

# LEARNING GALLERY

## EDUCATORS' RESOURCE

This resource is designed for educators with the aim of fostering meaningful discussions on contemporary art between them and their students.

## HAN SAI POR

# HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This educators' resource is designed for use with students before, during and after your visit to the Learning Gallery at Singapore Art Museum.

It shares key concepts and ideas associated with the exhibition to facilitate your visit and complements lessons conducted in school. This includes suggested guiding questions and activities that students may explore in the gallery, at home or in class, wherever relevant.

You may customise your visit by choosing your own preferred exhibition route.

For additional support, please refer to the additional notes for educators and facilitators when addressing the social and emotional learning aspects of the artworks during your discussion.

# INTRODUCTION

# LEARNING GALLERY

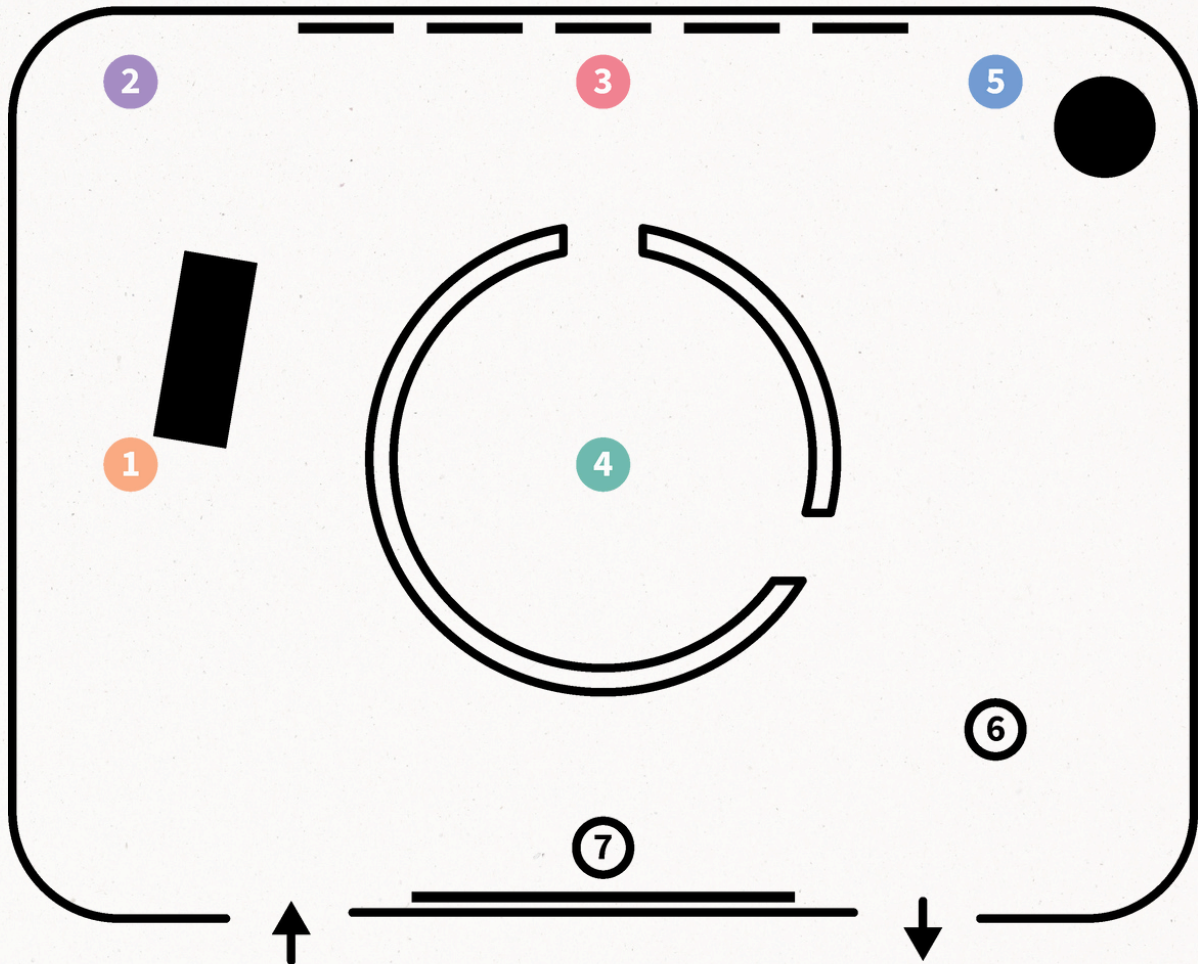
Childhood is a defining stage in all our lives. The foundations of our emotions, beliefs and memories take root during these formative years, with some receding within as we transit into adulthood.

