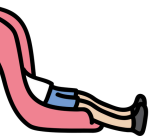
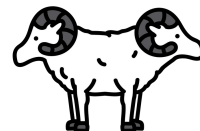
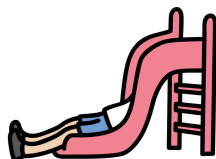
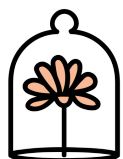
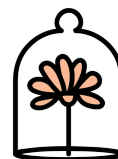


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CONTEMPORARY ART IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

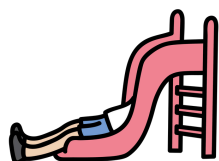


LEARNING GALLERY

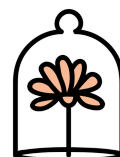
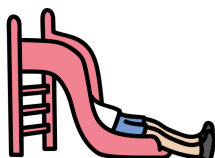
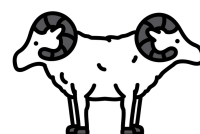


EDUCATORS' RESOURCE

This resource is designed for educators with the aim of fostering meaningful discussions on contemporary art between them and their students.



HAN SAI POR



singaporeartmuseum.sg    [singaporeartmuseum](https://www.instagram.com/singaporeartmuseum)



HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This educators' resource is designed for use with students before, during and after your visit to the Learning Gallery at the Singapore Art Museum.

It shares key concepts and ideas associated with the exhibition to facilitate your visit and complements lessons conducted in school. This includes suggested guiding questions and activities that students may explore in the gallery, at home or in class, wherever relevant.

You may customise your visit by choosing your own preferred exhibition route.

For additional support, please refer to the additional notes for educators and facilitators when addressing the social and emotional learning aspects of the artworks during your discussion.

INTRODUCTION

LEARNING GALLERY

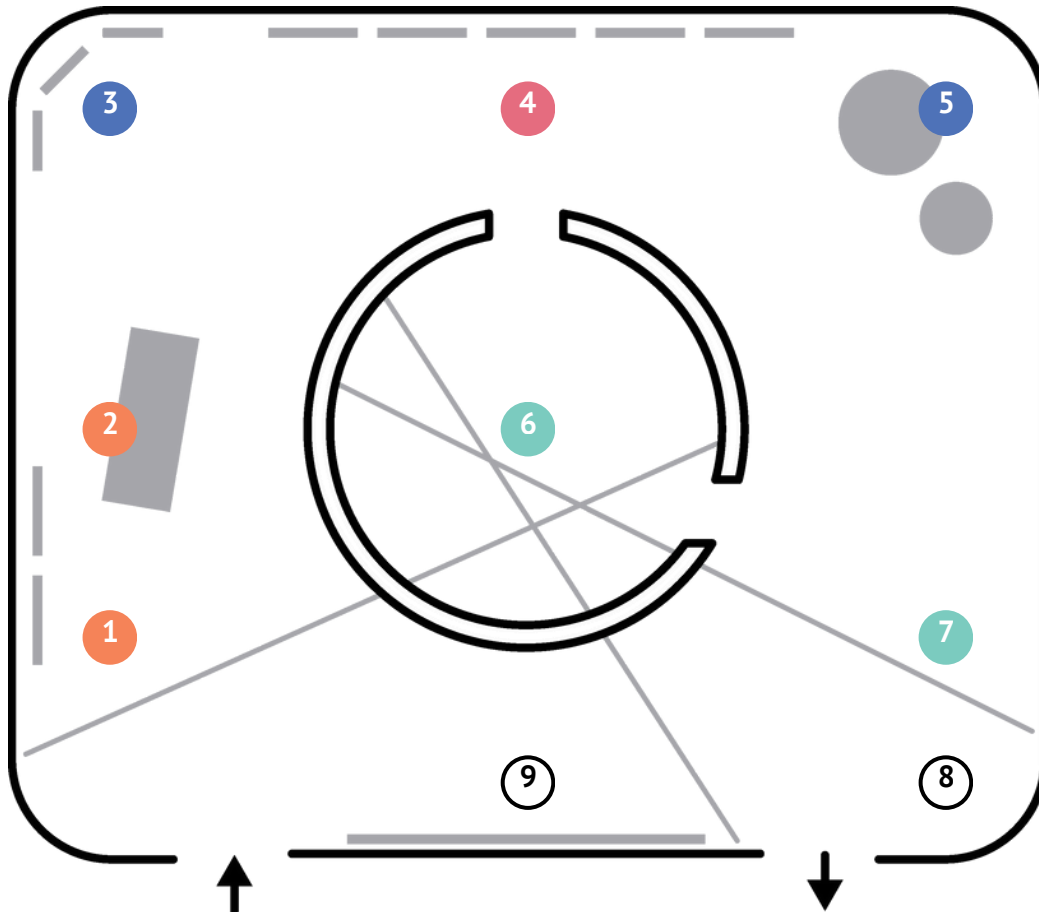
Art and childhood share a natural connection.

