

# MARGINS:

DRAWING PICTURES OF HOME

21 NOV 2020 – 28 FEB 2021

## EXHIBITION GUIDE



ArtScience  
Museum  
MARINA BAY SANDS

Co-presenter:

S  
I  
P  
F  
Singapore  
International  
Photography  
Festival

Production Partner:

SPACElogic

© Charmaine Poh

# ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

## MARGINS: DRAWING PICTURES OF HOME

This exhibition presents the work of 15 Singaporean photographers who reflect on our national character and issues found close to home.

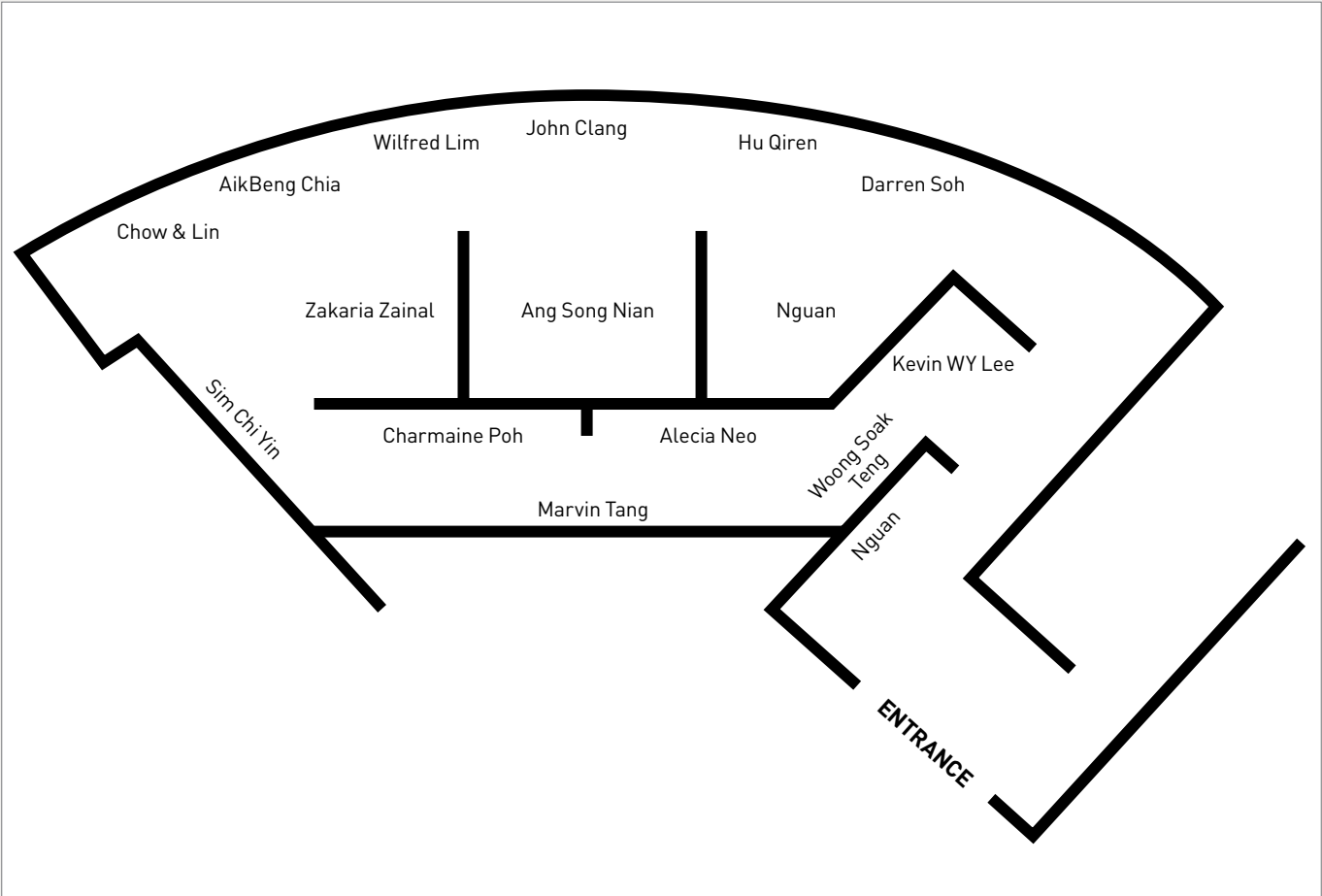
The 'margins' described in the exhibition title reflect a re-drawing of the dividing lines and a re-framing of people and places we think we know. These margins – delineating past from present, neighbour from neighbour and the natural environment from the built city – connect and intersect, offering insights, hope and a sense of belonging. The exhibition is a reminder that there are many different and valuable stories to be told in Singapore today.

