

MEDIA RELEASE

SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM EMBARKS ON A NEW DIRECTION TO BRING ART CLOSER TO ITS AUDIENCES AND INTO EVERYDAY SPACES

SAM intends to expand museum art experiences into neighbourhoods across Singapore, and will open a new contemporary art space at Tanjong Pagar Distripark by early 2022



Artist impression of the entrance of SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark, the museum's new contemporary art space opening in early 2022; image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum

Singapore, 11 August 2021 – Today, Singapore Art Museum (SAM) announced its new strategic direction, aligned with its vision to provide thought-provoking and meaningful everyday encounters through contemporary art. Challenging the notion of a museum as a single physical space that houses artworks for visitors, SAM will infuse art into the everyday by presenting in unexpected spaces around Singapore and actively collaborate with partners and communities to drive positive change through art. With a plan to roll out art experiences and presentations to audiences in different physical and virtual spaces over the next few years, SAM will begin with the opening of a new space in Tanjong Pagar Distripark by early 2022.

SAM's new strategic direction

Opened in 1996, SAM's mandate to present contemporary art with a Southeast Asian perspective started in 2013. SAM focuses on recent artistic practices of the region, spotlighting the contemporary art scene of Southeast Asia through the lens of the present. In contrast, the National Gallery of Singapore presents Southeast Asian modern art from a historical perspective. SAM's new strategic direction was developed in dialogue with the art community and in line with the vision of its museum director, Dr Eugene Tan, who took over the directorship in 2019. The strategic direction aspires for SAM's presentation of art to become diffused into the everyday and intimately connected to the communities where it resides. SAM will also engage in active collaboration and dialogue with its art community, visitor, and supporter constituents to drive positive social impact through art.

"SAM has welcomed art lovers and the art curious to our buildings for over 25 years. With SAM's heritage buildings closed for redevelopment, it presented us with an opportunity to assess what it means for us to be a museum today and examine our relationship to our community and to the greater society. Going beyond our four walls will enable SAM to evolve as an outward-looking art space that is open for new ideas, healthy debates and collaborative exchanges across communities. We want to make it possible for everyone to experience and be inspired by art, and to better understand the world through the art we present. Our ambition is to diffuse art across multiple spaces, including a new anchor space at Tanjong Pagar Distripark opening in 2022. We hope to connect and resonate emotionally with more people through art and bring communities together to collectively imagine a better future," says Dr Eugene Tan, Director of Singapore Art Museum.

Launch of the SAM Museum In Action campaign

To mark the announcement of the new strategic direction, SAM will be rolling out the SAM Museum In Action campaign, also known as SAM M.I.A., to galvanise members of the public to be a part of the museum's quest to bring art into everyday lives and spaces.

Audiences will be invited to participate in activations at SAM's spaces, aimed at actively involving the wider community in everyday art encounters and creating emotional connections with one

another. To complement this, specially designed physical and digital collectible sticker packs, reminiscent of SAM's visitor stickers of the past, will be made available for redemption at select venues that SAM is presenting at. These limited-edition stickers will feature selected works from SAM's National Collection and involve special artist commissions.

To kick off the SAM M.I.A. campaign, the first of these commissions features a collaboration with local artist Sam Lo, who is one of the artists that SAM is working with on the fifth edition of the museum's hoarding commission series. Lo will be unveiling a new artwork on the museum's hoarding at Queen Street titled *OUR FUTURE IS IN(CON)CLUSIVE*. After Phase 2 (Heightened Alert) ends, the public can contribute by sticking over the letters "C", "O" and "N" with their SAM stickers, creating a message of hope and inclusivity. All public events organised by SAM will be subject to prevailing safe management measures.

Transforming spaces for art experiences and programmes

Taking over an industrial, expansive warehouse space at Tanjong Pagar Distripark (TPD), SAM will offer innovative and experimental art experiences, as well as new spaces for community interactions. It will be sited alongside other art galleries, conservators and art logistics providers in a historic district where the inaugural Singapore Biennale in 2006 was held. Expected to open in early 2022, SAM at TPD will be one of the key venues where audiences can catch SAM's exhibitions and programmes. The opening show will be a presentation by The Observatory, which will feature elements such as a performative installation and an archival space. Apart from presenting bold and new exhibitions which are interdisciplinary and technologically-driven in nature, the versatile space will also be able to present large-scale contemporary art installations and host groups of visitors comfortably. More details about the space can be found in Annex B.

In line with the museum's strategic direction to infuse art into the everyday, SAM will be actively presenting art in other spaces over the year, such as *The Gift* exhibition at National Gallery Singapore, SAM Mini Mobile Museum at public libraries in Jurong, Tampines and Woodlands, and artwork commissions by Kray Chen and Sam Lo at the SAM hoardings along Bras Basah Road and Queen Street.