Both involve freedom, curiosity and fearless exploration. Many of us first create art as children, a time when we learn about the world and shape our emotions, beliefs and memories. What if we could return to that childlike spirit, open to discovery and unafraid to try something new?

This second edition of the Learning Gallery invites you to look beyond the everyday. Explore possibilities, experiment with different ideas and materials, and venture outside the familiar.

The artworks here span diverse mediums and explore themes of identity, home, nature and the environment, people and places, space and memory. They ask meaningful questions about life and inspire new ways of seeing and understanding contemporary art.

EXHIBITION LAYOUT



- 1 HAN SAI POR
Shelter
Land Deterioration
- 2 HAN SAI POR
Black Forest
- 3 DAVID CHAN
Animal Roulette
- 4 NGUAN
Untitled, from
the series 'Singapore'

- 5 EZZAM RAHMAN
Here's who I am, I am what you see
- 6 CHEN SAI HUA KUAN
Space Drawing 5
- 7 CHEN SAI HUA KUAN
Space Drawing 14
- 8 PROGRAMMES CORNER
Cloud Library
RE-Material
- 9 INTERACTIVE WALL

ARTIST

HAN SAI POR

b. 1943, Singapore

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Renowned artist Han Sai Por is celebrated for her mastery in transforming sturdy granite blocks into vibrant, lifelike figurative forms and organic shapes. Graduating from the Singapore Teachers' Training College in 1968, she later pursued studies in Fine Art at Wolverhampton University, United Kingdom and furthered her education in Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University, New Zealand, from 2004 to 2008.

Her artistic journey has been marked by international acclaim, with exhibitions spanning Southeast Asia, China, South Korea, North America and Europe. Han's creations grace permanent collections in prominent venues such as Singapore's hotels, libraries, Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) stations, as well as parks in Malaysia, Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom. Recognised for her outstanding contributions to the arts, she was honoured with the Cultural Medallion in 1995.



Installation view of *Shelter*, 2009 and *Land Deterioration*, 2009. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

- In an era of rapid global growth, the impact on wildlife and natural landscapes is undeniable. Artist Han Sai Por has emerged as a passionate advocate for environmental conservation, with her work reflecting a deep, physical engagement with nature.
- Her practice reveals a lifelong connection to ecological issues, offering a powerful commentary on humanity's changing relationship with the environment.
- In 2009, she turned her focus to Southeast Asia's vanishing rainforests — including Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia — inspired by the loss of her childhood home to urban development.
- Through research and observation, she created works like *Shelter* and *Land Deterioration*, which challenge traditional landscape art by portraying nature in its raw, untamed state rather than manicured perfection.



