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# REDEFINING SOUTHEAST ASIA'S ART SCENE

As Art SG gears up for its third edition in January 2025, the art fair anchoring Singapore Art Week continues to elevate the region's profile and strengthen Singapore's emergence as a new hub of Southeast Asian art.

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*Ruben Pang, Promise  
Me Eden, 2024  
Opposite: Libby Heaney,  
Q is for Climate, 2023*





Having debuted in 2023 as the world was emerging from COVID-19, Art SG is back for the third year running. More than ever, art fairs are becoming an essential element of Asia's art market, and it was only logical that after Art Basel Hong Kong and Frieze Seoul, Singapore should have its own – and one that focuses on Southeast Asian art. Apart from addressing the issue of carbon emissions by reducing long-distance travel, regional fairs bring regional art to local audiences. “Art SG has significantly contributed to the growing interest in the art market in Singapore,” announces fair director, Shuyin Yang. “According to the 2024 Art Basel and UBS Survey, 97 per cent of Singapore's high-net-worth collectors are optimistic about the global art market, with many preferring to purchase art at art fairs. This highlights the pivotal role Art SG plays as a critical platform for local collectors to explore both international and Southeast Asian contemporary art.”

As the region's largest international art fair, Art SG is establishing itself as a cornerstone of Southeast Asia's art scene. Over the past two editions, it has not only showcased Singapore's potential as a global cultural hub, but has also served as a



springboard for Southeast Asia's dynamic and wide-ranging group of contemporary artists to gain worldwide visibility.

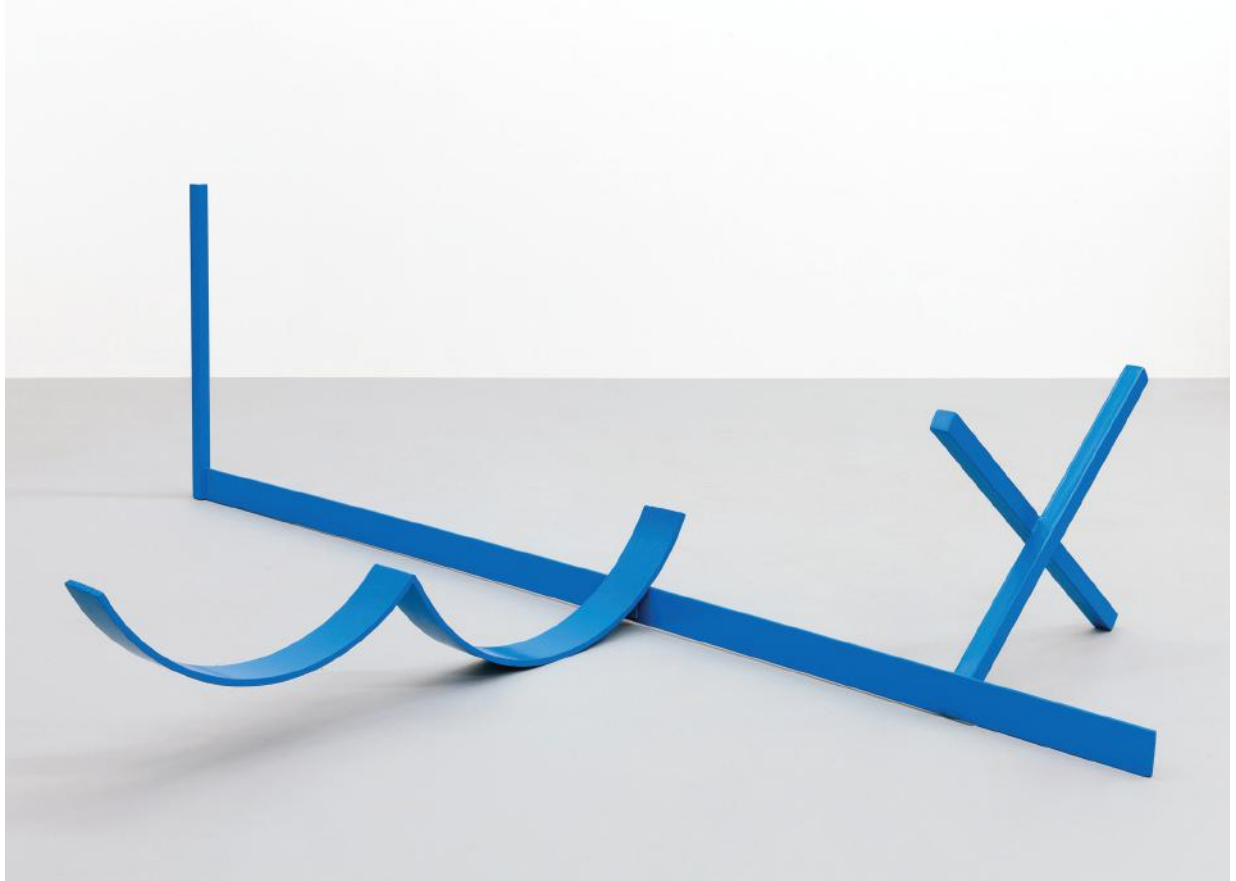
“Regional art fairs are important as they offer opportunities for regional artists, especially younger ones, to be seen and talked about internationally,” explains Singaporean collector and founder of art salon The Culture Story, Chong Huai Seng, who discovered Chinese artist Zhong Wei (represented by De Sarthe), and Lee Bul and Chantal Joffe (represented by Lehmann Maupin), during previous editions of Art SG. “Presently, most Southeast Asian artists are only collected by their local collectors. This silo phenomenon is not good for artists or collectors. As a result, unlike Western and Chinese art, Southeast Asian art is neither prominent nor collected internationally. I

