



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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NTU Singapore and the European Union Delegation to Singapore launch inaugural exhibition by emerging regional artists from the first cycle of a joint programme

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) and the European Union Delegation to Singapore have launched an exhibition of new works by regional artists, created after their residencies in Europe, as part of **SEA AiR – Studio Residencies for Southeast Asian Artists in the European Union**.

SEA AiR is a joint programme funded by the European Union and developed by the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (NTU CCA Singapore). ***Hoo Fan Chon, Citra Sasmita, Vuth Lyno: New Works*** marks the culmination of the first cycle of the programme.

As participating artists in the inaugural cycle of SEA AiR, **Hoo Fan Chon** (Malaysia), **Citra Sasmita** (Indonesia), and **Vuth Lyno** (Cambodia) were each awarded a three-month-long residency at an art institution in Europe as well as funding for the creation of artworks.

Stemming out of a year-long engagement, *Hoo Fan Chon, Citra Sasmita, Vuth Lyno: New Works*, is the outcome of a multifaceted process shaped by journeys and institutional collaborations, fieldwork and encounters, research and artmaking.

Located at NTU CCA Singapore's Residencies Studios at Gillman Barracks, the exhibition is curated by **Dr Anna Lovecchio, Assistant Director (Programmes)** at NTU CCA Singapore, and is part of **Singapore Art Week 2023**. It will run from 11 January to 5 February 2023.

In the first half of 2022, amidst Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing pandemic, the artists took off from their home countries to conduct their respective residencies: Hoo Fan Chon at **HIAP – Helsinki International Artist Programme** (Finland); Citra Sasmita at **WIELS** (Brussels, Belgium); and Vuth Lyno at **Villa Arson** (Nice, France).

These residency programmes share a long history in facilitating cultural mobility and a commitment to supporting emerging artists through curatorial mentorship, peer-to-peer dialogues, and public programmes.

The artworks featured in *Hoo Fan Chon*, *Citra Sasmita*, *Vuth Lyno: New Works* were created by the artists in the months following their residencies, a much-needed time for critical reflection and material experimentation that allowed them to develop their research findings and creative inspiration into full-fledged artworks.

Ranging from installation and video to sculpture and painting, some of these works also mark the artists' first attempts at embracing new mediums and materials: 3D animation techniques for Hoo Fan Chon, video for Citra Sasmita, and paper for Vuth Lyno.

Shaped by their respective residencies, the exhibition shows how the artists' interests in the cosmetics of food, cultural collaborations, the empowerment of women and the resilience of marginalised communities have evolved over the last year.

Iwona Piórko, Ambassador of the European Union to Singapore, said: "We have in SEA AiR a made-in-Singapore programme to drive the development of Southeast Asia's contemporary art and serve as a springboard for dialogue and mutual learning between European art institutions and Southeast Asian artists. SEA AiR celebrates diversity and people-to-people connectivity between the EU and ASEAN. We embarked on this pioneering project in a milestone year as the EU and ASEAN commemorated the 45th anniversary of their relations in 2022. This project embodies this rich spirit of dialogue and exchange that are hallmarks of the partnership between our two regions."

Professor Ute Meta Bauer from NTU's School of Art, Design and Media and Founding Director, NTU CCA Singapore, said: "As a Centre, we are enthusiastic to continue our support to emerging artists in the region through SEA AiR, a unique partnership between NTU and the European Union Delegation to Singapore. By weaving together research and production, the unique structure of this programme foregrounds the tremendous importance of cultural mobility to nurture artistic practices and, on a broader level, more open and inclusive societies."

"Thanks to three-month long residencies conducted in different European countries in the spring of 2022 with our partner institutions for the first cycle of SEA AiR, artists Hoo Fan Chon, Citra Sasmita, and Vuth Lyno had the opportunity to pursue their research interests and immerse themselves in different cultural contexts. *Hoo Fan Chon*, *Citra Sasmita*, and *Vuth Lyno: New Works* features the artworks inspired by the artists' experiences in Europe and we are delighted to present this exhibition to the audiences in Singapore in our Centre's Residencies Studios at Gillman Barracks during the Singapore Art Week 2023."