Installation view of *Shelter*, 2009. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Shelter

2009

Ink on paper

38 × 56 cm

Collection of the artist

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

- *Shelter* features a forest of sculptural tree trunks and branches, stripped of leaves and crowns.
 - The monochromatic artwork employs a reduced colour palette in shades of black, white and grey. This choice of colours focuses attention on the forest while highlighting the artist's exploration of form and texture.
 - Imbued with both aesthetic and emotional depth, this artwork expresses the impact of human activity, such as construction and climate change, on once-thriving rainforest ecosystems.
 - The absence of foliage or the crown of the trees in a tropical forest suggests the impact of human activities on the forest and highlights the broader environmental threats by climate change.
-



Installation view of *Land Deterioration*, 2009. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Land Deterioration

2009

Ink on paper

38 × 56 cm

Collection of the artist

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

- *Land Deterioration* focuses on the texture and materiality of the earth, highlighting fine and meticulous details and natural variations. The landscape shows a forest floor stripped of trees, drawing attention to the bare, vulnerable landscape.
 - It magnifies coarse, dense textures, highlighting the raw materiality of the eroded earth. The relentless force of water has shaped the loose soil into undulating formations, etched with deep ridges, cracks and grooves — evident in the dark markings.
 - It challenges viewers to reflect on the impact of deforestation and land development, especially the effects of prioritising human needs over biodiversity and ecological balance.
-

*The questions below are for both ink drawings.

PRE-VISIT QUESTIONS

- Why do you think forests are important?
 - Have you ever seen a natural space (like a park, forest or field) change or disappear? How did that make you feel?
-

VIEW AND DISCUSS



SEE

- How would you describe the qualities of texture, light and form in this artwork?
- Which part of the drawing did you notice first? Why do you think that area stands out?
- What visual elements feel natural, and which feel altered or disrupted?



THINK

- Find three different textures in the drawings. How do you think the artist made each one look different?
- What does the absence of leaves or the brokenness of the soil suggest to you?
- What messages might the artist be communicating through these visual choices?



WONDER

- What questions raise about human relationship with land and nature?
- What might be the next chapter in this landscape's story?
- Why do you think the artist named this work *Shelter*?

POST-VISIT QUESTIONS

- If you were to add one more drawing to this series, what would it depict?
 - What materials, colours or techniques would you use to create your own nature-themed artwork?
-

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



ACTIVITY 1 — TEXTURES OF EARTH

- Bring the students outside or explore a nature-themed texture box.
- Have students touch and observe different natural textures such as bark, leaves, stones, dirt and grass.
- Students will explore line, texture and contrast using only black ink (or black pen/marker) on white paper to create a drawing inspired by natural landscapes.
- Each student picks one or two favourite textures and creates mini square or circular drawings.
- Students write short clues or riddles about the texture they drew.
- Classmates guess which artwork matches each clue!

ACTIVITY 2 — CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPES

- Think of a natural environment you love (e.g., a childhood beach, a local forest, a mountain you have hiked).
 - Briefly describe or sketch its current state — what makes it vibrant or meaningful to you?
 - Imagine this place deteriorating to the state of Han Sai Por's *Black Forest* (twisted, fragmented, bleak).
 - Consider:
 - What visual changes would occur? (e.g., colours fading, trees collapsing, pollution creeping in).
 - What sounds, smells or textures would vanish or transform?
 - Describe in writing or draw a sketch of this altered landscape. Focus on striking details that show loss.
-



Installation view of *Black Forest*, 2024. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Black Forest

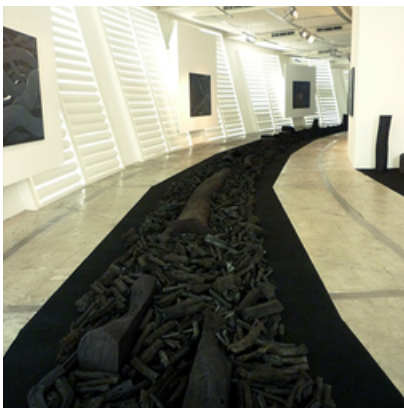
2024

Wood and charcoal

Dimensions variable

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

- The *Black Forest* series was first exhibited at the Esplanade — Theatres on the Bay in 2011 and later at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts gallery in 2013. The artwork was then redeveloped as part of a commission for the 2016 Singapore Biennale.



