

MEDIA RELEASE

ARTWORKS BY SINGAPOREAN ART COLLECTIVE VERTICAL SUBMARINE TO BE FEATURED ON HOARDINGS AROUND THE SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

vertical submarine's artworks will be the first of a series of specially commissioned works on the hoardings, titled Walking in the City



vertical submarine, *Flowery Language*, 2019, weatherproof digital print. Collection of the artists.
Singapore Art Museum Commission. Image courtesy of the artist.

Singapore, 17 July 2019 – The Singapore Art Museum undergoes its first major building redevelopment since the museum's official opening in 1996. SAM will continue to work with and feature contemporary artworks by turning the hoardings around the perimeter of the museum buildings into a public showcase of commissioned artworks by local artists.

Conceived as a series titled *Walking In The City*, these artworks will be presented on the hoardings along Bras Basah Road and Queen Street over the period of the museum's redevelopment. The series will engage with themes such as history of both the buildings and the island, society, urban development, and the environment. For the inaugural edition, Singaporean artist collective vertical submarine presents two works, *Flowery Language* on Bras Basah Road and *Tua Kang (Hyperbole)* on Queen Street.

In *Flowery Language*, sited on SAM's hoarding along Bras Basah Road, vertical submarine examines the history of botanical illustrations in relation to the power and potential of representation. Drawing from their research on botanical illustrations created during the colonial era, vertical submarine has created 12 fictional plants which serve not only as witty reference of

such illustrations but also to question the roles these illustrations played in advancing scientific knowledge and politico-economic goals.

vertical submarine's creation of these fictional flora has numerous historical parallels – from the unreadable texts and fantastical illustrations of the Voynich Manuscript (a 15th-century codex in an unknown script), to the label of HC SVNT DRACONES (Latin for 'Here Be Dragons') for unknown territories, which appears on medieval maps. Through their playful subversion of a colonial image-making practice, vertical submarine suggests that the reading of scientific illustrations should not be separated from their histories or politics.

Tua Kang (Hyperbole), sited on SAM's hoardings along Queen Street, is a tongue-in-cheek re-imagination of the world map. For this work, the artists have expanded the size of Singapore to many times its original size. Highlighted in red, the colour refers to the popular cartographical representation of Singapore as 'a little red dot', while the enlarged size alludes to the common perception that the country is able to punch above its own weight in the international arena. The title of the work is from a Hokkien expression used to describe an exaggerated story. In portraying Singapore as such, the artists take a humorous approach to open for discussion our successes in relation to our relatively small size.

June Yap, Director of Curatorial, Programmes, and Publications at SAM, says, 'While our buildings are out of view during this period of redevelopment, our presence within the city will continue to be felt, and observed, with this series of artworks. This is an opportunity for us to line the exterior of the museum, rather than its interior, with art. We hope to enliven the precinct with interesting and stimulating artistic expressions, as well as provide these artists with the chance to make a work on the scale of a museum.'

The commissioned outdoor artworks will be presented on the hoardings surrounding SAM's heritage buildings of the museum and will be unveiled in July-August 2019. More outdoor artwork commissions will be presented on the public hoardings during the museum's redevelopment, which is expected to take a number of years of complete.

Images are available for download at: <http://bit.ly/SAMHoardingsvertsub>
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About the Singapore Art Museum

Singapore Art Museum is a contemporary art museum which focuses on art-making and art-thinking in Singapore, Southeast Asia and Asia, encompassing a worldwide perspective on contemporary art practice. SAM advocates and makes accessible interdisciplinary contemporary art through research-led and evolving curatorial practice. Since it opened in January 1996, SAM has built up one of the most important collections of contemporary art from the region. It seeks to seed and nourish a stimulating and creative space in Singapore through exhibitions and public programmes, and to deepen every visitor's experience. These include outreach and education, research and publications, as well as cross-disciplinary residencies and exchanges.

SAM occupies two buildings: the old St Joseph's Institution on Bras Basah Road, built in 1855 and now a National Monument; and SAM at 8Q, a conservation building across the road on Queen Street that was the old Catholic High School. The museum buildings are currently closed for a major building revamp, with museum programming continuing at partner venues until the buildings re-open.

SAM was the organiser of the Singapore Biennale in 2011, 2013 and 2016. SAM will continue to organise the next two editions in 2019 and 2022. SAM was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 13 November 2013, operating under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. To find out more, visit www.singaporeartmuseum.sg

About vertical submarine

vertical submarine (VS) is an art collective from Singapore. Their cross-disciplinary projects, which incorporate theatre and curating, explore methods of storytelling and narrative via words and images. The group has received accolades such as The President's Young Talents Award (Singapore/2009), The Celeste Prize (New York/2011), and Finalist for Sovereign Asian Art Prize (Hong Kong/2015). In 2010, VS was appointed the Associate Director of TheatreWorks (Singapore/2010-13), and part of the Associate Artist Research Programme at The Substation (Singapore, 2011-13).

Apart from the routine international art fairs and commercial shows, they have participated in projects such as Kuandu Biennale (2010), Roundtable: Gwangju Biennale (2012) and The Roving Eye: Con-temporary Art from SE Asia, ARTER (Istanbul/2014 and CCC: Jogjakarta organized by Bangkok Arts and Cultural Centre (2016). To date, their widely acclaimed art installations, which includes The Garden of Forking Paths/Mirror Room (2010) and John Martin: Butcher or Surgeon (2015), have travelled to Barcelona, Beijing, Hong Kong, London, Mexico City and Taipei.

In 2017, vertical submarine was engaged as art director by ZARCH Collaboratives for SGIO-Sydney organized by Singapore Tourism Board. The group is also part of Thailand Biennale: The Edge of Wonderland (Krabi/2018).