



Art Reflects on

Peace

Justice

Equality

Democracy

Progress

5 Stars: Art Reflects on Peace, Justice, Equality, Democracy and Progress is the Singapore Art Museum's (SAM) salute to Singapore's Golden Jubilee and the five stars on the Singapore flag, which represent universal humanist values.

In inviting and commissioning five art luminaries of the nation – Ho Tzu Nyen, Matthew Ngui, T.K. Sabapathy, Suzann Victor and Zulkifle Mahmud – to ponder and respond to each of the values, SAM gives scope to these extraordinary Singaporeans, whose life-long commitment to art as a discipline is inimitable and exemplary. Through the creative and curatorial process, these abstract, intangible concepts are made manifest, and each unique artistic expression and presentation offers nuanced and layered interpretations of the nation's core values, which resonate with Singapore's multifaceted, complex identity. New 'thought-spaces' unfold: from one island-nation's conscious reflections on its ideals, we recognise the humanist foundations of today's world.

Engaging with these 'big ideas' through contemporary art, the **5 Stars** exhibition is curated to encourage diverse individuals and audiences to come together to contemplate what these shared human ideals mean in the present day, and how they might continue to help us envision our futures.


- 1** HO TZU NYEN
No Man
- 2** MATTHEW NGUI
Every Point of View
- 3** ZULKIFLE MAHMOD
Raising Spirits and Restoring Souls

