

## Activity Sheet



Welcome to the *President's Young Talents* exhibition at the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) at 8 Queen Street! The *President's Young Talents* is a special exhibition in which promising young artists from Singapore are selected and commissioned to create and present a new work at SAM.

This activity sheet has been designed to get you thinking about the artworks and to introduce to you some ideas explored in this exhibition.

### ***Don't forget to...***

Head over to the **Think&Tinker Room**, a special interactive space on level 2, to explore materials and ideas inspired by the artworks within the *President's Young Talents* exhibition. How do we make meaning of the mundane everyday? Can we transform how beauty is perceived and experienced? Where does power lie, and why? How do we organise knowledge and information? Is it possible to reverse environmental damage?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Inaugurated by the Singapore Art Museum in 2001, the *President's Young Talents* stands out from other art awards as the only mentoring and commissioning exhibition programme in Singapore.

An independent committee nominates a group of local artists below 35 years for the award and members of this committee are also mentors to each finalist artist.



### Did you know?

A mentor is someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person.

The word “mentor” is Greek in origin. It refers to a character in *The Odyssey*, written by the Greek poet, Homer. In this story, Odysseus, King of Ithaca, fights in the Trojan War and entrusts the care of his household to Mentor, who serves as teacher and overseer of Odysseus’ son, Telemachus. This sage Mentor is actually Athena, the Goddess of war and wisdom, in disguise.

1. The meaning of the word “mentor” has since evolved. Come up with five other synonyms for mentor:

The mentors we come across in stories are often wise and well travelled. They understand the ways of the world and have been through many difficult challenges in life. In overcoming such difficulties, these mentors have accumulated experience, gained wisdom and moved toward another level of actualising their full potential.

2. Do you wish you had a mentor? Why? Name someone who would be an ideal mentor to you. Why have you chosen this person? In what aspects of life would you like this mentor to coach you?

3. Match the mentors that have appeared in stories and movies with their students below:

Mentor	Student
Leigh Anne Tuohy From the movie, "The Blind Side" ♦	♦ Peeta Mellark
Master Shifu From the movie, "Kung Fu Panda" ♦	♦ Michael Oher
Rubeus Hagrid From the novel series, "Harry Potter" ♦	♦ Katniss Everdeen
Jason Bradley From the movie, "October Baby" ♦	♦ Bruce Lee
Branch Rickey From the film, "42" ♦	♦ Harry Potter
Yip Man ♦	♦ Po
Haymitch Abernathy From the novel, "The Hunger Games" ♦	♦ Hannah Lawson
	♦ Jack Roosevelt Robinson, fondly known as "Jackie" Robinson

4. Do you agree that the above mentors fit the usual characteristics of mentors? Why or why not?

5. Who are some other mentors you can recall from stories and movies?



Enter the first floor gallery

What you are viewing now is an *installation* titled ***Of Public Interest: The Singapore Art Museum Resource Room*** by the artist Loo Zihan. Spend some time wandering around the room and pay careful attention to the titles of the books and the way they are categorised on the shelves.

6. Did you notice that the bookshelves are arranged in an unusual manner in this room? What do you notice about this arrangement? Why do you think the bookshelves are placed in such a manner?

*abc* What do they mean?

*Installation*: a work of art that usually consists of multiple components often in mixed media. Installations are often site-specific and designed to transform the perception of a space.

7. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, street directories, libraries... what do these have in common? Knowledge becomes very useful when it is organised and can be accessed easily. How did the artist choose to classify the books? Is this a common or unusual way of categorising books? Why?

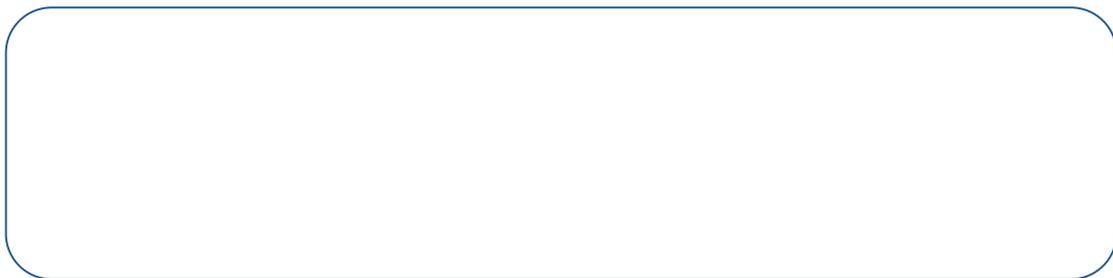
8. Notice the two areas in this gallery where one may “withdraw” or “contribute” a book. What do you think the artist is trying to convey through this process?



