

**Media Release**

For Immediate Release

**The *President's Young Talents 2015* opens at Singapore Art Museum**

Singapore's only mentoring and commissioning exhibition features  
the new generation of Singapore's contemporary artists

6 August 2015 – The Singapore Art Museum presents the *President's Young Talents 2015* exhibition, featuring five artists – **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. These works have been developed under the guidance of their mentors, Ian Woo, Noor Effendy Ibrahim, Twardzik Ching Chor Leng, Vincent Leow and SAM curator Louis Ho, who also make up the independent curatorial committee.

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 whose practices chart new dimensions in contemporary art. Selected by an independent curatorial committee of local art professionals, 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.

"The diverse concepts and mediums presented in the *President's Young Talents* exhibition reflect the depth and rigour of contemporary art by our young Singaporean artists. SAM is committed to being the generative and catalytic support for creative multi- and interdisciplinary work that is so much at the core of Singapore's contemporary art practice. In the milestone year of Singapore's Golden Jubilee, the *President's Young Talents* exhibition recognises and celebrates the nation's ever-evolving spirit of artistic creation and innovation," says Dr Susie Lingham, Director, Singapore Art Museum.

**Commissioned artworks**

The commissioned works by the five finalists are diverse in their presentation of artistic concepts and practices. The works range from the introspective, to those which address larger socio-political issues.

*Days* is a multi-part study of the mundane, presenting image, sound and text in various formats. As with most of **Ang Song Ming**'s works, they employ music as a subject matter from which other concerns are highlighted. "Song Ming's work *Days* is a clinical DIY bliss. It's an autobiographical document of a road trip, which marries the unadulterated sentiment of home and modern art," says Ian Woo, his mentor.

**Bani Haykal**'s *necropolis for those without sleep* reflects on the systems of power and the complex networks of these powers at play. The chief component of the work is a game of chess played by two mechanical arms, in which the pieces of one team has been rigged to disadvantage it significantly. On Bani's art practice and process, mentor Noor Effendy Ibrahim says, "Two things that I truly admire and envy at the same time of Bani's art practice are his courage and thirst for adventure in seeking knowledge, and his commitment to rigour and fact."

**Ezzam Rahman** explores the sense of self and materiality in *Here's who I am, I am what you see* and *Allow me to introduce myself*, two installations that provoke through the use of unconventional materials such as talcum powder and the artist's own skin. One of the works, *Allow me to introduce myself*, is performative in nature. The works emphasize, in ways both subtle and fleeting, the materiality of the artist's body. "Looking at Ezzam's work is like watching an explosion happen before you, you cannot help but stare and study the sight even with the realisation that you will be consumed in its path," says Twardzik Ching Chor Leng who mentored Ezzam through his artistic process.

*Of Public Interest: The Singapore Art Museum Resource Room* by **Loo Zihan** is the artist's recreation of a public reference library. Working with approximately 5,000 books from the resource room from SAM as his material, Zihan highlights oblique relationships among the books in the collection and critically reflects on the role of the art museum as a centre for imparting knowledge. SAM curator Louis Ho explains, "What is particularly distinctive about Zihan's installation is its focus on knowledge and the archive, on the way that these shape the memories, and embody the identity, of large, public institutions."

*Too Far, Too Near* by **Ong Kian Peng** explores how our urban environment is disconnected from the reality of climate change. A two-part installation, *Too Far, Too Near* takes viewers on an immersive experience of a haunting landscape, the footage for which was shot by the artist in Greenland. Beyond the work itself, mentor Vincent Leow notes, "Kian Peng's practice also stands out for me as he expressed a deep commitment to his art form that explores new technologies and also a deep passion to promote artists working in similar medium as him in the art scene"

### **Curatorial Mentorship**

Essential to the *President's Young Talents* exhibition and commission process is the curatorial mentorship. Artists were each paired with a member of the curatorial team who, with their knowledge, experience and involvement in the arts, mentored and guided the artists as they developed and executed their projects, and helped fine-tune their final artworks.