- 4** T.K. SABAPATHY
Of Equal Measure


- 5** SUZANN VICTOR
Bloodline of Peace

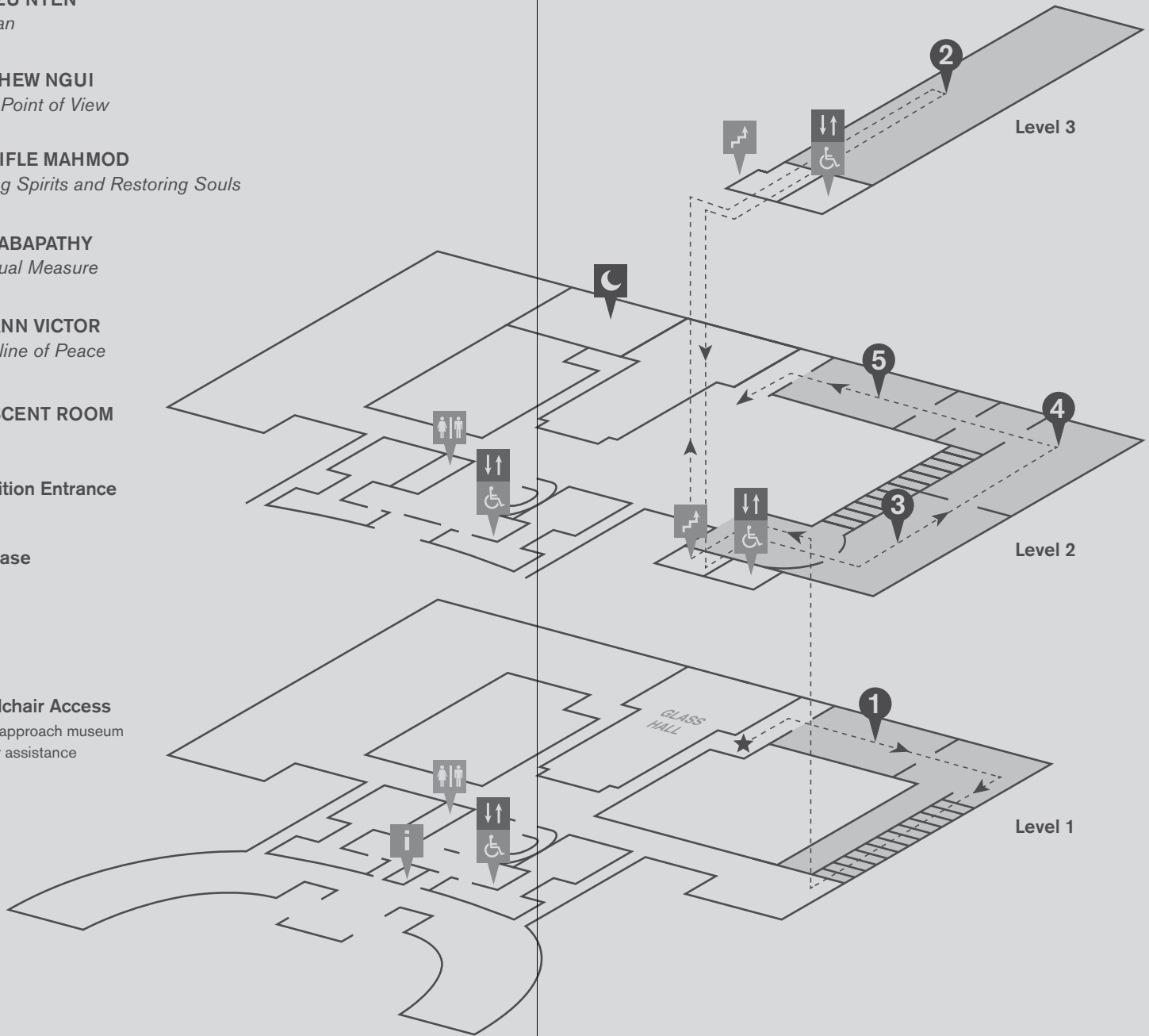
-  CRESCENT ROOM

-  Exhibition Entrance

-  Staircase

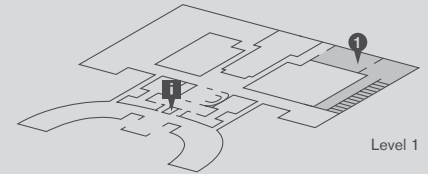
-  Toilet

-  **Wheelchair Access**
Please approach museum staff for assistance



Justice

Justice is often imaged as a woman, blindfolded, and wielding a double-edged sword. We speak of 'Justice' as being 'meted' out – measure for measure, lawfully. The evolution of justice stems from the deep primal need to address wrongs done, to put things right, to take back what was taken away. Who can forget the story of Solomon in his court, pitting the idea of justice and its fearful symmetry against the more incommensurate workings of mercy? Yet even even-handed 'Justice' seems nearly merciful in the historical context of the human need for reprisal, and how it has exacted satisfaction. The law has evolved: from blood feuds and revenge, to the retributive justice of Hammurabi's code, which may seem barbaric ('an eye for an eye'), but was set to restrict unreasoned vengeance, and, comparatively, was a lesser evil than harsh Draconian measures. The more nuanced understanding of justice as it has evolved in the law now may offer cold comfort, but compared to what it was in the past, and what might happen without the law, is accepted as what keeps the peace.



Level 1

Ho Tzu Nyen

No Man

2015

Six channel video installation with sound

15:00 mins (loop)

Collection of the Artist

Singapore Art Museum commission

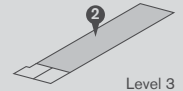
The idea of 'Justice' is inextricably bound up with notions about the individual and society, and their responsibilities towards each other. Through the meting out of justice, society undertakes to act on behalf of individuals to protect them, as well as to exact punishment. And yet, neither society nor justice are abstractions – the former is a massing of individuals, at once no man and everyman, called upon as judge, witness, as well as congregation, in the execution of justice, and the execution of justice itself is always palpable.

Taking as its starting point a poem by John Donne, "Meditation XVII – Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions", *No Man* reflects on how all of humanity is intertwined, such that the taking of a life – while insignificant at first – gradually diminishes the whole. A meditation on the relationship between crowds and power, and the representation of the masses and the individual, *No Man* invites viewers into a hall of mirrors where a sense of self is gradually dissolved, receding into shadows amidst the shifting tableaux. Flanked by an assembly of spectral figures, the passage through this work conjures a passage through limbo, its haunting mob evoking Dante's *Inferno*, and alluding to the final Judgement, where all are held accountable, beyond this mortal plane.

