



Education Folio

Ranbir Kaleka

India

**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.

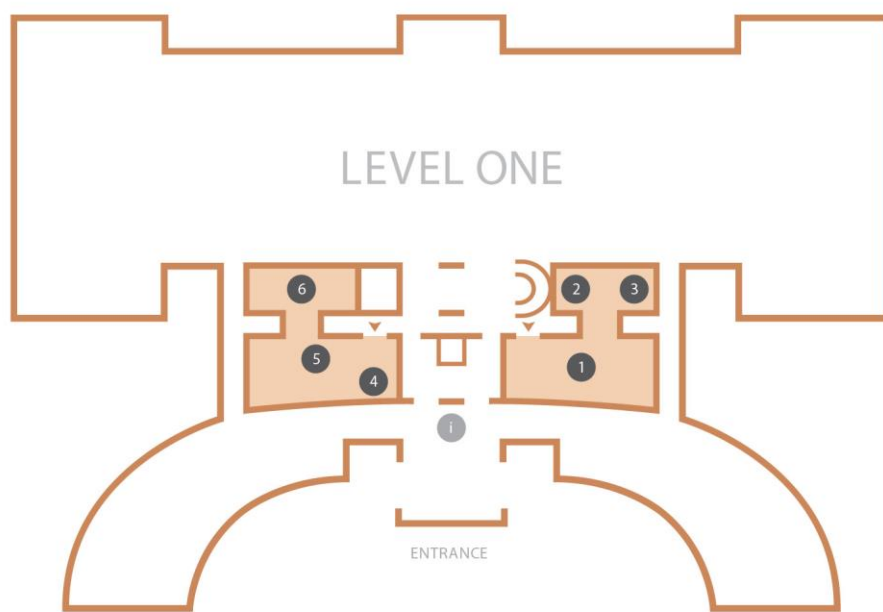
The inaugural edition in 2008 focused only on 12 countries: Cambodia, China, India, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, and received a total of 34 nominations. The APB Foundation Signature Art Prize soon expanded its focus in 2011 to reach 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



