



Expanding Horizons

The 1950s and 1960s were transformative decades for Singapore. Following independence in 1965, Singapore rapidly industrialised and urbanised. Amidst these changes, artists shared an urgent desire to innovate, searching for new artistic languages that would be in step with a modernising city-state.

The practice of abstraction in art quickly became synonymous with being modern. Artists contributing to the rise of abstraction in Singapore were often affiliated with the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts or art societies, while others were self-taught. They drew inspiration from diverse cultural sources, developing distinct artistic vocabularies. Their works range from semi-abstract forms and symbols to those rooted in nature and the real world.

This display interweaves artist-focused clusters alongside individual creations. It explores the adventurous spirit that underpinned their practices, as artists moved between abstraction and figuration, and the intersections of art with disciplines like literature, illustration and graphic design.

Top

Lim Yew Kuan (林友权)

(b. 1928, China; d. 2021, Singapore)

Ether

1959

Oil on board

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2015-00619

Bottom

Lim Hak Tai (林学大)

(b. 1893, China; d. 1963, Singapore)

Riot

1955

Oil on board

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 1998-00706

In *Riot*, Lim Hak Tai paints the tense atmosphere of 1950s Singapore during student protests and workers' strikes. The National Service Riots (1954) and Hock Lee Bus Riots (1955) were among the more well-known historical events of the period. Through angular shapes, fragmented forms and abstract space, the work reflects Lim's engagement with Cubism to convey the turbulence and energy of the period. His integration of Cubist techniques with scenes of social and political struggles highlights his commitment to both artistic experimentation and the engagement with local subject matter.

"I do not search for it (style) consciously or create it deliberately. It is a way of bringing order and intelligence to what an artist is doing. It is a memory marker and also a means of connecting different ideas and emotions, fusing them into a creative force." Cheong Soo Pieng, *The Straits Times*, 1983.

Cheong Soo Pieng is regarded as a pivotal artist and educator in Singapore's art history. Cheong's synthesis of easel painting and

Chinese ink aesthetics, and deep engagement with the cultural life of Southeast Asia cemented his legacy as a leading modern artist. Cheong also experimented with unconventional materials like metal and found objects to create richly textured Zssemblages. Cheong arrived in Singapore in 1946 and became a teacher at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and Chinese High School. He often signed his paintings with his homonym 三 宾 (Si Bin), as can be seen in some of his works exhibited here.

Cheong Soo Pieng (钟泗滨)

(b. 1917, China; d. 1983, Singapore)

Imagination

1970

Metal relief

Gift of the artist

Collection of National Gallery Singapore ASB-0026

During the late 1960s and 1970s, Cheong Soo Pieng began producing a series of metal reliefs, marking a period of bold artistic experimentation. These metal reliefs incorporated recycled materials and “found” objects into his art, an approach of merging art with non-art objects that was unconventional for his time. By using industrial materials on a flat surface, Cheong imbued *Imagination* with tactile qualities and depth, blurring the lines between painting and sculpture.

Khoo Sui Hoe (丘瑞河)

(b. 1939, Malaysia)

Children of the Sun

1965

Oil on canvas

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2018-00045

This acquisition was made possible with donations from an individual in honour of the memory of June Tan Poh Hah, Daniel & Soo Khim Teo, Heritage Research Sdn. Bhd., Penang and the Art Adoption and Acquisition Programme of National Gallery Singapore.

Vibrant figures exist in harmony with elements of nature as they stretch across a dreamlike landscape. Their elongated limbs resemble *wayang kulit* (shadow puppets). Initially a commission for the Singapore Conference Hall by architect Lim Chong Keat, this work complements his vision of integrating modernist design with the tropical climate and regional motifs.

“Faces, landscapes, human forms and objects both recognisable and imaginative will reverberate with emotive force. I am aware of the time I was born, the region I was born and my mission. I invite [the] viewer to see what each whimsical world might in fact contain...”

Khoo Sui Hoe, *Khoo Sui Hoe: An Overview*, 2015.

Khoo Sui Hoe studied at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts under Cheong Soo Pieng, Georgette Chen and Lai Foong Moi. In 1971, he helped establish Alpha Gallery, an artist-run space that fostered artistic discourse and showcased local and international artists. Later, with the support of a grant from the John D. Rockefeller III Fund, Khoo explored printmaking in New York. Landscapes and the human figure are dominant motifs in Khoo’s art. He deliberately adopted a highly abstract pictorial style to evoke imaginary worlds and psychological atmospheres.

Vincent M. Hoisington

(b. 1924, Singapore; d. 1972, Singapore)

Civilisation

c. 1970s

Polyurethane paint on board

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2019-00531

In *Civilisation*, a mysterious and haunting landscape unfolds. Disjointed arches and drifting figures seem to appear and disappear within the picture plane. Using industrial polyurethane paint and turpentine, Vincent M. Hoisington applied washes and drips to create a translucent and layered surface. This innovative approach to painting was typical of his practice, which also spanned sculpture and aluminium reliefs. A self-taught artist who blurred the line between art and interior design, Hoisington's inventive use of materials earned him major public and private commissions.

"Painting would give me freedom, not business."

Tay Bak Koi, *The New Paper*, 1990.

Tay Bak Koi is renowned for his imaginative depictions of landscapes and signature buffaloes, an animal which symbolises resilience and tradition in many Southeast Asian cultures. A graduate of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, he studied under influential artists, such as Cheong Soo Pieng and Georgette Chen, and honed his skills in oil and watercolour painting. His body of work spans both figuration and abstraction, showcasing his versatility. In 1969, Tay received a major commission from the Hilton Hotel in Singapore to create 300 paintings for its interior spaces, enabling him to pursue a full-time career as an artist.

Tay Bak Koi (郑木奎)

(b. 1939, Singapore; d. 2003, Singapore)

Untitled ('64 Series 3)

1964

Watercolour and ink on paper

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2024-00340

In *Untitled ('64 Series 3)*, Tay Bak Koi applies paint and ink using

a wet-on-wet technique and vigorous brushwork to create a mix of soft transitions and expressive intersecting lines. Tay abandons recognisable forms entirely, focusing instead on the material interactions of paint and reflecting his interest in texture, movement and spontaneity. As one of his earliest ventures into abstraction, it reveals his evolving experimentation with form and medium.