HO TZU NYEN (b. 1976, Singapore) is a writer and visual artist whose practice spans video, painting and theatre. Frequently related to historical and philosophical texts as well as art history, Ho's recent works comprise immersive multimedia installations – an apt vehicle for combining his personal interest in film, text, image and music. He has exhibited widely at home as well as abroad, participating in Biennales and Triennales such as the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane, Australia (2009), group exhibitions including *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia* – a travelling exhibition by the Guggenheim Museum, New York (2013) and a solo exhibition at the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012). He represented Singapore at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011.

Democracy

The origins of the idea of democracy demonstrate how infinitely perfectible complex human ideas can prove to be. What began in Athens – at least in recorded history – as democracy, privileged only a very specific slice of society, leaving out women, workers and nearly everyone else. But even that less than desirable beginning could be seen as a lesser evil than what it evolved from: monarchies that privileged bloodlines through the invocation of divine rights; the rule of tyranny and despots; oppressive rule through sheer might and military violence. Today, the contemporary world turns and returns along the very same lines of how power is distributed and wielded. ‘Democracy’ is a desirable value for any State to be grounded in, and nations run by its principles are strong advocates for it. Yet, it is a fragile state, and its viability is incessantly threatened and undermined. ‘Democracy’ as an idea and an ideal is energised by paradoxical and sometimes contradictory concepts of power, responsibility, rights, influence, protection and freedom. What are the people prepared to trade off for more of one thing over the other? And why does democracy remain such an exhilarating idea?



Level 3

Matthew Ngui

Every Point of View

2015

Plastic pipes and real-time video projection

Dimensions variable

Collection of the Artist

Singapore Art Museum commission

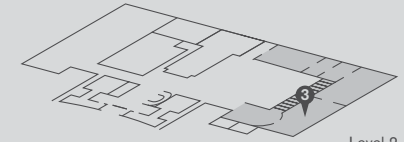
Matthew Ngui’s use of the optical effect of anamorphosis is particularly apt in his engagement with the idea of Democracy. Dense with the vertical whiteness of over 400 PVC pipes, *Every Point of View* invokes the multi-pillared Parthenon in Athens, coincidentally the birthplace of democracy as an ideal and practice.

Wandering amidst the forest of pipes, a viewer fleetingly encounters perspectives on the idea of ‘Democracy’. Representatives of particular demographics were invited to respond to two questions about ‘Democracy’, and the written responses were projected and traced onto the pipes. At specific points, the pipes become a *continuous surface*, where each statement is ‘jigsawed’ into coherence. Operating on the dynamics of anamorphic perception, only exact viewer positioning enables each statement to be read: the instant the viewer steps away from this tightly configured point, the perspective vanishes. These perspectives on democracy are experienced as moments of *surveilled* epiphany, as live camera feedback captures real-time footage at those points, which is projected in a separate space. A soundscape of murmurings of public enunciations on democracy is ‘piped’ through, and viewers become listeners and speakers too – speaking into, or listening from openings on certain pipes. The artist sees the work as “analogous” to the democratic process: that democracy “is an understanding that different viewpoints exist and that it is within this acknowledgment that ways to co-exist are devised consensually and sometimes, not so.”

MATTHEW NGUI (b. 1962, Singapore) is a visual artist, trained in sculpture and now working in the areas of installation, video, performance, site-specific works and public art. He has exhibited locally and internationally in contemporary art museums and spaces in cities such as Berlin, Bordeaux, Copenhagen, Graz, Hong Kong, London, Manila and Vienna. Participating in the São Paulo (1996), Venice (2001) and Gwangju Biennales (2002) and the tenth Documenta in 1997, Ngui focuses on site-specific installations and performances that engage the locality and people of the city and space in which the work is exhibited.