9. Take note of books that have been “withdrawn” and “contributed”. Do you agree with the suggestions? What do you think the artist wants the museum visitor to engage with? How has this intervention affected the artwork?



10. The artist chose to work with his own method of library classification. Can you name a classification system? How does it work?





### Let's try this

The Argentinian writer, Jorge Luis Borges, wrote the essay, *The Analytical Language of John Wilkins* as a critique of philosopher and writer John Wilkins's proposal for a universal language. Borges came up with this interesting thought experiment that likens Wilkins's classification scheme to "a certain Chinese Encyclopaedia", fictitiously called the *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, in which animals are divided into:

- a) Those that belong to the Emperor
- b) Embalmed ones
- c) Those that are tamed
- d) Suckling pigs
- e) Sirens
- f) Fabulous ones
- g) Stray dogs
- h) Those included in the present classification
- i) Those that tremble as if they were mad
- j) Innumerable ones
- k) Those drawn with a fine camelhair brush
- l) Others
- m) Those that have just broken a flower vase
- n) Those that from a long way look like flies

Through this example of classification, Borges wonders why we have attempted to describe the world, as the world really is, when "obviously there is no classification of the universe that is not *arbitrary* and *conjectural*".

11. Imagine if you had to arrange and classify all the animals in the world in a new way. How would you have done it?

### abc What do they mean?

*Arbitrary*: based on random choice, rather than any reason or system.

*Conjectural*: based on an opinion or conclusion formed without proof or sufficient evidence.



### Did you know?

There are several different classification systems used in libraries. The most common system is the Dewey Decimal Classification System with ten main categories represented by figures from 000 to 999. A decimal point follows the third digit in a class number, after which division by ten continues to the specific degree of classification needed.

The first digit in each 3-digit number represents the main class. For example, 500 – 599 represents the class “Natural Sciences” such as Mathematics, Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry, Geology, Paleontology, Biology, Zoology and Botany. The second digit represents the division. For example, 510 is used for Mathematics, 520 for Astronomy and 530 for Physics. The third digit indicates the section. For example, 530 is used for general works on physics, 531 for classical mechanics, 532 for fluid mechanics and 533 for gas mechanics.

Another system is the Library of Congress Classification which divides knowledge into twenty large classes, using alphabets from A to Z (except alphabets I, O, X and Y).

Do you know of other classification systems? How do you think living things and stars are categorised?

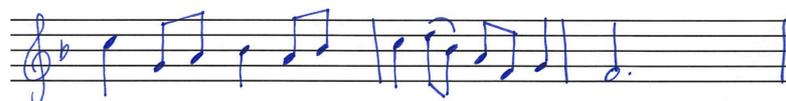
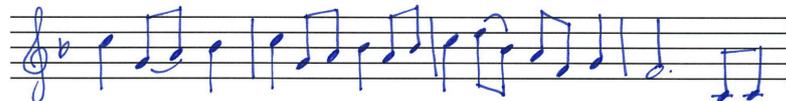
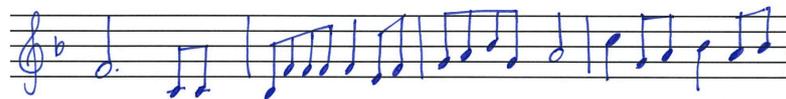
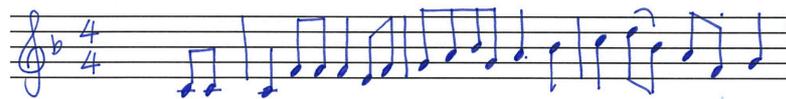


**Head to the third floor and enter the gallery on your right**

This artwork by the artist Ang Song Ming, titled *Days*, brings together four works of different media and is connected through their focus on the daily and ordinary.

12. Spend some time looking at *Music Manuscripts #30 – 48* displayed on the walls. Walk from manuscript #30, #31, #32 ... to manuscript #48 and back to manuscript #30 again. What do you notice as you walk from manuscript #30 to manuscript #48?

