

Art Stage Singapore

Singapore was a buzz with art lovers and collectors, artists and industry insiders during Art Stage Singapore, now in its fifth edition, open 22-25 January at the Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre, highlighting Singapore Art Week, an art smorgasbord of over 100 events.

Enthusiastic school children and seasoned collectors were amongst the audience that rubbed shoulders during the four-day fair that including the VIP preview on 21 January, welcoming over 51,000 visitors and highlighted by enthusiastic buying.

Since its beginnings Art Stage has grown in stature, in 2011 the first edition of the Fair had to organize parallel events in order to generate a dynamic ambience surrounding the event. The diversity and strength of Singapore Art Week's 100 plus events has helped consolidate Art Stage's presence on the global art calendar, while at the same time guaranteeing art collectors of something new.

"Art Stage has an important role to play in helping to build the eco-system to support S.E. Asian contemporary art and each year the Fair becomes larger with more regional and international galleries reflecting the growth of the market," says Art Stage founder and director Lorenzo Rudolf.

"It is beautiful to see the cooperation between the Fair, local museums, art spaces as well as Singaporean government agencies, all functioning seamlessly together to make the event a success," he adds.

The Fair featured 158 galleries as general booths, 18 galleries at the *Southeast Asia Platform* and 33 galleries and institutions at the *Special Exhibitions*, while the participating galleries come from 29 countries. Themed, *We Are Asia*, Art Stage functions as a necessary unifying force bringing together the segmented national art scenes in S.E Asia and acting as a bridge between region and the rest of the world. With a comprehensive overview of some of the best contemporary art from the region Art Stage Singapore is now confirmed as the flagship contemporary art event in S.E. Asia.

Art Stage's program had something for everyone. The return of Southeast Asia Platform with a curated exhibition of artworks by 32 emerging artists from the region curated by Singaporean Khim Ong, took an academic approach in the selection of works ranging from painting, installation, print and photography, to video and performance. Taking up an area of 1,000 square meters the Platform allowed for more thought provoking works to be enjoyed in more open, comfortable spaces. Special exhibitions for Russia, Malaysia, Korea and Modern Art were also very popular with fairgoers.

"It's wonderful to see different parts of the world bursting out with visual culture. It's completely new," says the celebrated English duo and Turner Prize winning artists Gilbert & George, one of the highlights of the Fair, commenting upon their first experience with Art Stage Singapore.

Making its debut was the Video Stage providing an overview of the history of video art to the present day, allowing for a greater understanding of the medium that is quickly gaining interest among collectors in Asia today. This comprised of three parts featuring 73 videos projected on 15 screens.

Other features were the public art works, amongst the highlights were Japanese Hiroshi Senju's breathtaking waterfall compositions, *Day Falls/Night Falls*, painted in fluorescent pigments and displayed under ultraviolet light revealing electric blue colors.

The Education platform included art talks, presentations and tours while the VIP program featured an array of gallery openings outside of the Fair, and breakfast programs with discussion panels, highlighted by the event at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute featuring an outstanding exhibition by Australian based Singaporean artist Suzann Victor's works on paper titled *Imprint*. Another highlight was an exhibition interactive exhibition and the viewing of the first 'the Earlier Mona Lisa' by Leonardo da Vinci at the Arts House.



Entang Wiharso 2015. mixed media on paper. Image Richard Horstman



'Day Fall - Night Falls. Hiroshi Senju, Image by Richard Horstman



'The Prohecy of Time' 2014, Pannaphan Yodmanee, mixed media, Image Art Stage



'Sama Rata Sama Rasa', Yuli Prayitno, Mixed Media, Image Richard Horstman

“Improved organization, more galleries and larger audience during the VIP preview have been a noticeable feature this year,” says participating Indonesian gallerist Chris Dermawan of Semarang Gallery. “After the 2007-08 art boom the local market fell dramatically, yet now there are opportunities for Indonesian art in Singapore with its growing infrastructure aiding the regional art boom. I hope more Indonesian galleries, collectors and art industry professionals come see and be inspired to develop more art infrastructure in Indonesia.”

While the presentation of the Indonesian gallery’s booths lacked imagination this did not hamper sales. Works by Yuli Praynito and Entang Wiharso, exhibiting a series of works forged from paper produced at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute, were highlights.

With prices ranging from under USD \$1000 to well over USD 1 million there was work available for all budgets. Top sales include Amorous, an artwork featuring butterflies stuck onto a surface of wet paint, by Damien Hirst was sold to a regional collector by White Cube for USD1.6 million.

“This year Art Jog (Indonesia’s premiere art fair) has been gifted a complimentary booth to help promote our event,” said Seto Satriagama Rakantaseto, Art Jog director. “Over 4 years of communication between us and Art Stage enable us to move forward together.”

The booth promoting Art Jog 2015 allowed the audience to view works through peeps holes gaining an insight into some of the works to be exhibited. “We are very happy with audiences response,” Seto adds.

Even though the exhibited works have been selected on quality, decorative art is more often the norm and while the visual character of works by especially the South Korean and Chinese artists was highly noticeable at the end of the day, it was those gallery’s that presented themed or conceptualized booths which remained etched in the observers mind.

Fresh, yet highly aesthetic art was in abundance, its energy seemed to flow out from the booths circulating throughout the enormous exhibition center, however most of the galleries faded into insignificance because the works and booth appear too similar and become lost in a blur of familiarity. It was those galleries that invested in a concept along with creative booth design that were memorable. After viewing over 150 booths the audience justifiably experience stimulus overload.

Booth design that is interesting, challenging convention, creating intrigue and beckoning the audience to venture in and discover imprinted lasting impressions. Galleries to remember where Sundaram Tagore, Pearl Lam, well aware of the spatial relationship between high quality art and the observer and how this generates feel good experiences. The Yauz Gallery of Singapore and its stunning installation display ‘The Prophecy of Time’ by Thai artist Pannaphan Yodmanee was memorable.

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Art Stage singapore 2015, Image Art Stage Singapore



Art Stage Crowds, image courtesy Art Stage Singapore