Hoo Fan Chon, SEA AiR artist said: “I have limited experience with artistic residencies. I participated in a month-long research residency in Taiwan in 2017 and a two-week-long research and production residency in Sulawesi, Indonesia, for the Makassar Biennale in 2019. Both were organised by artist-run initiatives. SEA AiR is a well-supported residency that creates an environment that allows artists to focus purely on learning, reflecting, and producing. It is a privilege to take part in it.”

Citra Sasmita, SEA AiR artist said: “The SEA AiR residency for me was a stepping stone to regenerate existing thinking methods. Exposed to new situations and experiences, my artistic ideas and processes have been constantly tested through intense discussions and meetings with audiences from different cultures.”

Vuth Lyo, SEA AiR artist said: “Being an artist-in-residence in SEA AiR meant that I could immerse myself in a new environment and develop new research. This structure has been around for a very long time in the history of artistic residencies. However, SEA AiR also has the second component of supporting the materialisation of research ideas into new works for an exhibition. This model drives motivation. It is concrete and realistic because, in the end, as artists we make artworks. To be able to think, and to know from the beginning that there are the material conditions to create an artwork out of the research was very helpful to bring my ideas to fruition.”

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ANNEX A – Artist Biographies

HOO FAN CHON

Born in Malaysia, age 40

Lives and works in George Town

Hoo Fan Chon is a visual artist whose practice explores taste and foodscapes as cultural and social constructs. His research-driven projects examine how value systems fluctuate as people move from one culture to another. Reframing mundane aspects of everyday life with irony and wry humour, his multimedia works address notion of cultural authenticity setting in motion overlaps and frictions produced by the migration of symbols amongst different sociocultural contexts. Hoo recently received a solo exhibition at The Back Room, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2021) and he has participated in a number of group shows including the last Makassar Biennale, Indonesia (2022). Also active as a curator and a grassroots cultural producer, he was the co-founder of the art collective Run Amok Gallery (2012-2017) in George Town.

CITRA SASMITA

Born in Indonesia, age 32

Lives and works in Bali

With a background in literature and physics, Citra Sasmita is a self-taught painter who turned to visual arts after working as an illustrator at a local newspaper in Bali. She is deeply invested in the social empowerment of women and in questioning colonial legacies. Regularly exhibited in Indonesia, her work has been presented internationally at SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, Germany (2022), Kathmandu Triennale 2077, Nepal (2022); and ParaSite, Hong Kong (2020). In 2020, she received the UOB Museum MACAN Children's Art Space Commission. She is the Gold Award Winner of the UOB Painting of The Year 2017.

VUTH LYNO

Born in Cambodia, age 40

Lives and works in Phnom Penh

Vuth Lyno is an artist, curator, and educator interested in space, cultural history, and the production of knowledge through social relations. He often articulates his research into spatial configurations that resonate with personal stories and collective practices. His artistic and curatorial approach is deeply rooted in communal learning and aims to engage a multiplicity of voices in the production of meaning. Besides his solo practice, Lyno is currently Artistic Director of Sa Sa Art Projects in Phnom Penh, an artist-run initiative that addresses the lack of infrastructure for contemporary art education and engagement in Cambodia. His works have been featured in several group exhibitions at institutions such as the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, Thailand (2020) and the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial, Brisbane, Australia (2019) amongst others. With Sa Sa Art Projects, he was a participant in documenta fifteen, Kassel, Germany (2022).

ANNEX B – Artwork Information

HOO FAN CHON

Hoo Fan Chon hoped that the **residency at Helsinki International Artist Programme** (22 February – 22 May 2022) would provide some respite from his obsession with the iconography and symbolism of fish—hailing from a fisherman family, fish-based imagery often surfaces in the artist’s work. Yet, upon arriving in Helsinki the artist found himself immediately drawn to the salmon pink colour that commonly adorns buildings in Finland. This chromatic cue ignited his interest in issues of taste, class aesthetics, and fish culture and it triggered an erratic investigation about the cosmetic processing of farmed salmon, the environmental plight of this fish, and the social status of its consumption as a signifier of class and wealth. This research resulted in a multimedia installation presented in the exhibition.

