

MEDIA RELEASE

**SINGAPORE BIENNALE RETURNS IN OCTOBER 2022 WITH
A TEAM OF FOUR CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTORS**

Binna Choi, Nida Ghouse, June Yap, and Ala Younis appointed to lead SB2022



"What would it take to see beyond the preoccupation with the spectacle?"

*Singapore Biennale 2022 Co-Artistic Directors; From left: June Yap, Nida Ghouse, Ala Younis, and Binna Choi.
Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.*

Singapore, 9 November 2021 – Singapore Art Museum (SAM) announces the return of the Singapore Biennale for its seventh edition from 18 October 2022 to 19 March 2023. Helmed by a team of four Co-Artistic Directors, the 2022 edition of the Singapore Biennale (SB2022) brings together four curators from around the world – Binna Choi from South Korea/the Netherlands, Nida Ghouse from India, living in Germany, June Yap from Singapore and Ala Younis from Jordan. The selected team comprises individuals with a strong profile of multi-disciplinary, experimental and participatory practices, and who activate different sites and archives, drawing relations between the historical and contemporary. The Singapore Biennale is a platform for international contemporary art organised by SAM and commissioned by the National Arts Council (NAC), Singapore.

Dr Eugene Tan, Director of SAM, says, “SAM has always envisioned the Singapore Biennale as a key platform for the discourse of Southeast Asian art, and for the deep exploration of the human condition through contemporary art. Over the years, the Biennale has become a distinct mark of Singapore’s position as an art node in the region, connecting artists within the region and bringing them into global conversations on the art of our time. The Biennale seeks to not only present art that speaks to the urgent issues we face today, but also invites audiences to make space for these dialogues and collectively reflect on the role of art in finding a way forward. We are delighted to introduce our Co-Artistic Directors for this upcoming edition to our audiences. Their artistic direction has been shaped in part by the impact of the pandemic on the region over the last two years and the question of what it means to be living in our present conditions.”

Mrs. Rosa Daniel, Chief Executive Officer of NAC, says, “During this challenging period, art plays an even more important role to heal, uplift and unite people. Since its inception, the Singapore Biennale has been a key cornerstone for Singapore and the region’s arts and culture scene. This has not only paved the way for the development of arts practitioners in the region, but it has been especially timely and important in the present day to bring new perspectives and opportunities for people to engage with and be inspired by art. With a strong team of Co-Artistic Directors from diverse backgrounds, we look forward to seeing fresh collaborations with international artists and communities as a means of catalysing new ideas within the region and internationally, as well as introduce exciting ways for the public to experience art.”

International Co-Artistic Directors collectively shaping the Biennale

Southeast Asia’s cultural, social and artistic diversity and multiplicity stems from its long-standing connections with other global influences. In drawing out perspectives from the region as situated within the world, the SB2022 Co-Artistic Directors reflect upon and revisit curatorial approaches and collaborative forms of cultural production, generating renewed perspectives in contemporary art, as well as engaging emerging vocabularies, infrastructures, critiques and narratives that are of interest to the region and beyond.

- **Binna Choi** is the director at Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons, Utrecht since 2008 which has been internationally recognised as an art institution re-modelling itself with dedication to the changing world and collective agency with diverse and inclusive art forms. Choi engages with art and art institutional practice as a way to imagine another world in tandem with social movement, having conceived and

developed several long-term, interdisciplinary and collaborative artistic research projects in the fields of art, social movement, and academia.

- **Nida Ghouse** is a writer and curator whose projects span mediums and disciplines, experimenting with ways of staging artistic practices, in relation to activating materials and sites. Her collaborative approach has brought about projects that take shape in a variety of forms, building upon one another and developed over a long period of time.
- **June Yap** is Director of Curatorial & Collections at the Singapore Art Museum, where she oversees the museum's exhibitions and curatorial programmes. With a deep knowledge of Southeast Asian contemporary art practices and discourse, Yap has been involved in several major projects both in the region and on the international art circuit, which present the perspective of the region in relation to global discourses.
- **Ala Younis** works deeply with archives, different materials and forms to address contemporary situations through the lens of historical phenomena. As an artist and curator, her work explores the impact and influence of representations on society and individuals, and their repercussions across times and geographies.

The full bios for the Co-Artistic Director Team can be found in **Annex A**.

Artistic Direction for SB2022

The Co-Artistic Directors are committed to the functions and potentials of contemporary art in and after pandemic time. They posit the Biennale as a presence through which art, as well as that which is considered other to art, may be deeply connected to life. Coming together from across distinctive artistic and curatorial practices, cultures, institutions and positions, the Co-Artistic Directors will endeavour to engender forms of curatorial and artistic collectivity.

