**UNCOVER THE GOLDEN ERA OF SINGAPORE AND MALAYAN CINEMA
FROM THE '50S AND '60S WITH SAM MINI MOBILE MUSEUM**
*Featuring 'Slander!' by Jeremy Sharma, the SAM Mini Mobile Museum
returns to bring more contemporary art into community spaces at local libraries*

Image courtesy of Jeremy Sharma

Singapore, 7 June 2021 — This June, Singapore Art Museum (SAM) will launch its fourth exhibition of the SAM Mini Mobile Museum, featuring *Slander!* by multidisciplinary artist Jeremy Sharma, a presentation of his research into Singapore's films and popular culture of the 1950s and 1960s. The exhibition will open at Woodlands Regional Library from 9 June to 25 July 2021, and travel to Jurong and Tampines regional libraries on 28 July and 15 September 2021 respectively. The SAM Mini Mobile Museum is a travelling art exhibition held in partnership with the National Library Board, that introduces the multifaceted nature of contemporary art through a selection of artworks from SAM's collection, adapted for non-museum spaces and created by Southeast Asian artists.

The exhibition's title references the 1959 film *Korban Fitnah* (Victims of Slander), a central feature in Sharma's 2017 installation *A White, White Day* — now part of the museum's collection. With *A White, White Day*, Sharma extracted video data from the film and translated these signals through

LED nodes in the lightboxes, as a means of deconstructing the cinematic image and to point towards the haziness of our memories.

As an artist and musician, Jeremy Sharma's works and experiments look into scenes and places through the lens of modernity, while employing elements of voice, light, atmospheres, film, music, movement and architecture. His practice examines our relationship with the information age and is situated within the everyday. More recently, the artist has produced installations involving sound, performance, and moving images, with a particular interest towards cultural archives.

This can be seen in the making of *Slander!*, where Sharma revisits a range of films shot and produced in Singapore from 1958 to 1963, the post-war period between the heyday of Singapore's film industry and Singapore's eventual independence. The films that emerged from this golden era of Malayan cinema helped sustain the region's postcolonial search for a national identity and future, as well as its negotiations with the order of modernity at large. As such, the films often reflected a palpable sense of social ferment and restlessness.

SAM Assistant Curator Kenneth Tay, who curated the fourth edition of the Mini Mobile Museum, says, "The Mini Mobile Museum allows us to provide artists with opportunities to revisit some of their earlier research interests, and to stage them not just outside the museum and its usual audience, but also over time through the various library spaces. Particularly in this edition, we collaborated with Jeremy Sharma on *Slander!* to locate the film *Korban Fitnah* within some of the other films produced during this same period, and to look at the broader cultural and political contexts informing these films."

Elaborating on Sharma's practice, he adds, "Jeremy Sharma has, in recent years, began thinking more intently with moving images, but also how to work with them through a choreography of installations, text, and performances. I've been drawn to his practice as one that plays with signals and frequencies. In this edition, we worked to create this space where the past seems to interfere into the present, and where the library's audiences could read across time, media formats and different voices. Not to be nostalgic about the past, but to tune in on how our present environment is constantly being shaped by these seemingly 'weak signals'."

Slander! looks back at a cultural moment when a new nation started rapidly urbanising and shaping its politics. It features a system of modular structures with themes that recur in Sharma's practice — the modernist notions of shape, size, scale, seriality and repetition. On display is a choreography of film footages, digitised images, text, objects and printed matter.

Jeremy Sharma shares, "With *Slander!,* I wanted to explore how identities are formed through the processes of urbanisation and nationhood, and also consider how the contemporary self is very much shaped by history. Watching selected films while experimenting with writing and history, I thought about questions like: How can we use these images and film archives to look at history through an alternative lens? Can we produce a network of objects and images to engender new meanings and narratives? *Slander!* refers to the title of the Cathay-Keris film *Korban Fitnah*. But I also wanted it to remain as an ambiguous expression to suggest that certain imaginations, in our rapid modernisation, have been silenced to make way for other forms of imaginings."

Public programmes to complement the exhibition include *A Date with SAM*, an online conversation with the artist and curator as they share behind-the-scenes insights into the making of the work; and *Kopi, Teh and Contemporary Art*, a virtual guided tour specially designed for seniors (More details can be found in Annex B). Following the successful pilot of artwork labels for children, this edition also features specially designed labels for young visitors, which break down the themes and concepts in the artwork in a manner that is more engaging and accessible for children. There is also a take-home activity for children to create their own film strip inspired by the artwork.

The first installment of *Slander!* will take place at the Woodlands Regional Library from 9 June to 25 July 2021. Subsequent installments will be presented at the Jurong and Tampines Regional Libraries from 28 July to 12 September, and 15 September to 31 October 2021 respectively.

More information can be found in the Annexes below and http://bit.ly/SAMMMM-Slander. Images are available for download here.