Installation view of *Black Forest*, 2011.
Image courtesy of artist.



Installation view of *Black Forest*, 2013.
Image courtesy of artist.



Installation view of *Black Forest*, 2016.
Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

- The latest iteration of *Black Forest* (2024) in the Learning Gallery is an installation made of burnt, stained black wood arranged in upright positions and lying on beds of charcoal.
- The installation illustrates the changing state of forests, which have been seriously affected by deforestation.
- With *Black Forest*, Han aims to raise the public's awareness of the dangers of environmental destruction and the need for conservation.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Han was born on 19 July 1943 during the Japanese Occupation. She grew up in a kampong in Changi, which was then surrounded by a forest.
- She described her childhood as “happy and free.” She loved the outdoors and enjoyed going to the nearby beach where she would sculpt sand into the shapes of animals.
- Her childhood experiences made her appreciative of nature and instilled in her a sense of adventure.
- Most of the branches that were used to create this artwork came from Tembusu trees, which are native to Northeast India and Southeast Asia.
- The Tembusu branches are kindly donated by the National Parks Board (NParks).
- Tembusu wood is hardy and resistant, and thus frequently used to make chopping boards.
- The Singapore \$5 Portrait Series note features an image of a Tembusu tree in the Singapore Botanic Gardens. That particular tree had been growing in that spot since before the garden's construction in 1859.



Image taken from Monetary Authority of Singapore website.

PRE-VISIT QUESTIONS

- Draw out the images that come to your mind when you hear the title *Black Forest*. Describe and explain your drawings.
- There are many artists who are concerned with environmental issues. Do some research on these artists and their practices. How have they addressed these environmental issues through their artworks?

Artists interested in environmental topics include:

TAN ZI XI



Installation view of *Plastic Ocean*, 2016. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Plastic Ocean

2016

Plastic, nylon string, wooden pedestals, dimensions variable

Garbage is everywhere! What happens when we heedlessly throw away our garbage? 269,000 tonnes of plastic debris floats on the surface of our world's oceans, creating hazardous living environments for marine life. In *Plastic Ocean*, artist Tan Zi Xi tackles the issue of pollution head-on with her recreation of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Comprising approximately 26,000 pieces of non-biodegradables, her installation invites viewers to experience the sensation of floating in a sea of trash. At the same time, the artwork embodies the wonders of recycling and repurposing, and the transformative power of art.

ONG KIAN PENG



Installation view of *The Viscous Sea*, 2022. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

The Viscous Sea

2022

Video, 6 channels, HD format, surround sound, 20 min

Collection of the artist Singapore Biennale 2022 Commission

The Viscous Sea is an installation that explores how we experience and are affected by climate change. While Ong Kian Peng plans the content that he hopes to record prior to a shoot, he often encounters unexpected situations and must rely on his intuition while out in the field. As environmental conditions are unpredictable, actively observing and responding to his changing surroundings are key parts of his practice. He has documented the effects of rising sea levels on his treks along the valleys and seasonal rivers that connect to the Dead Sea. He has collected footage of waterways as well as the nomadic Bedouin tribes that roam around the valleys of Jordan. Ong hopes that audiences can derive meaning from what they hear or see.

VIEW AND DISCUSS



SEE

- What objects or materials do you recognise in this installation?
- How do you think this artwork was made?



THINK

- Walk around and experience the installation. What word best describes how you feel after the looking at the artwork? Share your thoughts with your friends.
- Before seeing this installation, what do you think deforestation will look like?



