



Education Folio  
Robert Zhao Renhui  
Singapore

**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.

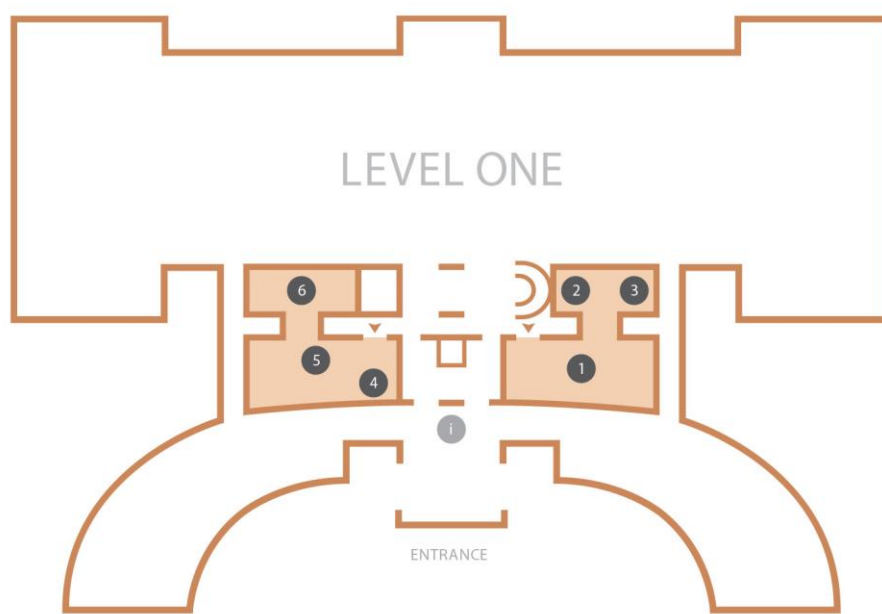
The inaugural edition in 2008 focused only on 12 countries: Cambodia, China, India, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, and received a total of 34 nominations. The APB Foundation Signature Art Prize soon expanded its focus in 2011 to reach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

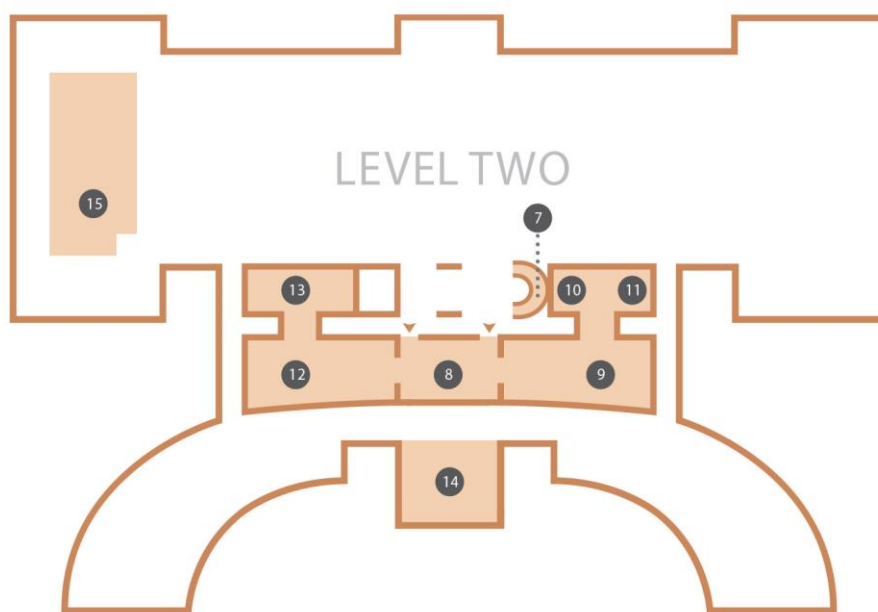
## Exhibition map



### 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)

## 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*****Eskimo wolf trap often quoted in Sermons***

Robert Zhao Renhui

2013

Mixed media installation with knife, bicarbonate soda, and diasec

Dimensions variable

Edition 2 of 3

Collection of the Artist

*Image courtesy of the Artist*

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### About the artwork and artistic process

*Eskimo wolf trap often quoted in Sermons* is a mixed media installation which consists of a bloodied-looking knife in a field of snow and an accompanying text on the wall detailing the **narrative** behind the artwork. Part of a larger series of installation works entitled *The Glacier Study Group* which revolves around the investigation of glacial and polar activities in the Arctic Circle, the artwork features the concept of the animal trap, an object that fascinates Zhao.. The narrative behind the artwork tells the ironic and tragic tale of a wolf that begins to lick the frozen blood on a knife it encounters in the snow. As the wolf continues to lick the knife, the knife's blade is gradually uncovered and it begins to cut the wolf's tongue. The wolf, unaware of this due to the numbing cold, becomes increasingly excited upon tasting warm, fresh blood and eventually dies from the loss of its own blood.

