

Media Release

For Immediate Release

**Ezzam Rahman and Ong Kian Peng are
Joint Grand Prize winners of *President's Young Talents 2015***

21 October 2015, Singapore – The Singapore Art Museum (SAM) is proud to announce Ezzam Rahman and Ong Kian Peng as joint Grand Prize winners of the *President's Young Talents 2015*. The Prize was presented to the artists by President Tony Tan Keng Yam at the awards ceremony held on October 21 at SAM. The \$20,000 prize, to be shared equally between both artists, will be put to the creation of a new work or an artist residency to further develop their practices.

An independent curatorial committee, comprising artists and art professionals Ian Woo, Noor Effendy Ibrahim, Twardzik Ching Chor Leng, Vincent Leow and SAM curator Louis Ho, had collectively decided on the two winning projects. The curatorial committee members also served as the mentors to all five artists during the *President's Young Talents* commissioning process.

Ezzam Rahman's works *Allow me to introduce myself* and *Here's who I am, I am what you see*, stood out for its inspired use of materials, ranging from the artist's own skin to talcum powder, as mediums to explore issues of the body and its ephemerality. Ong Kian Peng's immersive installation, *Too Far, Too Near*, which utilises mechanisation as a tool of sensorial engagement, marks a canny, cogent intersection of art and technology. Taken together, the works by these two artists embody the bold new terrains of contemporary art, which incorporate not just new mediums and new forms, but, even more importantly, new modes of thinking about our world and how we inhabit and represent it.

Ezzam Rahman was also named the winner for the *People's Choice Award*. He was presented with a cash prize of \$5,000. The award was decided through an on-site public voting process, where visitors could select an artwork of their choice based on a similar set of criteria used by the mentors. A total of 2,666 votes were cast by members of the public. Ezzam garnered 32% of the votes.

"On behalf of the Singapore Art Museum, I would like to congratulate both Ezzam Rahman and Ong Kian Peng. We are impressed with the quality of works produced by all the finalists of the 2015 edition of the *President's Young Talents*. In selecting joint winners for this year's prize, we are encouraged to embrace the plurality of voices that make up the world of

contemporary art, and acknowledge the diversity of visions which enable artistic processes to continue to dynamically evolve,” says Dr Susie Lingham, Director of the Singapore Art Museum.

Started in 2001 by SAM, the *President’s Young Talents* is Singapore’s only mentoring and commissioning exhibition. It recognises and supports promising young artists below the age of 35 whose practices chart new dimensions in contemporary art. The award is based on the depth of the artists’ practice, their potential for growth and the contributions they would potentially make to the field of contemporary art in Singapore. The 2015 edition of the *President’s Young Talents* is supported in part by the Singapore Artists’ Fund, which was seeded by sponsors William S.W. Lim and family, BinjaiTree, and Vinod Nair.

The *President’s Young Talents* exhibition will be on show until 27 March 2016. More information about *President’s Young Talents* is available online at www.singaporeartmuseum.sg.

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About the 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.

SAM occupies two buildings: the old St Joseph's Institution on Bras Basah Road, built in 1855 and now a National Monument; and SAM at 8Q, a conservation building across the road on Queen Street that was the old Catholic High School.

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. To find out more, visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg

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Annex A: President's Young Talents – Synopsis

The *President's Young Talents* distinguishes itself from other art awards as it is the only mentoring and commissioning exhibition programme in Singapore. The *President's Young Talents* recognises young artists whose practices chart new dimensions in contemporary art. Inaugurated by the Singapore Art Museum in 2001, an independent committee comprising local art professionals and a SAM curator nominates a group of local artists, aged 35 and below, for the award, based on the depth of their practice, their potential for growth, and the contributions they would potentially make to the field of contemporary art. Each artist, working closely with mentors from the committee, will present newly commissioned work for the *President's Young Talents* exhibition, which culminates in a Grand Prize winner and a People's Choice awardee.

The list of finalists for this year's *President's Young Talents* are Ang Song Ming, Bani Haykal, Ezzam Rahman, Loo Zihan and Ong Kian Peng. Representing some of the most exciting strands in contemporary Singapore art, they will create works spanning the disciplines of performance, new media, sculpture and sound.

The 2015 exhibition coincides with Singapore's SG50 Jubilee Year, and marks the sixth edition of the *President's Young Talents*. Aptly, it recognises and celebrates the nation's ever-evolving spirit of artistic creation and innovation. Previous *President's Young Talents* artists include Boo Junfeng, Heman Chong, Liao Jiekai, Charles Lim, Lim Tzay Chuen, Donna Ong, Tan Pin Pin and Vertical Submarine, among others, who have gone on to develop outstanding artwork, both within and beyond Singapore.

Annex B: President's Young Talents Grand Prize Winners – Artworks

Ezzam Rahman

Allow me to introduce myself

2015

Performative installation with talcum powder, second-hand furniture and glass bell jars

Dimensions variable

Singapore Art Museum commission

Collection of the Artist

Here's who I am, I am what you see

2015

Artist's skin, nails and adhesive, second-hand furniture and glass bell jars

Dimensions variable

Singapore Art Museum commission

Collection of the Artist

Fragile, miniature flowers shaped from flakes of dead skin, and ephemeral sculptures that consist of little but talcum powder – Ezzam Rahman's practice is grounded in a keen sense of materiality. Animating these otherwise mute objects, however, is the artist's living, breathing body. The skin is his own, culled over a period of time from the soles of his feet, and the powder sculptures are remnants of his performances, into which his perspiration is mixed. As Ezzam puts it: "These works are representations of self, about that impermanent moment of someone's presence." The human body, then, as both thematic concern and physical fact, haunts these delicate, evanescent pieces, which channel the generally unpalatable realities of our flesh into an exquisite aesthetic.

Ong Kian Peng

Too Far, Too Near

2015

DC Motor, Metal balls, Steel structure; 2-channel video with 3-channel sound

Dimensions variable

Duration: 15 mins

Singapore Art Museum commission

Collection of the Artist

Climate change has been a persistent global issue, yet the reality of climate change is disconnected from the urban environment that the world's majority lives in. Enclosed in concrete and steel structures, the threat of a potential sea level rise remains alien to those within, despite compelling evidence of the phenomenon. *Too Far, Too Near* is a two-part installation with audio-kinetic sculptures accompanying a video of melting ice sheets and glaciers filmed on location in Greenland. Taking viewers on an immersive, perceptual journey to experience this haunting landscape, the work is an intimate reflection on the changes taking place at the edges of the earth. It reminds us that humankind and nature are linked, and that these changes will ultimately impact us all.

Annex C: President's Young Talents Grand Prize Winners – Artists Biographies

Ezzam Rahman

Ezzam Rahman is a multi-disciplinary artist, but his mediums of choice are performance and installation art. He is also known for his use of unconventional materials, such as corporeal detritus. Recent works include skin sculptures commissioned by the Singapore Art Museum for the exhibition, *Unearthed*, in 2014, as well as performances at the SingaPlural design festival in 2015. Ezzam is a member of The Artists Village, The Singapore Sculpture Society and the Angkatan Pelukis Aneka Daya (Association of Artists of Various Resources).

Ong Kian Peng

Ong Kian Peng is a media artist who works across multiple disciplines, ranging from media installations to theatre productions, using a media arts perspective. Inspired by natural phenomena, the human sensorium and information consumption, these thematic areas converge into works that intersect art, science and technology. His works have been presented in festivals such as the Singapore M1 Fringe Festival and the Japan Media Arts Festival, and he has also exhibited locally and internationally at ICA Singapore (2014) and Arebyte Gallery London (2014).