Inspired by amateur tutorials commonly found on YouTube, the video ***How to turn your siakap into salmon*** illustrates DIY techniques to colour fish. The artist discovered that, in order to achieve the vibrant hue that makes salmon appealing to consumers, farmed salmons are regularly fed synthetic carotenoids the health implications of which are still under scrutiny. In Southeast Asia, salmon is a luxury good and its consumption bespeaks the lifestyle aspirations of a rising global middle class. This instructional video shows how to simulate a salmon-eating experience by dying affordable local fish and is presented alongside takeaway maps of upscale Singaporean restaurants where salmon is served at high tea.

The ironic speculation on how to ‘domesticate’ a foreign species continues in ***I have never seen a swimming salmon in my life***. The installation features 3D animations of salmon cuts—fillet, loin, and streak—swimming inside a fish tank, a staple fixture in Chinese seafood restaurants. It is accompanied by a voiceover by Sir David Attenborough borrowed from an advocacy campaign to protect salmon.

The artist’s familiar-yet-distant relation to salmon culminates with ***Finnish landscape painting series***, an installation featuring 13 paintings hung on a salmon-pink wall. In this series, the artist introduced the motif of the proverbial “carp leaping over the dragon’s gate” and auspicious Chinese blessings into existing Finnish landscape paintings purchased in thrift shops around Helsinki. Both salmons and carps are known for their strength and jumping ability and, in Chinese culture, the iconography of the leaping carp symbolises courage and perseverance leading to wealth and prestige. By conflating Chinese symbolism and the Nordic waterscapes where wild salmons once thrived, the work enacts a process of cultural contamination while also hinting at the hardships of migratory journeys and environmental change.

CITRA SASMITA

The artistic practice of Citra Sasmita revisits ancient mythologies and traditional artistic techniques and materials to question historical misconceptions and misrepresentations that persist in Balinese society, especially with regard to the status of women. The **residency at WIELS** (4 April – 1 July 2022) enabled the artist to research the legacy of her ancestors in European archives and museum collections—built during the colonial era by often dubious and unethical means—and to produce the eighth chapter of her long-term project *Timur Merah* (*The East is Red*).

Timur Merah Project VIII: Pilgrim, How You Journey is a two-part work featuring an installation and a double-channel video. Eight antique carved wooden pillars float mid-air, each adorned by a painting. They are arranged in a star-shaped configuration that references ancient Balinese cosmologies. The vivid imagery of this painting series unfolds complex narratives inspired by the life of **I Dewa Agung Istri Kanya**, the daring and undaunted Queen of Klungkung who opposed the Dutch through military struggle and diplomatic manoeuvring in the mid-19th century. Erased from most historical accounts, the history of this charismatic woman leader is revived in Citra's powerful imagery painted on the traditional Kamasan canvas.

The series starts off with a Dutch warship rigged with batik sails to suggest the possibility of a peaceful encounter between the two civilizations. Dressed in a black and white cloth, the Queen makes her appearance from the third painting onwards, first leading the armed resistance in the battle of Kusamba (1849) and then requiring the Dutch to offer a one-horned rhinoceros to stop her subjects from committing mass suicide. The elaborate scenes in the two following paintings are representations of Hell and Heaven drawn from the Bhima Swarga, a Hindu epic evoked by the Queen in her anti-Dutch propaganda. The last painting illustrates the abominable trade of slaves which entailed the massive deportation of Balinese people, including a great number of women, to other Dutch colonies.

Set in the royal palace of the Karangasem kingdom where I Dewa Agung Istri Kanya was allegedly born, the video features a singer performing *Prelambang Bhasa Wewatekan* (*The Coded Language of Symbols*), a poem written by the ruler herself. The tantric symbolism of the poem secretly encodes the Queen's own memoir, military strategies and is a call for resistance.

VUTH LYNO

Pursuing intersecting interests in architecture, the politics of space, and place-making practices, during his **residency at Villa Arson** (8 March – 2 July 2022) Vuth Lyno travelled to Paris to research the Bois de Vincennes forest park. In 1931, the park hosted the International Colonial Exhibition, a showcase designed to boast the ‘accomplishments’ of colonialism wherein pavilions modelled after indigenous architectural styles housed displays of the ‘native’ cultures of the colonies. Some of these structures outlived the temporary exhibition and are still extant today.

