



Local artist Donna Ong creates a fantastical wonderland with her new work Cocoon (Garden Of Waiting Virgins). It comprises, among other things, a wardrobe, LED lightboxes, found paper objects and a glass and iron table. ST PHOTO: ASHLEIGH SIM

An encounter with the Royal Academy

Ninety works worth \$12.3 million from the famous art academy in Britain will be shown here

Deepika Shetty

Singapore is the first city to host a blockbuster travelling exhibition from Britain's famous Royal Academy of Arts. It opens at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Lasalle College of the Arts, on Friday.

Encounter: The Royal Academy In Asia features about 90 works worth US\$10 million (\$12.3 million) by 50 artists. Many of the pieces are for sale. Artists include some of the institution's best-known academicians such as artist and sculptor Richard Deacon, a winner of Britain's famous Turner prize, and celebrated sculptor Antony Gormley. There are also Asian shining lights such as Cambodia's Sopheap Pich as well as Singapore painter Ian Woo and installation artist Donna Ong.

The show is expected to travel to seven cities over two years. Its next stop is Doha, with a Middle Eastern component replacing the Asian one, but other destinations are still being finalised.

The academy has done smaller projects in Japan, but nothing on this scale and with so many artists. This combination of artists and artworks from the East and the West is meant to present a rich and dynamic showcase of cultural perspectives.

Of the cross-cultural tie-up, Mr

Charles Saumarez Smith, secretary and chief executive of the academy, said: "It is hoped that this exhibition will foster the creative dialogue amongst a wide variety of artists, countries, cultures and visual art practices."

The show is jointly organised by the academy and a curatorial and art advisory firm, Fortune Cookie Projects, led by Ms Mary Dinaburg and Mr Howard Rutkowski. Its key sponsors include the Bank of Singapore, OCBC's private banking arm, insurance underwriter XL Group and hotel group St Regis Singapore.

Surprisingly for an exhibition such as this - this being the first time a major academy exhibition has come to Asia - the organisers have chosen Lasalle College of the Arts and its Institute of Contemporary Art as a venue instead of the many museums here.

On the choice of venue, Mr Rutkowski, 56, told Life! that the institution was "an obvious and natural partner".

"Our concept for the project was not to present a static exhibition from a museum's inventory, but to encourage a dialogue, artist to artist, community to community," he said.

Dr Charles Merewether, director of the Institute of Contemporary Art called it a "ground-breaking event".

"Through one exhibition and a public programme, you will see and hear some of the most important artists living and working in Asia and those associated with the Royal Academy in London. The event will celebrate the value of international collaboration and the significance of the visual arts today."

Indeed, there are several important works in the exhibition and many of the international artists are no strangers to

Singapore.

Works by Tracey Emin, the Turner Prize-winning enfant terrible of British art who made a career out of intimate personal details including her own unmade bed, has been featured at the high-end contemporary art fair, Art Stage Singapore.

It is interesting to see such works presented together with those of top-selling China artist Liu Xiaodong, whose art focuses on displaced people and places (see highlights).

Among the Singapore artists, Ong has created another fantastical wonderland with a sense of fragility in her recent work titled Cocoon (Garden Of Waiting Virgins) which comprises, among other things, a wardrobe, LED lightboxes and a glass and iron table.

Painter Woo presents two new richly textured acrylic on linen works titled Star Weightless and Transmissions From The History Of Folk Music. In a time of installation and experimental art, his works make for an intriguing visual play because while they stick to traditional notions of art as something drawn by hand, these are not conventional paintings. His canvases are laden with a sense of mystery and to fully appreciate the work, one needs to play around visually with the shapes and colours which appear.

It has taken about two years to bring this exhibition here and Mr Rutkowski says it points to "the increasing attention" the international arts community is giving to Singapore.

"Lot of people, including prominent players such as the academy, see the potential of growth in Asia," he said.

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HIGHLIGHTS

False Idols, 2011

By Tony Cragg, cast iron, 95x38x44cm

Another prominent sculptor Cragg re-looks idols through this gravity-defying piece which appears to be turned on its head. He worked as a laboratory technician before moving to art in the 1970s. In his early years, he found inspiration and materials during his part-time work on building sites, and these materials continue to shape his art.



Your Landscape - Tailing, 2011 (top)

By Liu Xiaodong, oil on canvas, 200x200cm

Your Landscape - White Dust, 2011

Oil on canvas, 200x200cm

China artist Liu Xiaodong's paintings often look at displaced people and places. Among his top-selling works have been paintings set against the backdrop of the Three Gorges Dam project in south-western China, spotlighting the impact of the project on people in the area. In November 2006, an oil painting depicting the controversial dam project, was auctioned for US\$2.75 million, setting a new record for contemporary Chinese art. In December 2008, he was among the top 10-selling contemporary artists at auctions, having sold art worth £10.5 million. Priced at US\$800,000 each (\$988,323), these two paintings by the artist are the most expensive in the exhibition.