A manuscript is a handwritten or typewritten document instead of a printed copy.  
An example of a handwritten music manuscript is:



13. Name one similarity and one difference between this handwritten manuscript and the artwork *Music Manuscripts #30 – 48*.

14. Ang Song Ming is interested in investigating the rigorous process of art making through the use of music as a subject matter. What do you think the artist is trying to convey in this piece?

Now take a look at the music stands displaying sheets of paper in the room. This is titled *Notes*. Look at the diary entry accompanying this doodle:



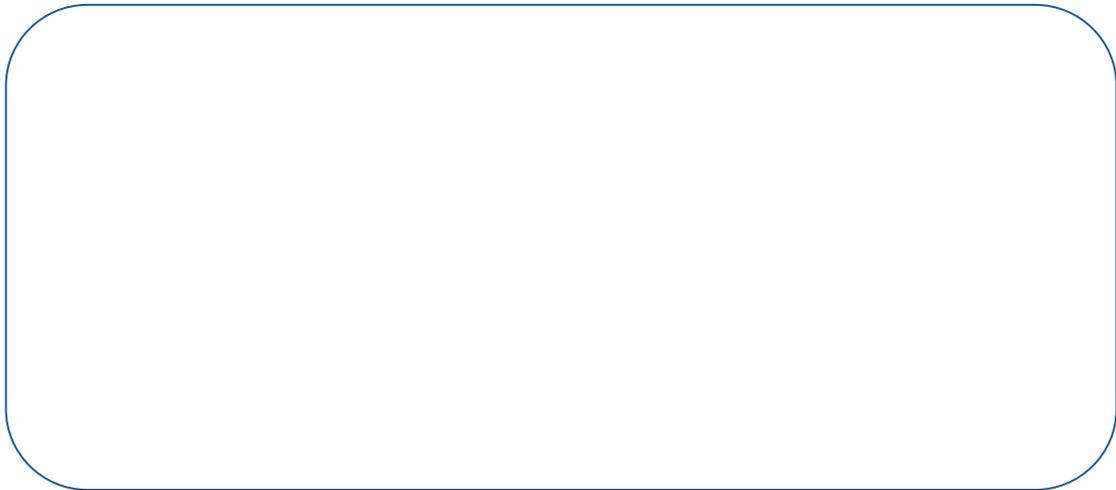
15. In your own words, summarise the diary entry.



16. How do you think the artist was feeling when he wrote this? Do the words and doodle correlate? How can you interpret feelings or meaning from the brush stroke?



17. Enter the last room where a video is being played. Spend some time watching this video, *Album*. Describe what you see here and give an assessment of what transpired:



18. Through the four different mediums of photography, video, drawings and writing, how effective are the mediums in conveying the artist's intention? Why?





**Now exit this gallery and enter the other gallery on level 3**

19. The title of this artwork by artist Bani Haykal is *necropolis for those without sleep*. Name three other synonyms of *necropolis*.

The artist Bani Haykal designed this space to be experienced by a set of rules:

- #1) Please do not touch the artworks.
- #2) If the door is closed, please wait patiently till it opens to enter.
- #3) Only 2 visitors are allowed in the space at any point in time.
- #4) If you are visitor #2 in the space, your steps are limited to 50 steps, after which you will be told to leave.

20. Are you ready to engage with this artwork? Pick a friend and enter the space. Take a closer look at this board game. How different is it from a conventional chess game? Write down three differences you observe.

21. Make a guess which team will win! Stay in this game space until one team wins. Did you guess correctly? What made your prediction accurate or inaccurate?

*abc* **What do they mean?**

*Necropolis*: a cemetery, especially a large elaborate cemetery of an ancient city.

22. As the game is reset, do you think the same team will win again? Why?

The artist is using the chess game as an *allegory* to comment on systems of power in political, economic and social landscapes. Although used mostly by writers and poets, some visual artists also use allegory to represent meaning beyond, or in addition to, the literal meaning depicted.



### Did you know?

The artist invited experts in this game of chess to play this game with him during live performances. According to him, the team that is in a slightly disadvantageous position at the beginning won an average of one out of nineteen games played!

What do you think this means politically, economically and socially?

### abc What do they mean?

*Allegory*: the description of a subject in the guise of another subject. An allegory usually extends its representation over the course of an entire story, novel or poem.