In a statement on their process for SB2022, the Co-Artistic Directors explain, "While the region of Southeast Asia remains the Singapore Biennale's immediate context, this edition will journey through unfamiliar terrains and beyond geography itself. In an attempt to apprehend and grapple with questions pressing for humanity, the Biennale will conceive ways in which to relate to a public without relying on spectacle. Turning away from the conventional preoccupation with the visual, it will dwell instead on interiority, gather around other senses and sensibilities. Artists, curators, researchers and publics will be invited to imagine the possibilities of a biennale, of art and life, and of being."

Apart from collaborations with local, regional and international visual art practitioners and art organisations, engagement with the public will be central to SB2022. Audiences can look

forward to programmes and encounters with art at multiple sites and contexts, both in Singapore and overseas.

Further details on the SB2022 curatorial concept and programmes will be revealed in Q1 2022.

More information can be found in the Annexes.

Images may be downloaded at <https://bit.ly/SB2022mediakit>

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About the Singapore Biennale

The Singapore Biennale was established in 2006 as the country's pre-eminent platform for international dialogue in contemporary art. It presents and reflects the vigour of artistic practices in Singapore and the region within a global context, and fosters productive collaborations and deep engagement with artists, arts organisations, and the international arts community.

The Singapore Biennale cultivates public engagement with contemporary art through a period of concerted activities including exhibitions, public engagement and education programmes that feature artist and curator talks and tours, school visits and workshops, and community days. It complements achievements in other areas of arts and culture, collectively enhancing Singapore's international profile as a vibrant city in which to live, work and play.

The 2006 and 2008 editions of the Biennale were organised by the National Arts Council (NAC). NAC has commissioned SAM to organise the Biennale since 2011.

About the Singapore Art Museum

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

SAM's mandate as a non-profit arts institution is to build one of the world's most important public collections of Southeast Asian contemporary art, 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 Tanjong Pagar Distripark, and two heritage buildings along Bras Basah Road and Queen Street that are slated to re-open by 2026.

As Singapore's national contemporary art museum, 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.

About the National Arts Council

The National Arts Council champions the arts in Singapore. By nurturing creative excellence and supporting broad audience engagement, our diverse and distinctive arts inspire our people, connect communities and profile Singapore internationally. We preserve our rich, cultural traditions as we cultivate accomplished artists and vibrant companies for the future. Our support for the arts is comprehensive – from grants and partnerships to industry facilitation and arts housing. The Council welcomes greater private and corporate giving to and through the arts so that together we can make the arts an integral part of everyone's lives.

For more information on the Council's mission and plans, visit www.nac.gov.sg.

Annex A: Singapore Biennale 2022 – Biographies of Co-Artistic Directors



Binna Choi is the director at Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons, Utrecht since 2008, where she engages with both its artistic programming and the organisational cultural practice as part of the curatorial. This practice follows the path marked by mostly long-term, trans-disciplinary, and collaborative projects like *Composing the Commons* (2013–16) with the extended team of Casco consisting project-exhibitions such as *Site for Unlearning (Art Organization)* (2014–18) with Annette Krauss, *We Are the Time Machines: Time and Tools for Commoning* (2016), and *New Habits* (2014) with commissions for new works, research groups, publishing and networks like Arts Collaboratory and Cluster, and *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (2010–12) with Maiko Tanaka, Yolande van der Heide and many others. The latest programmes under her directorship and co-curatorship include *Parasite Lottery* by Wok the Rock, *The Library of Unread Books* by Heman Chong and Rene Staal, *Army of Love* by Ingo Niermann and Dora Garcia, four solo exhibitions in one (Babi Badalov, Ansuya Blom, Ama Josephine Budge, Miree Lee), *Het is of de stenen spreken* (silence is a commons). Long-term, collective projects such as *Travelling Farm Museum of Forgotten Skills* with the Outsiders, *Unmapping Eurasia* with You Mi, and the annual Assembly for commoning art institutions, and the infrastructural project under development *Commons.art* with Yin Aiwen, are amongst the ways to de/re instituting at Casco in light of the commons.

Choi also works for Dutch Art Institute and Islands Culture Diversity Network. As a member of Akademie der Künste der Welt, Köln, she curated *Gwangju Lessons* over the 18 May Democratic Uprising with Christian Nyampeta and took it to Asia Culture Center as part of the *MaytoDay* by the Gwangju Biennale Foundation (2020). Choi was a curator for the 11th Gwangju Biennale: *The Eighth Climate (What Does Art Do?)* in 2016. Choi also serves as an advisor to the AFIELD network and *MARCH* journal and is a board member for Green Art Lab Alliance Support (galas), MyVillages and the Office for Postartistic Services.