Progress

Technology is moving, and moving societies along with it, at great speeds. Yet technology is not what defines 'Progress' as a value. Progress relates to growth, development, evolution, and a turn towards the future with courage. Progress is not merely about the speed at which improvements or change occurs, but is also about embracing the evolving intricacies of social contexts, accepting unfamiliar solutions to familiar problems, and recognising the possibilities of new perspectives on perpetually thorny issues. Progress is certainly not anything that can be taken for granted: there may be nothing forwardly linear about progression, given how changing policies can reset both the positive and the negative aspects of progress in equal measure. When we speak of a progressive society, it refers to a society that dares to go forward into the future through clear-headed and yet compassionate engagement with the complexity of the human condition, and with a willingness to prospect for more enlightened ways of being.



Level 2

Zulkifle Mahmud

Raising Spirits and Restoring Souls

2015

64-channel midi controller, solenoids, e-bows, amplifiers, piano/bass/guitar strings, copper pipes, midi player and others

Dimensions variable

Collection of the Artist

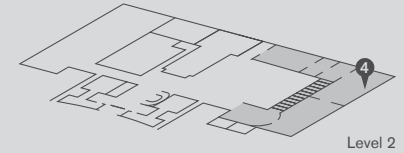
Singapore Art Museum commission

Along a maze of copper pipes that hug the walls, wrapping around the gallery space, a staccato, metronomic orchestra of clinks and twangs tap out the rhythms of a melody that seems all too familiar, yet somehow eludes immediate recognition. The sounds are produced by solenoid valves and e-bows, devices which activate when an electromagnetic current runs through them, while pre-recorded singing issues forth from the speakers. Zulkifle's *Raising Spirits and Restoring Souls* draws upon and reimagines Singapore's national anthem, *Majulah Singapura* (*Onward Singapore*), and in the process, much of the song has been distilled to its percussive beat. Composed by Zubir Said in 1958, *Majulah Singapura* – which is sung daily by every school child in Singapore – contains the phrase "*Sama-sama menuju bahagia*", which translates as, "*Let us progress towards happiness together*". This sentence was of particular interest to Zulkifle, and in examining the idea of 'Progress' and what it signifies to Singaporeans from across the social and economic spectrum, the artist collaborated with children from disadvantaged backgrounds to record their vocal rendition of the phrase, and this is the only line that is 'sung' in the sound installation. Zulkifle asks, "Does the song really resonate with Singaporeans? What is progress in this context? Most of us believe that progress is a linear path; perhaps it is anything but."

ZULKIFLE MAHMUD (b. 1975, Singapore) is at the forefront of a generation of sound-media artists in Singapore. Adopting a multidisciplinary/multi-genre approach that also includes drawings, prints, sculptures and ready-mades, Zulkifle has exhibited in Singapore, Thailand, Germany, Japan, Italy, Moscow, China, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Norway. Zulkifle represented Singapore at the Ogaki Biennale in 2006 and the 52nd Venice Biennale 2007, and other notable initiatives include winning the Singapore Straits Time Life! Theatre Award 2010 for Best Sound Design. Most recently in 2015, his work was featured in 'Singapore: Inside Out', which was presented in Beijing, London, New York and Singapore.

Equality

To be able to live well as a society of equals is to be free from discrimination – whether this pertains to origin, gender, race, class, age, sexual orientation, income, status, language, religion, health or disability, and difference in general. When a nation places the importance of equal opportunities for everyone as the cornerstone of its establishment, it stands strong as a shelter, and is at the same time well supported by the diverse skills and unique individual strengths of its people. Progressive societies strive towards this ideal of equality, which like democracy, is a delicate matter, poised just above and between the more self-serving tendencies of human nature. 'Equality', seemingly simple idea as it is, continues to remain a real challenge.