In the late 1970s, the Cameroon Pavilion was transformed into a Buddhist temple known as La Grande Pagode. In the spring, thousands of Cambodians living in France swarm to the temple to celebrate Khmer New Year occupying the adjacent grounds with picnic mats and makeshift stalls. The community’s appropriation of a public space previously used to present Eurocentric representations struck the artist as a self-powered emancipatory practice of place-making and community-building.

Vibrating Park-Forest ensues from Vuth Lyno’s comparative study of heteronormative practices that unfold in the Bois de Vincennes as well as in Hong Lim Park in Singapore and Democracy Park in Phnom Penh, the artist’s hometown. Since 2009, Hong Lim Park hosts Pink Dot, an annual rally of thousands of people in support of LGBTQI communities, freedom of love, and inclusiveness in a country where male same-sex relationships were criminalized until just a few months ago. Democracy Park has a history of entanglement between colonial power, the nation state, and the people. Created at the end of the colonial period, throughout the 1950s the park was used to celebrate the country’s independence and parade the nation building process. In recent years, it became a designated site for political demonstrations until it was closed off to the public following anti-government protests in 2014.

The layered identity of these urban forest parks as sites of contestation, refuge, community building, and emancipation are conveyed in Lyno Vuth’s immersive installation where the forest is turned into a mosaic made of pulsating paper tiles. Fluttering delicately to the movement of the air, the forest’s ‘leaves’ reveal underneath drawings. They depict a diverse range of events that took place on those sites, from manifestations of state power to grassroots initiatives and other informal modes of appropriation by which marginalized communities reclaim these public spaces to enact their agency.

ANNEX C – ARTWORK IMAGES AND CAPTIONS

HOO FAN CHON



Portrait of Hoo Fan Chon at Helsinki International Artist Programme (HIAP). Photo: Sheung Yiu. Courtesy HIAP.



Hoo Fan Chon, *How to turn your siakap into salmon*, 2022, single-channel video, full HD, colour, sound, 15min 36sec. Courtesy the artist.



Hoo Fan Chon, *Finnish landscape painting series – #7 Bright future ahead*, 2022, oil interventions on found painting signed U. Huumo, 2003, 69 x 59.5 cm, framed. Courtesy the artist.



Hoo Fan Chon, 3D animation rendering from *I have never seen a swimming salmon in my life*, 2022. Courtesy the artist.

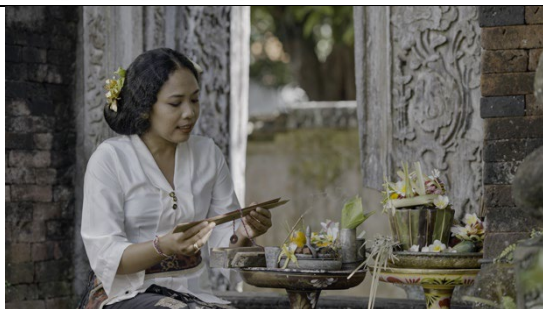
CITRA SASMITA



Portrait of Citra Sasmita. Courtesy the artist.



Citra Sasmita, *Timur Merah Project VIII: Pilgrim, How You Journey*, 2022, acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas. Courtesy the artist.



Citra Sasmita, *Timur Merah Project VIII: Pilgrim, How You Journey*, 2022, double-channel video, 4K, colour, sound, 22 min. Courtesy the artist.



Citra Sasmita, *Timur Merah Project VIII: Pilgrim, How You Journey*, 2022, acrylic on traditional Kamasan canvas. Courtesy the artist.

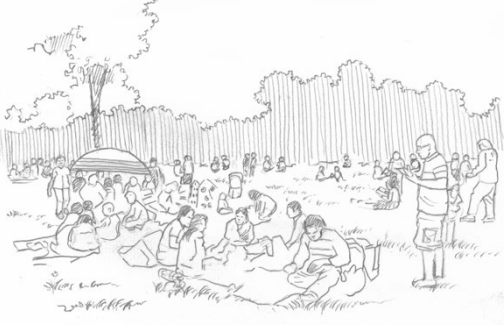
VUTH LYNO



Portrait of Vuth Lyno at Villa Arson. Courtesy the artist.