Presence

Artists have long used the human body to explore identity, the human psyche and social change. As society transformed, artists grappled with how to depict the human figure to reflect the evolving identities of their time. Through deeply personal self-portraits and intimate portrayals of fellow artists and friends, they captured the presence of their subjects and the relationship between artist and sitter, while also exploring personal and social realities. Figuration also took on innovative representational and compositional approaches, demonstrating new aesthetic sensibilities. As art continued to evolve in the 1950s and 1960s, portraiture and still life painting remained foundational for modern artists and a vital mode of expression.

At the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), figurative art—rooted in the direct representation of the physical world and honed through repeated observational drawing sessions—was a cornerstone of education. NAFA became the main centre for artistic training in postwar Singapore, where generations of artists were guided by influential artists who were also teachers, such as Georgette Chen, Chen Wen Hsi, Cheong Soo Pieng and Chen Chong Swee.

Lim Mu Hue (林木化)

(b. 1936, Singapore; d. 2008, Singapore)

It's but a dream

1963

Oil on canvas

Collection of NUS Museum, National University of Singapore

S2012-0005-052-0

A woman holds a lit cigarette as a second figure emerges from the shadows. From her cigarette smoke comes a street scene that contrasts a hopeful future with her dark present. Painted in

1963, two years before Singapore's separation from Malaysia, the work shows a society poised between anxiety and hope.

Lim, then a teacher at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and an illustrator for *Nanyang Siang Pau*, may have drawn on his dual roles as educator and social observer to present both realism and reflection in this work.

“Although the teachers in your school are practising artists, each painting in his distinctive style, they are not there to teach their own particular art; for an academy's task must always be the guidance of the students in the basic and conservative laws of drawing and painting from life itself.”

Georgette Chen, *Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts Class of 1957 Graduation Booklet*, 1957.

Georgette Chen is a key figure in Singapore art history and trained in cities like Shanghai, Paris and New York. In 1954, she was invited to teach painting and drawing at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts by its founding principal, Lim Hak Tai. Chen taught her students techniques from her overseas training and emphasised discipline and practice when developing one's own artistic style. Besides still-life paintings, she is known for her portraits, including those of her students like Rohani Ismail, an artist who became her lifelong friend.

Georgette Chen (张荔英)

(b. 1906, China; d. 1993, Singapore)

Rohani

1963

Oil on canvas

Gift of the artist's estate

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 1994-04116

This portrait features Rohani Ismail, a student of Georgette Chen at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. Seated with poise, she wears a striking red floral dress and a matching headscarf, with a delicate gold pin bearing the letter “R.” Rohani and Chen were close friends and often exchanged letters in Bahasa Melayu. Their correspondence reflects the deep mutual respect and admiration they had for each other.

“The structure of the body is a very powerful symbol of emotion and feeling; I am fascinated by the immense potential in the use of the figure. Be it a young body or an old body, it still conveys a story emotionally, with its parts.”

Ng Eng Teng, *Ng Eng Teng: art and thoughts*, 1998.

Ng Eng Teng was a prolific artist who worked across sculpture, ceramics, painting and drawing. He began his formal artistic training at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, where he was taught by esteemed artists, including Georgette Chen and Cheong Soo Pieng. Encouraged by Chen, he furthered his studies in industrial and studio pottery in England from 1962 to 1964. Ng is most recognised for his expressive sculptures and ceramics that explore the human form and condition.

Ng Eng Teng (黄荣庭)

(b. 1934, Singapore; d. 2001, Singapore)

Thy Name is Woman II

c. 1967

Ciment Fondu and wood

Collection of NUS Museum, National University of Singapore

N1997-0001-287-0

Thy Name is Woman II depicts a seated female figure, whose presence is made stronger by the extension of her head and right foot outward beyond the relief’s surface. This clever bridging of surface and space reflects Ng Eng Teng’s fascination with

sculptural reliefs. For this sculpture, Ng worked with Ciment Fondu, an industrial concrete. He learnt the technique in 1959 from British artist Jean Bullock, whose portrait bust in terracotta is displayed nearby.

Lim Nang Seng (林浪新)

(b. 1916, Malaysia; d. 1987, Singapore)

Cow

c. 1960s

Bronze

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2021-00005

This sculpture, *Cow*, tells a powerful story of suffering. The gaunt and malnourished animal expresses the harsh conditions it endured. In the 1960s, when painting dominated the art world, Lim Nang Seng and his peers began exploring three-dimensional forms and depicting realistic subject matter.

The archival photograph behind this work documents Singapore's first sculpture exhibition at the National Library in 1967, which included artists like Lim and Aw Eng Kwang—a transformative moment that brought sculptural work into public conversation.

Liberating Form and Colour

From the 1960s, new ways of thinking about art emerged in Singapore in tandem with developments in the international art world. Many young artists gained new perspectives through travel, exposure to international art publications or studies abroad. Members of the Modern Art Society advocated for new artistic languages that could reflect their changing realities, which were shaped by science, technology and shifting geopolitical tides. In 1962, the Angkatan Pelukis Aneka Daya (Association of Artists of Various Resources) was established to support Malay artists and became active in organising exhibitions, art classes and collaborations in Singapore and the region. The confluence of national, regional and international outlooks became a wellspring of creative freedom in their visual sensibilities.

Instead of relying on narrative content, artists explored how aspects of form—compositional elements like line, shape and colour—could become meaningful components in themselves, communicating meaning while engaging visual perception. They experimented with colour, brushwork and everyday materials to express concepts like harmony and emotion, the spiritual and the cosmic. Others innovated upon traditional art forms such as batik, drawing out tensions between tradition and modernity. The multitude of artistic and cultural exchanges in this period also led to a diversity of stylistic approaches.

Chen Wen Hsi (陈文希)

(b. 1906, China; d. 1991, Singapore)

On Chen Wen Hsi's murals at 5 Kingsmead Road

2025

Video, single-channel, 4:3 aspect ratio, colour and sound (stereo), 5 min 35 sec

Collection of National Gallery Singapore Library & Archive

Chen Wen Hsi created two landmark abstract mural paintings for his home on 5 Kingsmead Road, Bukit Timah, where he lived and worked from 1955 to 1991. The larger of the two, titled *Studio*, spans a purpose-built wall at the front porch; the second appears on the reverse side. Both works reflect Chen's bold experimentation with geometric planes and fragmented compositions which challenged art's traditional genres of landscapes, nudes and still life. Although the works have deteriorated over time, they have since been meticulously restored, preserving an important facet of his artistic legacy and offering insight into his explorations beyond traditional mediums.

