

Singapore Tyler Print Institute

During Singapore Art Week in January of this year I had the pleasure of visiting the Singapore Tyler Print Institute (STPI). The occasion was a VIP breakfast and discussion featuring a panel of prominent regional art experts. Then, following a guided tour through the 400 square meter gallery space, I was delighted to be granted permission to venture further inside this renowned establishment.

Located in the Arts and Heritage district of Singapore the STPI is a state-of-the-art printmaking workshop, paper mill and contemporary art gallery located in a restored 1921 warehouse, perched riverside in the thriving tourism enclave of Clarke Quay.

Passing through doors labelled Staff Only, I am escorted along a corridor into an elevator. My stomach drops as the elevator suddenly begins its descent and a sense of mystery overcomes me as I plunge into the inner sanctums of the STPI. The next 30 minutes were some of the most memorable of that five-day sojourn to Singapore.

Bubbling with anticipation I march into the massive STPI print workshop and my sensory perception kicks into overdrive as I enter into another world. This is a world foreign to the intimacy of the gallery where mechanical, technical and creative precision reigns supreme. At a glance the workshop appears clinical, yet the semi industrial landscape conjures up thoughts of infinite creative possibilities. I am already familiar with the ambience within an artist's studio, and while my curiosity and excitement levels are high, inside this workshop I was within a realm completely alien to me.

"The STPI is a non profit institution that has evolved into a cutting edge experimental art retreat committed to the pursuit of technical and innovative printmaking excellence," says Emi Eu, who first joined STPI in 2001 and has been at the helm as STPI Director since 2009.

Lecturer of Art History and Appreciation at the Singapore Management University and a member of the Joint committee for Art Basel, the world's leading art fair, Eu and the STPI board of directors are some of the most respected art and cultural administrative figures in Singapore. Collectively their efforts have been responsible for STPI's global journey of development while establishing itself as a revolutionary force in the Asian region.

STPI's exposure to the global audience via its participation in strategically selected international art fairs connects it with artists, curators, collectors and museum directors from Europe, Asia, Singapore and Southeast Asia. While both the gallery and the workshop have gained international stature here the conventions of print media are being reimagined and aligned with the future.

"I first visited STPI in 2002 and was really excited and dreamed that one day I would be invited to work there," says Indonesian international artist Entang Wiharso. "Just being there sparked an explosion of creative ideas."

"The Visiting Artist Program (VAP) lies at the heart of STPI's programs and consists of an artist residency usually carried out in 2 phases, culminating in an exhibition," says Eu. "As one of S.E Asia's foremost artists it was an obvious choice to invite Entang to our artist in residency program." Wiharso (b. Central Java 1967) lives and works in Rhode Island USA and Yogyakarta, Central Java, and his residency involved 3 sessions, totalling collectively 2 months. The results are to be showcased in 'Never Say No' from 21 April - 30 May in the STPI gallery.

While Wiharso is known for political, socio-economic, cultural and emotionally laced themes, 'Never Say No' is an exploration media in a new and dynamic environment that features 25 mixed media works in yarn, silkscreen on mirror and plexiglass, lithography, laser cut metal, caste paper, digital print, and pencil. "During the course of the program artists are invited to give public talks providing them an interactive platform to share their experiences and pass on some expertise and inspiration," Eu says.

"In the beginning of the residency you don't know what the outcome will be, and then all the aspects come together and integrate harmoniously; concept, technique and aesthetics. During the residency I was involved in a very different technical process that brought me back to my roots in drawing and painting," Wiharso says.



Entang Wiharso Black Goat vs Identity & Aesthetic Crime-Comic Book Series 2015. mixed media Image Richard Horstman



STPIBuilding. Image Courtesy STPI



Entang Wiharso Art as a Gift-Comic Book Series 2015, mixed media Image Richard Horstman

“The STPI’s history, its lineage of excellent international residency artists, the state of the art printing workshop along with the professional team was at times intimidating for me. I felt pressure, and I wanted to create something significant and meaningful,” says Wiharso, and he adds. “I like to get out of my comfort zone as an artist, to have different experiences and to challenge myself.”

“Through STPI’s extensive range of education and public programs we offer an exclusive array of carefully curated programs to a wide audience,” Eu says. “We seek to engage while broadening our visitors understanding and experience of contemporary art practice by hosting guest workshops, guided tours, print and paper making workshops, artists talks, annual open house and school programs.”

The name Kenneth Tyler is synonymous with printmaking and he has had a formative influence on the art and science of printmaking for five decades. Tyler (b.1931 Indiana, USA) is a master printer, publisher, arts educator and a prominent figure in the American post-war revival of fine art. His passion and expertise to forge new grounds in the realm of printmaking have earned him the respect from some of the biggest global art names, while he is a mentor of a younger generation of printers through his various training and collecting institutions in Singapore, Japan, Australia and the USA.

“The STPI contains all the original printing presses and equipment from Tyler's workshops in America, including a 100 ton hydraulic press,” says Eu. “ And since 2002 the Singapore government has been actively supporting the STPI,” she adds.

“I loved the excitement of working at STPI. I was experimenting with a new found and playful freedom, in a new and dynamic venue and with an equally exciting new team. I enjoyed feeling that I had no limits and I was driven to create new meanings to my works,” Wiharso recalls. “My energy level was so high that I was sleeping only a few hours a night then waking early each morning and rushing into the workshop to continue my work.”

Entang Wiharso – “Never Say No”

21 April – 30 May 2015

STPI open to the public

Tuesdays – Fridays: 10am – 7pm

Saturdays: 9am – 6pm

Closed on Sundays and Public Holidays

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www.stpi.com.sg

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STPI Workshop, Image Courtesy STPI