

GAL LERY & STU DIO

VOLUME FIVE . TWO THOUSAND FIFTEEN

VOL. 05 SGD9.98



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HISTORY REDEFINED

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Eleven up-and-coming local contemporary artists were tasked to create pieces inspired by Singapore's National Collection. The result: an assemblage of national treasures made anew by fresh perspectives, but which harkens back to the past

The lines between past and present, old and new, converges in 'Fresh Takes', a group show featuring 11 of Singapore's youngest and brightest contemporary artists. Proudly put together by Chan Hampe Galleries, Aiman Hakim, Alvin Ong, Esmond Loh, Eugene Soh, Jahan Loh, Jing Hu, Koh Liang Jiang, Ryl Zaini, Sheryo, Yanyun Chen, and Yeo Jian Long, have been challenged to engage our little red dot's history. Each artist had the opportunity to select an artwork curated in Singapore's National Collection, and respond to it in his or her own visual language. In their responses, the old was made new without loss of spirit, creating entirely fresh works that not only paid

homage to the past and to the original work, but also spoke invariably of their own time and space.

Benjamin Hampe, Director of Chan Hampe Galleries, shares, "By interacting with the collection in this way, we hope the artists will be inspired to discover alternate narratives to explore within their own practice, and viewers will consider new ways of looking at these national treasures." Artist Alvin Ong, 27, concurs, adding that this show was an opportunity for them to engage with the art of their past, and recall what other artists have articulated in the process of nation building, and at the same time, find their own voice against these bodies of work.





Alvin Ong

Yanyun Chen

Esmund Loh

Gallery & Studio got up close and personal with three of the inspiring artists, and waxed poetic about their pieces for the show, and what's it like being an artist in Singapore.

Alvin Ong (b.1988)

Singapore is... the place I was born. Through painting, I am constantly trying to uncover its past and soul.

Being an artist in Singapore means... being situated in a confluence of cultures and influences. While the proliferation of art fairs and commercial galleries in Singapore has grown, it doesn't equate to a livelier scene. For now, Singapore will continue to be my canvas, although I foresee a point where I will stop trying to keep up with the pace of redevelopment and become a stranger in my own country.

On his piece... *In Search of Tanah Airku* (2015) is a response to Chua Mia Tee's *Epic Poem of Malaya*. His work belonged to the grand tradition of history painting, which captures people caught in the throes of political awakening. Sixty years on, we live in very different times. My work is a point of departure, a farewell to an older Singapore.

Yanyun Chen (b.1986)

Singapore is... a line. A geographical, conceptual, cultural, economic boundary line that separates that which is, should be, and can be called 'Singapore', and that which is not.

Being an artist in Singapore means... ambiguity. I

do not think much about labels, or perhaps I think too much about them, so much so that I am paralysed from being able to do anything about them. But I do think the art scene is much louder now than it was before, and I am less oblivious and more interested to participate in it than I was 10 years ago.

On her piece

"I was drawn to Latiff Mohidin's *Two Standing Figures* for the jarring colours, striking figures, and suggestive cheeky visuals. I used my preferred technique and materials: Nitram charcoal, Fabriano Roma paper, and the difference between my approach and Mohidin's is very much in opposition.

Esmund Loh (b.1995)

Singapore is... where I feel safest and at home. It's also where I know there will be help available whenever I need it.

Being an artist in Singapore means... I have to be really determined and passionate because not many will support what I do. It is still extremely difficult to be in any creative profession here and many artists still struggle with the lack of space to work.

On his piece

"I scanned the Internet for artworks in the Singapore National Collection and after much consideration, I chose to respond to Tan Swie Hian's *Sun Moon Lake*. *Farewell* is the result of my emulation of *Sun Moon Lake*'s composition, and incorporation of its depiction of natural elements into my own narrative and subject matter."