### Let's try this

23. Now that you have understood the meaning of allegory, find out the difference between allegory, metaphor and symbol.

Metaphor: \_\_\_\_\_.

Symbol: \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.



## Fun at Home

Thai artist Natee Utarit is known for his paintings that use assemblages of *still life*, symbolically using toys and common everyday objects to signify coded meanings that are an allegory to the Thai social and political situation in a particular time.

*The Birth of Tragedy* is Natee Utarit's largest masterpiece to-date, painted during the uncertain point of politics in the Thai kingdom, alluding to the uncertain future. This painting belongs to SAM's permanent collection and was last exhibited in the exhibition *Medium at Large* from 25 April 2014 – April 2015 in SAM.

What do you think the symbols mean in Natee Utarit's *The Birth of Tragedy*? Fill them up on the next page.

## abc What do they mean?

*Still Life*: a painting or drawing of objects, such as fruits and flowers, and objects contrasting with these in texture. Traditionally, some objects in a still life were likely to have been selected for their symbolic meaning, but this symbolism sometimes eludes most modern-day visitors.

Write down what you think these symbols mean:



Where are stag heads usually found? What do you think it means?

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Skeleton:

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In Christianity, Jesus Christ is usually painted adorned in a red robe. What does it mean?

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A soldier of comparatively gigantic proportions overlooks the miniature soldiers. What do you think this signifies?

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This is a famous sculpture in The Louvre Museum in Paris, called the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*. What could it represent or suggest?

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**Go to the fourth floor and enter the gallery on your left**

24. This artwork by multi-disciplinary artist Ezzam Rahman is titled ***Here's who I am, I am what you see***. Write down three adjectives that describe your immediate response upon experiencing the artwork.

25. Now observe each item closely and describe what you see here. What do you think this artwork is made of?

26. Find out what material the artist used in this artwork. How do you feel about it now? How has your initial response in question 24 changed? Why? What is the cause of this change, if any?

27. Trained as a sculptor, Ezzam Rahman now works with installation art and *performance art*, and is known for his use of unconventional material. Why do you think he chose this material in this work? How does the nature of this material contribute to the significance of this artwork?

28. What do you think the artist is trying to convey through this artwork?

29. View the artwork ***Allow me to introduce myself*** by the artist Ezzam Rahman in the glass gallery at the entrance of SAM at 8Q. What is the material used here and what does this material remind you of? What do you think the artist is trying to convey through this material?



If you are intrigued by this artwork, return to this space on 13 Nov or 11 Dec 2015 and witness this performance art by Ezzam Rahman.

Interested to understand more about Ezzam Rahman's creative processes? Sign up for a workshop led by the artist and educator Ezzam Rahman, *Would you like to discover yourself?* Tailored specially for students, this workshop focuses on the body as material in art practice.

Email [education@singaporeartmuseum.sg](mailto:education@singaporeartmuseum.sg) for more details and to sign up for the workshop as a class.

### *abc* What do they mean?

*Performance art*: a non-traditional art form where the artist uses his or her body as a medium to express the ideas behind the work. Performance art is presented 'live' to an audience and often draws on other art forms such as acting, poetry, music, dance or painting.



## Who are they?

An example of an artwork that is part performance and part installation is *Tiger's Whip* by the Singaporean artist Tang Da Wu. This artwork comments on the exploitation of tigers for the supposed aphrodisiac powers of their reproductive organs. During the performance, the artist dragged behind him one of ten life-sized papier-mâché tigers. In the installation art component shown below, a tiger standing with front paws rests on a rocking chair that has been painted red and draped in a red cloth. This represents the tiger's vengeful spirit returning to haunt its poacher.



**Tang Da Wu**, *Tiger's Whip*, 1991, Mixed media installation, Dimension variable, Collection of Singapore Art Museum



**Exit this gallery and enter the other gallery on this level**

30. This artwork is titled ***Too Far, Too Near*** by artist Ong Kian Peng. Quickly enter the space and sit with your back against the wall. Now close your eyes and listen. What does it remind you of?

31. After about two minutes, slowly open your eyes and walk towards the source of the sound. What do you see? What is the material causing the sound? What does the sound remind you of?

32. Now watch the video being played. You may sit on the platform to enjoy the video. Describe what you see and feel. Why do you think the artist presented the video on two screens like this?

