



Education Folio

Choe U-Ram

South Korea

How to use this folio

This education folio contains information about the featured artists in the Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize 2014, their artworks as well as artistic processes, giving visitors a better understanding and appreciation of the artworks displayed.

Questions and activities found at the back of the folio are meant for visitors to have a deeper engagement with each of the finalist artworks. The questions can be used for discussions when looking at the particular artwork, while the suggested activities are designed for educators or parents to explore with their students or children for further engagement beyond the museum visit.

The suggested reading and viewing lists also provide more information about the artist's practice, artwork themes and related ideas or issues, which are aimed at helping educators and readers make interesting and relevant connections to matters in their daily life.

Introduction

The Asia Pacific Breweries (APB) Foundation Signature Art Prize is a premier juried prize inaugurated by the Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation and the Singapore Art Museum in 2008. It is a hallmark of distinction awarded to artists whose artworks represent a significant development in contemporary visual art in the Asia Pacific region.

A triennial competition, the APB Foundation Signature Art Prize seeks to highlight new developments in the visual arts, stimulate lively public discussion and critical debate, and provide a cross-cultural exhibition platform for established practitioners and significant emerging artists alike. Aimed at recognising the single most outstanding contemporary visual artwork produced in the preceding three years, the competition is open to all visual artworks, regardless of medium, subject matter and size.

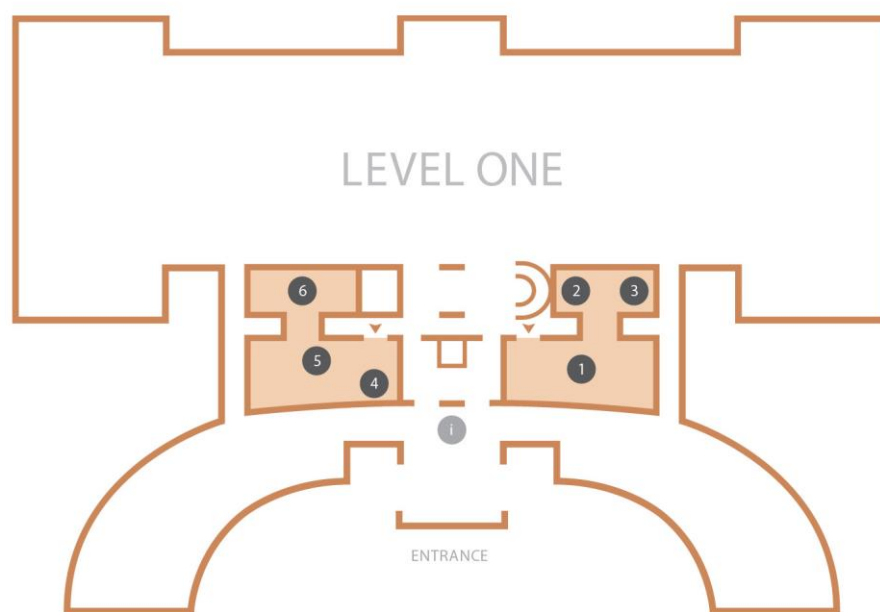
The inaugural edition in 2008 focused only on 12 countries: Cambodia, China, India, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, and received a total of 34 nominations. The APB Foundation Signature Art Prize soon expanded its focus in 2011 to reach the entire Asia Pacific region, including 130 artworks from 23 Asia Pacific countries and territories. Nominations were received from new countries and territories including Indonesia, Philippines, Myanmar, Brunei, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Australia and other Oceania and Pacific islands. The 2014 edition includes nominations from all previous countries and territories, including a nomination from new entrant, Hong Kong.

Nominators from across the region with a wide range of specialties and backgrounds are specially invited to nominate specific artworks – instead of artists – that had been aesthetically, culturally and socially significant in their particular art scenes in the past three years. A diverse panel of distinguished judges, who mostly hail from the Asia-Pacific region, are also selected specially to evaluate the nominations, shortlist the finalists, and decide on the key award-winning works in the APB Foundation Signature Art Prize exhibition

All nominated works are assessed on a set of criteria: the strength of the idea and concept; creative and interesting use of medium and material; technique, expression and form; artistic insight and interpretation, and imagination and originality. The Grand Prize and two Juror's Choice Awards are chosen by the international jury of art experts, critics and curators, while the People's Choice Award will go to the artist whose work garners the most number of public votes.