"For me, collage is a liberation from the tyranny of the brush. It injects a significant physical element into methods of operation. You have to know the behaviour of these extraneous materials." Thomas Yeo, *Thomas Yeo: A Retrospective*, 1997.

Regarded as a master colourist, Thomas Yeo is renowned for his paintings and collages, which often depict organic forms, landscapes and imaginary spaces. He trained at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts before furthering his studies at the Chelsea School of Art and Hammersmith College of Art and Architecture in London, where he immersed himself in the city's art scene. Returning to Singapore in the 1980s, Yeo continually experimented with a wide range of mediums including oil, acrylic, gouache, paper and metal. His works are distinguished

by motifs of nature and landscapes, often viewed from a higher vantage point.

Thomas Yeo (姚照宏)

(b. 1936, Singapore)

Yellow Rider

1967

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2020-00351

Inspired by Paolo Uccello's *The Battle of San Romano* (c. 1438–1440), *Yellow Rider* marks Thomas Yeo's shift from representation to abstraction. Instead of a clear narrative, Yeo distils form into pure colour and shape. Two white ovals suggest horse riders, their figures dissolving into a mustard-hued ground and vibrant masses of colour. A horse emerges not through distinct contours but through fluid, interlocking forms. Here, Yeo reimagines the chaos of battle into an interplay of shapes and hues, inviting visitors to experience the scene instead of merely observing it.

(After the 1960s, I realised that to be innovative was to abandon all figuration and existing painting techniques. It was only when I moved toward areas where no one else had tread could I then emancipate myself from figuration and advance freely into the realm of abstraction.)

Ho Ho Ying, *My Paintings*, 1978.

Ho Ho Ying was a painter, writer and art critic, known for his expressive abstraction and calligraphy. A self-taught artist, he co-founded the Modern Art Society, championing innovation in local art. Drawing from Chinese culture, philosophy, calligraphy and Western abstraction, he developed his own distinctive paint-dripping technique in the 1970s.

Ho Ho Ying (何和应)

(b. 1936, China; d. 2022, Singapore)

Composition

1974

Acrylic on Masonite board

Gift of the artist

Collection of National Gallery Singapore P-0249

Composition features a dynamic interplay of bold blocks of colour and cascading paint drips. Ho Ho Ying often worked with his paintings laid flat on the floor, tilting and repositioning them to guide the natural movement of free-flowing paint. This process-driven approach was inspired by the spontaneity of American Abstract Expressionism, reflecting Ho's belief in painting as an unrepeatable act of self-discovery. Each gesture, intuitive and unrestrained, captures a moment of instinct and exploration.

"My colours express my environment. If you look at them, you'll see that they are colours of Singapore [...] My environment is cramped and urban. I may paint differently if I lived elsewhere."
Goh Beng Kwan, *One-man Show by Goh Beng Kwan*, 1977.

Goh Beng Kwan's practice is rooted in both place and material. He studied art under Chen Wen Hsi and Cheong Soo Pieng at the Chinese High School, before pursuing his art education in the United States, where he engaged with both American Abstract Expressionism and collage in the 1960s. This exposure shaped his distinctive artistic style, which merges Chinese calligraphic strokes with abstraction. Goh's works are known for their unconventional use of materials like rice paper, fabric and soil to create richly textured compositions that reflect his personal experiences.

Goh Beng Kwan (吴珉权)

(b. 1937, Indonesia)

Black Afternoon

1963

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 1993-01394

Goh Beng Kwan created *Black Afternoon* in response to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963. Its sombre colours and expressive brushstrokes convey grief and anguish in response to this tragic, historic event. As a student in New York at that time, Goh's approach to painting was influenced by American Abstract Expressionism—a movement known for its gestural brushstrokes, energetic fields of colour and spontaneity.

Goh Beng Kwan (吴珉权)

(b. 1937, Indonesia)

Top

Kreta Ayer Urban Renewal

1986

Household paint, rice paper, ink and glue on canvas laid on board

Bottom

Geomancy

c. 1980s

Household paint, ink, Chinese tea-wrapping paper, rice paper, decorative paper, fabric, string, soil, wax and glue on canvas

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2010-03472 | 2003-00226

Kreta Ayer Urban Renewal and *Geomancy* showcase Goh Beng Kwan's innovative collage techniques and his engagement with

Singapore's evolving urban and cultural transformations in the 1980s. In *Kreta Ayer Urban Renewal*, Goh reinterprets Chinatown from a top-down view, capturing its rapid evolution using dizzying patterns and bold colours. The work responded to ongoing urban redevelopment projects and growing fears that heritage areas will become overly commercialised. *Geomancy* turns to Chinese cosmology, exploring how ritual and belief influence social life, urban form and culture. A dominant circular form, divided into four quadrants with string, it alludes to the *luopan* compass used in feng shui—a form of divination and a system for organising space based on energy flow (qi). More than a symbol, it serves as a compositional device, lending the work a sense of balance and flow.

“Just like painting: writing poems is brushing over inter-textured words.”

Lin Hsin Hsin, *In BYTES We Travel*, 1997.

Lin Hsin Hsin is a painter, digital media artist, poet, composer and IT visionary most known for her early forays into media tools and techniques. In addition to academic training in mathematics and computer science, as well as formal certification in music, she also studied under Liu Kang and Cheong Soo Pieng. Consequently, Lin's artworks and writing showcase her knowledge of, and dexterity with, computers and technology, and demonstrate her observations on natural, social and technological phenomena, making her a unique force in Singapore's post-independence art landscape.

Lin Hsin Hsin (林欣欣)

(b. Singapore)

The Computer as Architect

1977

Oil on canvas

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2021-00530

In the 1970s and 1980s, Lin Hsin Hsin made computing a central theme in her highly abstracted paintings. She recognised its growing presence in the world around her. *In The Computer as Architect*, she envisions how computer-aided design (CAD) would transform architecture and engineering. Through her work, Lin foresaw the increasing role of digital technology in urbanisation.

“If I take a brush, I can reflect speed or monotony. If I use a fast stroke, I can show time fighting against time. Line is universal, yet people fail to understand this. I come up with colours which are my visual experience in life, my internal landscape.”

Jaafar Latiff, *The Straits Times*, 1985.

Jaafar Latiff was a painter known for his innovative approach to batik, a medium deeply rooted in Southeast Asian tradition. Although widely regarded as a traditional craft, Jaafar transformed batik into a dynamic form of artistic expression. Brilliant colours as well as organic forms and shapes that evoke movement, emotion and rhythm feature prominently in his oeuvre. Beyond his practice, Jaafar taught art, design and new media subjects at the Baharuddin Vocational Institute, LASALLE College of the Arts and the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts.