The human impulse to create and appreciate art starts in childhood, and has transcended cultural and geographical boundaries from the moment humans first made their mark on the world. Both art and childhood are universal human experiences, which are characterised by freedom, curiosity and exploration.

The Learning Gallery invites you to embrace this spirit of exploration with a child-like lens. Allow yourself to approach the artworks curiously, unburdened and unafraid of the unknown. Learn about the artworks, artists and their attachments while engaging in both internal conversations and open dialogue.

Perhaps you may once again have an uninhibited relationship with the world: to look, feel and live fearlessly.

# EXHIBITION LAYOUT



1 HAN SAI POR  
*Black Forest*

2 JULIAN ABRAHAM "TOGAR"  
*A Gesture*

3 NGUAN  
*Untitled, from the series Singapore*

4 MIGRANT ECOLOGIES PROJECT  
Lucy Davis and collaborators, Zai Tang, Kee Ya Ting  
and Zachary Chan, with editing by Daniel Hui  
*{if your bait can sing the wild ones will  
come} Like Shadows Through Leaves*

5 TANG DA WU  
深疤凰 SEMBAWANG

6 ACTIVITY CORNER  
*Cloud Library*  
*Cloud Mailbox*  
*RE-Material*

7 INTERACTIVE WALL

## ARTIST

# HAN SAI POR

b. 1943, Singapore

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### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Renowned sculptor **Han Sai Por** is celebrated for her mastery in transforming sturdy granite blocks into vibrant, lifelike figurative forms and organic shapes. After graduating from the Singapore Teachers' Training College in 1968, she pursued studies in Fine Art at Wolverhampton University, UK, and furthered her education in Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University, New Zealand, from 2004 to 2008.

She has exhibited artworks across Southeast Asia, China, South Korea, North America and Europe. Han's creations grace permanent collections in prominent venues such as Singapore's hotels, libraries, Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) stations, as well as parks in Malaysia, Japan, the US and the UK. Recognised for her outstanding contributions to the arts, she was honoured with the Cultural Medallion in 1995. She currently lives and works in Singapore.

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# ARTWORK



Installation view of *Black Forest*, 2024. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

## ***Black Forest***

2024

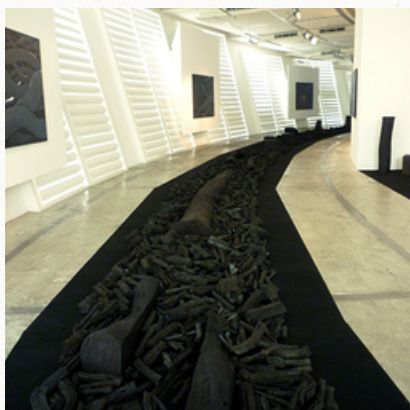
Wood and charcoal

Dimensions variable

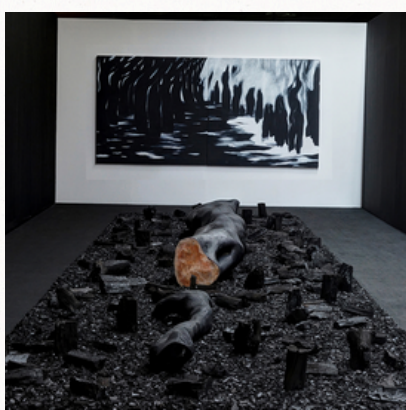
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### ABOUT THE ARTWORK

- The *Black Forest* series was first exhibited at the Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay in 2011 and later at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Art gallery in 2013. The artwork was then redeveloped as part of a commission for the 2016 Singapore Biennale.



Installation view of *Black Forest*, 2011.  
Image courtesy of artist.



Installation view of *Black Forest*, 2013.  
Image courtesy of artist.