Level 2

T.K. Sabapathy

Of Equal Measure

2015

Books, mixed media, video and artworks

Dimensions variable

Books and artworks by Elaine Navas and Tan Swie Hian:

Collection of T.K. Sabapathy

Artwork by Kumari Nahappan:

Singapore Art Museum commission and Collection of the Artist

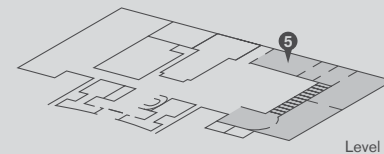
Working tirelessly as an art historian, educator, critic, writer and curator, T.K. Sabapathy's entire life's work has been focused around the creative output of artists – an endeavour to establish art history as an academic discipline in Singapore. In recognising the value of his singular and foundational role in Singapore, *Of Equal Measure* also seeks to underscore the irrevocable value of art – and its roots – to the history and legacy of any nation, society and culture. Insofar that artistic talent and creative expression may originate from any individual, art may be regarded as a precious space of equality and egalitarianism within society.

Drawing upon Sabapathy's personal book collection, one component of this specially curated presentation traces the chronology of his critical writings in a practice spanning over four decades – a remarkable production of knowledge that has resulted in 'textual topology' that is vital to the study of art from this region. Expressed through the medium of language, the work of the art critic and historian also pivots upon deeply personal relationships with the creators of the artworks, and where individual artists have often been the subjects of Sabapathy's work, on occasion, the roles are reversed. Three very different portraits capture the art historian – now the subject of the artist's gaze – and here, in the realm of art, between word and image, a measure of mindful symmetry is framed.

T.K. SABAPATHY (b. 1938, Singapore) is an internationally recognised and respected art historian who has researched and published extensively on Southeast Asian art and artists. His influential writing has inaugurated important art historical trajectories for appreciating the modern and the contemporary in Southeast Asia. His monographic studies of artists, especially in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, have established significant benchmarks in developing the critical literature on art and artists.

Peace

We claim to live in an era of post-World Wars, yet war rages everywhere, and in current times, disturbingly more so. Does history teach us nothing? We speak of 'making' and 'keeping' peace, as active involvement, and that is true of all relations – within the self, between individuals, families, nations, cultures and religions. Paradoxically, while religion has often been the spark that ignites many of the fires of war, religion also offers sanctuary, both literal, in its temples and churches and mosques created through art and architecture, and psychological, through rituals of prayer, fellowship and the promise of a better world than this. To be at peace is what the human heart craves, especially in times of personal crises and when the soul feels embattled. And, it is only when great peace prevails in cities, countries and regions – peace that comes only after immense struggle and relentless negotiation – that great art can arise. So easily taken for granted, gentle peace is attained and maintained with iron-willed discipline, and at great cost.



Level 2

Suzann Victor

Bloodline of Peace

2015

Fresnel lenses, blood and metal pins

4000 x 216 cm

Collection of the Artist

Singapore Art Museum commission

Expansive in scope and in spirit, ***Bloodline of Peace*** brings together a diverse range of Singaporeans who are conjoined through the shared act of giving life's most precious fluid: blood. Unfolding like a monumental quilt, the work comprises over 11,500 units created from more than 34,500 prismatic Fresnel lenses, a material that Victor first used in 1997. Now, in ***Bloodline of Peace***, each segment holds and magnifies in its 'heart', a single drop of blood contributed by individuals representing Singapore's key communities such as the armed forces, medicine, civil defence, the arts and the pioneer generation.

Blood *is* life, visceral, and when drawn by force, it implies brutality, pain, and death. Yet, when donated voluntarily, it is an act that saves the lives of loved ones – and strangers – during medical emergencies. Ultimately, the symbolically rich gift of blood signifies the utmost sacrifice for a fellow human being and for nation, and poignantly, peace – that most fragile of conditions – can oftentimes only be attained, upheld and protected through a *willingness* to make this highest sacrifice. In the artist's words: "A transient state, 'Peace' is defined by absence – that of war and bloodshed. To be sustainable, commitment and preservation are necessary processes undertaken by civilians while armed and medical personnel are at the frontiers."