- Annex A: Artist Biography and Artwork Information
- Annex B: Exhibition Venues, Dates and Accompanying Programmes

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About the Singapore Art Museum

Singapore Art Museum is a contemporary art museum which focuses on art-making and art thinking in Singapore, Southeast Asia and Asia, encompassing a worldwide perspective on contemporary art practice. SAM advocates and makes accessible interdisciplinary contemporary art through research-led and evolving curatorial practice. Since it opened in January 1996, SAM has built up one of the most important collections of contemporary art from the region. It seeks to seed and nourish a stimulating and creative space in Singapore through exhibitions and public programmes, and to deepen every visitor's experience. These include outreach and education, research and publications, as well as cross-disciplinary residencies and exchanges.

SAM occupies two buildings: the old St Joseph's Institution on Bras Basah Road, built in 1855 and now a National Monument; and SAM at 8Q, a conservation building across the road on Queen Street that was the old Catholic High School. The museum buildings are currently closed for a major building redevelopment, with museum programming continuing at partner venues until the buildings re-open.

SAM is the organiser of the Singapore Biennale in 2011, 2013, 2016 and 2019. SAM was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 13 November 2013, operating under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. To find out more, visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg.

ANNEX A: ARTIST BIOGRAPHY & ARTWORK INFORMATION

About Jeremy Sharma

Jeremy Sharma (b. 1977, Singapore) is an artist and musician. His recent works and experiments look into scenes and places through the lens of modernity, while employing elements of voice, light, atmospheres, film, music, movement and architecture. He has also produced installations involving sound, performance, and moving images, with a particular interest towards cultural archives (e.g. songs and cultural memory in Southeast Asia, Malaya's film history). Sharma holds an MA (Fine Art) from LASALLE College of the Arts, where he now teaches as a lecturer.

About *Slander!*

Jeremy Sharma
Slander!
2021
Modular steel structure, print on dibond, monitors, media players,
printed matter
9600 x 2400 x 100mm; 6400 x 2400 x 100mm
Commissioned by Singapore Art Museum
Footages of film supported by Cathay-Keris Films Pte Ltd and
Asian Film Archive

Slander! represents an extension of Jeremy Sharma's research into Singapore's films and popular culture of the 1950s and 1960s, and its title references the 1959 film *Korban Fitnah* (Victims of Slander). This film was also a central feature in Sharma's 2017 installation *A White, White Day*, which deconstructs the cinematic image. *Slander!* on the other hand revisits films produced between 1958 and 1963, which is the period sandwiched between the post-war heyday of Singapore's film industry and Singapore's eventual independence. In other words, *Slander!* looks back at a cultural moment when a new nation started rapidly urbanising, drafting and shaping its politics. It uses a system of modular structures with themes that recur in Sharma's practice—the modernist notions of shape, size, scale, seriality and repetition—drawing on digitised images from films as well as texts and objects.

About *A White, White Day*

Jeremy Sharma
A White, White Day
2017
Lightbox system mounted on a metal rack, horn speakers
200 x 240 x 40 cm
Collection of Singapore Art Museum

In *A White, White Day*, Jeremy Sharma explores the notions of representation and form by deconstructing the filmic image, breaking it down into its constituent elements of light, shadow and sound. The installation of lightboxes appropriates the appearance and function of a cinema screen, transforming the space of the gallery into an atmospheric rendition of the movie theatre. The viewer, however, is presented with an abstract play of flickering, scintillating illumination: the LED nodes in the lightboxes are controlled by a programme that is based on video data taken from an old Cathay Keris production, *Korban Fitnah* (1959). The title translates to "Victims of Slander," and the film tells the tale of a couple unfairly accused of adultery. It is chiefly remembered today for its depiction of a Singapore that no longer exists, featuring locations including the now-demolished Outram Prison, Keppel Road Customs House, Wyman's Haven Restaurant on Upper East Coast Road, and old C.K. Tang building.

The work reimagines scenes in a film that Sharma considers an integral part of "our nation's historical and biographical literature." The dissolution of the cinematic images into fitful, unstable flashes of light suggests the similarly hazy nature of memory and history.

A White, White Day was first presented in 2017, as part of the *Cinerama: Art and the Moving Image in Southeast Asia* exhibition held at SAM. It was subsequently acquired into the SAM Collection in 2018.

ANNEX B: EXHIBITION VENUES, DATES AND ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMMES

Exhibition Venues and Dates

Woodlands Regional Library	9 Jun – 25 Jul 2021
Jurong Regional Library	28 Jul – 12 Sep 2021
Tampines Regional Library	15 Sep – 31 Oct 2021

Programmes

The latest programme information and updates can be found at http://bit.ly/SAMMMM-Slander

Programme Title	Date, Time	Platform	Brief Description
A Date with SAM: Jeremy Sharma	24 June 2021, 8pm – 9pm	Sessions will be conducted online via Zoom. Free with registration.	Join local artist Jeremy Sharma and SAM curator Kenneth Tay as they share about the process of researching, curating, conceptualising, and creating the artwork, *Slander!*. This programme is organised by SAM in collaboration with the National Library Board.
Kopi, Teh and Contemporary Art Online	15 July & 14 October 2021, 3.30pm –4.30pm	Sessions will be conducted online via Zoom. Free with registration.	Discover more about contemporary art on a virtual tour of *Slander!* by Jeremy Sharma, designed for the silver generation. The session will conclude with a light-hearted quiz. This programme is organised by SAM in collaboration with the National Library Board and RSVP Singapore—

			The Organisation of Senior Volunteers.