Installation view of *Black Forest*, 2016.  
Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

- The latest iteration of *Black Forest* (2024) in the Learning Gallery is an installation made of burnt, stained black wood arranged in upright positions and lying on beds of charcoal.
- The installation illustrates the changing state of forests, which have been seriously affected by deforestation.
- With *Black Forest*, Han aims to raise the public's awareness of the dangers of environmental destruction and the need for conservation.



## DID YOU KNOW?

- Han was born on 19 July 1943 during the Japanese Occupation. She grew up in a kampong in Changi, which was then surrounded by a forest.
- She described her childhood as “happy and free.” She loved the outdoors and enjoyed going to the nearby beach where she would sculpt sand into the shapes of animals.
- Her childhood experiences made her appreciative of nature and instilled in her a sense of adventure.
- Most of the branches that were used to create this artwork came from Tembusu trees, which are native to Northeast India and Southeast Asia.
- The Tembusu branches are kindly donated by the National Parks Board (NParks).
- Tembusu wood is hardy and resistant, and thus frequently used to make chopping boards.
- The Singapore \$5 Portrait Series note features an image of a Tembusu tree in the Singapore Botanic Gardens. That particular tree had been growing in that spot since before the garden's construction in 1859.



Image Taken from Monetary Authority of Singapore website.

# PRE-VISIT QUESTIONS

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- Draw out the images that come to your mind when you hear the title, *Black Forest*. Describe and explain your drawings.
- There are many artists who are concerned with environmental issues. Conduct research on them and look at how they address these various issues.

Artists interested in environmental topics include:

## TAN ZI XI



Installation view of *Plastic Ocean*, 2016. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

### ***Plastic Ocean***

2016

Plastic, nylon string, wooden pedestals, dimensions variable

Garbage is everywhere! What happens when we heedlessly throw away our garbage? 269,000 tons of plastic debris floats on the surface of our world's oceans, creating hazardous living environments for marine life. In *Plastic Ocean*, artist Tan Zi Xi tackles the issue of pollution head-on with her recreation of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Comprising approximately 26,000 pieces of non-biodegradables, her installation invites viewers to experience the sensation of floating in a sea of trash. At the same time, the artwork embodies the wonders of recycling and repurposing, and the transformative power of art.



## ONG KIAN PENG



Installation view of *The Viscous Sea*, 2022. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

### ***The Viscous Sea***

2022

Video, 6 channels, HD format, surround sound, 20 min

Collection of the artist Singapore Biennale 2022 Commission

*The Viscous Sea* is an installation that explores how we experience and are affected by climate change. While Ong plans the content that he hopes to record prior to a shoot, he often encounters unexpected situations and must rely on his intuition while out in the field. As environmental conditions are unpredictable, actively observing and responding to his changing surroundings are key parts of his practice. He has documented the effects of rising sea levels on his treks along the valleys and seasonal rivers that connect to the Dead Sea. He has collected footage of waterways as well as the nomadic Bedouin tribes that roam around the valleys of Jordan. Ong hopes that audiences can derive meaning from what they hear or see.

# VIEW AND DISCUSS

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## SEE

- What objects or materials do you recognise in this installation?
- How do you think this artwork was made?



## THINK

- Walk around and experience the installation. What word best describes how you feel after the looking at the artwork? Share your thoughts with your friends.
- Before seeing this installation, what do you think deforestation will looked like?



## WONDER

- Imagine yourself walking through a burnt forest. How do you think you would feel? How would you feel if all our forests look like the *Black Forest*?
- How do you think the artist felt when creating this artwork?
- Do you think this installation is effective in showing the consequences of human activities on the environment? Why?
- The artist has changed the presentation of this installation multiple times. Why do you think she chose to make different versions of the artwork?



## REFLECTION

### **SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-MANAGEMENT**

- What emotions does this artwork evoke in you? How do you usually cope with difficult emotions like sadness or anger about environmental issues?
- How do people deal with the feelings of loss / grief?
- Once you have a growing concern about certain issue, how do you decide the way you can approach it? Fight / flight response? Denial?

### **SOCIAL AWARENESS AND RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT**

- How can we work together as a community to address the issue of deforestation?
- What role can art play in raising awareness and inspiring action?

### **RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING**

- What choices can we make in our daily lives to reduce our impact on forests and the environment?
- How can we use our creativity to find solutions to environmental problems?

