	O	X	B	H	R	P	O	U
H	T	O	L	U	B	I	T	A	E	G	O	C	R	U	Y	C	L	N	I
A	G	E	O	N	F	P	I	E	S	E	N	E	I	F	F	C	A	V	T
N	O	R	P	T	O	F	D	M	A	R	N	I	A	F	T	L	N	S	A
G	F	Y	T	S	H	E	F	H	R	S	L	D	E	Y	N	O	T	M	Y
I	A	C	S	C	S	C	U	Y	P	H	T	T	E	F	E	U	A	F	S
N	T	O	I	U	E	O	O	T	F	R	V	O	L	I	A	D	I	P	E
G	R	B	W	T	S	S	F	A	P	I	E	F	F	S	N	E	N	C	N
P	P	R	R	T	N	E	R	R	T	K	S	T	P	H	T	D	S	O	C
A	M	A	Y	I	T	A	T	I	M	E	I	H	I	O	R	M	Q	I	M
R	E	I	R	E	A	S	E	R	D	T	D	I	O	W	S	O	U	R	P
R	T	A	P	A	L	M	C	I	V	E	T	O	C	L	I	N	I	M	U
A	S	I	A	N	K	O	E	L	T	M	O	C	T	I	L	I	R	N	I
T	E	R	T	I	C	I	L	B	U	P	E	R	P	T	C	T	R	U	N
B	J	A	V	A	N	M	Y	N	A	Z	A	R	D	A	E	O	E	T	P
I	S	A	C	A	R	T	S	E	M	O	R	P	M	O	C	R	L	I	J

BUFFY FISH OWL

COBRA

PLANTAIN SQUIRREL

ASIAN KOEL

SMOOTH-COATED OTTER

TIGER SHRIKE

JAVAN MYNA

CLOUDED MONITOR

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