Conserving SAM's heritage buildings for the future

As SAM takes art programming into everyday spaces and closer to audiences, the museum's buildings at Bras Basah Road and Queen Street will continue to be key venues where the public can encounter and engage with art in meaningful ways. Currently closed for redevelopment, the project will now focus on critical works to conserve both the National Monument building of the old St. Joseph's Institution and the old Catholic High School building. This move is in line with the government's efforts to exercise prudence during these challenging times, while still ensuring that the heritage buildings will better serve the public for many years to come.

As this project is under review and plans are being revised, the redevelopment of both buildings will be delayed further, and is expected to be completed in 2026. More details on the redevelopment project will be released later. The extended closure of the buildings will present SAM another opportunity to challenge the notion of a museum as a single physical space that houses artworks by infusing art into the everyday and transforming unexpected spaces around Singapore with art. In the interim, SAM's presence at TPD will also be an opportunity for it to present large-scale art exhibitions and installations in a versatile warehouse space.

Deepening roots and connections with different constituents through art

SAM seeks to rethink the museum's relationships with the art community, partners, and audiences by engaging them in active collaboration and co-creation, as well as enabling connections between the different constituents. The introduction of new initiatives will allow the museum to work more closely and collaboratively with the art community, and also provide opportunities for artists to co-create and interact with the wider public from diverse backgrounds.

"We hope to make our museum spaces, collection, and programmes open and accessible to everyone so that art can be enjoyed by all audiences and infused into everyday life. Our initiatives will also encourage new forms of engagement and experimentation within and beyond the artistic community. We see our artists, partners and communities as active collaborators and co-creators in this journey, and are working towards developing relationships premised on reciprocity and co-production, which are key to the work we do," says Dr June Yap, Director of Curatorial, Collections and Programmes at Singapore Art Museum.

Ongoing efforts to extend the museum's outreach into the community include public art presentations and programmes such as the SAM Touch Collection, The Care Collection and Kopi Teh & Contemporary Art. With the new strategic direction, SAM will deepen its engagement with different communities through a range of upcoming programmes, including communities in Jurong as part of the multi-year project *Art in the Commons: Data Visualising Jurong* at Science Centre Singapore, as well as the art community through SAM Residencies at Tanjong Pagar Distripark and the new SAM Fellowship programme.

For the full calendar and details of SAM's upcoming exhibitions and programmes, please refer to Annex C.

For more information, visit bit.ly/SAM-MuseumInAction for the latest updates. Media assets can be accessed via bit.ly/SAMNewDirection-MediaKit.

- Annex A: SAM's Refreshed Vision and Mission
- Annex B: Fact Sheet on SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark
- Annex C: Calendar of Exhibitions and Programmes

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For media queries, please contact:

Tricia Low
Senior Associate
Tate Anzur
+65 9231 7480
tricia.low@tateanzur.com

Hilary Tan
Senior Associate
Tate Anzur
+65 8727 4845
hilary.tan@tateanzur.com

About the Singapore Art Museum

Singapore Art Museum opened in 1996 as the first art museum in Singapore. Also known as SAM, we present contemporary art from a Southeast Asian perspective for artists, art lovers and the art curious.

SAM is building one of the world's most important public collections of Southeast Asian contemporary art, and as a non-profit arts institution – it is our responsibility to preserve, research, exhibit and connect the art and the artists to the public and future generations through thought-provoking exhibitions and meaningful programmes.

SAM is redefining the idea of the museum by presenting art in multiple spaces, including our two heritage buildings along Bras Basah Road and Queen Street. Both buildings are currently closed for redevelopment and will re-open in a few years.

SAM is proud to be the organiser of the Singapore Biennale, a festival that celebrates contemporary art from all over the world across the island-city of Singapore. To find out more, visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg.

ANNEX A: SAM's Refreshed Vision and Mission

VISION

SAM will inspire humane and sustainable futures through transformative, thought-provoking and meaningful everyday encounters with art of our times.

MISSION

SAM will present contemporary art from a Southeast Asian perspective, in active dialogue, discovery and collaboration with our constituents; through our collection, research, exhibitions and programmes.

ANNEX B: Fact Sheet on SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark

The SAM space at TPD is spread over two floors, and is developed by design and build agencies SPACElogic Pte Ltd, FARM and AE Models Team Pte Ltd.

The first level will have over 2,000 square metres of floor space, containing:

- Two expansive **climate-controlled gallery spaces** that feature 6-metre-high ceilings, to present large-scale installations and exhibitions;
- A **multi-purpose events space** which can host outreach programmes for up to 100 pax;
- An **F&B space** overlooking a view of the port, which also serves as a lounge area for visitors.