### **Commissioning Award and People's Choice Award**

In continuing with the commitment to support promising, up and coming artists in their artistic journey, the *President's Young Talents (PYT)* commissioned artworks will be evaluated by the curatorial committee, and one artist will be awarded a prize of \$20,000. The *PYT* award is to be put to the creation of a new work or an artist residency to further develop their practice.

*President's Young Talents* will also introduce a People's Choice Award for this edition, giving visitors the opportunity to select an artist and artwork of their choice based on the same set of criteria used by the curatorial committee. Public voting will take place on site. The People's Choice winner will be awarded a cash prize of \$5,000.

The *President's Young Talents* exhibition will be on from 21 August 2015 to 27 March 2016. The award ceremony and announcement will be held on 21 October 2015. The exhibition will be accompanied by programmes for the public that includes artist talks and curator tours. More details about *President's Young Talents* can be found online at [www.singaporeartmuseum.sg](http://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg).

The 2015 edition of the *President's Young Talents* is supported by the Singapore Artists' Fund, which was seeded by sponsors William S.W. Lim and family, BinjaiTree, and Vinod Nair.

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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](http://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 – Artwork**

### **Ang Song Ming**

#### ***Days***

2015

Multi-part installation: Video, photographs, drawings, text

Dimensions variable

Singapore Art Museum commission

Collection of the Artist

*Days* is a multi-part study of the mundane, presenting image, sound and text in various formats. As with most of Ang Song Ming's works, they utilise music as a subject matter from which other concerns are highlighted. The centerpiece of *Days* is a video featuring Ang's parents on a flight from Singapore to London to bring him his guitar (en route to Berlin where Ang is currently based). In return, Ang composed and recorded its soundtrack using the same guitar. Elsewhere, diary entries and acrylic sketches illustrate Ang's thoughts, while drawings and photographs are created based on repetition and self-imposed restrictions. Together, the components highlight the time, labour and processes that inform the acts of art and music making.

### **Bani Haykal**

#### ***necropolis for those without sleep***

2015

Installation with custom designed mechanical turks, computer-programmed chess game, 3D printed chess pieces and jumpsuits; rubber ducks

Dimensions variable

Singapore Art Museum commission

Collection of the Artist

Game Designer / Programmer: Tan Jianyang

Robotics Engineer / Programmer: Leonardus Adi Prasetya

A game of chess, played by two mechanical turks based on collected game data, runs according to a computer programme. Instead of the usual black and white pieces, there is an orange team and a white one; the orange team is significantly disadvantaged, consisting only of Pawns, a Knight and a King. Bani's installation, *necropolis for those without sleep*, is premised on an asymmetry of power. It evokes political, social and economic hierarchies, distilling the complex networks of power at play in our climate of neoliberalism into a purposefully imbalanced game. The audience is likewise affected, where one viewer is

allowed only 50 steps in the gallery, while another enjoys free reign within the space – reflecting the anxieties of globalisation and disequilibrium of democracy in the twenty-first century.

**Ezzam Rahman**

***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

***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

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.

**Loo Zihan**

***Of Public Interest: The Singapore Art Museum Resource Room***

2015

Installation of books from the Singapore Art Museum

Dimensions variable

Singapore Art Museum commission

Collection of the Artist

Loo Zihan views knowledge as his chief medium. His practice is deeply engaged with the archive in all its myriad manifestations – with history and collective memory, and the

narratives and absences thereof. *Of Public Interest: The Singapore Art Museum Resource Room* is a project that will move nearly 5,000 volumes from the museum's resource room into the space of a gallery. Presented as an interactive installation, the work will function as a reference library open to the public. The artist, in working with SAM to make these materials accessible as artwork, intends to foreground the evolving priorities and concerns that are reflected in the institution's collection of books and ephemera, and for the space "to critically reflect on the role of the art museum as a centre for the dissemination and transmission of knowledge."