These photographs unearth connections to home that feel especially powerful, anchoring us in history, at this moment of extraordinary uncertainty. *Margins: drawing pictures of home* invites us all to examine real and imagined borders and encourages us to consider the stories that exist beyond the boundaries of our own lives.

The artists and photographers in this exhibition describe home as a fluid concept that is both nearby and distant, formed from multiple voices, and found in the marginal lines between the external world and our internal selves. Through photography, invisible subjects are surfaced. What is revealed encourages questioning and comparison with the lived experience of our national identity and the communities we form in our home country, the Red Dot, the Lion City: Singapore.

*Margins: drawing pictures of home* is a part of the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of Singapore International Photography Festival.

# GALLERY MAP





Kevin WY Lee  
*Suddenly the Grass Became Greener*  
© Kevin WY Lee

## Gardening the City

The “Garden City” vision was introduced by the late former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in 1967, as part of a strategic plan to transform Singapore into a tree-lined city of green spaces and parks. The 1975 Parks and Trees Act enhanced this vision with plans for trees and greenery becoming mandatory for build projects by government agencies and private developers. This initiative continues, as over the next ten years the National Parks Board plans to plant one million trees across Singapore, further greening our Garden City.

**List of artists:** Kevin WY Lee, Woong Soak Teng and Marvin Tang



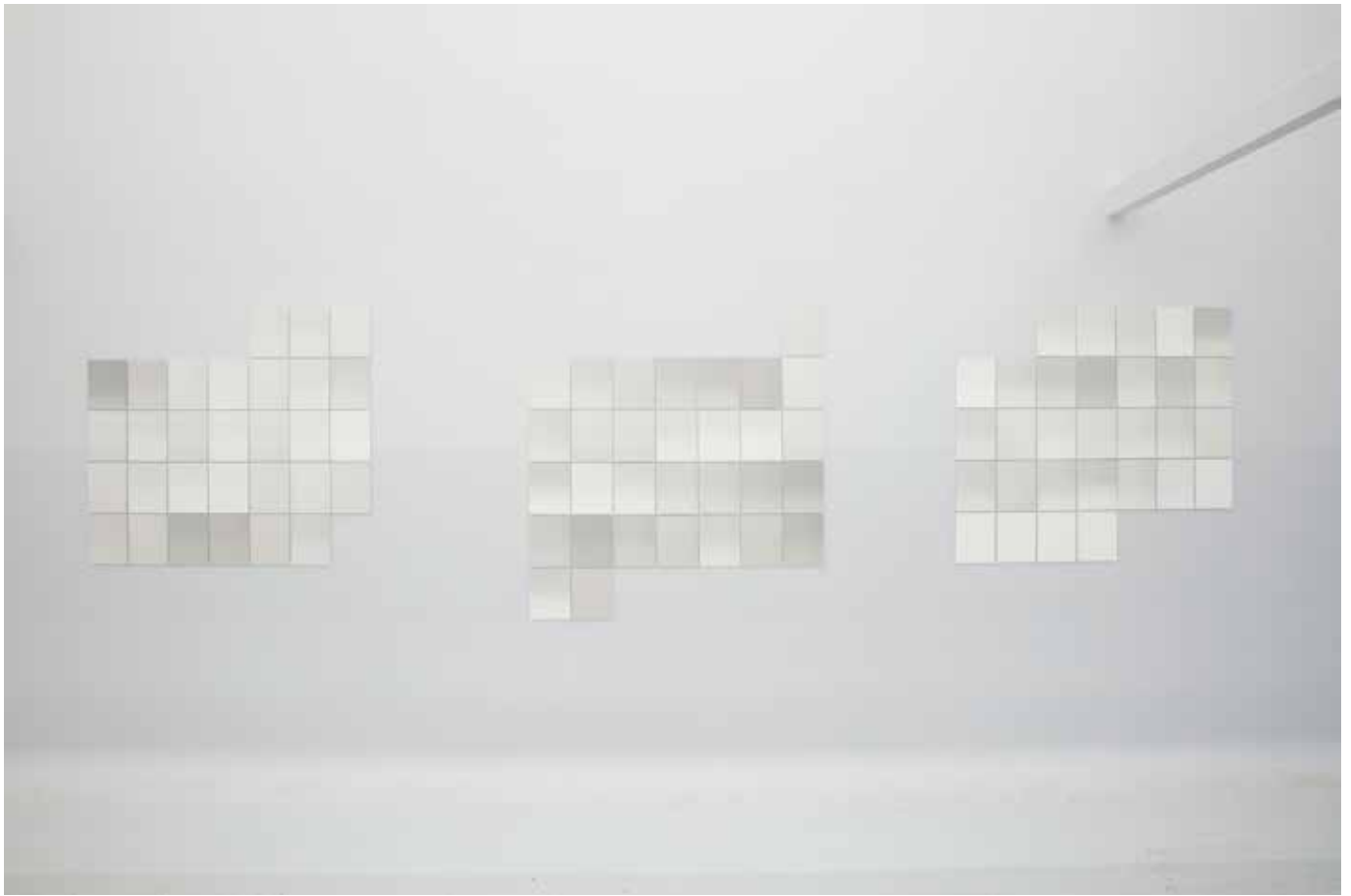
Zakaria Zainal  
*Our Gurkhas*  
© Zakaria Zainal

