

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

President's Young Talents: Singapore's Most Promising Artists Revealed!

22 January 2013, Singapore – The Singapore Art Museum (SAM) and Credit Suisse are proud to present this exhibition of large scale new commissions by six Singaporean visual artists for 2013 edition of the *President's Young Talents (PYT)*. They are: **Boo Junfeng, Liao Jiekai, Zaki Razak, Grace Tan, Ryf Zaini and Robert Zhao Renhui**. The artists were selected by an independent curatorial committee of local art professionals for the strength and promise in their practice and for possessing the potential for credibility and recognition in the international arts scene.

Jointly organised by the Istana and SAM, *PYT* was inaugurated in 2001 as a developmental platform for promising local artists under the age of 35 working with emerging contemporary art practices. It has since become SAM's premier commissioning exhibition for younger artists. The independent curatorial committee who selected this year's artists are: Ahmad Abu Bakar, Shirley Soh, Cheo Chai-Hiang, Tay Swee Lin, and SAM curator Tan Siu Li.

This year's edition of the exhibition continues to present newer forms of artistic practice, such as photography, film, interactive installations, and new conceptions of sculpture and public art. The works are:

- Boo Jun Feng's ***Mirror***: Loosely based on the Bukit Brown Cemetery which is being exhumed, this short film is screened on two video screens running simultaneously. It collapses temporal realities and narratives, and reflects on how our present and future are inextricably tied to our past.
- Liao Jiekai's ***Brothers' Quarters***: Occupying a section of the SAM building which was previously the former St Joseph's Institution, Liao's work investigates the 'afterlife' of conservation buildings and questions how structures are deemed worthy of preserving.

- Grace Tan's *refuge*: With her practice rooted in manipulating materials with one's hands, Tan makes a physical connection to her raw material and transforms it into an object of beauty and contemplation. For this exhibition, Tan has produced a beautiful organic hanging sculpture using plastic loop pins.
- Ryf Zaini's *Unveil the curtain to the window with no ledge*: A sensorial, interactive installation that uses lamps and switches as metaphors for illumination, information dissemination and circuits of power, reminding us of our reliance on technology and its ability to aid as well as to incapacitate.
- Robert Zhao Renhui's *The quieting and the alarming*: Zhao's work takes a look at the impact of the measures taken to control the wild boar population in Singapore and, through the presentation of images and information, invites the public to consider – and reconsider – how their opinions and perceptions result in their actions.
- Zaki Razak's *Revising Art: The Ten Year Series*: Occupying a tent pitched outside SAM, Razak's work questions established practices and paradigms of art education. His work adopts an informal, collaborative, participatory and inter-disciplinary framework for art education, opening up his art work as a space of and for art to the public.

For further information on the artists and their works or the curatorial committee, please refer to Annex B and Annex C respectively.

The *PYT* artists were paired with two members of the curatorial committee who mentored them throughout the process of creating their works, from concept development to exhibition realisation. As a result, the artists and curator-mentors each found themselves provoked, moved and inspired by the more varied perspectives that arose and dialogues and exchanges that took place in the process.

Mr. Tan Boon Hui, Director of SAM, says, "With the *President's Young Talents*, we look to provide gifted young artists with the platform and resources that enable them to create new works on a more ambitious scale, and be seen by a wider audience. With the mentorship, we hope to challenge them to push the boundaries of their practice and reach outside their comfort zone to produce innovative, engaging works they otherwise may not have the opportunity to produce. Through the commissioning process and exchange of ideas with experienced arts professionals, we want to cultivate and develop these artists holistically and in a more sustained manner to better prepare them for future undertakings in the visual arts industry and enrich their practice in the long term. This year, we are heartened to

receive more support from the private sector towards developing young talent in Singapore and hope this will continue to grow."

Besides Credit Suisse who has been presenting sponsor for the past two editions of *PYT*, the Singapore Artists' Fund, seeded by Mr William Lim and the other patrons in 2012, will further support the young artists participating in *PYT* to embark on large-scale works in the museum.

As an additional endeavour by SAM to provide added commissioning experience and international exposure, a selection of artists from this year's edition will be further short-listed for the upcoming Singapore Biennale 2013. The shortlist will be revealed at a later date.