Jaafar Latiff

(b. 1937, Singapore; d. 2007, Singapore)

Vision 1/86

1986

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of National Gallery Singapore P-0954

Bold streams of colour and flowing, curvilinear forms fill the canvas in *Vision 1/86*, conveying a sense of energy and movement. Having begun with batik painting in the 1960s, Jaafar

Latiff turned to acrylic painting during the 1970s to 1980s. The change allowed him to work at a faster pace. He carried the motifs and rhythms he used in batik into this new medium, harnessing the capacity of acrylic for sharper contrasts in colour, which is evident in the interplay of hues across the canvas.

“I transfer the same feeling from my poetry to my paintings.”
Abdul Ghani Hamid, *The Straits Times*, 1999.

A writer, poet and artist, Abdul Ghani Hamid saw no boundaries between his creative disciplines. For him, art and literature were deeply connected. In 1962, he co-founded Angkatan Pelukis Aneka Daya (Association of Artists of Various Resources), a collective that championed Malay artists through exhibitions, programmes and art classes. Abdul Ghani Hamid was also a member of Angkatan Sasterawan '50 (The Malay Literary Movement of the '50s), the first literary movement in post-war Singapore. His poetry, essays, plays and art reviews, mostly published in Malay, explored themes of culture, identity and artistic expression. He also contributed caricatures and satirical cartoons—under pen names—in the Malay magazine *Hiboran* and the Sunday newspaper *Berita Minggu* in the 1950s and 1970s.

Abdul Ghani Hamid
(b. 1933, Singapore; d. 2014, Singapore) Left
Chempaka Mewangi Pagi
1995
Paper cut-outs and ink on paper

Right
Art Junction, 1995
1995
Newspaper, paper cut-outs, photograph and ink on paper

Collection of National Museum of Singapore 2001-03739 | 2001-03738

These collages by Abdul Ghani Hamid reflect the dynamic relationship between his artistic and literary pursuits.

Chempaka Mewangi Pagi weaves together poetry he wrote in the 1970s with motifs of nature. *Art Junction, 1995* offers a more personal narrative, assembling photographs of fellow artists, including himself, with newspaper articles he either wrote or in which he was featured. Together, these works transport viewers to his creative lifeworld, where words and images converse and connect with one another.

Teh Tien Chong (郑殿宗)

(b. 1939, Malaysia; d. unknown, New Zealand)

Cosmic Barriers

1980

Synthetic paint, canvas and wood

Gift of the artist

Collection of National Gallery Singapore ASB-0017

Cosmic Barriers pushes the boundaries of traditional canvas, with patterns and flowing wave-like forms spilling across multiple panels. Influenced by science fiction and the space race, Teh Tien Chong translates abstract concepts of space and time into a physical medium. Using relief techniques, he creates three-dimensional effects, giving his painting a sculptural quality. In doing so, he rethinks where painting ends and sculpture begins.

Chong Fah Cheong (张华昌)

(b. 1946, Singapore)

Family and One

1985

Teak and branch of rambutan tree

Collection of National Gallery Singapore ASB-0081

Five carved wooden planks rest against each other, each supporting the next in a delicate yet steadfast balance. The space within feels embraced, held together by their connection. Originally titled *Family*, Chong Fah Cheong reworked this sculpture into *Family and One* by adding a fifth plank—its rounded edges and organic form suggesting an expanded notion of family. By placing the work directly on the floor, rather than on a pedestal, Chong invites a more immediate, physical experience with his sculpture.

Vectors of the New

What could *new* forms of art look like?

As modern art evolved in the 1970s, artists examined the physical form and material qualities of art itself. They mobilised newly available industrial technologies and materials such as plastic, steel and textiles, redefining what painting and sculpture could be constituted of and look like. Light, colour and rhythm became important elements that transformed the viewer's perception and experience of art. Artists associated with the Alpha Gallery, a pioneering artist-run space in Singapore, advanced innovative approaches to art and engaged critically with international movements.

This period also witnessed significant artistic innovations across other mediums, such as photography, ceramics, printmaking, ink and sculpture. Embracing the modernist ethos of “newness,” artists expanded the possibilities of their chosen mediums to reflect contemporary contexts. They tackled questions about form, materiality, self-expression, nature and the tensions between tradition and innovation. Some ventured into commercial and graphic design, reflecting the multidisciplinary ethos of the time and the deepening entanglements between art and industry.

Tan Swie Hian (陈瑞献)

(b. 1943, Indonesia)

大花海幻觉或冷泉危石新结桥

*(An Illusion of a Floral Sea, or a New
Composition of Grotesque Stones)*

1982

Chinese ink and watercolour on rice paper

Gift of the YLY Collection

Collection of National Gallery Singapore

With its enigmatic forms, this work invites multiple interpretations—are they stones or a “floral sea,” as the title suggests?

The ambiguity reflects Tan Swie Hian’s engagement with Buddhist philosophy, where perception is seen as fleeting, fluid and subjective. A self-taught artist, Tan works across painting, sculpture, performance, linguistics, writing and translation. Unbound by disciplinary categories, his practice is open-ended, much like the shifting meanings of his works.

Kim Lim (林真金)

(b. 1936, Singapore; d. 1997, United Kingdom)

Intervals I + II

1973

Pine

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2015-00420

Intervals I + II comprises several ladder-like wooden structures, each with a spine and a set of prongs. This arrangement represents one of several permutations that were predetermined by Kim Lim. The work embodies Lim’s modular and restrained approach to sculpture and her use of light to cast shifting shadows to create visual rhythm. For Lim, the intervals or negative spaces in her work are alive with possibilities, suggesting the unseen rhythms in nature, music and the everyday.

“If you are an artist, you are also a craftsman, a designer. I am wholly involved in my work and my exhibitions. My firm grounding in the Bauhaus has taught me that.”

Eng Tow, *The Straits Times*, 1982.

Eng Tow is an interdisciplinary artist, renowned for her innovative and methodical use of cloth to create effects through relief and colour. She studied under Georgette Chen at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts before furthering her education in the United Kingdom, where she encountered Bauhaus pedagogy, which emphasised material exploration and strong design principles. Returning to Singapore in 1981, she became part of the Alpha Group and exhibited with Alpha Gallery. Tow's practice spans textiles, paper and three-dimensional forms, reflecting her intuitive and experimental approach, deeply influenced by nature and metaphysical forces. Beyond traditional art boundaries, she has also worked in stage, textile and book design.