33. This artwork is an extension to the artist's previous work on climate change. What do you think is the immediate impact of climate change? What are the long-term effects of climate change?

34. How does climate change affect you personally in Singapore and why?



### Did you know?

Polar bears use sea ice as a platform for hunting and for resting. They prey on seals when they come up through the holes in sea ice and hunt for seal pups in snow-covered ice caves. However, due to climate change, sea ice is decreasing throughout the Arctics. This has caused a decrease in the amount of algae, plankton and krill, the sources of the marine food chain.

To cope with the declining food source of seals, polar bears have been spotted devouring dolphins in the Arctic.

Name some other effects of climate change.



### Discussion Time

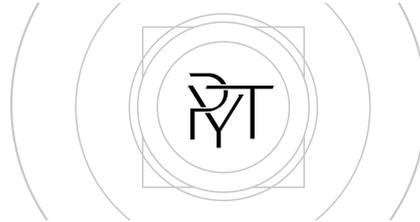
According to the artist, a worst-case scenario of rising sea levels predicts a rise of up to 80 metres around the world. Singapore is not more than 15 – 20 metres above sea level. If the worst-case scenario were to happen, how deep under water would Singapore be?

The main cause of climate change is an increase in greenhouse effect. This is an effect where carbon dioxide and other gases in the earth's atmosphere absorb the infrared radiation emitted by the sun, thus increasing the average temperature on Earth. Human activities such as excessive burning of fossil fuels have increased concentrations of greenhouse gases, causing the Earth to be devastatingly warmer in some regions and colder in other regions.

What other human activities contribute to the greenhouse effect? What can you do today to help restore this balance of greenhouse gases and slow down the phenomenon of rising sea levels?

The *President's Young Talents* distinguishes itself from other art awards, as it is the only mentoring and commissioning exhibition programme in Singapore. This exhibition culminates with a Grand Prize winner and a People's Choice awardee.

Although voting for the People's Choice award has since ended, try your hand at voting for the artist of your choice by considering the *form*, content and idea of the artworks you have just viewed:



## THE PRESIDENT'S YOUNG TALENTS PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

Singapore Art Museum invites you to vote for your favourite artwork from 21 August 2015 to 18 October 2015 at the SAM at 8Q lobby.

The artist whose artwork receives the most votes from the public will receive the **People's Choice Award** and \$5,000 in prize money. Voting closes Sunday, 18 October 2015, 7pm.

### THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

Please mark an "X" in the box next to the artwork that you would like to vote for.

- Days** by Ang Song Ming
- necropolis for those without sleep** by Bani Haykal
- Allow me to introduce myself** and **Here's who I am, I am what you see** by Ezzam Rahman
- Of Public Interest: The Singapore Art Museum Resource Room** by Loo Zihan
- Too Far, Too Near** by Ong Kian Peng

You may like to consider the following points when voting for the **People's Choice Award**:

1. **Form:** Which artwork impressed or surprised you by the unusual use of materials or technique?
2. **Content:** Which work inspired you or started you thinking in different ways?
3. **Idea:** How do you feel about the work that keeps you thinking, even when you walk away?

Visit [www.singaporeartmuseum.sg](http://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg) for more information on *President's Young Talents 2015*.

Who do you think won the Grand Prize and People's Choice Awards? Read this article by arts writer and editor, Mayo Martin, in TODAY <http://www.todayonline.com/entertainment/arts/ong-kian-peng-ezzam-rahman-joint-winners-presidents-young-talents-2015> to find out more!

### abc What do they mean?

**Form:** One of the seven elements of art, *form* is a three-dimensional geometrical figure, as opposed to shape, which is in two-dimensions.

## My day at SAM...

Complete this page and pass it to your teacher to deposit at the SAM Front Desk

Name	School	Age	Exhibition title

### I found the activity sheet...

Very easy     Quite easy     Okay     A little difficult     Very difficult

### I found the activities in the worksheet...

Very interesting     Quite interesting     Okay     Not so interesting     Not interesting at all

### I would like future activity sheets to have...



**3 things I have learnt...**



**2 things I would like to find out more about...**



**The thing I enjoyed the most at SAM...**

**\*For Teachers to note:**

Please collect all the pages as a single bundle and deposit them at the SAM Front Desk.