**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 – Artists Biographies**

### **Ang Song Ming**

Ang Song Ming's practice employs music as a subject matter from which other concerns emerge. His work is rooted in the everyday and often made from the overlapping perspectives of an artist, fan, and amateur. Ang has presented his works at Camden Arts Centre (London), Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin), Witte de With (Rotterdam), and Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney). In 2011, he was conferred the Young Artist Award by the National Arts Council of Singapore.

### **Bani Haykal**

Bani Haykal's work stretches across various disciplines and mediums, including installation, poetry and theatre. As a musician, he works primarily with acoustic instruments, both traditional and improvised, and his favoured forms are structured improvisation and the spoken word. He is a member of musical groups OFFCUFF and b-quartet. Haykal has exhibited, performed and toured internationally, having participated in festivals including Media/Art Kitchen in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Japan, as well as the M1 Fringe Festival in Singapore.

### **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).

### **Loo Zihan**

Loo Zihan is a performance and moving-image artist. His work emphasizes the malleability of memory, through various representational strategies that include performance re-enactments, essay films and data visualization. His performances have been presented at various events, including the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival in 2012 and in 2015. His moving-image works have been screened at various international film festivals, such as the AFI Fest in Los Angeles and the Pusan International Film Festival in South Korea.

## 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).

## **Annex D: President's Young Talents – Artist Performances and Public and Educational Programmes**

### **Artists Performances**

#### **Ezzam Rahman - *Allow me to introduce myself***

**Dates & Time:**

Friday, 21 August 2015 | 7.30pm – 9.30pm

Saturday, 22 August 2015 | 8.30pm – 10.30pm

Fridays, 11 September, 9 October, 13 November & 11 December | 6.30pm – 8.30pm

**Venue:** SAM at 8Q

Artist Ezzam Rahman will be performing his work, titled *Allow me to introduce myself*, during the opening weekend of the *President's Young Talents* exhibition, which also coincides with the first weekend of Singapore Night Festival 2015. He will also be performing his work monthly at SAM at 8Q from September to December 2015.

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#### **Bani Haykal - *the public assembly***

**Date:** Friday, 16 October 2015

**Time:** 7.30pm (45 – 60 min)

**Venue:** SAM at 8Q

*the public assembly* is a durational performance consisting of two chess players and an ensemble of musicians. The performance revolves around the chess game played of which its outcome would inform the sounds produced through a set of instructions. *the public assembly* was first performed in Paris as part of Singapour Mon Amour with a choir.

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### **Public And Educational Programmes**

#### **Think&Tinker Room**

**Venue:** Level 2, SAM at 8Q

This interactive space introduces audiences of all ages to the general concepts explored in the *President's Young Talents* exhibition. Leap into a world where you can connect with others through music, rethink how you play your favourite games or reflect on your impact on earth.

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### **Artist Talk with Ang Song Ming**

**Date:** Saturday, 22 August 2015

**Time:** 1pm – 2pm

**Venue:** SAM at 8Q

Join artist Ang Song Ming as he shares the insights and inspiration behind his new artwork *Days*, specially commissioned for the *President's Young Talents* exhibition.

Free. Register at <http://bit.ly/1K1JSBT>

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### **Curator's Tour**

**Date:** Wednesday, 2 September 2015

**Time:** 7.30pm – 8.30pm

**Venue:** SAM at 8Q

Join SAM curator Louis Ho as he brings you on a specially-curated tour of the *President's Young Talents* exhibition that will provide insights on the artworks, as well as the curatorial process behind their selection and presentation.

\$15. Tickets available at SAM and SISTIC.

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### **Afternoon Tea With the Mentors**

**Date:** Saturday, 26 September 2015

**Time:** 2.30pm – 4pm

**Venue:** Glass Hall, SAM

Join the five esteemed *President's Young Talents* mentors in an afternoon tea session as they explore what it takes to be a mentor and the significance of mentoring young artists in Singapore.

\$15. Tickets available at SAM and SISTIC.