Mr. Lito Camacho, Vice Chairman Asia Pacific and Singapore Country CEO, Credit Suisse, and Board member of the National Heritage Board of Singapore, says, "Credit Suisse places great emphasis on its continued commitment to the local community, particularly through its support of the arts. We are delighted to be working with SAM and supporting the *President's Young Talents* once again, as part of our commitment in encouraging and developing young artistic talent in Singapore. We hope that through our support, emerging artists in Singapore are given the opportunity to expand on their creativity and create works that they would otherwise not be able to."

Credit Suisse: Innovation in Art series – *President's Young Talents* runs from 25 January to 15 September 2013, with a number of related programmes including artist presentations and curator tours taking place in-conjunction with the show. For more information, please refer to Annex A.

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For more information, please read on:

- **Annex A** – Exhibition synopsis and In-conjunction Events
- **Annex B** – Curatorial Committee
- **Annex C** – Artists and Artworks

About the Singapore Art Museum

The Singapore Art Museum (SAM) focuses on the creation of art in the present moment. It advocates and presents the contemporary art practices of Singapore, Southeast Asia and Asia, situating them within the global context of art making today. SAM has built up one of the most important collections of contemporary art from the region, and its programming aims to introduce new artistic practices and styles to the public, as well as nurturing discerning audiences for contemporary art. SAM is also organiser of the Singapore Biennale 2013 and the past edition in 2011.

About Credit Suisse

Credit Suisse AG is one of the world's leading financial services providers and is part of the Credit Suisse group of companies (referred to here as 'Credit Suisse'). As an integrated bank, Credit Suisse offers clients its combined expertise in the areas of private banking, investment banking and asset management. Credit Suisse provides advisory services, comprehensive solutions and innovative products to companies, institutional clients and high-net-worth private clients globally, as well as to retail clients in Switzerland. Credit Suisse is headquartered in Zurich and operates in over 50 countries worldwide. The group employs approximately 49,200 people. The registered shares (CSGN) of Credit Suisse's parent company, Credit Suisse Group AG, are listed in Switzerland and, in the form of American Depositary Shares (CS), in New York. Further information about Credit Suisse can be found at www.credit-suisse.com.

About Credit Suisse: Innovation In Art Series

The Credit Suisse: Innovation In Art Series began in 2007 as a long-term partnership between the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) and Credit Suisse. The Series enables SAM to showcase important Asian contemporary art practices, ground-breaking artists, as well as significant exhibitions from around the world. Exhibitions presented under the Series include *Seeing. Feeling. Being: Alberto Giacometti*, *Accelerate: Chinese Contemporary Art*, *FX Harsono: Testimonies* and the prestigious *President's Young Talents*. In 2013, as part of Credit Suisse's commitment to promoting emerging artistic talent, the Bank is also sponsoring the *President's Young Talents Credit Suisse Artist Commissioning Award* which offers recipients the opportunity to develop and showcase new works during the *Singapore Biennale 2013*, Singapore's premier contemporary art exhibition.

With the visual arts as a key focus, Credit Suisse builds lasting relationships with important museums and cultural institutions around the world. The Bank's support has given SAM the creative freedom and resources to plan ahead, while supporting the museum's efforts to offer unique and varied experiences to its visitors and create a stimulating environment through the expanse of contemporary art. For its

contributions to SAM, Credit Suisse has been conferred the National Heritage Board's *Partner of Heritage* award.

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Annex A: Exhibition Synopsis & In-Conjunction Events

Credit Suisse: Innovation In Art Series

President's Young Talents

25 January 2013 to 15 September 2013 | Singapore Art Museum

Inaugurated by SAM in 2001, the *President's Young Talents* is Singapore's premier commissioning exhibition, featuring the island's most promising artists under the age of 35. Selected by an independent curatorial committee of local art professionals, these artists are mentored through the process of art creation - from concept development to exhibition realisation. This year's exhibition features new commissions from Boo Junfeng, Liao Jiekai, Zaki Razak, Grace Tan, Ryf Zaini and Robert Zhao Renhui.