Artist Impressions (Level One)	Caption
	<p>Artist impression of the entrance of SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark, the museum’s new contemporary art space; image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum</p>
	<p>Artist impression of the reception area at the first level of SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark; image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum</p>
	<p>Artist impression of the gallery foyer at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark, which will house two climate-controlled gallery spaces; image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum</p>

	<p>Artist impression of one of two expansive gallery spaces in SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark where large-scale installations and exhibitions will be held; image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum</p>
	<p>Artist impression of the F&B space offering a view of the port, as well as the multi-purpose hall for events and programmes at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark; image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum</p>

The third level has a floor space of over 1,300 square metres and will house the SAM Residencies studios and SAM’s corporate office. This arrangement gives SAM staff, residents and the public greater opportunities for social interaction and engagement in these spaces, which include:

- A **central, open space** that serves as a zone for interaction and to host programmes of the SAM Residencies, such as talks and performances;
- An **experimental ideas lab** to showcase the development of content, research and processes by staff and residents;
- **Artist studios and a shared workspace** for SAM residents.

Artist Impressions (Level Three)	Caption
	<p>Artist impression of the space on level three of SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark, featuring SAM residency studios and a central, open space for interactions and programmes; image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum</p>



Artist impression of a public programme held at the central, open space of the SAM residency studios on level three of SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark; image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum

ANNEX C: Calendar of Exhibitions and Programmes

For the latest updates on SAM's programmes, visit bit.ly/SAM_Exhibitions

SAM Mini Mobile Museum: *Slander!* by Jeremy Sharma

Ongoing till 31 October 2021

Woodlands, Jurong, Tampines Regional Libraries

The SAM Mini Mobile Museum is a travelling art exhibition held in partnership with NLB, showcasing contemporary artworks by SEA artists through a selection of works adapted from the National Collection. *Slander!* by Jeremy Sharma is the fourth edition of SAMMMM, extending from his earlier work *A White, White Day* (2017).

SAM Hoarding Commissions

23 August 2021 – 6 February 2022

***When the odd ones out get in* by Kray Chen**

SAM Hoarding along Bras Basah Road

This work depicts a legendary winning hand in the Chinese tile-based game mahjong commonly known as "Thirteen Wonders." It is made up of the 13 least versatile and hence most discarded tiles in the game. While few players are willing to undertake the challenge of winning with this hand, Chen recognises the humour, creativity and wit of its rare combination which defies the rules, structure and logic of mahjong, and provokes an exchange of favourable odds for aesthetics.

These tiles are variously named the Winds, Dragons, Warriors, and Orphans or Lone ones. Even these names liken them to artists and visionaries who defy and transgress norms, showing exceptional resolve in taking chances to achieve a more beautiful win. This winning hand is a demonstration of solidarity and the power of banding together for the better.

OUR FUTURE IS IN(CON)CLUSIVE by Sam Lo

SAM Hoarding along Queen Street

This mural responds to the redevelopment of the Singapore Art Museum buildings, making a bold declaration that conveys the artist's hopes for what the Museum of the future may bring. It invites viewers to look more closely to discover the vibrant motifs within it that symbolise a diverse range of communities in Singapore. Lo encourages viewers to obliterate the "CON" in the statement with stickers, and in doing so presents a thought-provoking and empowering revelation: the future may be uncertain, but the power to shape it lies in each of our hands.

OUR FUTURE IS IN(CON)CLUSIVE reflects a desire for a more socially conscious and inclusive society, a recurring theme in Lo's practice that both stems from and acknowledges their lived experience in a diverse community.

The Gift

20 August – 7 November 2021

The Ngee Ann Kongsi Concourse Gallery, National Gallery Singapore

The Gift explores the tangible and intangible in the offer, of encounter and interrelation, which is at once an embodiment of expansiveness of spirit as much as it is also an obligation to another. Held at National Gallery Singapore's The Ngee Ann Kongsi Concourse Gallery, *The Gift* is part of *Collecting Entanglements and Embodied Histories*, a dialogue between the collections of Singapore Art Museum, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, MAMMO Contemporary Art Museum and Nationalgalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, initiated by the Goethe-Institut.

SAM Residencies

From October 2021

The museum's first studio-based residency programme features four residency types open to artists, curators, art organisations and artist-run spaces, as well as community and education-focused art practitioners. Serving as an incubator for creative experimentation and exchange, the multidisciplinary programme will actively involve local communities and the public through a diverse lineup of activities such as work-in-progress presentations, performances, talks and workshops.