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## **POST-VISIT QUESTIONS**

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- Discuss the environmental issues that you are concerned about.
  - Sketch out how you would express your concerns in a sculpture or installation.
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# SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



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## ACTIVITY 1 – CREATE A “FOREST DWELLER”

- Choose a natural object that can be found in a forest. Observe it closely and draw.
- Select a few characteristics of the natural object.
- Design a creature based on these characteristics.

## ACTIVITY 2 – CAN I BE AN ART ENVIRONMENTALIST?

- Choose an environmental issue that is close to your heart.
- Conduct research on the issue and share what you discover with your peers. You may present about the root of the problem, the consequences of allowing the issue to worsen or the possible solutions.
- Decide on a medium that would best express your understanding of the issue. Draft the design of the artwork that you would create with this medium.
- Share your design with your partner and share your thoughts about each other’s work.

## ACTIVITY 3 – I CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT!

- Encourage students to research and explore local environmental initiatives or organisations they can get involved with.
- Invite a guest speaker, such as a local artist or environmentalist, to share their perspectives and insights on the topic.
- Organise a follow-up field trip to a natural environment where students can apply their newfound understanding and appreciation for nature.

# FIND OUT MORE!

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## ARTIST

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- National Gallery Singapore. (2020, November 16). *Get up close with. . . | Singapore sculptor Han Sai Por* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBo8Y-sZKfo>
- STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery. (2022, April 29). *Han sai por: The Forest and its soul* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uREvuKJJRLA>

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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<https://pluralartmag.com/2018/07/16/an-inconvenient-practice/>
  - Li, T. W. (2021, February 17). “Art exhibitions probe mankind’s relationship with nature.” The Straits Times. <https://www.straitstimes.com/life/arts/art-exhibitions-probe-mankinds-relationship-with-nature>
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<https://vimeo.com/185041614>
  - Ong Kian Peng. (n.d.). <https://www.singaporebiennale.org/artists/ong-kian-peng>
  - Singapore Art Museum. (2022). *Artist Folio of Ong Kian Peng*.  
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  - Tembusu. (n.d.). National Parks Board. <https://www.nparks.gov.sg/gardens-parks-and-nature/heritage-trees/ht-2003-60>
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# ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR EDUCATOR / FACILITATOR

**If a student is feeling uncomfortable when talking about their emotions, you may consider the following suggested approaches:**

## **1. ACKNOWLEDGE AND VALIDATE THEIR EMOTIONS**

*Let the participant know that you are concerned about their wellbeing.*

- Verbal: “I hear you're feeling overwhelmed. It's okay to feel this way.”
- Non-verbal: Make eye contact, nod empathetically, and show that you're listening attentively.

## **2. ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

*Allow the participant to talk about their experiences (and beliefs) if they want to, but do not force them.*

- Verbal: “What was that like for you?” or “Can you tell me more about...?”

## **3. PARAPHRASE TO CLARIFY**

*Restate what you believe they are saying in your own words to ensure you are understanding their experience correctly.*

- Verbal: “It seems like you were frightened and worried.”

## **4. OFFER A BREAK**

- Verbal: “Would you like to take a short break?”
- Non-verbal: Gesture towards a door or a quiet area.

## **5. CHECK-IN PRIVATELY**

- Verbal: “If you'd like to talk about this further, we can have a private conversation later.”
- Non-verbal: Discreetly approach the participant after the session.

## **6. GROUNDING TECHNIQUES**

- Verbal: “Can I offer you some grounding techniques? Perhaps focusing on your breath or the sensations in your body might help.”
- Non-verbal: Demonstrate deep breathing exercises or guide the participant through the technique.

## **7. ADJUST THE PACE**

- Verbal: “Let's slow down for a moment. We can revisit this topic later if you're feeling more comfortable.”

## **8. SHIFT THE FOCUS**

- Verbal: “Perhaps we could shift our focus to a different topic for now and come back to this later.”

## **9. GET HELP IF NEEDED.**

*If the participant is in distress, do not hesitate to get help from a fellow teacher or school counsellor.*

- Verbal: “I'm concerned about your well-being. Would you like me to get help from another teacher or a counsellor?”



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