The use of such fictional narratives is characteristic of Zhao's artistic practice, which also draws heavily from the observations and research of the natural world and the relationship between man and nature. Working under the **guise** of a fictitious research organization known as the Institute of Critical Zoologists, Zhao's works often reflect his keen interest in **anthropomorphism** and how humans frequently and subconsciously allow their human concerns to foreground the animals' when talking about them. The Institute of Critical Zoologists "aims to develop a critical approach to the zoological **gaze**, or how humans view animals" and is a platform through which Zhao attempts to find other non-anthropomorphic ways to address animals. Even though *Eskimo wolf trap often quoted in Sermons* is an exception to Zhao's usual practice of using photography in his works, it is an installation work which retains the photographic element of a moment 'frozen' in time in its exploration of the **representation** of truth and reality.

**About the artist**

Robert Zhao Renhui (b. 1983, Singapore) is a multi-disciplinary artist who received a Bachelor of Arts in Photography from the Camberwell College of Arts in London and a Master of Arts in Photography from the London College of Communication.

His work addresses man's relationship with nature and presents different modes of the human gaze on nature, frequently highlighting how truth is constructed through a false naturalization and manipulation of beliefs.

Zhao was the recipient of the United Overseas Bank Painting of the Year Award, Singapore (2009); the National Arts Council Singapore Young Artist Award (2010); and the Deutsche Bank Award in Photography (2011). He was selected to participate in the 2013 President's Young Talents exhibition at the Singapore Art Museum. His works have been shown widely in Singapore and abroad, including exhibitions at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan; the Photo-Levallois Festival, Paris; the GoEun Museum of Photography, Korea; and most recently at the Singapore Biennale (2013).



## Discussion and suggested activities

### Questions for discussion

- What is your first impression upon encountering the artwork (before you read the accompanying text)?
- After reading the accompanying text on the wall what are your thoughts about the artwork now? Are they different from your first impression?
- The artist frequently employs convincing fictional narratives in his works, which often deceive the viewer.. What are the elements that makes his narration effective? [Based on facts, simple narrative, strong visuals, etc.]
- The wolf is an animal that is usually perceived as a cunning figure in fairy tales (Three Little Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood, etc.). Has this artwork changed the way you perceive the wolf?
- We often attach stereotypical traits not only to animals, but also to groups of people. Why do you think we have the tendency to do so?  
[FOOD FOR THOUGHT] The nominator of the artwork expressed that the accompanying text on the wall is a crucial part of the work; without it, the audience would not be able to understand the work. Is the viewing of artworks more enjoyable without any explanation or better with the artist's statement? What are your thoughts on this?

### Suggested activities

- This installation is accompanied by a short parable and title. Re-interpret the installation and come up with your own parable and title based on the bloodied knife in the snow. Share your story and ask your audience to choose the more convincing story!
- Have you heard of Aesop's fables? Aesop is the most famous of all fable writers, and he lived in ancient Greece. A fable is a short story that conveys a moral, typically with animals as characters. Try writing your own fable with your favourite animal character. Visualize an installation to illustrate the climax of the story, and create it somewhere. It can be on any scale – from room-sized to something on your table. Use everyday objects, and take a photograph of it – and don't forget to include a meaningful moral that you would like your audience to learn about.

**Glossary****Narrative**

A spoken or written account of connected events; a story.

**Guise**

An external form, appearance, or manner of presentation, typically concealing the true nature of something.

**Anthropomorphism**

The attribution of human characteristics, motivation, or behaviour to an animal.

**Gaze**

In literary theory, a particular perspective considered as embodying certain aspects of the relationship between observer and observed.

**Representation**

The depiction of someone or something in a work of art.

## Further reading and viewing

### Artist's Website

<http://www.criticalzoologists.org/>

### Book on Aesop's fables (for children)

*Aesop's fables* adapted by Jan Fields. Available [here](#).

### Book on animals in mythology, history, art, science, philosophy, and literature

*The mythical zoo: animals in myth, legend, and literature* by Boria Sax. Available [here](#).

### Book on the zoological gaze

*Why look at animals?* by John Berger. Available [here](#).

### Video introducing anthropomorphism (for children)

*Monkey See, Monkey Do? Let's Talk About Anthropomorphism* by Kids Animal Channel. Available [here](#).