Present Realms

January 2022

Tanjong Pagar Distripark

SAM's pilot residency programme concludes with *Present Realms*, a fluid project space for the exploration of ideas, works-in-progress and research. The three pilot residents—Chu Hao Pei, Salty Xi Jie Ng, and Johann Yamin—present their ongoing inquiries into the themes of intimacy and infrastructure through topics spanning rice, rituals, and gaming. Their practices offer a glimpse into methods, visualities, and beliefs in contemporary worlds that are both familiar and distant.

Chu investigates notions of seed sovereignty and agricultural amnesia across the region, as shaped by political, economic, and social factors. Ng explores the intersections of grief, rituals, ancestor worship, and Chinese religion, as well as the relationship between museum acquisition and social forms of art. Yamin focuses on histories of eSports and its ecosystem(s) from the vantage of Southeast Asia as a way to consider nationalism, capitalist logics, and queer games communities.

Present Realms reflects the shared and interactive working environment that defines SAM Residencies. This joint presentation extends the residents' exchanges during the programme and invites visitors to participate in developing the residents' research. The residents will be present on both weekends to engage with visitors (*subject to prevailing safe management measures*).

Think! Contemporary Primary School Virtual Exhibition

End 2021

The *Think! Contemporary Primary School Virtual Exhibition 2021* is the culmination of the museum-based learning partnership between the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) and five primary schools: CHIJ Our Lady Queen of Peace, Geylang Methodist School (Primary), Haig Girls' School, Mayflower Primary School and St. Anthony's Primary School.

Featuring artworks by Primary Four students who were a part of the *Think! Contemporary Programme*, the exhibition includes themes related to home, community, identity, and the

environment – responses to issues and ideas investigated through contemporary artworks featured in SAM exhibitions. The pandemic has altered and transform traditional approaches to engaging students. This edition of *Think! Contemporary* was conducted online. The upcoming presentation will adopt a digital format in the form of a virtual exhibition showcasing 18 artworks, including videos of students sharing their experiences.

The *Think! Contemporary Programme* is a multi-visit, museum-based school programme that advocates learning through contemporary art at SAM. Integrating school curricula with museum visits, the programme employs artworks from two SAM exhibitions, *Once Upon This Island* from SAM's Learning Gallery and *Singapore Biennale 2019: Every Step in the Right Direction*, as primary resources for classroom teaching and learning of Art, Character and Citizenship Education, English, Science and Social Studies.

Gan Siong King: My Video Practice

End 2021

Venue to be confirmed

A month-long presentation by Malaysian artist Gan Siong King, featuring *Kecek Amplifiers Bersama Nik Shazwan* (2019) and *My Video Practice* (2021). It will showcase the artist's recent practice, which are characterised by the information loops he creates between his videos and their environments, as well as the iterative process between the pre-production, production and post-production of his works.

Art in the Commons: Data Visualising Jurong

November 2021 – July 2023

Science Centre Singapore

In collaboration with Science Centre Singapore, the multi-year project seeks to marry Art and Science. In its first edition, local artist and Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) Lecturer Debbie Ding and leading students from NYP's School of Design and Media will create an artwork based on data collected from the various communities in Jurong. Future editions will involve other local artists and the communities in Jurong as they explore and present the town's unique identity through the innovative use of technology.

Opening show at TPD by The Observatory (*Title to be revealed at a later date*)

Early 2022

Tanjong Pagar Distripark

Taking inspiration from influences past and present, The Observatory, an art rock, experimental and electronica band based in Singapore, fuses progressive sounds with unconventional structures, bold arrangements, improvisation, thought and expression. The Observatory's presentation explores two sides of the same coin – decomposition and composition, degeneration and generation. Comprising a performative installation and an archival space, the exhibition will speak to the band's constantly evolving methodologies, the communities it is surrounded by, and its significant place in the Singaporean music scene.

SAM Fellowship

From Late 2021

The SAM Fellowship will develop new perspectives on regionality, place, and climate across the Indian Ocean Rim with selected artists over an extended period of time. The programme is designed to support deep, open-ended inquiry through long term investment in artistic process and a high level of curatorial engagement. As research and production unfolds, the SAM Fellowship will become a vital site for generating critical vocabularies and compelling discussions with our diverse publics.

Lonely Vectors

Early 2022

Various venues

Focused on the lines, infrastructures and networks inscribed on the surface of the earth, *Lonely Vectors* is a multi-venue exhibition project that unfolds across regional libraries, the SAM Hoardings along Bras Basah Road and Queen Street, and Tanjong Pagar Distripark. As part of the SAM Mini Mobile Museum, the regional libraries will feature a new commission by artist Chu Hao Pei that considers the library as a repository and site of knowledge as it speculates about a different mode of seed distribution.