SUZANN VICTOR (b. 1959) received her PhD (Visual Art) in 2009 from the University of Western Sydney. With distinctive forms and ideas, Victor's compelling artworks garnered critical attention at prestigious international platforms including the 6th Havana Biennale (1997), 49th Venice Biennale (2001), 2nd Asia-Pacific Triennial, Australia (1996), 6th Gwangju Biennale, Korea (2006) and 'Thermocline of Art: New Asian Waves' at ZKM Centre for Art & Media, Karlsruhe, Germany (2007). Formerly the Artistic Director of 5th Passage Ltd (1992-1993), Victor was nominated for the coveted New York-based Civitella Fellowship (2009) while her acclaimed signature series "Contours" was voted top of "10 Must-See List" (Forbes) at Art Stage 2015. Her public artworks are at high-profile locations including the National Museum of Singapore and World Square, Sydney.

Crescent Project

CRESCENT ROOM

Friday, 2 October 2015 – Monday, 2 May 2016 | SAM Gallery 2.9

The Crescent Room is a special play-and-think space for one and all, shaped to extend your experience of the **5 Stars** exhibition. Grasp fresh understanding of all five values at your fingertips through hands-on games and activities. Experience for yourself what it means to win at something you may rather not; contribute to creating possibilities for others; discover how Mathematics help you understand the human value of happiness; increase your 'value' vocabulary, or simply exercise your vote and share your views!

THE ORIGINAL SELFIE MACHINE

\$4 (for two printouts)

Set your scene, BYOP (Bring Your Own Props) and show us what the five stars mean to you. Leave a photo with your name and email address on the Selfie Machine. The two best entries will win a Lomography Diana Mini Camera!

CURATOR TOUR

Wednesday, 7 October and 4 November | 7:30pm | SAM

\$15. Tickets available at SAM and SISTIC.

Interested to find out more about the artworks in the **5 Stars** exhibition? Join the SAM curators of **5 Stars** as they bring you on a specially curated tour that will provide insights into the artworks featured in the exhibition, as well as discuss the curatorial process behind their selection and presentation.

ROUNDTABLE@SAM – ART AND THE BIG IDEAS OF A SMALL NATION

As part of our **Crescent Project: Art Embraces All**, SAM presents a series of Roundtables on *Art and the Big Ideas of a Small Nation*, where experts in their fields are invited to share how the five values affect and influence their experiences, expectations, and visions of the individual, communities, and the state.

Visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg for more information.

Educational Programmes

EDUCATOR TALKS AND TOURS

Friday, 23 October | 4pm | SAM

Talks and tours are held to give educators, preparing to bring students for a visit, an overview of SAM's upcoming exhibitions. Join SAM curator Tan Siuli and educator Wang Tingting as they share the ideas and concepts behind the artworks in **5 Stars**. Each educator will be given a set of the activity sheets.

For more information and to register, please visit

www.singaporeartmuseum.sg/education

PEER-LED GUIDED TOURS

Weekdays | SAM

Secondary 3 art students from Singapore Chinese Girls' School have been trained to guide younger students through the **5 Stars** Exhibition. These tours are offered to Primary Schools only. Contact education@singaporeartmuseum.sg to check on availability and to book a timeslot.

SCHOOL WORKSHOPS

Weekdays | 10:30 am or 2:30pm | SAM

Educational workshops inspired by the artworks in **5 Stars** have been specially developed to offer students a multidisciplinary and holistic contemporary art experience. These workshops which range from learning specific art techniques to craft-making, encourage originality and development of language skills and self-confidence, and facilitate exploration.

For more information, please visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg/education

ACTIVITY SHEETS

Suitable for both students and young adults, the activity sheets – which are based on selected artworks in the exhibition – are catered to different age groups and are available for download at the SAM website.

5 Stars Merchandise

5 Stars: Art Reflects on Peace, Justice, Equality, Democracy and Progress invites diverse individuals and audiences to come together to contemplate what these universal humanist ideals mean in the present day, and how they might continue to help us envision our futures. In this spirit, we have teamed up with five Singaporean designers to create commemorative commitment bands, each representing a meaningful interpretation of the nation's core values, to be worn alone or stacked. Commit to a value today!