Eng Tow (杜瑛)

(b. 1947, Singapore)

Grey Shadows

c. 1970s

Quilted stitching on cotton ticking

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2024-00676

Grey Shadows is a subtle and intricate study of texture, rhythm and light. A square ticking cloth—a tightly woven cotton fabric commonly used for bedding—is meticulously stitched and pleated into nine different patterns and orientations. Together, they form a mesmerising grid of rhythmic effects that create an optical illusion of movement. Is this art or textile design? Informed by the Bauhaus concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), Eng Tow blurs the boundaries between art and craft and reimagines textiles as a rich artistic medium with expansive possibilities.

Eng Tow (杜瑛)

(b. 1947, Singapore)

Untitled – Palms

c. 1983–1984

Textile relief (50% polyester/50% cotton) with polyester wadding stretched over wooden frame

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2016-00742

Commissioned by Times of Singapore Pte. Ltd., this textile relief was photographed and reproduced in the book *A Salute to Singapore* (1984). Stitched in cloth, this work features a burst of pleats that radiate from a central spine, echoing the traveller's palm featured on the cover of the book and coinciding with its fold lines. Eng Tow received numerous public and private commissions in her career, working fluidly as an artist, craftsperson and designer, treating these roles as interconnected modes of working.

Tan Ping Chiang (陈彬章)

(b. 1940, Malaysia)

Music

1979

Paint, wood, bamboo, mirror and metal

Gift of the artist

Collection of National Gallery Singapore ASB-0010

This wood relief brings together bamboo rods, circular mirrors and wooden components in a harmonious composition to represent music, highlighting the artist's enduring interest in the subject. Tan Ping Chiang shaped Singapore's art and design scene through education. He was the first head of Applied Arts at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts as well as the founding president of the Singapore Contemporary Printmaking Association. His works often explore art, design and music, reflecting his multidisciplinary approach to artmaking.

“Everything can be simplified to the basic shapes of lines and angles.”

Anthony Poon, *The Straits Times*, 1972.

A graduate of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and Byam Shaw School of Art in London, Anthony Poon is celebrated for his geometric and relief paintings, which produce dynamic optical and spatial effects. Influenced by the Bauhaus school, hard-edge painting and Op Art, Poon methodically explored the intersections of art, design and technology. He was best known for his *Wave* series, which began in the early 1970s. Inspired by the fluid motion of frequency waves, the paintings ripple with energy, defying the static nature of traditional painting. From 1973 to 1978, Poon managed Alpha Gallery and was a member of the Alpha Group, a collective of nine artists that shared studios above the gallery.

Anthony Poon (方谨顺)

(b. 1945, Singapore; d. 2006, Singapore)

W on White 2P

c. 1990s

Acrylic on canvas-relief

Gift of family of the late Anthony Poon Collection of Singapore Art Museum 2007-01065

W on White 2P combines the sculptural effects of Anthony Poon's shaped canvases and the sinuous wave patterns of his earlier paintings. Beneath the pristine surface, aluminium struts create a voluminous wave form, inviting light to interact with the canvas and enhancing the sensation of gentle movement. Although painted entirely by hand, the surface appears almost spray-painted, demonstrating Poon's precision and control.

Tow Theow Huang (杜超寰)

(b. 1945, Singapore)

1. *Boxes Inside*

1977

Acrylic and light

Collection of National Gallery Singapore ASB-0006

2. *Untitled (Boxes Series)*

1977

Acrylic and light

Collection of Wee Chwee Heng

3. *First Rain*

1977

Acrylic and light Collection of the artist

Tow Theow Huang's light sculptures are made by slotting acrylic sheets into a box, allowing their illuminated edges and etched patterns to glow, creating optical effects. First exhibited in 1977 at the artist-run space, Alpha Gallery, visitors at the time were invited to rearrange the sheets to form their own sequence of patterns, encouraging interaction with the work. This spirit of play and participation was central to Tow's approach. He imagined his sculptures as multifaceted objects: decorative elements, sources of light, as well as "toys."

Choy Weng Yang (蔡荣恩)

(b. 1930, Singapore)

Horizontals I

1977

Oil on canvas

Gift of the artist

Collection of National Gallery Singapore P-0235

Horizontal bands of vivid colours fill this painting's surface. Some align to create vertical and horizontal formations, interrupting the flow of colour. Here, Choy Weng Yang explores colour relationships—harmony, contrast, texture and tonality—and how they shape perception. His expressive brushwork and textured paint application evoke emotions rather than follow strict theory. Choy, who encountered the Bauhaus artists György Kepes and Josef Albers in 1973, had an interdisciplinary practice as a painter, curator, exhibition and graphic designer, and believed in unifying art, craft and design into a cohesive visual language.

Tan Lip Seng (陈立诚)

(b. 1942, Singapore; d. 2025, Singapore)

Left

Three Workers

1965, printed in 2017

Digital print on archival paper

Right

Two Workers

1968, printed in 2017

Digital print on archival paper

Collection of National Gallery Singapore

2018-00046 | 2018-00048

This acquisition was made possible with donations to the Art Adoption & Acquisition Programme.

Tan Lip Seng's *Two Workers* and *Three Workers* show labourers within Singapore's rapidly transforming landscape in the 1960s. Tan developed an innovative technique known as colour-derivation montage. By layering and manually manipulating multiple colour transparencies, he created visually arresting compositions with rich saturation and intense graphic quality.

Originally produced as 35 mm slides that were to be projected, these works showcase his command of high-contrast colour photography. Tan's background as a medical photographer informed his technical precision, which he paired with bold artistic experimentation to document Singapore's changing physical terrain and the human experience within it.

"My photographic style is simple. It's realistic and down-to-earth. It's about finding unique qualities about life and turning them into a photograph worthy as a memento, as a valuable object for appreciation."
Lim Kwong Ling, *Stories in Light*, 2023.

Lim Kwong Ling began learning photography in his thirties, drawing influence from everyday life and the desire to document moments with his family. He took a beginner's photography course at Singapore's Adult Education Board, taught by local photographer Lee Sow Lim. In 1965, Lim co-founded the Photo-Art Association of Singapore and participated widely in local and international salon exhibitions. However, by the 1970s, he distanced himself from typical salon photography, disagreeing with its emphasis on pictorial aesthetics. Instead, Lim turned to documentary photography, dedicating himself to chronicling life in Singapore without resorting to staged scenes or poses.