WONDER

- Imagine yourself walking through a burnt forest. How do you think you would feel? How would you feel if all our forests look like the *Black Forest*?
- How do you think the artist felt when creating this artwork?
- Do you think this installation is effective in showing the consequences of human activities on the environment? Why?
- The artist has changed the presentation of this installation multiple times. Why do you think she chose to make different versions of the artwork?



REFLECTION

SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-MANAGEMENT

- What emotions does this artwork evoke in you? How do you usually cope with difficult emotions like sadness or anger about environmental issues?
- How do people deal with the feelings of loss / grief?
- Once you have a growing concern about certain issue, how do you decide the way you can approach it? Fight / flight response? Denial?

SOCIAL AWARENESS AND RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

- How can we work together as a community to address the issue of deforestation?
- What role can art play in raising awareness and inspiring action?

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

- What choices can we make in our daily lives to reduce our impact on forests and the environment?
 - How can we use our creativity to find solutions to environmental problems?
-

POST-VISIT QUESTIONS

- Discuss the environmental issues that you are concerned about.
- Sketch out how you would express your concerns in a sculpture or installation.



LOOKING AS A WHOLE

*Look at all three artworks together to answer the questions below.

- Han Sai Por's three artworks interpret a damaged forest from different angles. What perspectives does she use, and how do they shape the viewer's experience?
 - Why do you think these ink drawings are positioned directly beside the installation? What relationship does their placement suggest?
 - How does viewing the drawings affect your interpretation of the installation? Does one alter the meaning of the other?
 - What recurring symbols, themes or visual motifs link the drawings and the installation? How do they reinforce or contrast with each other?
 - If the installation conveys a story, how do the drawings expand upon it? Do they act as a prequel, sequel or alternate viewpoint? What clues support your interpretation?
-

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



ACTIVITY 1 — CREATE A “FOREST DWELLER”

- Choose a natural object that can be found in a forest. Observe it closely and draw.
- Select a few characteristics of the natural object.
- Design a creature based on these characteristics.

ACTIVITY 2 — CAN I BE AN ART ENVIRONMENTALIST?

- Choose an environmental issue that is close to your heart.
- Conduct research on the issue and share what you discover with your peers.
You may present about the root of the problem, the consequences of allowing the issue to worsen or the possible solutions.
- Decide on a medium that would best express your understanding of the issue.
Draft the design of the artwork that you would create with this medium.
- Share your design with your partner and share your thoughts about each other’s work.

ACTIVITY 3 — I CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT!

- Encourage students to research and explore local environmental initiatives or organisations they can get involved with.
- Invite a guest speaker, such as a local artist or environmentalist, to share their perspectives and insights on the topic.
- Organise a follow-up field trip to a natural environment where students can apply their newfound understanding and appreciation for nature.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



While students often associate nature-themed art with environmental messages, artists use natural imagery to express far more diverse themes.

Simryn Gill's *Forest* uses photographs, objects and installations to reconsider how people experience a sense of place and how both personal and cultural histories inform our present moment.