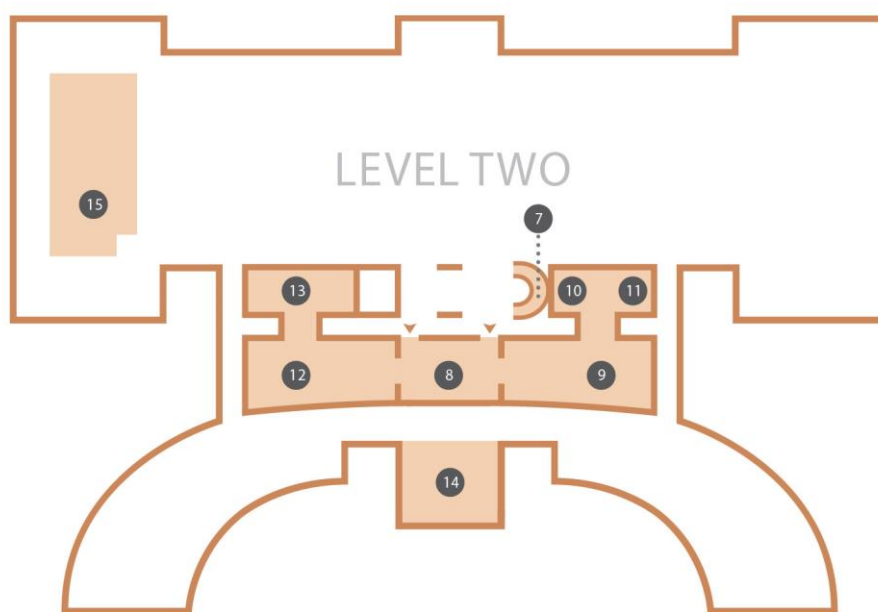
### LEVEL ONE

- 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

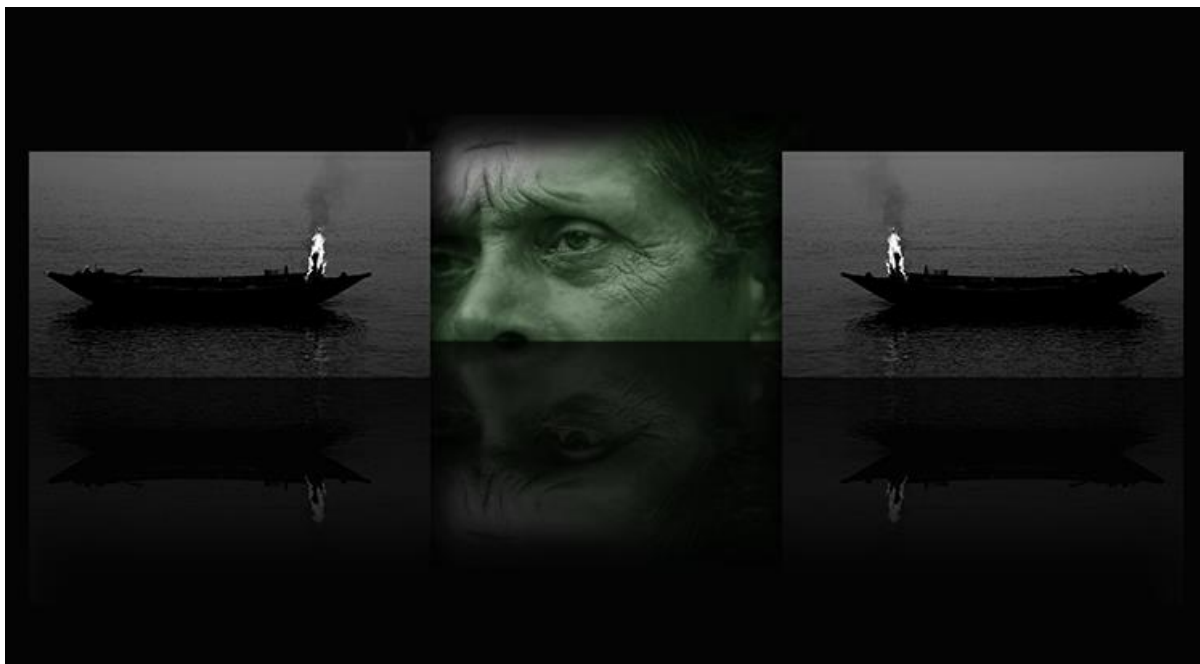


### LEVEL TWO

- 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*****House of Opaque Water***

Ranbir Kaleka

2012

HD video installation

222 x 1097 cm, Duration 10:33 mins

Collection of the Artist and Volte Gallery

*Image courtesy of the Artist*

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### About the artwork and artistic process

Ranbir Kaleka's *House of Opaque Water* is an **immersive** video installation which consists of three separate video projections. The video work follows the story of Sheikh Lal Mohan, a man who lost his home when his village situated in the Sundarbans was submerged by rising sea levels. The Sundarbans, home to the largest mangrove forest in the world, has been experiencing rising water levels due to global warming and man's careless destruction of the environment. As a result, many local inhabitants of the region have been **displaced** from their homes, leaving behind their livelihood to build safer homes inland. Sheikh Lal Mohan now lives on another island, but in the video work he returns to where his former village is submerged, drawing a map of the village in the mud as he explains its layout in a rite of healing. The loss and displacement experienced by this man brings about a **catharsis** which gradually becomes apparent to the viewer. The video work also condenses the artist's conversations with Sheikh Lal Mohan through the use of subtitles, highlighting the identity of a man whose life revolved around the sea. The sea is thus a source of life as well as a powerful force that man is subjected to. The **phantasmagorical** elements evident in *House of Opaque Water* and Kaleka's other works are a result of his childhood, which was largely defined by the experience of living in a **haveli**. The enormous house with its many nooks and crannies was a playground for Kaleka during his growing up years and had been crucial in fuelling Kaleka's imagination of the world outside.