The APB Foundation Signature Art Prize is a recognition of distinction and significance in artistic practice, presenting the best of contemporary art in the Asia-Pacific region.

Exhibition map



LEVEL ONE

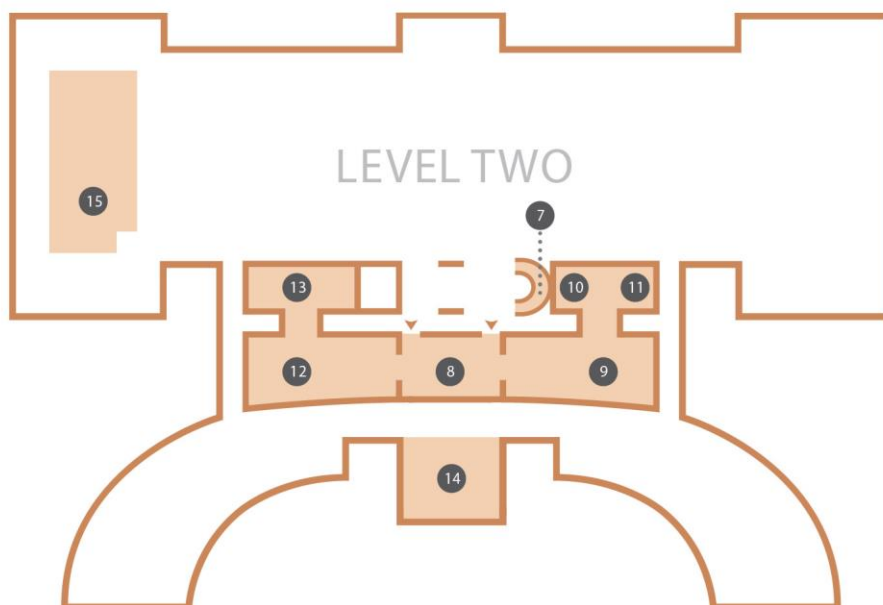
- 1 Nguyen Trinh Thi
- 2 Robert Zhao Renhui
- 3 Owen Leong
- 4 Farida Batool
- 5 Peng Wei
- 6 Yao Jui-Chung
+ Lost Society
Document (LSD)

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Exhibition map



LEVEL TWO

- 7 Liu Jianhua
- 8 Choe U-Ram
- 9 Go Watanabe
- 10 Lisa Reihana
- 11 Naeem Mohaiemen
- 12 Arin Rungjang
- 13 Ranbir Kaleka
- 14 Melati Suryodarmo
- 15 Ho Tzu Nven

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Artwork***Custos Cavum (Guardian of the Hole)***

Choe U-Ram

2011

Metallic material, resin, motor, gear, custom CPU board, LED

220 x 360 x 260 cm

Collection of the Artist

Image courtesy of the Artist

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About the artwork and artistic process

Custos Cavum (Guardian of the Hole) is a **kinetic** sculpture by South Korean artist Choe U-Ram. A **biomorphic** form with skeleton-like metal ribs, it lies flat on a bed of sand, as if washed up on a forgotten shore. Delicate gold leaves wave gently above the form, and appear to be growing out of the metallic tendrils that emerge from its ribs. The mechanical body of the creature rises and falls, and seems to be breathing. These movements resemble those observable in nature, which contrasts sharply with the etched stainless steel and robotic sculptural form.

The **mythology** of the **otherworldly** creature is explained in an imaginary narrative created by the artist. *Custos Cavum* is a creature that inhabits an imagined universe where two parallel worlds exist. They serve as guardians of holes that connect these two worlds, gnawing at the holes faithfully to prevent them from closing up. *Unicuses* (winged **spores**) develop on the backs of the *Custos Cavum*; they eventually take flight and travel to a new hole where they give birth to a new creature.

Having brought to life an imaginary creature with its own mythology, the artist recognises his own **paradoxical** relationship with technology. Though an ardent fan of robotics and futuristic technology, Choe admits to having a **dystopian** paranoia of machinery and the science-fiction **genre**:

“A relationship that for a brief moment seemed mutually beneficial is now breaking apart, as machines have captured the edge in a 65,000-year evolutionary race... I shudder to think that all of us, not just me but everyone else, may be nothing more than their (the machines’) hosts. The sea of machinery that mankind has spawned is enough to form the **coacervate** that give birth to life on our early planet. It may be that at this very moment, somewhere, machines are arising for machines themselves.”