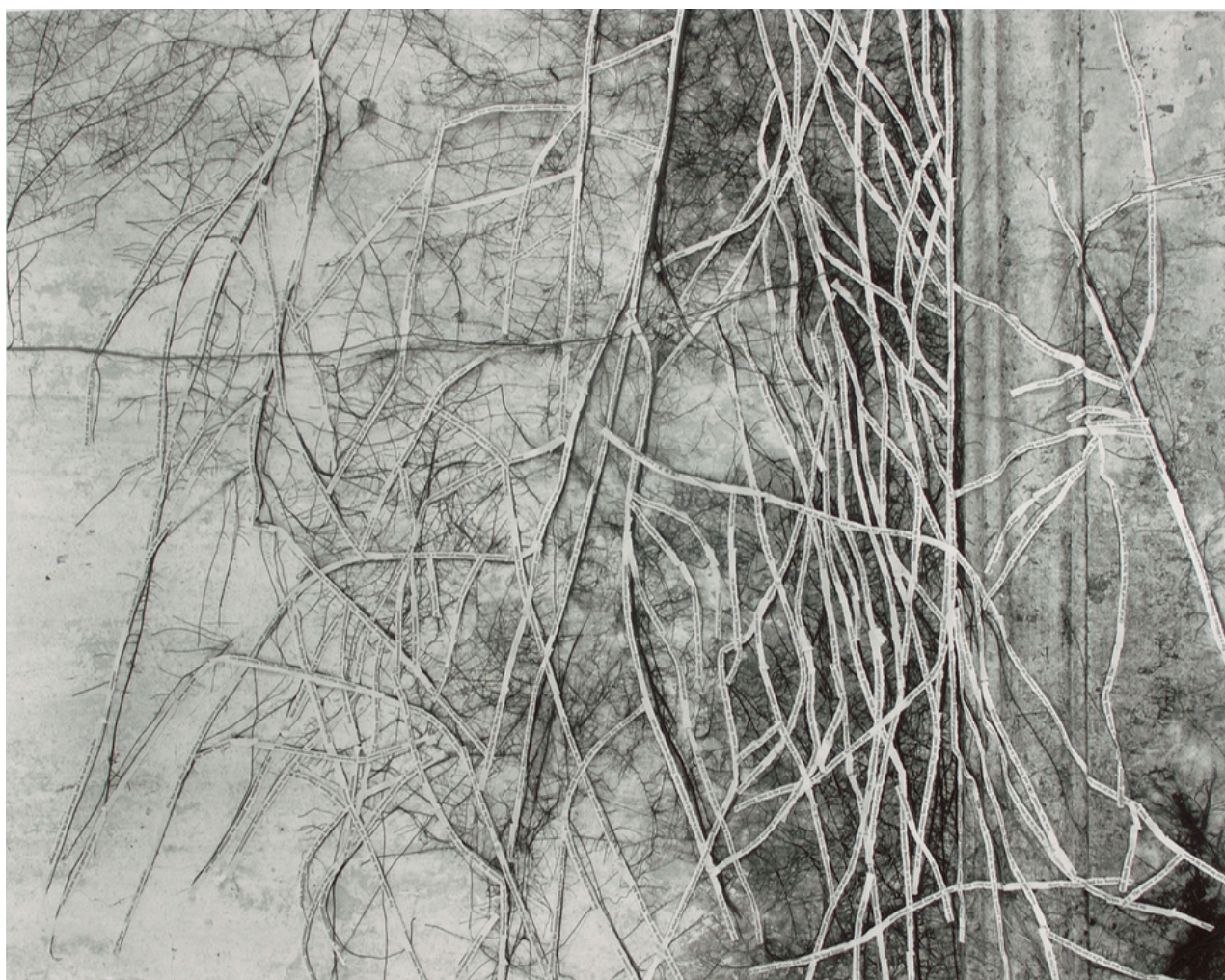


Image from the series, *Forest*, 1996–1998. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Forest (Series of 16, Edition 6/15)

1996–1998

16 photographs, 120.0 × 95.0 cm each

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

This photographic series by Simryn Gill captures a landscape where once-cultivated plants have been left to reclaim the land, creating a space where local and introduced species thrive together in unexpected harmony.

Upon closer inspection, viewers will discover that each photograph incorporates pages from books that were precisely cut and woven into the forest's fabric. These fragments of text merge with leaves, dangling roots and the textured bark of trees, as if the printed text returned to its origins in the natural world.

By deliberately embedding these pages into the forest, Gill invites us to reflect on our relationship with the environment and our place within it. She prompts us to consider how cultures, stories and legends, though often invisible, take root and shape our daily lives. Just as plants spread and adapt, human movement, whether migration or displacement, leaves an indelible imprint on the land.