RELATED PROGRAMMES

Artist Workshop: Grace Tan

A multi-disciplinary practitioner specialising in wearable art and spatial structures, Grace Tan's experiments often blur the lines between design, art and mathematics. This workshop with Tan explores the transformation of two-dimensional surfaces to 3D 'structures' through various methods of cutting, folding and crushing.

Saturday, 9 March 2013 | 2:00pm – 3:30pm | SAM

\$12 (includes admission to the exhibition). Tickets available at SAM and SISTIC.

Limited spaces. For ticket availability at the door, please call SISTIC.

Curator Tour

This tour of the *President's Young Talents* exhibition showcases the works and practices of Singapore's most promising young artists. Participants in this tour will get a sense of the issues and concerns of this new generation of Singapore artists, as well as an appreciation of their diverse approaches to contemporary art-making.

Wednesday, 27 March 2013 | 7:30pm – 8:30pm | SAM

\$12 (includes admission to the exhibition). Tickets available at SAM and SISTIC.

Limited spaces. For ticket availability at the door, please call SISTIC.

Lecture-Performances

Zaki Razak's work, *Revising Art: The Ten Year Series*, consists of a series of 10 lecture-performances held regularly over the course of the exhibition. Led by the artist himself together with his collaborators, these sessions aim at an informal, participatory and inter-disciplinary approach to learning and art education.

Human, Environment and Living Things

Presented by the Kaizan Crew

Emphasising a critical and empirical analysis on human gestures, Kaizan seeks to share and practice Sociology of Dance with the public. As an ongoing search to new forms and formations in dance, Kaizan will explore humans' behavioural traits, their social spaces and their relationships with nature.

Kaizan Crew, a name given by Osman Abdul Hamid, who is one of the pioneer and principal choreographers in Malay dance, comprises different personalities from diverse groups exploring new modes of practices in contemporary Malay dance.

Monday, 28 January and Thursday, 31 January 2013 | 7:30pm – 9:30pm | SAM Front Lawn
Free. Limited spaces are available. Email nhb_sam_programs@nhb.gov.sg for registration.

Non-Syllabus Education: Learning Through Hearing

Presented by Saifuddin Abd Rahman

Due to globalisation, many tertiary level and higher education schools have been opened to undergo the process of secularism and the output of those courses contribute to specialisation in different disciplines of knowledge. Saifuddin yearns, in the advent of this year, to revive education in the light of tradition – on how to comprehend a subject matter through hearing.

Saifuddin has a Diploma Arabic Proficiency of Institute of Language and a Degree in Arabic Literature from University of Imam Saud University, Riyadh. He was a translator of Arabic, English and Malay for the Prime Minister's office in Malaysia and is currently a freelancer in legal translation.

Monday, 4 February and Thursday, 7 February 2013 | 7:30pm – 9:30pm | SAM Front Lawn
Free. Limited spaces are available. Email nhb_sam_programs@nhb.gov.sg for registration.

The Art of Public Speaking

Presented by Gene Sha Rudyn

Using classical texts as reading materials, Gene will share an introductory training in theatrical tools of public speaking with the participants and apply his techniques in presentations throughout the spaces of the museum.

Gene Sha Rudyn, educated at Raffles Institution, is a multi-faceted theatre director, writer, designer, educator, performer and award-winning actor with over 25 years of professional experience. Gene was Associate Director of Teater Ekamatra (1998-2000), Director-In-Residence of Education & Theatre Consultants (2001), Co-Artistic Director of Naga Pass-Ra (2002-2003), and founding Artistic Director and Ensemble Leader of Keelat Theatre Ensemble (2008-present).

Monday, 4 March and Thursday, 7 March 2013 | 7:30pm – 9:30pm | SAM Front Lawn
Free. Limited spaces are available. Email nhb_sam_programs@nhb.gov.sg for registration.

Details of upcoming sessions will be released every quarter, please visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg for the programme schedule and more information.

Annex B: Artists and Artwork

Boo Junfeng

Mirror

2013

Two-channel high-definition video

Mirror was inspired by the artist's visit to Bukit Brown Cemetery, where exhumations of over 3,000 graves are taking place for the construction of a new highway, cleaving the old burial ground into two. This bifurcation is also visited upon the soldier, a recurring figure in Boo's cinema: one serves the present-day Armed Forces; the other the Malayan Communist Party from the past.

