



Lee Wen

Strange Fruit

2003

C-Print photographs, set of 12, edition 1/3 + 2 A.P.

42 x 59.4 cm (each)

Singapore Art Museum collection

Exhibition Guide: page 12 – 13

Pre-SAM

TASK: Think about how objects can be signifiers of cultural identity and place.

SUBJECT(S): Literature, Cultural Heritage

READ

Have students analyse the poem, *Postcards from Chinatown* by **Terrence Heng**. From the poem, come up with a list of objects that are signifiers of the Chinese identity. Guiding questions for poem analysis:

- What kind of mood/atmosphere is conveyed through the poet's description of Chinatown?
- What do you think the poet feels about the changes Chinatown is undergoing?

CONNECT

If possible, have the students explore Chinatown. Let them compare their own experience with that of the poet's. Examples they can think about include:

- Objects
- Scenes of daily life
- Smells
- Sounds

Alternatively, compare Singapore's Chinatown and the Chinatowns in other countries such as America, United Kingdom, Australia, etc.

In-SAM

TASK: Transmediate understanding of artwork through creative writing and performance.

SUBJECT(S): Art, Literature, Drama, Cultural Heritage

DISCUSS

Have students observe **Lee Wen's *Strange Fruit*** silently for 1 minute. Next, get them to sit in front of the artwork and discuss the following questions:

- What is the cultural and symbolic use of lanterns during mid-autumn festival?
- Lee Wen has obscured his upper body with a cluster of red lanterns. How has this changed our understanding of lanterns in Chinese culture?
- Why do you think Lee Wen covered his body in yellow paint?
- What message is the artist trying to convey?

WRITE

Let the students respond to the artwork by writing a short poem/prose/reflections with Lee Wen's photographs as stimulus. Have the students devise a performance in relation to Lee Wen's photographs. The performance can involve reading aloud or choral speaking. The session could end with a discussion on additional insights gleaned from one another's performance.

Alternatively, they could write a blog review on the Learning Gallery exhibition, with emphasis on **Lee Wen's *Strange Fruit***. Students can consider making references to Lee Wen's previously exhibited works, such as those in Singapore Biennale 2013.

Post-SAM

TASK: Explore/examine self-image in relation to perceptions of identity.

SUBJECT(S): Art, Literature

CONSTRUCT

Before the lesson, have students gather images of animals from the internet/magazines/books, etc. Get students to ask their family members/friends to come up with a list of adjectives that they would use to describe the students.

In class, students are to examine their own sense of self by compiling the list of adjectives commonly used to describe themselves. With the list, they are to construct a collage by using different animal parts to represent the different sides of themselves.

Next, get the students to work in groups to provide a list of adjectives for one another's artwork. Students can then compare their original list and the new list, and share their observations with the class.

The lesson can be extended by looking beyond the individual and towards the community. Ask students to place a group of composite images together and invite them to come up with a new list of adjectives about the collective work.

SOVA supplement

TASK: Draw links between the Study Of Visual Arts (SOVA) and contemporary artwork in the museum.

ARTWORK(S): Tang Da Wu, *Tiger's Whip*, 1991

Both artworks are in part a performance – Tang Da Wu dragged a life-sized papier mache tiger behind him while Lee Wen walked through the streets of Singapore dressed in lanterns. Ask students to find out and define what performance art is.

Ask students to examine Lee Wen's set of photographs. Task them with recreating the works as Lee Wen's assistant. Ask them to come up with a shopping list of materials and tools required.

Both artworks convey a message / issue that is close to the artists' hearts and is related to culture. Let students contemplate and create a wearable assemblage with the use of iconic objects/colours representative of an ethnic group. Ask them to make use of recycled materials and turn the assemblage into something wearable for a procession. Choose a model to put on the assemblage for a parade showcase.

Further Readings:

Lee Wen's Website

<http://leewen.republicofdaydreams.com/>

Lee Wen's works in Singapore Biennale 2013

http://www.singaporebiennale.org/downloads/folios/Lee%20Wen_Final.pdf

Lee Wen's biography

Available [here](#).

Feature on Lee Wen on *The Straits Times*

Available [here](#).

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