FIND OUT MORE!

ARTIST

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- Inona Whittaker, "The Committed Artist: Han Sai Por Interview," Ran Dian 燃点, translated by Song Jing, 21 March 2014, <http://www.randian.art/the-committed-artist-han-sai-por-interview/>.
- Nureza Ahmad, "Han Sai Por," *National Library Board*, accessed 3 September 2025, <https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuiid=c747d402-f99c-4fd0-8b0f-c06dd7044ae8>
- Payal Uttam, "Force of Nature," *Prestige*, 26 June 2014, <https://www.prestigeonline.com/sg/lifestyle/force-of-nature-2/>.
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VIDEOS

- ART SG, "ART SG Portraits | Han Sai Por" YouTube, 13 May 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Z7g2eRP4DI>
- National Gallery Singapore, "Get up close with... | Singapore sculptor Han Sai Por" YouTube, 16 November 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBo8Y-sZKfo>
- STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery, "Han Sai Por: The Forest and Its Soul" YouTube, 29 April 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uREvuKJJRLA>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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 - Sumedhaa Hariram, "An inconvenient practice," *Plural Art Mag*, 16 July 2018, <https://pluralartmag.com/an-inconvenient-practice/>
 - Toh Wen Li, "Art exhibitions probe mankind's relationship with nature," *The Straits Times*, 17 February 2021, <https://www.straitstimes.com/life/arts/art-exhibitions-probe-mankinds-relationship-with-nature>
-

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR EDUCATOR / FACILITATOR

If a student is feeling uncomfortable when talking about their emotions, you may consider the following suggested approaches:

1. ACKNOWLEDGE AND VALIDATE THEIR EMOTIONS

Let the participant know that you are concerned about their wellbeing.

- Verbal: “I hear you're feeling overwhelmed. It's okay to feel this way.”
- Non-verbal: Make eye contact, nod empathetically, and show that you're listening attentively.

2. ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Allow the participant to talk about their experiences (and beliefs) if they want to, but do not force them.

- Verbal: “What was that like for you?” or “Can you tell me more about...?”

3. PARAPHRASE TO CLARIFY

Restate what you believe they are saying in your own words to ensure you are understanding their experience correctly.

- Verbal: “It seems like you were frightened and worried.”

4. OFFER A BREAK

- Verbal: “Would you like to take a short break?”
- Non-verbal: Gesture towards a door or a quiet area.

5. CHECK-IN PRIVATELY

- Verbal: “If you’d like to talk about this further, we can have a private conversation later.”
- Non-verbal: Discreetly approach the participant after the session.

6. GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

- Verbal: “Can I offer you some grounding techniques? Perhaps focusing on your breath or the sensations in your body might help.”
- Non-verbal: Demonstrate deep breathing exercises or guide the participant through the technique.

7. ADJUST THE PACE

- Verbal: “Let’s slow down for a moment. We can revisit this topic later if you’re feeling more comfortable.”

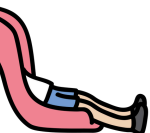
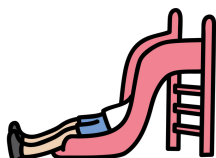
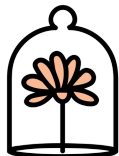
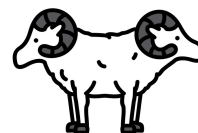
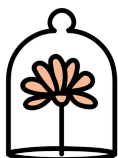
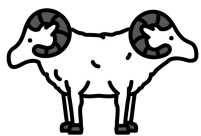
8. SHIFT THE FOCUS

- Verbal: “Perhaps we could shift our focus to a different topic for now and come back to this later.”

9. GET HELP IF NEEDED.

If the participant is in distress, do not hesitate to get help from a fellow teacher or school counsellor.

- Verbal: “I’m concerned about your well-being. Would you like me to get help from another teacher or a counsellor?”



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