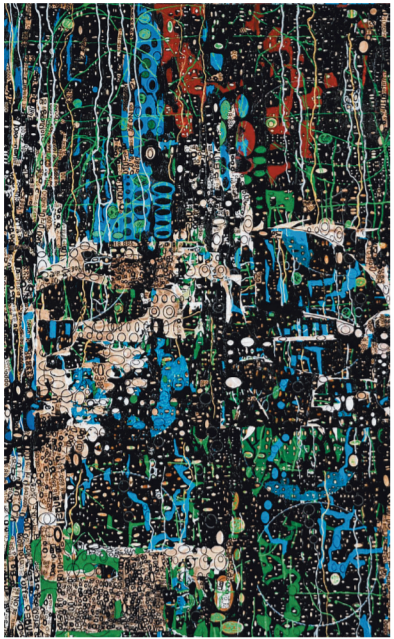


New ways of seeing

Singapore Art Week 2024 ended on Jan 28. Clement Yong and Shawn Hoo pick the seven best shows of the annual event



Udomsak Krisanamis' *Glamour Fresh* is both abstract cityscape and flowing digital code. PHOTO: S.E.A. FOCUS

BEST APPROACH TO TECHNOLOGY: S.E.A. FOCUS

Curator John Tung's intelligent show opened multiple ways of thinking about technology in art. Organised by STPI Creative Workshop and Gallery, S.E.A. Focus marshalled close to 200 works by more than 50 artists in the region blurring the boundary between the organic and the inorganic.

The expansive show views technology as anything non-natural: the binaries of nature and human, human and machine, human and alien bleeding into each other.

Through this lens, Artificial Intelligence is the latest in a series of disruptions that can be absorbed into artists' practices.

The collages of Thai artist Udomsak Krisanamis are emblematic of this. Assembled from paint, cellophane and newspaper, they are both abstract cityscapes and polychrome iterations of the falling green digital codes in the Matrix films (1999 to 2021).



At S.E.A. Focus, Joshua Kane Gomes' alien figures were given flesh in the form of soft foam. ST PHOTO: CLEMENT YONG



Theaster Gates' installation puts Japanese tatami together with an African mask. PHOTO: THE INSTITUTUM

BEST INTER-CONTINENTAL BLOCKBUSTER: TRANSLATIONS: AFRO-ASIAN POETICS

This was the must-see exhibition which aimed to kick-start a conversation between Asian and African diasporas.

More than 100 works by artists of African and Asian ethnicities – curated by Dr Zoe Whitley, director of London's Chisenhale Gallery, and her assistant Clara Che Wei Peh – were exhibited in five galleries at Gillman Barracks.

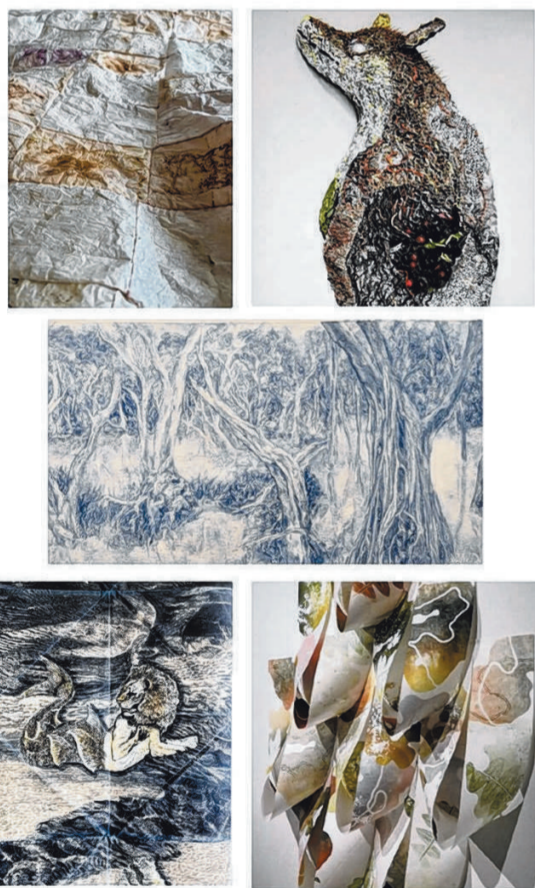
Some curation was based on theme. In a room focused on ecology, Singaporean Robert Zhao's photographic stills of a wild boar building its nest led visitors to Ghanaian sculptor El Anatsui's wall hanging of a fish net created from discarded alcohol bottle caps.

There were sections on ceramics, portraiture, abstract art and tapestry – and even one memorable segment on works suspended in motion – which immersed visitors in the diverse aesthetics of Asian and African art.

It was a more interesting perspective than that of the National Gallery's *Tropical: Stories From Southeast Asia And Latin America*, where post-colonial politics formed the overarching framework.