Both soldier-figures are lost in what appears to be the same space. As the dual realities echo and diverge from each other, this short film collapses temporal realities and narratives, reiterating the point that our present and future are inextricably tied to our past, while underscoring the critical distance one might need to view history.

About the artist:

Trained in film schools in Singapore and Spain, Boo Junfeng is one of Singapore's notable young film-makers whose works often centre on themes of identity, memory and sexuality. His short films have won him acclaim internationally. Boo's debut feature film, *Sandcastle*, which premiered at Cannes Film Festival's International Critics' Week in 2010, garnered several awards from film festivals around the world, and was listed by The Wall Street Journal as one of Asia's most notable films that year.

With support from The Puttnam School of Film, LASALLE College of the Arts.

Liao Jiekai
Brothers' Quarters

2013

16mm film installation

Dimensions variable

Liao Jiekai's site-specific work for the *President's Young Talents* occupies a space formerly known as the Brothers' Quarters of the old St Joseph's Institution school. In 1990, the building underwent renovation to be reborn as the Singapore Art Museum. This section of the original building was deemed historically and culturally 'insignificant' to warrant preservation, and was demolished while other parts of the school were preserved. A new wing was erected in its place, its façade designed to mirror the main conservation building, and yet certain architectural features are discernibly different. These slippages and disjunctures inspired Liao's work, where he investigates the 'afterlife' of conservation buildings, how it is decided which buildings (and by extension, which memories) are deemed worthy of preserving, and whether there are any echoes or cadences of 'past lives' in the present.

About the artist:

Liao Jiekai graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is a Singapore-based film-maker and artist. He is a founding member of film collective 13 Little Pictures, and has directed several short films. In 2010, his debut feature film *Red Dragonflies* – an exploration of people, places and time – won him critical acclaim at various international film festivals. Liao has also collaborated with artists on projects such as *Don't Sit On Me* (with Cheo Chai-Hiang), and *The Flying Method of an Artist with a Fear of Flying* (with Nedko Solakov) at the Singapore Biennale 2011.

Grace Tan

refuge

2013

Polypropylene loop pins

Dimensions variable

refuge reinterprets space, sculpture and gesture, transforming commonplace industrial items into a work of organic beauty through a collaborative and comforting action of looping. With a single unit as its starting point, *refuge* took shape through the repetitive actions of the artist and her assistants connecting a few million units of polypropylene loop pins, in the process transforming the conventional functions of materials beyond their immediate application, and realising an idea through the performance of art-making, with each step and gesture tangibly and symbolically embedded in the resultant artwork. The repetition of familiar motions is silently comforting; it creates and revisits memory; and the monotony of movements paradoxically reveals poetry.

About the artist:

Grace Tan is a multi-disciplinary practitioner whose experiments often blur the lines between design, art, and mathematics. Formally trained in fashion design, Tan began her art and design practice in 2003 under the auspices of *kwodrent* – a creative platform which she founded. Initially based on the study of rectangles, materials and construction methods, her works have since evolved from wearable fabric pieces into more complex, site-specific installations and spatial constructs.

Ryf Zaini

Unveil the curtain to the window with no ledge

2013

Mixed media installation

Dimensions variable

Alluding to discovery and uncertainty, *Unveil the curtain to the window with no ledge* is an invitation to those who inquire and who seek, rewarding curiosity and persistence with illumination. Ryf Zaini often employs technology in his artworks, as a means to underscore as well as critique our dependence on these tools. In this work, lamps and switches function as metaphors for enlightenment, information dissemination and circuits of power, while reminding us of our reliance on technology in our everyday lives and its capacity to aid as well as to incapacitate: light, after all, can illuminate; and it can also blind.

About the artist:

Ryf Zaini graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Interactive Media Arts, and also holds a double diploma in Engineering and Media Arts. Ryf's artistic development and practice stem from his interest in how technology shapes society. Since 2006, Ryf has been progressively creating interactive works with electronic components, which encourage audiences to reconsider social issues and norms – in particular the potential repercussions of our reliance on technology.