The Bohemian Rhapsody Project, 2006

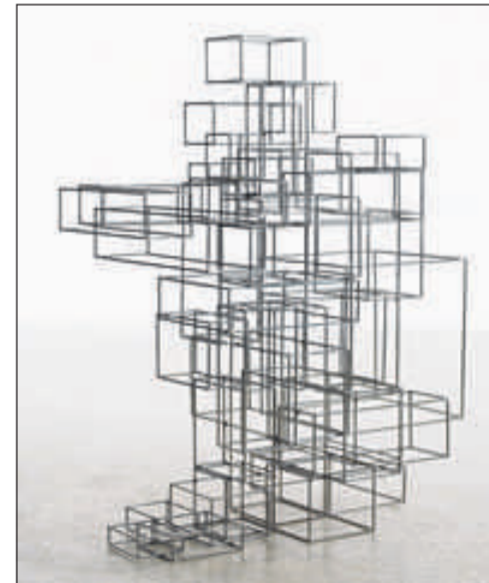
By Ho Tzu Nyen, single-channel HD video, stereo sound, 6 minutes 24 seconds

Here is your chance to see home-grown artist and film-maker Ho Tzu Nyen's much travelled film. The Bohemian Rhapsody Project, which has Singaporeans reciting the lyrics to British band Queen's famous rock anthem in a former Supreme Court room, was first shown at the Singapore Biennale in 2006. In the same year, curators picked it for the Yerba Buena Centre for the Arts in San Francisco.

Hold V, 2012

By Antony Gormley, 3mm square section stainless steel bars, 78.3x43.6x61.5cm

Several of the artists taking part in this exhibition have already made a splash in Singapore. Gormley's massive three-dimensional piece titled Drift hovers over the atrium of Hotel Tower 1 at Marina Bay Sands. This new work by the celebrated British sculptor, priced at £225,000 (\$444,558), involves the packing of spheres around what appears to be a body-like form. Gormley, who studied Buddhism in India for three years, is known for his compelling sculptures, which he says are "an attempt to energise the space, rather than occupy it".



OTHER SHOWS AROUND TOWN

Several galleries and art spaces are opening shows this week as buzz on the visual arts scene builds up over the opening of Gillman Barracks this weekend. Here are some picks around town

Inside The Chelsea Hotel By Julia Calfee

What: From 2003 until 2008, multi-media artist, photographer and writer Julia Calfee lived mainly in New York City's Chelsea Hotel. It was widely regarded as the residence of the creative types. Musicians, artists, writers and photographers including Jimi Hendrix, Andy Warhol, Edie Sedgwick, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Bob Dylan fell under its spell. Calfee's long-term project resulted in the acclaimed book Inside The Chelsea Hotel (2008), which is considered a reference point for the 120-year-old hotel. Fourteen large-format photographs from this book will be exhibited in this show, accompanied by a video installation which captures the atmosphere and people at the Chelsea Hotel.

Where: Art Plural Gallery, 38 Armenian Street

When: Today to Oct 12, 11am to 7pm (closed on Sundays and public holidays)

Admission: Free
Info: Call 6636-8360 or e-mail info@artpluralgallery.com



The Experience Machine

What: Japanese gallerist Ikkan Sanada showcases New Media Art by nine international artists. A major work is the interactive animation installation What A Loving, And Beautiful World by Japan's Ultra Technologist Group teamLab and the Japanese calligrapher, Sisyu. This exhibition explores theories related to the historical differences between Western and Asian ways of seeing, understanding and experiencing the world.

Where: Ikkan Art Gallery, Artspace@Helutrans, 01-05 Tanjong Pagar Distripark, 39 Keppel Road

When: Tomorrow to Oct 27, noon to 7pm (Tuesdays to Saturdays). Closed on Sundays, Mondays and public holidays

Admission: Free
Info: Call 8316-6044 or go to www.ikkan-art.com

False Apparitions

What: Filipino artist Nona Garcia, who was the first woman to win the Grand Prize at the Philip Morris Asean Art Awards in 2000, looks at issues of identity through her photo-realist



paintings. For this solo, she presents a site-specific installation of paintings and objects.

Where:

Valentine

Willie Fine Art, Artspace@Helutrans, 02-03 Tanjong Pagar Distripark, 39 Keppel Road

When: Thursday to Oct 7, 11am to 7pm (Tuesdays to Saturdays), 11am to 3pm (Sundays). Closed on Mondays and public holidays

Admission: Free
Info: www.vwfa.net/sg

Profiled By Ken Gonzales-Day (above)

What: This award-winning American photographer's work can be found in the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Getty Research Institute and the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Through photographs of the bust collections in renowned museums such as the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Ecole Des Beaux-Arts, Profiled seeks to investigate the depiction of race through antiquities.

Where: Galerie Steph, 01-05 Artspace@Helutrans, Tanjong Pagar Distripark, 39 Keppel Road

When: Till Nov 1, noon to 6pm (Tuesdays to Saturdays)

Admission: Free
Info: Call 9176-8641 or go to www.galeriesteph.com/



PHOTOS: ROYAL ACADEMY/FORTUNE COOKIE PROJECTS

Lower Case, 2011

By Richard Deacon, stainless steel, powder-coated on the inside, 84x93x5.5cm

Deacon made news here with his form-defying sculptural work Upper Strut, which can be seen at Louis Vuitton's glass-and-steel island at Marina Bay Sands. In the early 1980s, he was among a generation of British sculptors who achieved international acclaim. Rather

than carving or modelling, he started shaping his pieces from a variety of materials not traditionally used in sculpture. These ranged from galvanised steel and laminated wood to corrugated iron and leather. Bits, and ways of putting them together, have been central to his practice, from his early laminated wood-and-vinyl constructions to his more recent work such as this piece titled Lower Case, which is priced at £35,000 (\$69,155).

View it

ENCOUNTER: THE ROYAL ACADEMY IN ASIA

Where: Institute of Contemporary Art, Lasalle College of the Arts

When: Friday to Oct 21, 11am to 6pm daily
Admission: Free
Info: Call 9382-1700