Vuth Lyno, *Vibrating Park-Forest* (detail), 2022, installation, paper. Courtesy the artist.

	Vuth Lino, preparatory drawing for <i>Vibrating Park-Forest</i>, graphite on paper, 2022. Courtesy the artist.
	Vuth Lino, preparatory drawing for <i>Vibrating Park-Forest</i>, graphite on paper, 2022. Courtesy the artist.

NTU CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART SINGAPORE

	Research Centre and Office, Blk 6 Lock Road, NTU CCA Singapore. Courtesy NTU CCA Singapore.
	Residences Studios, Blk 38 Malan Road, NTU CCA Singapore. Courtesy NTU CCA Singapore.



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About Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

A research-intensive public university, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) has 33,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students in the Engineering, Business, Science, Medicine, Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences, and Graduate colleges. NTU is also home to world-renowned autonomous institutes – the National Institute of Education, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Earth Observatory of Singapore, and Singapore Centre for Environmental Life Sciences Engineering – and various leading research centres such as the Nanyang Environment & Water Research Institute (NEWRI) and Energy Research Institute @ NTU (ERI@N).

Under the NTU Smart Campus vision, the University harnesses the power of digital technology and tech-enabled solutions to support better learning and living experiences, the discovery of new knowledge, and the sustainability of resources.

Ranked amongst the world's top universities, the University's main campus is also frequently listed among the world's most beautiful. Known for its sustainability, over 95% of its building projects are certified Green Mark Platinum. Apart from its main campus, NTU also has a medical campus in Novena, Singapore's healthcare district.

For more information, visit www.ntu.edu.sg

About NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore

A national research centre of Nanyang Technological University Singapore, with a focus on Spaces of the Curatorial, NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (NTU CCA Singapore) addresses the urgencies of our time such as the climate crisis and its impact on communities. A leading international art institution, driven by dynamic thinking in its three-fold constellation: Research and Academic Education; Residencies Programme; and Exhibitions. It brings forth innovative, multi-disciplinary, holistic and experimental forms of emergent artistic and curatorial practices that intersect the present and histories of contemporary art embedded in social, geo-political, geo-cultural spheres with other fields of knowledge. NTU CCA Singapore's office and research centre is located at Gillman Barracks.

SPACES OF THE CURATORIAL

The Centre seeks to engage the potential of “curating” and its expanded field. What are the infrastructures and modes of presenting and discussing artistic and cultural production in diverse cultural settings and in particular throughout Southeast Asia's vastly changing societies?

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About the European Union

The European Union (EU) is an economic and political union of 27 Member States. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. With the help of over 140 diplomatic representations around the world, the EU cooperates closely with its Member States to promote the values and interests of the EU and establish networks and partnerships, promoting multilateral-based solutions to common challenges. The EU is the largest trade block in the world, as well as the world's main source and the top global destination of foreign direct investment.

In 2012, the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for advancing the causes of peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe.

The 27 EU Member States are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

About the European Union Delegation to Singapore

Set up in December 2002, the EU Delegation to Singapore formally opened on June 30th, 2004. Since then, the EU's diplomatic representation has worked to promote closer ties between the EU and Singapore. In close coordination with the diplomatic missions of the EU Member States, the Delegation ensures consistency and effectiveness of the EU's external action in Singapore.

With 27 countries, nearly 450 million people and the largest GDP in the world, the EU is of increasing importance to Singapore, especially since the entry into force of the EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (EUSFTA). The Delegation covers a range of issues such as trade, foreign policy, climate change, environment, transport, industrial policy, research, science, technology as well as education projects such as the Study

In Europe higher education fair and EU at Your School and on the cultural front presents SEA AiR (in partnership with NTU CCA) and the annual European Film Festival (EUFF).

On 15th December 2022, the substantial conclusion of a new Digital Partnership between the EU and Singapore was announced in Brussels. This Partnership expands the robust EU-Singapore relationship into the digital realm, which has a transformative potential for the future of our economies. The Digital Partnership builds on long-standing cooperation between the EU and Singapore on trade, research and technology. It will also serve as a strategic pathfinder for closer region-to-region digital connectivity.

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