Robert Zhao Renhui
The Quieting and the Alarming
2013

Black holes #5
150cm x 100cm x 5cm
Diasec, wood

A vision of the universe
250cm x 150cm x 60cm
Diasec, wood

Shooting Star
170cm x 110cm x 50cm
Piezographic print on linen, wooden cabinet, LED lights

Black holes #1
182cm x 102cm
Diasec, standing wood frame

Black holes #2
182cm x 102cm
Diasec, standing wood frame

The quieting and the alarming
Mixed media
220cm x 100cm x 260cm

Robert Zhao Renhui's project addresses an issue that has recently gripped the public imagination and polarised opinion: the explosion of the wild boar population in Singapore, and the government's decision to control their population growth by culling. Much of the debate and resistance to these measures have hinged on ethical questions and a fear of upsetting a natural balance we do not yet fully understand.

The Quieting and the Alarming explores the different perspectives through which we observe nature, as well as the sense of uncertainty that characterises our relationship with these natural forces, the concept and perception of which are often defined by various systems of control and authority – the media, official bodies, academia and interest groups.

About the artist:

Robert Zhao Renhui received his Bachelors and Masters degrees in Photography from Camberwell College of Arts and the London College of Communication respectively. His work addresses man's relationship with nature, and related issues of morality and ethics, paying close attention to how our attitudes and opinions shape our assumptions about the natural world. Zhao works mainly in photography, but often adopts a multi-disciplinary approach by presenting images together with documents and objects. He does this to test the principles behind the dissemination of knowledge and to challenge the ways in which we commonly receive and accept information.

Zaki Razak

Revising Art: The Ten Year Series

2013

Series of ten lecture performances

Duration variable*

Marking a decade of his artistic practice and personal attempts to understand the complexity and nature of contemporary art, Zaki Razak's tongue-in-cheek work proposes an art school that questions established practices and paradigms of art education. Over the course of the exhibition, this tent will play host to the artist and his collaborators, who will facilitate a series of sessions that aim at an informal, participatory and inter-disciplinary approach to learning and art education, hence opening up this school for 'revision' and the space of / for art to a broader (and perhaps unsuspecting) public.

About the artist:

Zaki Razak graduated from LASALLE College of the Arts with a Masters in Fine Art. He has a background in graphic design and street art. Zaki's work also involves curatorial practice and his recent projects investigate human consciousness and the reception and interpretation of art. Often employing wordplay, Zaki's work takes advantage of everyday situations or events, allowing his audience to encounter or participate in the process of art-making, thereby provoking debate about art, its institutions and modes of creation, transmission and reception.

*Please visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg for the programme schedule and more information.

Annex C: Curatorial Committee

Ahmad Abu Bakar graduated from LaSalle-SIA College of the Arts with a Diploma in Fine Arts (Ceramics) in 1989 and received his Bachelor of Fine Art (Sculpture) from the University of Tasmania (Australia) in 1995. Upon his return to Singapore in 1996, Ahmad joined LaSalle College of the Arts as a full-time lecturer where he taught ceramics and 3D studies. He also pursued his Master of Fine Arts with RMIT / LaSalle–SIA during his teaching period in the college. Ahmad left LaSalle to focus on his art practice in 2008.

As an artist, Ahmad has participated in numerous group exhibitions in Singapore, Malaysia, China, Thailand, The Philippines, Korea, Australia and Indonesia. In 2009, he was invited to be a part of Jakarta Contemporary Ceramics Biennale and the International Contemporary Ceramics Exhibition: Asian Ceramics Network and Selsius, held in the National Art Gallery, Malaysia in 2007. He was also invited to participate in the inaugural exhibition of the Singapore Art Museum’s new contemporary art wing, 8Q. Ahmad has also co-curated a showcase of Singaporean Malay artists entitled *Tok Selampit Millennium* in 2004 at the Jendela art space (Esplanade, Theatres by the Bay) and in 2007, a group show featuring contemporary ceramicists from Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam entitled *Mapped* in the same venue.