*House of Opaque Water* was first conceived when Kaleka saw *Mean Sea Level*, a film by Pradip Saha. Saha is an environmental **activist** who works with villagers affected by the rising sea levels in the Sundarbans region, and his work on the plight of these villagers was a starting point for Kaleka. *House of Opaque Water* employs the **documentary** format in its depiction of the subject, a largely different approach from Kaleka's other works which involve metaphorical representations through the projection of video on painting. Kaleka explains his choice of the video-documentary approach in this work, stating that "the medium of video is able to document the richness and meaning of cinematic time, and this cannot be matched by other mediums such as painting". He also feels that such a video-documentary approach is effective in its artistic representation of the lives and experiences of people.

### **About the artist**

Ranbir Kaleka (b. 1953, Patiala, India) lives and works in New Delhi, India. He attained a Diploma in Painting from the College of Art at Punjab University, Chandigarh in 1975 and a Master in Painting from the Royal College of Art, London in 1987. He has taught fine art at the Fine Arts Department, College for Women, Punjabi University, Patiala, India and the Delhi College of Art, New Delhi.

Kaleka is known for combining the mediums of paint and videos by projecting video projections on easel paintings in a process known as superimposition. His works touch on current issues faced in India, such as poverty and migration, as well as scenes of everyday life, which are narrated and transformed visually into cinematic and surrealistic worlds.

Kaleka's works has been shown at the 4th International Contemporary Art Gwangju Vision Exhibition (2014), Gwangju, South Korea; The Peabody Essex Museum, *Midnight to the Boom* (2013), from the Museum's Herwitz Collection, Salem, Massachusetts; *Project 35* (2013), Independent Curators International (ICI), North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, USA.



## Discussion and suggested activities

### Questions for discussion

- The sea is a prominent and central aspect of this video work. What is the significance of the sea to the inhabitants of the Sundarbans delta?
- What are the sounds you can recognize from the video work? What effect is created by the use of these sounds?
- What are some metaphorical images and actions used in the video work? How do these metaphors relate to the central character Sheikh Lal Mohan's experience and emotions? [drawing the map of a village in the mud, fire burning on the boat, etc]
- How is the video installation presented to the viewers and what emotions does it evoke? [3 separate projections, predominantly black and white colour scheme, reflection of videos on the floor, use of sounds and silence, etc.]
- [FOOD FOR THOUGHT] The artwork revolves around the theme of displacement and one's sense of belonging to a place. Do you think the constant demolition of buildings in Singapore contribute to a sense of displacement? Which is more important – one's sense of belonging or the renewal of infrastructure? What are your own thoughts and feelings on this?

### Suggested activities

- In the video installation, the villagers are displaced from their homes due to rising sea levels. Find out the causes and what we can do to lessen the impact of rising sea levels. How would you share this message? Get your friends and family to join you on this campaign!
- Find out which regions or countries around the world are at risk of rising sea levels. What are some potential environmental problems these countries might face? What are some solutions planned and undertaken by the relevant authorities?
- The artwork highlights people's attachment to spaces they inhabit. Are there any public spaces you are attached to at different stages of your life? Revisit these familiar places and sketch out their unique features to share with your friends and family.

## **Glossary**

### **Immersive**

Providing information or stimulation for a number of senses, not only sight and sound.

### **Displaced**

Being forced to leave one's home, typically because of war, persecution, or natural disaster. It can also refer to a sense of not belonging.

### **Catharsis**

The process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions.

### **Phantasmagorical**

Of a sequence of pictures, characterised by rapid changes in light intensity, colour and size.

### **Haveli**

The Hindi word that refers to a mansion.

### **Activist**

Someone who has a policy of taking direct and often militant action to achieve an end, especially a political or social one.

### **Documentary**

A movie or television programme that is based on factual events, interviews, and often detailed research on a particular set of circumstances, narrative, or incident..

## Further reading and viewing

### Artist's Website

<http://www.rkaleka.com/index.html>

### Book on real-world solutions to rising sea levels

*Adapting to flooding and rising sea levels* by Susan Meyer. Available [here](#).

### Article on Pradip Saha's environmental documentary "Mean Sea Level".

*The vanishing village* by Jayanta Basu for The Telegraph India. Available [here](#).

### Documentary on rising sea levels

*Sea Level Rise: Facing the Issues* by Sea Level Rise Education. Available [here](#).