Lim Kwong Ling (林光霖)

(b. 1932, Singapore)

Marine Parade in the Past

1970

Gelatin silver print on paper

Gift of the artist and family

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2019-00010

This photograph reflects a recurring theme in Lim Kwong Ling's oeuvre—the often-overlooked workers behind Singapore's

changing urban landscape. In the background, towering pristine white Housing Development Board flats symbolise modernity and progress, while in the foreground, workers toil on darkened ground under the sun. With no staging or manipulation, Lim composes the scene through careful composition and strong visual storytelling. This clever juxtaposition draws attention to the manual labourers driving the nation's development.

Yusman Aman

(b. 1937, Singapore; d. 2016, Malaysia)

Structure I

1973

Batik

Collection of National Gallery Singapore P-0184

Rectilinear forms in soft pink hues jostle, stack and cascade across this batik painting, creating a dynamic rhythm. Initially a figurative painter, Yusman became known for his experiments with batik, which he combined with acrylic paint. A self-taught artist who worked in commercial contexts, Yusman's practice bridges craft traditions and modernist abstraction. Like many artists in Singapore during the 1960s and 1970s, he pursued new visual languages that could express a changing cultural and social landscape.

"It has to come from your inner self, your power and your character. There's no secret to those things. They are real because they come from the inside. My body is moving and my emotions are encapsulated in that moment."

Tan Teng-Kee, *A Fact Has No Appearance: Art Beyond the Object*, 2015.

Tan Teng-Kee was a sculptor and a painter, and an influential teacher during the 1970s and 1980s. He studied Chinese ink and Western painting in Hong Kong before training in sculpture and

printmaking at the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Germany. Tan moved to Singapore in 1970, where he taught applied sculpture at the Baharuddin Vocational Institute. Tan played a pivotal role in introducing new approaches to sculpture in Singapore, using industrial metals to construct dynamic abstract forms. His works are rooted by his foundation in calligraphy and ink as well as the influence of his teacher, sculptor Norbert Kricke.

Tan Teng-Kee (陈录记)

(b. 1937, Malaysia; d. 2016, Australia)

Maquette for Rider

1983

Steel, paint and wood

Gift of the artist

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2016-00482

This was Tan Teng-Kee's entry for the 2nd ASEAN Sculpture Symposium in Bangkok in 1983, where he represented Singapore. The finished sculpture still stands in Bangkok's Chatuchak Park. Moving away from sculptural conventions like carving or modelling, Tan stacked and welded industrial elements to depict an abstracted horse rider, a recurring subject matter in art history. Due to his expertise in industrial fabrication and distinctive aesthetic, Tan received numerous commissions for large-scale public sculptures.

Tan Teng-Kee (陈录记)

(b. 1937, Malaysia; d. 2016, Australia)

Photo documentation of *The Picnic*, featuring *Fire Sculpture*, 1979

Digitised by National Gallery Singapore Library & Archive with kind permission from Tan Teng-Kee

In 1979, Tan Teng-Kee staged *The Picnic*, an outdoor exhibition of his paintings and sculptures on a field outside his home at Normanton Estate. It included *Fire Sculpture*, a towering metal structure with a torch, containing newspaper and supported by wooden poles. At dusk, Tan invited a German cultural attaché to ignite it, transforming the work into a dramatic act of creation and destruction. This series of actions marked the opening of his exhibition. While Tan did not return to performance art after this, this event has come to be regarded as one of Singapore's earliest instances of the form, foreshadowing the rise of conceptual practices in the late 1980s.

Kwei Chin Pen (桂承平)
(b. 1927, China; d. 2020, Singapore)
翠羽丹楓 (*Blue Birds and Maple Trees*)

1985

Chinese ink and colour on paper

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2021-00007

This work showcases Kwei Chin Pen's mastery of the flower-and-bird genre and her expertise in the specialised technique of finger ink painting. Following the compositional principles of traditional Chinese painting, the work features diagonal branches of orange maple leaves. The leaves, painted with varying opacities, create a sense of depth and contrast with the blue birds.

Kwei trained under Chen Chong Swee, Che Cheng Lin and later, finger-painting master Wu Tsai Yen. A trailblazer in a male-dominated field, she co-founded the San Yi Finger Painting Society and became the first female president of the Society of Chinese Artists in 1986. Beyond art, Kwei had a varied career as a radio broadcaster, actor and educator, notably serving as Lee Kuan Yew's Mandarin teacher.

Hong Sek Chern (洪雪珍)

(b. 1967, Singapore)

"City Square" After Giacometti

c. 1998

Mixed media

Gift of National Arts Council

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2024-01101

Moving beyond traditional ink painting themes of mountains and seas, Hong Sek Chern uses dense layers of lines and elements to project a familiar, yet unsettling sense of urban space. The work is a response to Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti's *City Square* (1948), which features five thin human figures in a desolate landscape. In contrast, Hong's environment is devoid of people, its ever-extending lines both overwhelming and enclosing the viewer, offering a contemplative reflection on the containment and the sense of isolation of urban environments.

Loo Foh Sang (卢伙生)

(b. 1944, Malaysia)

Flying Fortress

1968

Screenprint

Gift of Mr. Tay Long

Collection of National Gallery Singapore P-0354-T

In *Flying Fortress*, Loo Foh Sang uses the diamond form to frame intricate, interwoven shapes, which suggest the movement of flight and acceleration. A graduate of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Loo moved to Paris to study printmaking at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts and the renowned Atelier 17 under Stanley Hayter. Like many artists in the 1960s and 1970s, Loo travelled abroad to further his practice in printmaking before showcasing his achievements in the medium through exhibitions in Singapore and beyond.

Chen Cheng Mei (陈城梅)

(b. 1927, Singapore; d. 2020, Singapore)

Durian

1986

Etching

Collection of National Gallery Singapore GI-0130

Chen Cheng Mei's print features a fruiting durian tree, with its trunk and branches in muted washes of blue, against a textured, earthy pale brown background. Her lifelong fascination with nature was shaped in part by her early years surrounded by tropical vegetation, as her father cultivated orchids and durians. Chen made a major contribution to Singapore's printmaking scene when she donated two newly imported printing presses to LASALLE College of the Arts in 1985. This helped establish the school's printmaking department, where artists like Chng Seok Tin would go on to teach and nurture future generations of artists.

"I am interested in playing with different kinds of materials and exploring new techniques. The process of making art itself becomes a materialised action which transforms my seeing and thinking into visual information."

Chng Seok Tin, *The Straits Times*, 1989.