Since 2009, Ahmad has dedicated his time to working with the Singapore Prison as an art instructor, where he mentors the inmates in an Arts programme (3D studies). Into his third year in this programme, Ahmad has successfully inspired the inmates to express their creativity through art and instil confidence and conviction through the processes of art making.

Shirley Soh received her Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours in Political Science) in 1979, after which she started her working life as a TV Producer with the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation. Shirley was then based in Sydney and London from 1988 – 1997, working in the publishing and printing industry. In London, Shirley returned to school and received her Diploma in Further Education & Applied Arts (Ceramics) from the London Guildhall University (England) in 1999. She pursued her Bachelor of Arts in RMIT/LaSalle –SIA upon her return to Singapore in 2000.

Shirley taught foundational Art Theory at LaSalle-SIA College of the Arts from 2002 – 2005 and joined Singapore Management University in 2005 as the Director of Student Life. In SMU, she led a team who were devoted to student development and co-curriculum learning in the areas of arts, sports, community engagement and leadership. Shirley left the university in 2008 to dedicate time to her practice, her love for making art.

Shirley has exhibited her works in Singapore, Malaysia, Switzerland and America. Shirley’s practice began in ceramics, focusing on making functional vessels for their symbolic and cultural representations of their usage. Her artwork has extended to working with living vegetation –growing rice, weed, grass and germinating tree seedlings – and other materials such as soil and even soap, reflecting on certain recurrent themes such as biodiversity, sustainability and ecological interdependency. Shirley collaborated with American artist Martha Rosler and Singaporean artist Brendan Goh for Purple

Medicine and Mandala Garden presented in the Singapore Biennale 2011. Currently, Shirley is involved Changi Women's Prison as an art instructor where she is developing an art module for the women inmates for the Yellow Ribbon Art Competition.

Cheo Chai-Hiang is a pioneering artist and art-writer in Singapore's modern art scene. He graduated from Brighton Polytechnic with a BA (Hons) in Fine Art (Printmaking) in 1975 and furthered his studies at the Royal College of Art in London, with a Master of Art in 1978.

In 1975, Cheo famously wrote that local art in that period was dominated by the production of "beautiful pictures" that were lacking in conceptual content. He viewed art as a thought process and advocated the change of local realist art to one that redefined methods of artistic representation. He promoted interactive art in Singapore in the 80s - 90s with his work entitled *Gentleman in Suit and Tie* (1988), back in the days when such approaches of incorporating the audience into an exhibition were considered unconventional. To Cheo, art should be fluid and the artwork should not be presented as an unalterable form but one that is the by-product of exchanges between artists, concepts, environment and materials. Cheo is of the opinion that artwork should not be confined by conventional aesthetics and the need to constantly produce commercially-valuable objects, and he believes in giving thoughts to ideas, concepts, processes and engaging in the everyday world as a site for materials, inspiration and the methods of art making.

Cheo has exhibited in numerous exhibitions since 1968. His artworks have been presented in Singapore, China, Malaysia, London, France, Australia and Italy. Cheo remains active in the local and international art scene today, with recent participation in the 6th Asia Pacific Triennale in Australia, and a solo exhibition in Malaysia in March 2012.

Tay Swee Lin is a curator, educator and an independent art consultant. Tay has been involved in the art scene since 1983 and has worked in the United States as an art director before returning to Singapore in 1993.

Tay has taught in University of Georgia, LaSalle-SIA/RMIT degree programme and at the National University of Singapore in 2001. From 1995 till 2001, she worked with the Singapore Art Museum (National Heritage Board) as a curator, where she specialised in art from Indo China (Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia), Thailand and Australia.

Tan Siu Li is Assistant Director of Programmes and Curator at the Singapore Art Museum, and oversees its Indonesia collection and Education portfolio. She holds a Masters in Art History from University College London, UK, a BA in Literature and Art History from the University of Nottingham, UK, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Education from the National Institute of Education, Singapore. Her past exhibitions include *Chimera* (The Collectors Show: Asian Contemporary Art from Private Collections), *Classic Contemporary: Contemporary Southeast Asian Art from the Singapore Art Museum Collection*, *The President's Young Talents 2009*, and *FX Harsono: Testimonies*.