## From Another Shore

Singapore is a nation of permanent immigrants and temporary foreign workers who all play crucial roles in the growing economy. This section of the exhibition unearths the complexities of this history.

The subjects explored across these photographs tell stories of the hardworking heroes who have played, and continue to play, an important part in the country's evolving social, political and economic story.

**List of artists:** Alecia Neo, Charmaine Poh, Sim Chi Yin and Zakaria Zainal



Ang Song Nian  
*Hanging Heavy On My Eyes*  
Photo courtesy of Marvin Tang

## Documenting Reality

In Singapore's race for progress, the struggles faced by individuals, both observed and mediated, help us make sense of the present. These photographs are reveries, suffused with personal anecdotes, satire, humour, and a sense of time passing.

**List of artists:** Chow & Lin,  
AikBeng Chia, Wilfred Lim and  
Ang Song Nian



Hu Qiren  
*People Mountain People Sea*  
© Hu Qiren

## Our Island City-state

Singapore is a relatively young nation, existing in a state of in-betweenness, steeped in its own history. It is also future-focused, ambitious and resourceful. The country's rapid urbanisation, for some, fuels a particular kind of nostalgia and these photographs encourage us to pause and contemplate our home's changing shape and nature. What will home look like 20 years from now? How will our heartlands, tourist centres and transport systems evolve? Will our national character change too?

This moment, in all its uncertainty, offers us, if we allow it, clarity around what is important, what should be pulled into focus and nurtured in ourselves and in our communities.

**List of artists:** John Clang, Hu Qiren, Nguan and Darren Soh

# EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS



© Charmaine Poh

## Charmaine Poh

*Ma Jie*  
2016

*Ma Jies* were a wave of female migrants, largely from China's Guangdong province, who worked as domestic servants in Singaporean households from the 1930s to the 1960s. Defying patriarchal norms, these strong women were often the family breadwinners. Characterised by their independence and commitment to their work, many never married and some even took

a vow of celibacy, in a ceremony known as the *sor hei* which refers to the combing up of hair. In 2016 when Poh began to document this group of women, she discovered many had passed away or had returned home, but she connected with several *Ma Jies* who were living out their twilight years in rental apartments in Singapore's Chinatown.



## EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS



© John Clang

### **John Clang**

*The Land of My Heart*

2014

*The Land of My Heart* casts the woman in *sarong kebaya* attire as a protagonist in a portrait of Singapore's past, present and future. The images contemplate different notions of a 'Singaporean identity' in the context of the country's rapid development. The photographs include Clang's

handwritten annotations of memories and conversations that point to the personal historical layers of familiar landmarks. Clang constructs these portraits of these women as timeless and persistent symbols in contrast to a landscape in flux.

## EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS



© Nguan

### **Nguan**

*Untitled* (2012), from the series *Singapore*  
2007 – 2020

Singapore is known for its futuristic buildings, mega shopping districts and iconic skyscrapers. Peering behind the polished and extravagant facade presented to the world, Nguan reveals overlooked corners of the city and uncanny moments in the lives of ordinary

Singaporeans. Despite its tender palette of fairy-tale colours, *Singapore* is a study of the nation's grittier face and the alienation sometimes felt by city dwellers.

# EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS



© darren soh

## **Darren Soh**

*SS24 The Last Train*

2011

Senandung Sutera 24 (SS24) was the last passenger train service to depart Tanjong Pagar train station for Kuala Lumpur. This railway line ran between Singapore and Malaysia for decades until a 2010 agreement between the two countries ended a 20-year dispute over land ownership. As part of the agreement, the land in question was returned to Singapore and the

railway line was removed. Soh spent several months capturing the train's nightly route in a series of apparition-like images, as a tribute to its long history and the connection between the two countries.

# CONSERVATION OF ARTWORK



You may have noticed art handlers wearing plastic gloves. This is because the oil on our hands causes a chemical reaction with almost everything we touch. For artworks, this can have a detrimental effect, so please do not touch.



Most museums practise the 'NO FLASH' photography rule. The ultraviolet light of the flash generates heat and light, both of which can damage artworks.



Taking photographs in the museum is encouraged unless otherwise signposted.



You may notice that our museum is quite cold. Artworks must be kept at a specific low temperatures and relative humidity to protect them from deterioration.

Want to know more about collection conservation guidelines? Visit the **International Council of Museum** for more information.  
<https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/>

# PROGRAMMES

## **MARGINS: DRAWING PICTURES OF HOME GUIDED TOURS**

Saturday & Sunday | 11.30am

Exhibition Entrance, Basement 2

Join us in exploring the fluctuating notion of 'home' through the riveting works of various Singaporean photographers. Venture into the often overlooked margins of society as we learn about issues close to home but often far from the spotlight.

Complimentary to ticket-holders of *Margins: drawing pictures of home*.  
Up to 10 participants on a first-come, first-served basis.

## **MARGINS SPOTLIGHT TOURS**

Exhibition Entrance, Basement 2

Make the most out of your night-time visit and join us in our galleries for this series of intimate evening tours. Hear from exhibiting photographers, curators and exhibition producers as they share about the making of *Margins: drawing pictures from home* and discuss compelling photographic works from the show that reflect stories close to home.

**Adrian George** (Director, Exhibitions & Museum Services):

Friday, 29 January, 7pm

Complimentary to ticket-holders of *Margins: drawing pictures of home*.  
Up to 10 participants on a first-come, first-served basis.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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## **Singapore International Photography Festival (SIPF)**

Singapore International Photography Festival (SIPF) is a biennial gathering of minds from around the world with the common pursuit to advance the art and appreciation of photography. Launched in 2008, SIPF is the largest international photo festival in Southeast Asia – hosting some of the biggest names in photography, while uncovering new talents, and promoting the understanding of our society through creative photographic expressions. 7<sup>th</sup> SIPF 2020 will take place 5 November 2020 – 30 January 2021. Join us for a three-month presentation of exhibitions, online discussions and community participatory programmes.

## **SPACElogic**

A one-stop solution provider that specialises in interior, permanent gallery and museum fit-out projects, SPACElogic has built a strong foundation of trust and an excellent track record to deliver high standard services. SPACElogic collaborates with experts from various disciplines to co-create spatial stories, integrating visual aesthetics with technology and functionality to craft out meaningful and engaging experiences for its customers. As thinkers and doers, SPACElogic thrives on ideas and solutions to create enthralling encounters in museums, commercial and artistic environments.