This show, organised by The Institutum, offered the most memorable and crowd-pleasing pairing. Large-scale installations by American installation artist Theaster Gates and Singapore's Tang Da Wu faced each other; one a tableau of a bronze African mask, Japanese tatami mats and a large clay vase, and the other a portrait of former South African president Nelson Mandela behind steel bars and a collapsing brick wall.

More information on the backstory of individual pieces would have been welcome, though.



Collage of Australian works at Paper Trails: Between Lion And Swan. PHOTO: ARTSOURCE

BEST UNDER-THE-RADAR OFFERING: PAPER TRAILS: BETWEEN LION AND SWAN

Paper Trails: Between Lion And Swan, a collaboration between 12 artists from Singapore and Australia, deserved more attention.

Curated by Australian artists Harrison See and Desmond Mah with Singaporean sculptor Yeo Chee Kiong, the title intentionally avoided mentioning the two countries to pre-empt an East-West paradigm.

It aimed to reinscribe meaning on paper and textiles – materials used by the British to sign over land deeds, and used in uniforms and flags to display military might.

Most eye-catching was Australian contemporary artist Kelsey Ashe's meticulously silkscreen-printed canvas (above right): a fantastical, craggy riverscape bringing together the Merlion and a three-headed swan referencing Perth's Swan River.

Six works from Australia are now on show at Yeo's Sculpture 2052 space at Primz Bizhub in Admiralty. The Singaporean pieces are in digital form, awaiting completion for a joint show in Perth in June. The exhibition runs till Feb 25.

BEST ALTERNATIVE EXHIBITION SPACE: KEYS UNDER THE SOFA AT HOCK SIONG & CO

Unconventional exhibition spaces are a staple of the visual arts in land-scarce Singapore, but this is not the usual industrial warehouse or abandoned building.



Keys Under The Sofa takes place at second-hand furniture shop Hock Siong & Co, a space with old-school charm.

Five artists have hidden art amid the bric-a-brac, many of which respond to people's relationship with objects at home.

Singaporean artist Woong Soak Teng's *Chair Person* (2024) – a vertical video work where the artist tries out different chairs over nine minutes – is, aptly, being screened beside a shelf of assorted chairs for sale.

Curated by Kamillah Bahdar, this is a humbler counterpart to the buzzy *Eat Play Love*, which also featured a work by Suwito.

This hidden gem, which runs till Feb 18, is worth the trek.

Artist Woong Soak Teng's *Chair Person* at Keys Under The Sofa. ST PHOTO: SHAWN HOO



Ho Tzu Nyen's mid-career retrospective *Time & The Tiger*, now showing at the Singapore Art Museum, will travel to Seoul and New York in 2024. ST PHOTO: SHINTARO TAY

BEST INSTITUTIONAL SHOW: HO TZU NYEN: TIME & THE TIGER AT SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

In a season of institutional blockbusters, Singaporean artist Ho Tzu Nyen's mid-career retrospective at the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) leaps out, retelling the dark histories of Asia through found footage and algorithms.

With two galleries screening video work spanning two decades, *Time & The Tiger* demands an inconceivable attention span.

But the curation, led by SAM director Eugene Tan, offers an alternative cinematic experience that is fragmentary and multisensory. One cruises through "cinema halls" and finds a subversive take on film-making and history.

Placing a Singapore artist centre stage during SAW demonstrates to international visitors – and Singaporeans – that Singapore is not just a wealth hub, but also a contributor to cultural conversations.

Time & The Tiger, which rewards multiple visits, is on till March 3.



Chronic Compulsions: Selected Works From Art Addicts Anonymous runs at The Private Museum till March 24. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

BEST PRIVATE ART COLLECTION SHOW: CHRONIC COMPULSIONS AT THE PRIVATE MUSEUM

There was a significant number of private collections on public display at SAW 2024.

But the standout is The Private Museum's *Chronic Compulsions*, located in the refreshed former Osborne House bungalow at Emily Hill.

Drawn from 15 collections in Singapore, it features more than 40 works of art. These reveal a different side of well-loved artists such as Han Sai Por, Tang Da Wu, Lee Wen, Suzann Victor, Latiff Mohidin and F.X. Harsono.

This is also a survey of Singapore-based collectors and their interests. The fact that they are stepping into the limelight bodes well for Singapore's arts ecosystem.

Chronic Compulsions is on till March 24.

Throngs of young people flocked to the 47-year-old Peace Centre in Selegie Road for the shopping centre-turned-arts space's last hurrah. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN



BEST GROUND-UP ARTS SPACE: SELEGIE ROAD

Ground-up arts spaces and events stole the thunder from some of the blockbusters this year.

On the final weekend of SAW, throngs of young people crowded Selegie Road for Peace Centre's final hurrah. Shopping centre GRiD, located in the same road, also drew crowds with pop-up spaces by Deck and Supper House.

It affirms the vitality of ground-up initiatives in a scene reputed for being overplanned and institutional.

clementy@sph.com.sg
shawnhyc@sph.com.sg