PEACE

Agate is known for its restorative powers and ability to bring about inner peace. The black and white agate, alluding to the yin and yang, symbolises peace through harmony and balance. – Shabnam Melwani, SunMoonRain

JUSTICE

Representing the quest for balance between truth and fairness, this band is inspired by the needle engraved counting marks on a daching scale – Southeast Asia's version of weighing scales. – Angie Lai-Tay, ALT

EQUALITY

A friendship band is a symbol for true equality. It is through friendship that we recognise and respect an individual, and accept each other's differences.

– Aaron and Vivi, *Vice + Vanity*

DEMOCRACY

Each stoneware band is painstakingly handmade and unique, just as democracy is moulded by people and different points of view. – Edwin Low, Supermama

PROGRESS

An open-ended answer to a never-ending question; progress is about the constant quest for more, to always strive for higher levels – and it all begins with a question: "why not?" – Carolyn Kan, Carrie K.

5 Stars Commitment Bands: \$120*

Produced in limited quantities of 50 each.

*Each purchase comes with a limited edition 5 Stars Tote Bag.

5 Stars Tote Bags: \$10

5 Stars Artwork Postcards: \$10 for a set of 10, or sold at \$1.50 each.

Sold exclusively at Supermama at SAM.

All proceeds go toward supporting the Singapore Art Museum and its programmes.

General Information

SAM is located at 71 Bras Basah Road, Singapore 189555.

SAM's annexe, SAM at 8Q, is located at 8 Queen Street, Singapore 188535.

OPENING HOURS

Saturdays to Thursdays | 10am to 7pm

(Last admission at 6:15pm)

Fridays | 10am to 9pm

ADMISSION

Citizen/Permanent Resident Free

Foreign Visitors

Adult \$10

Student & Senior Citizen \$5

(60 & above)

Children under six Free

20% off admission tickets for 20 or more persons

Visitors can also enjoy free entry to SAM every Friday from 6pm to 9pm and on Open House days.

Tickets can be purchased from the Information & Ticketing counter at Singapore Art Museum and SAM at 8Q or from SISTIC.

ENQUIRIES

6589 9580 or 6589 9564

enquiries@singaporeartmuseum.sg

MUSEUM TOURS

Tours in English

Mondays to Thursdays | 11am & 2pm

Fridays | 11am, 2pm & 7pm*

Saturdays and Sundays

11am, 2pm & 3:30pm

Tours in Japanese

Tuesdays to Fridays | 10:30am

Tours in Mandarin

Fridays | 7:30pm

Sundays | 11:30am

Tours are not available on public holidays and selected Open House days.

*Select days only.

GETTING TO SAM

By bus

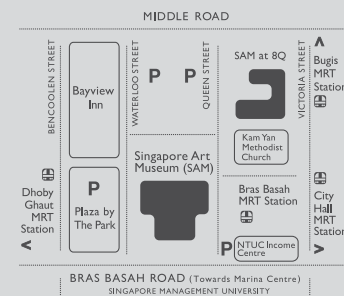
SBS 7, 14, 16, 36, 111, 131, 162, 175, 502, 518 **SMRT** 77, 167, 171, 700

By MRT

2-minute walk from Bras Basah MRT station. 10-minute walk from Dhoby Ghaut, Bugis or City Hall MRT stations.

By car

Carparks are available at Waterloo Street, Queen Street, NTUC Income Centre, Manulife Centre, Hotel Grand Pacific and Singapore Management University.



WHEELCHAIR ACCESS/LOCKERS

Lifts provide easy access to galleries.

Lockers are available for visitors' use.

SAM ONLINE

www.singaporeartmuseum.sg

www.facebook.com/singaporeartmuseum

www.instagram.com/sg_artmuseum

www.twitter.com/sg_artmuseum

www.youtube.com/samtelly

About Singapore Art Museum

The Singapore Art Museum (SAM) 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.

In 2011, SAM was the venue organiser of the Singapore Biennale, becoming the main organiser in 2013. SAM was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 13 November 2013, operating under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, and is no longer part of the National Heritage Board.

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CONTEMPORARY ART IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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