Chng Seok Tin played an important role in developing printmaking in Singapore and taught it from 1986 to 1997. Her art explores social concerns, the environment and the human condition. Chng worked as a Chinese language teacher before studying art in the United Kingdom, United States and Paris. She also trained under Stanley Hayter at Atelier 17. Despite losing most of her sight in 1988, she continued making art and advocating for people with disabilities. Though best known for printmaking, Chng also worked across painting, sculpture,

mixed media and installation. A dedicated writer, she won the Singapore Chinese Literary Award in 2007.

Chng Seok Tin (庄心珍)

(b. 1946, Singapore; d. 2019, Singapore)

Self Portrait

1989

Etching and drypoint on paper

Collection of National Gallery Singapore

2021-01075

Self Portrait was created during one of the darkest moments in Chng Seok Tin's life. In 1988, she met with an accident that left her almost completely blind. Despite her grief, she returned to artmaking soon after, channelling her emotions into her work. In this print, a dense tangle of lines envelops and obscures a simply rendered figure, creating a sense of tension and energy. The composition reflects both struggle and resilience—central themes in Chng's practice.

Cheo Chai-Hiang (蒋才雄)

(b. 1946, Singapore)

Top

Untitled – 29 pieces (9)

1976

Etching and aquatint on paper

Bottom

Untitled – 29 pieces (8)

1976

Etching and aquatint on paper

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2000-00149 | 2000-00148

In these prints, Cheo Chai-Hiang foregoes traditional methods to highlight the material presence of printing plates and the marks of his etching tools. He incises, hammers and burnishes oblong plates, allowing intentional gestures and accidental traces to surface. Created at the Royal College of Art in London, these works reflect his broader conceptual approach to interrogating systems of meaning and ways of perceiving art.

“The two activities—making sculpture and print making—are of equal importance to me.”

Kim Lim, Tate Gallery notes, 1977.

A sculptor and a printmaker, Kim Lim was deeply interested in the qualities of light, space and rhythm throughout her practice. Lim left Singapore at the age of 17 to study at London’s St. Martin’s School of Art and Slade School of Fine Art. Lim’s sculptures and prints were developed using simple forms, which are repeated to create visual vibration and rhythm. Her sculptures and prints are often interconnected—ideas first explored in one medium often informed the other—demonstrating the artist’s ability to move fluidly between two- and three- dimensional expression.

“There is no such thing as a clear-cut division between the functional and the artistic. [...] The tension might be there in the initial part. Should I go towards the sculptural, towards the artistic, or towards the functional? But as you develop, the hand, the clay, your emotion, your mind will somehow come to a fusion in the final work you wish to make. The division is not that clear.”

Iskandar Jalil, *Transformation Image: Contemporary Ceramics in Singapore*, 1987.

Regarded as a master potter, Iskandar Jalil’s ceramic works often span functional objects and sculptural artworks. His

works are enriched by diverse cultural sources and from his travels and are recognised for their innovative use of local clay, unique glazes and Southeast Asian motifs. He taught at institutions like the Baharuddin Vocational Institute and the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts for over five decades, championing artistic integrity and discipline.

Iskandar Jalil

(b. 1940, Singapore)

Interplay Between Traditions and Contemporary Forms: #2 Jawi Arabic Scripts

2002

Stoneware and glaze

Istana Art Collection

2004-00190

Jawi calligraphy flows across the surface of this work. Iskandar Jalil frequently incorporated Jawi script into his ceramics, reflecting his profound interests in the history and evolution of calligraphy. The resulting forms and patterns are visually striking and rich in meaning, merging a Malay consciousness with creative new ideas.

Suriani Suratman

(b. 1959, Singapore)

Third Shift 1

2017

Buff raku, orange and white Jalan Bahar clay slip, eucalyptus wood ash glaze

Collection of National Gallery Singapore

2023-00145

Suriani Suratman's *Third Shift 1* is a quiet yet potent meditation on the unseen labour of women. In addition to paid work and unpaid household and childcare duties, Suriani highlights the

“third shift,” the often-overlooked contributions of women in volunteerism and social service. Inspired by her mother, the work acknowledges the multiple roles women balance across work, family and community through three interconnected *gasing* (spinning tops). These forms, each relying on the others for stability, symbolise a delicate balance. A social anthropologist as well as a sculptor, Suriani studied pottery under Iskandar Jalil. Her practice is deeply informed by research into gender relations in Malay households.

Lim Leong Seng (林龙成)

(b. 1950, Singapore)

Life Begins

1977

Kaolin clay

Collection of the artist

In *Life Begins*, Lim Leong Seng redefines the use of ceramics—traditionally associated with craft and function—by transforming it into a sculptural object. Unlike conventional vases, Lim’s work is sealed at the top, emphasising its aesthetic qualities over function. A graduate of Baharuddin Vocational Institute, where he learnt ceramics under Iskandar Jalil, Lim is recognised for his diverse artistic practice, spanning sculpture, painting and collage.

Han Sai Por (韩少芙)

(b. 1943, Singapore)

Growth

1985

Marble

Collection of National Gallery Singapore ASB-0062

Growth comprises five smoothly contoured abstract forms that arc and bend gently, suggesting a sense of organic vitality. Though carved from marble—a material known for its permanence and strength—these shapes appear lifelike and fluid. Han Sai Por's work often draws on organic forms, shaped by close attention to the natural world and its interconnection to human experience.

Body, Self and Other

What does it mean to make images of the human body? How do we hold space for the bodies of others?

Artists created images of the human body as both a personal and profound act. An informal collective called Group 90 devoted themselves to studying and interpreting the human body. They held closed-door life drawing sessions from the nude at LASALLE College of the Arts and the Stamford Arts Centre, and staged exhibitions together. At a time when alternative art forms were on the rise, they remained committed to the human figure as an essential aesthetic form that was central to their artistic development.

Despite cultural anxieties about the nude in art, artists continued to engage with the body to explore identity, including gender, race and sexuality. By the 1990s, a younger generation of artists also used the body to engage with broader questions of representation and how we as viewers look at the person portrayed. Some artists turned to performance art, using their bodies as a medium to interrogate shifting cultural norms that surround the body.