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### **Artists and Curator Dialogue Tour**

**Date:** Tuesday, 20 October 2015

**Time:** 7pm – 8.30pm

**Venue:** SAM at 8Q

Join us for an evening tour with the artists and curator behind the *President's Young Talents* exhibition. Learn more about the artworks from the artists' own perspectives, and gain other insights into the exhibition from SAM curator Louis Ho.

\$20. Tickets available at SAM and SISTIC.

## **Annex E: President's Young Talents – Curatorial Committee Biographies**

### **Ian Woo**

Ian Woo is a painter working in the language of abstraction. Influenced by forms of modernism, perceptual abstraction and the sound structures of music improvisation, his work is characterised by a sense of gravitational and representational change. He often uses the term 'picture making' when describing his position and approach, maintaining the discipline and evolvement of painting as a vehicle for pictorial reflexivity.

In 1999, Woo was the recipient of the UOB Painting of the Year award in the Abstract category. He was also the Juror's Choice for two consecutive years in South East Asia's Philip Morris Award in 1999 and 2000. His works are in the collection of major institutions such as ABN AMRO, Singapore Art Museum, the Istana Singapore, National Gallery Singapore, UBS, and the Mint Museum of Craft & Design, USA. He is currently the Programme Leader of the MA Fine Arts programme at the Faculty of Fine Arts, LASALLE College of the Arts.

### **Noor Effendy Ibrahim**

Noor Effendy Ibrahim has served as a member of the National Arts Council (NAC) Board from 2004 to 2006 and on several other consultative panels and committees on arts and culture in Singapore. He was a recipient of the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Singapore Foundation Culture Award 2007 and the NAC Cultural Fellowship 2014. Effendy was Artistic Director of The Substation from 2010-2015 and Teater Ekamatra from 2001-2006.

An interdisciplinary artist, Effendy has worked with arts groups such as Teater Kami, Cake Theatrical Productions and Maya Dance Theatre. He began his artistic journey and career in 1991 as a playwright and theatre director. Since then, he has written and directed over 30 theatre productions and performed in over 20 theatre and dance performances locally and internationally. He also does set and costume design for the theatre. As an arts educator Effendy has taught and conducted theatre and performance courses and workshops from pre-school to tertiary.

### **Twardzik Ching Chor Leng**

Twardzik Ching Chor Leng has been practising Installation art and Land art for more than 15 years. She has exhibited extensively in group and solo exhibitions internationally and locally. Founder of the arts group Landing Space that promotes Land Art in Singapore, she is also an

independent curator as well as a member of WITA (Women in the Arts), Singapore. She has received meritorious awards and scholarships including the Hanna Kristmanson Ceramic Scholarship, the Ceramics Canada Award, and the Crown Life Entrance Award, she was also nominated for the President's Young Talent Award 2009.

She has lectured in Lasalle College of the Arts and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. She was the Head of Fine Arts at the NUS High School of Math & Science from 2004-2009. Currently, she is a lecturer at NIE, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. As an artist-educator, Chor Leng believes in developing local talent and resources in the arts.

### **Vincent Leow**

Vincent Leow is an artist and an art educator whose practice spans a wide range of genres from sculpture, installation, performance art to painting and mixed-media. He has exhibited internationally and regionally; his works has been collected and commissioned by various public institutions such as museums, corporate companies and private collections both locally and internationally.

Leow was awarded the Culture Award (2002) by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry for his contribution to the arts in 2002. Leow represented Singapore in the 52nd Venice Biennale of contemporary art (2007), "9th Indian Triennial of contemporary art", New Dehli, India (1997), "1st Asia Pacific Triennial of contemporary art", Brisbane, Australia (1993). Currently, Leow teach at SOTA and has taught art at LASALLE, College of the Arts and Sharjah University, College of Fine Arts and Design in the United Arab Emirates.

### **Louis Ho**

Louis Ho is a curator with the Singapore Art Museum, where his focus is on the art of Malaysia and Brunei. His first exhibition for the museum was the permanent collection show, *After Utopia – Revisiting the Ideal in Asian Contemporary Art*. He also lectures at the National Institute of Education, and is a contributor to various art publications.