Nida Ghouse is a writer and curator. She is Visiting Lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in the Humanities at Princeton University for Spring 2022. With Vic Brooks, she received the 2021 Andy Warhol Foundation curatorial fellowship for the exhibition *Shifting Center* at EMPAC, upcoming in 2023. She curated *A Slightly Curving Place* at Haus der Kulturen der Welt (2020), in the framework of *An Archaeology of Sound*, a collaborative project responding to the acoustic archaeologist Umashankar Manthravadi. The project travels to Alserkai Arts Foundation (2021-22) and encompasses 'Coming to Know,' a discursive programme with Brooke Holmes; 'A Supplementary Country Called Cinema,' a film programme with Surabhi Sharma; and *An Archaeology of Listening*, a publication series with Archive Books. She previously co-curated *La presencia del sonido* at Botín Foundation (2012), was part of the exhibition *Anarchéologie* at Centre Pompidou (2017) and has a collection of writing on listening.

Ghouse has co-curated *Parapolitics: Cultural Freedom and the Cold War* (2017) at Haus der Kulturen der Welt and co-edited its accompanying publication (Sternberg Press, 2021). Her work 'Lotus

Notes' which started with Mada Masr has since appeared in multiple text and talk formats. Her engagement with Hassan Khan's practice has taken shape in a two-week event '14 Proper Nouns,' as well as artist seminars, writing workshops, conversations and essays like 'The Loss of Tokyo.' Ghouse's collaborative projects include *Emotional Architecture* with Malak Helmy, and *Take to the Sea* with Lina Attalah and Laura Cugusi, first presented at Manifesta 8 (2010) and later nominated by Bassam El Baroni for the Vera List Center Prize (2014).

The question of what an exhibition can be is a preoccupation manifest in her curatorial projects, such as *Untitled Exhibition #1* with Padmini Chettur, *Desert of Images* with Melik Ohanian, *Bartered Collections* with CONA Foundation, and *Rehearsing the Witness* with Zuleikha Chaudhari. She began her practice through a curatorial programme at Townhouse Gallery in Cairo, and once served as director of an experimental exhibition space Mumbai Art Room. Her writing has been featured in numerous periodicals, as well as in the publications of MuKHA, New Museum, Palazzo Grassi, the 56th and 58th Venice Biennale, Van Abbemuseum, among others. Her text 'From the Resistance to the Clouds: on panning to the sky' is forthcoming with Ashkal Alwan's publishing platform Perpetual Postponement.



June Yap is Director of Curatorial & Collections at Singapore Art Museum, where she oversees the museum's exhibitions and curatorial programmes. Her prior roles include Guggenheim UBS MAP Curator (South and Southeast Asia), Deputy Director and Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, LASALLE, and curator at the Singapore Art Museum.

Amongst exhibitions she has curated are: *The Gift* for Singapore Art Museum presented at National Gallery Singapore (2021) as part of the transregional curatorial collaboration, *Collecting Entanglements and Embodied Histories; They Do Not Understand Each Other* co-curated with Yuka Uematsu from National Museum of Art, Osaka, at Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong (2020); *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia* as part of the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2013), Asia Society, Hong Kong (2013) and NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (2014); *The Cloud of Unknowing* for the Singapore Pavilion, 54th Venice Biennale with artist Ho Tzu Nyen (2011); *The Future of Exhibition: It Feels Like I've Been Here Before* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, LASALLE (2010); *Paradise is Elsewhere* at Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart and Berlin (2009); media art exhibitions *Twilight Tomorrow* and *Interrupt* at the Singapore Art Museum (2004 and 2003, respectively). Yap is the author of *Retrospective: A Historiographical Aesthetic in Contemporary Singapore and Malaysia* (SIRD, 2016).



Ala Younis is an artist with research, curatorial, film, and publishing projects. She is co-Head of Berlinale's Forum Expanded, member of the Akademie der Künste der Welt, Cologne, and co-founder of the independent publishing initiative, Kayfa ta. She co-initiated and co-directed a national group for researching and developing cultural policy in Jordan (2012–18). Younis seeks instances where historical and political events collapse into personal ones. Her artworks were featured in major exhibitions, including solo shows in New York, Seville, London, Prague, Cairo, Amman, Sharjah, and Dubai, and in the Istanbul, Gwangju, Orléans and Ural biennales. Her project *Plan for Greater Baghdad* (2015) premiered at *All the World's Futures*, 56th Venice Biennale.

In 2013, Younis curated Kuwait's first pavilion at the Venice Biennale. She curated *Museum of Manufactured Response to Absence*, collection and interventions in Kuwait, Algiers and Ramallah (2012–14). She also co-curated *How to find meaning in dead time* in Berlin and *Hands* in Cologne (both 2021); *How to Reappear: Through the quivering leaves of independent publishing* in Beirut and Amman and *How to Maneuver: Shapeshifting texts and other publishing tactics* in Abu Dhabi (both 2019–20); and *Out of Place* at Tate Modern and Darat al Funun (2011). Younis edited an extensive monograph on late Palestinian artist Abdul Hay Mosallam and co-edited *The Time Is Out Of Joint* published by Sharjah Art Foundation in 2020 and 2016 respectively. She co-edited and published over 18 publications through Kayfa ta initiative.