Chia Wai Hon (谢惠汉)

(b. 1927, Singapore; d. 2023, Singapore)

Top

Biological Forms

1975

Etching on paper

Bottom

The Accusing Finger Points

1999

Charcoal on paper

Gift of the artist

Collection of National Gallery Singapore P-1133 | 2010-01276

The reclining nude in *The Accusing Finger Points* partially conceals her body with her limbs. In the top right corner, a pointing finger intrudes and introduces an ambiguous narrative—who is pointing, and why? Artist-critic Chia Wai Hon was part of Group 90, an informal arts group that believed mastery of the human figure was key for artists. His depictions of nudes reflect his refusal to be constrained by prevailing social taboos surrounding the nude as an art form.

S. Namasivayam

(b. 1926, India; d. 2013, Singapore)

Top

Untitled

Undated

Charcoal on paper

Bottom

Untitled

Undated

Charcoal on paper

Collection of National Gallery Singapore

2020-00288 | 2020-00290

These drawings by S. Namasivayam express his deep engagement with the human form, capturing its expressive possibilities through gestural lines in charcoal. His use of distortion heightens the intensity of each figure. He was a founding member of Group 90, an informal group committed to the artistic study of the nude, which included Brother Joseph McNally, Liu Kang, Chia Wai Hon, Ng Eng Teng and others. He also taught figure drawing at LASALLE College of the Arts from 1987 to 2001.

Chrisilda Cherian

(b. 1957, Malaysia; d. unknown)

The Dancer

1995

Chinese ink on paper

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

1996-00160

In *The Dancer*, the female figure takes shape with brisk, energetic brushstrokes, creating a sense of mystery and ambiguity. A bold and decisive brushstroke obscures the figure's eyes, deliberately averting her gaze. Why has the artist chosen to do so? In what ways might it challenge traditional representations of female nudity? A graduate of LASALLE College of the Arts, Chrisilda Cherian was also trained in dance and music, and sought to convey motion and energy through emotive impulses.

Tan Oe Pang (陈有炳)

(b. 1947, Singapore)

Han Acrobatics

1983

Chinese ink and colour on rice paper

Collection of National Gallery Singapore
2015-00409

In *Han Acrobatics*, Tan Oe Pang captures the energy and grace of a male acrobat in motion. Bold brushstrokes outline the figure, while fluid ink smudges suggest movement and energy. Through a predominantly monochromatic palette, Tan honours this ancient performance art, drawing on Surrealist and Cubist influences. The result is a hybrid: part human figure, part calligraphic character. Tan began his formal training in traditional Chinese art at the age of 13 under local ink master Fan Chang Tien.

“The choice of using my body and personal experience as materials for a direct communication with the audience in a live performance was a conscious, deliberate one.”

Amanda Heng, presentation notes, undated.

Amanda Heng is an interdisciplinary performance artist whose works engage with traditional gender roles, cultural identity politics and urban transitions in contemporary society. She turned to art in her late 30s, leaving her job as a tax officer to study printmaking at LASALLE College of the Arts in 1986. A founding member of The Artists Village, Heng’s practice emphasises process and audience engagement, using simple everyday acts—walking, talking or touch—as powerful tools for social critique and transformation. She also established Women in the Arts, the first artist-run women’s collective in Singapore in 1999.

Amanda Heng (王良吟)
(b. 1951, Singapore)
Walking the Stool
1999

Stool, chain, video, single-channel, 5:4 aspect ratio, colour and sound (stereo), 12 mins
Collection of the artist

Walking the Stool was Amanda Heng's response to artistic restrictions in Singapore. In 1997, when Heng was awarded a studio at Telok Kurau by the National Arts Council, she had to sign an agreement that banned performances in the space. This restriction was part of a broader context in which the Singapore government had frozen funding for performance art for nearly a decade. This freeze followed Josef Ng's controversial work *Brother Cane* in 1994. Heng's response was both pointed and playful. She and her collaborators took turns walking a stool on a chain—as if it were a pet—through the streets from Bugis to Orchard Road and back. This simple yet powerful act symbolically addressed issues of control and exclusion in the arts.

Amanda Heng (王良吟)
(b. 1951, Singapore)
Body Fragment Speaks I
1990

Charcoal on paper

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2024-00681

Body Fragment Speaks I brings together Amanda Heng's close-up drawings of body parts—limbs, eyes, the stomach and buttocks. The identities of the sitters are unknown. Through these intimate yet fragmented snapshots, the work breaks down traditional figure drawing, challenging fixed notions of the body and its objectification. While Heng is better known for her performance art, these drawings reveal connections between drawing and her ongoing exploration of the body and identity.

Amanda Heng (王良吟)

(b. 1951, Singapore)

Ho Soon Yeen (何舜莹)

(b. 1970, Singapore)

Chen Kunyi (陈坤仪)

(b. unknown)

Group Performance I

1992

Performance documentation at The Space, Hong Bee Warehouse

Digitised by National Gallery Singapore Library & Archive with kind permission from Amanda Heng. Photographed by Koh Nguang How.

Group Performance I was a collaborative performance by Amanda Heng, Ho Soon Yeen and Chen Kunyi. It used the body as a medium for mark-making to explore its relationship with space. Inviting audience participation, the artists applied house paint to trace the contours of their bodies onto various surfaces of the now-demolished Hong Bee Warehouse rooftop—including the walls, floor, ledge and staircases. Staged in 1992 as part of The Artists Village's collaboration with the Singapore International Festival of Arts, the ephemeral and site-specific nature of this performance reflects changing ideas about what art can be and the role of the artist in society.

Susie Wong (王翠凤)

(b. 1956, Singapore)

Womb Series #7

1997

Oil on canvas

Collection of National Gallery Singapore 2024-01097

Womb Series #7 is a response to the genre of nude painting from a woman-centred perspective. Featuring an elderly model, the

work probes conventional beauty ideals that privilege youthful bodies. Curled into a foetal position, the figure suggests both old age and infancy, highlighting the cyclical connection between birth and death. Although nude painting has been an activity dominated by men, Wong held life drawing sessions at her home, which were largely attended by women. What does it mean to study the body on one's own terms and how might that change what we see?

Ho Soon Yeen (何舜莹)

(b. 1970, Singapore)

Drawing from this position with untucked tummy

1992

Ink on paper

Private collection

In this portrait, Ho Soon Yeen offers a raw and unfiltered depiction of herself that is both honest and self-revealing. Portraying herself as both artist and subject, she paints an unidealised image—her tousled hair and a caption noting her “untucked tummy” challenge idealised representations of women's bodies. With a playful yet cynical perspective, Ho subverts traditional images of female nudity and what beauty is, which often cater to the male gaze. A graduate of LASALLE College of the Arts, Ho is an artist and educator known for her critical engagement with queer identity and representation in art.