By making a statement about the **insatiable** human desire for technological advancement, Choe urges audiences to reflect on the human race’s obsession with scientific achievements and reconsider the ways in which humans can have more balanced relationships with technology.

About the artist

Choe U-Ram (b. 1970, Seoul, South Korea) obtained a Bachelors of Fine Art and Masters of Fine Art from Chung-Ang University Department of Sculpture in 1993 and 1999 respectively.

Born to parents who were art majors, Choe loved machinery as a child and worked at a robotics company before studying sculpture in college. His keen interest in biology, physics and science-fiction has resulted in the production of kinetic art which expresses a refined delicacy and intricate weightlessness through organic, life-like forms. Unexpected and fantastical, Choe's kinetic sculptures breathe with rhythmic movement, bringing to mind aquatic propulsion, flight and ritualistic courtship displays.

Choe has held solo exhibitions at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo (2012), Asia Society Museum in New York (2011), and the John Curtin Gallery in Perth, Australia (2006). His work has also been shown at the inauguration exhibition of the Leeum Samsung Museum of Art in Seoul (2004), the Shanghai Biennale (2006) and the Liverpool Biennale (2008). He was also the recipient of several awards in South Korea, including the Kim Se Choong Sculpture Award, Young Artist Today Award and POSCO Steel Art Award.

Discussion and suggested activities

Questions for discussion

- What is your first impression of *Custos Cavum*? Does it remind you of any animal or plant? [Seal, dolphin, willow weed, wild plants, etc.]
- Walk around the artwork. Look up at the moving leaves and bend down to see the whirling gears. How do you feel? Do the different parts of the creature evoke a different feeling?
- Have you come across any mythological creatures from books, films or cartoons? Compare your favourite creature with *Custos Cavum*. What are the similarities and differences?
- *Custos Cavum* is the name of the creature in Latin. Botanists and zoologists use Latin for classificatory naming of flora and fauna. If you were a zoologist, what name would you give to this creature? [*Custos* = Guardian, *cavum* = hole]
- The artist expressed his concerns about technology taking over people's lives. Can you think of any instances when you might be over reliant on technology? Can you survive a day without your handphoned?
- [FOOD FOR THOUGHT] Is rapid technological advancement beneficial to humankind? Yes, No or Maybe? Think hard – what examples relating to this matter spring to mind?

Suggested activities

- Create your own fictional creature by combining your favourite animal and plant. Sketch it and come up with a story about it. And of course – give it a Latin name! Share your creation with your friends and amaze them with your creativity!
- Sounds of whirring gears accompany the kinetic movements of *Custos cavum*. How can you enhance the experience of viewing this artwork by adding on to the soundscape? Select a list of sounds or music, come back with the sounds/music and listen to it on headphones while viewing the artwork. How does it affect your experience?

Glossary**Kinetic**

Relating to or resulting from motion.

Biomorphic

Having the form of a living organism.

Mythology

A collection of myths, especially one belonging to a particular religious or cultural tradition.

Otherworldly

Relating to an imaginary or spiritual world.

Spores

Typically a single unit of which can reproduce without sexual fusion, characteristic of fungi, etc.

Paradoxical

Seemingly absurd or self-contradictory.

Dystopian

A society or state of mind in which everything is imagined to be as bad as it can be.

Genre

A style or category of art, music, or literature.

Coacervate

(Physical chemistry) A reversible aggregation of liquid particles in an emulsion.

Insatiable

Not able to be satisfied or satiated; greedy or unappeasable.

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Further reading and viewing

Artist's Website

<http://www.uran.net/>

Feature on Choe U-Ram on The Creator's Project blog

Available [here](#).

Video introducing Choe U-Ram by The Creators Project

Kinetic Sculptor Puts Cyber Dreams In Motion. Available [here](#).

Audio recording of artist talk at John Curtin Gallery in Perth, Australia

U-Ram Choe Artist Talk at Curtin University. Available [here](#).

Video documentation of Choe U-Ram's artworks

Available [here](#).

Book on kinetic sculptures

Super sculpture; using science, technology, and natural phenomena in sculpture by Diane B. Chichura and Thelma K. Stevens. Available [here](#).