think Art SG is important to strengthen Singapore's role as a regional art hub.”

Co-founded by Magnus Renfrew, Sandy Angus and Tim Etchells and envisioned as a platform to amplify Singapore's position in the global art ecosystem, Art SG responds to the region's increasing appetite for contemporary art and its potential to become a key player in the international art market. The third iteration from Jan 17 to 19 at Marina Bay Sands features 106 exhibitors from 30 countries. It attracts top-tier exhibitors like Gagosian, White Cube, Thaddaeus Ropac and Lehmann Maupin, alongside regional powerhouses such as Gajah Gallery, Sullivan+Strumpf and Richard Koh Fine Art, local players STPI, Yeo Workshop and Fost Gallery, as well as newcomers Haridas Contemporary, Baik Art and Galerie Gmurzynska.



From top: Anthony Caro, Flax, 1965; Leslie De Chavez, Mater Piedad Fernanda, 2023  
Opposite, from left: Magnus Renfrew and Shuyin Yang; Natee Utarit, It Would Be Silly to Be Jealous of a Flower Part 2, 2024



## REGIONAL FOCUS

Whereas Art Basel Hong Kong and Frieze Seoul dominate the Asian art fair circuit, Art SG distinguishes itself by shining the spotlight on Southeast Asia, contrary to its counterparts that lean heavily on North and East Asia. Art Basel Hong Kong is renowned for its scale and focus on blue-chip galleries, while Frieze Seoul highlights Asia's cutting-edge contemporary art. Art SG carves its niche by blending the global contemporary art with a strong representation of Southeast Asian voices. "What sets Art SG apart is its dedication to promoting the rich diversity of the region, with over 30 per cent of exhibitors in 2025 coming from Southeast Asia or with significant representation of Southeast Asian artists," states Yang. "This emphasis on regional representation allows Art SG to provide a platform for emerging Southeast Asian artists to gain global exposure. By connecting established and emerging galleries, particularly from Southeast Asia, Art SG contributes to the growth and development of the regional art ecosystem."

Despite its relative youth, Art SG has demonstrated how it can play a role in nurturing Singapore's art collecting culture. The fair has introduced local collectors to world-class artworks, cultivated a deeper appreciation for contemporary art within the city-state and fostered a more vibrant art market. Moreover, Art SG's presence has enhanced Singapore's cultural reputation, drawing attention from international collectors and institutions, and bridging the gap between Southeast Asia's artists and the wider art





*Ju Ming, Taichi Series, 1999*  
*Above: Suzann Victor, She Is Closer Than You Think, 2019*

market. "The participation of international, Asian and Southeast Asian galleries makes Art SG unique as the melting pot of East-West aesthetics," notes Singaporean collector, Linda Neo. "Unlike fairs elsewhere, there is better representation of artists from both sides. Strategically, Singapore remains an international hub for global businesses, as the potential for family businesses from the region continues to grow. Art is an alternative asset class, and with the presence of the fair and government support for art and culture, the art market in Singapore has the potential to create waves in the region."

On the lookout for contemporary Southeast Asian female artists, Singapore-based British collector, Krystina Lyon, says Art SG has allowed her to rediscover artists such as Sinta Tantra (represented by ISA Art Gallery in Jakarta), Tulip Duong (from CUC Gallery in Hanoi) and Pinaree Sanpitak (from Ames Yavuz), and to be introduced to galleries from farther afield like Retro Africa. "Art SG is less overwhelming in size than Art

Basel Hong Kong and offers a more balanced mix of Southeast Asian and international artists," she discloses. "It has effectively filled the vacuum left by Art Stage's demise in 2019, playing a pivotal role in energising Singapore's art ecosystem."

### DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

Southeast Asia is a treasure trove of creativity, with artists drawing from the region's rich history, diverse cultures and complex socio-political landscapes. From Melissa Tan's explorations of womanhood through mythology to Wyn-Lyn Tan's preoccupations with space, light and translucency in her paintings of the natural world – represented by Haridas Contemporary and Fost Gallery respectively – Southeast Asian artists offer refreshing perspectives that resonate globally. As more collectors and institutions turn their attention this way, artists are finding new opportunities to expand their practices and reach broader audiences. The increasing prominence of Southeast Asian art is also fostering a sense of

pride and ownership within the region, further driving its growth.

Art SG 2025 showcases an impressive lineup of artists, including both mainstream names and rising stars. The Columns Gallery exhibits Singaporean artist Shavonne Wong, known for her groundbreaking digital art and AI-driven projects like Meet Eva Here, who continues to redefine the boundaries of virtual storytelling. Her compatriot Khairulddin Wahab's post-colonial narratives delve into Southeast Asia's maritime past and cultural geography in a Cuturi Gallery installation. Other artists to watch include Nakrob Moonmanas at Warin Lab Contemporary's booth, whose intricate digital collages reimagine Thai visual culture and history, and Miya Ando, recognised for her meditative metal paintings that encapsulate both ephemerality and permanence. Represented by Sundaram Tagore, her display of 29 printed silk chiffon panels symbolises a complete lunar cycle.

Fair highlights include four large-scale, site-specific installations as part of the Platform sector, the Futures section dedicated to young galleries less than 10 years old, a film programme presented in collaboration with Bangkok Kunsthalle, and talks featuring prominent art world thought leaders exploring the intersection of performance and art, the relationship between art and artificial intelligence and a series curated by Aaron Cezar of the Delfina Foundation around collecting, philanthropy and creating private foundations. There will also be insightful discussions by Southeast Asian artists, such as Mandy El-Sayegh, a London-based Malaysian-born painter and mixed media artist, and Thai multi-disciplinary artist Korakrit Arunanondchai, who recently featured in major institutional presentations in Bangkok and Jakarta.

As it enters its third edition, Art SG acts as a catalyst for the region's future, continuing to shape its art scene and position it as a significant player in the international art market. "The potential for development of Southeast Asian contemporary art is great, as there is still a lack of exposure of the artists from this region in more developed art worlds," concludes Lyon. "Galleries, institutions, biennales and art fairs play an important role in bridging the gaps of knowledge about the regional art scene for collectors and visitors. It is an exciting time to collect local artists from the region, as collectors wake up to their accessibility and affordability." ■





## TOP 5 GALLERIES TO WATCH

### AMES YAVUZ

(Singapore, Sydney)

Acclaimed Southeast Asian artists Abdul Abdullah, Isabel and Alfredo Aquilizan, Elmer Borlongan, Ayka Go, Alvin Ong and Samak Kosem participate in a thematic show entitled Kindred Spirits, which investigates how memories and materials accumulate over time to form complex local identities.



### GAZELLI ART HOUSE

(London, Baku)

Showcasing pieces by six pioneering artists merging digital media and emerging technologies, including Jake Elwes, Entangled Others, Xin Liu and 00 Zhang, the group show Unknown & Uncontained researches speculative communication with other life forms.



### LEHMANN MAUPIN

(New York, London, Seoul)

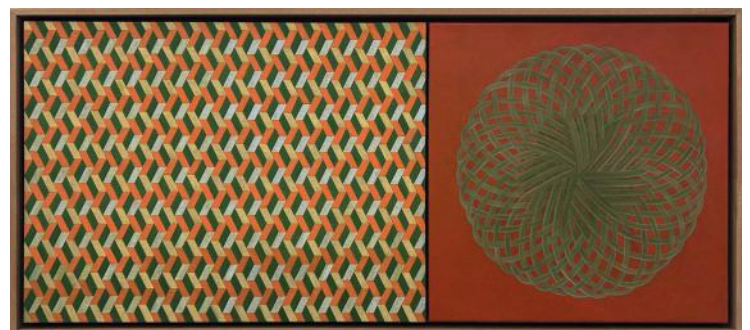
Featuring a selection of works from across the gallery's programme, Lehmann Maupin focuses on Asian and diaspora female artists including Tammy Nguyen, Mandy El-Sayegh, Lee Bul and Kim Yun Shin.



### RICHARD KOH FINE ART

(Singapore, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur)

The gallery zooms in on young Singaporean talents Faris Nakamura, Hu Qiren, Ruben Pang and Samuel Xun, alongside artists from Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar and Iceland, exploring themes of memory, identity, urban spaces and socio-political commentary.



### YEO WORKSHOP (Singapore)

The homegrown gallery highlights works by four female artists from Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam – Wei Leng Tay, Noor Mahnun, Shayne Phua and Tra My Nguyen – examining materiality through diverse mediums to narrate stories, challenge perceptions and spark dialogue on contemporary socio-cultural issues.