

# 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.

## NGUAN

# 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

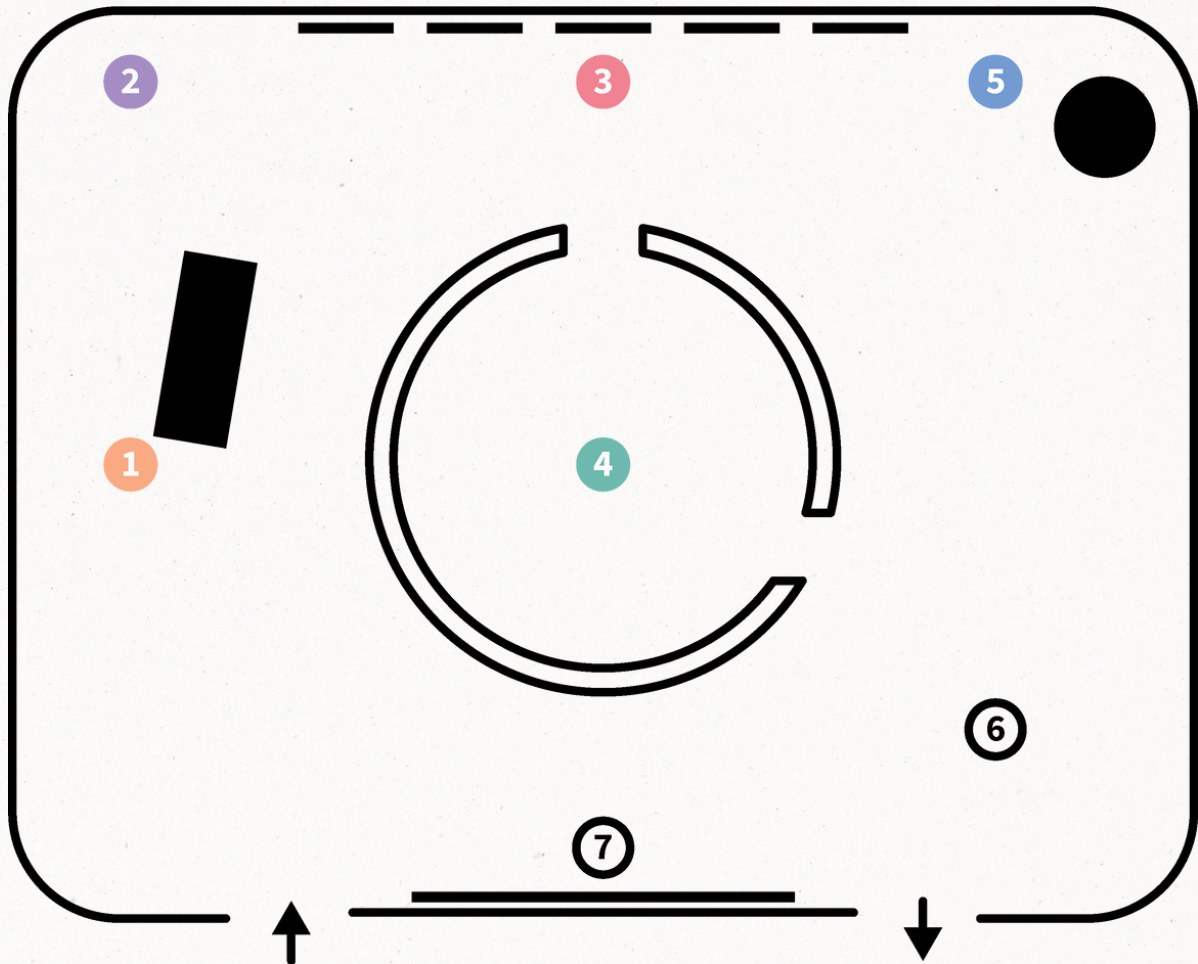
Childhood is a defining stage in all our lives. The foundations of our emotions, beliefs and memories take root during these formative years, with some receding within as we transit into adulthood.

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

# NGUAN

b. 1973, Singapore

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### ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Nguan** (pronounced “Nu-aung”) studied film and video production at Northwestern University in Illinois. He has showcased his photographs in cities such as Beijing, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Tokyo, and his hometown of Singapore, where he currently lives and works.

Nguan's photographs of cityscapes offer a deep look into human emotions and connections. Through his art, he prompts viewers to reflect on the complexities of contemporary urban living and its impact on individuals. His portfolio captures a diverse range of cities, including their distinct characters and untold narratives.

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# ARTWORK



Installation view of *Untitled*, from the series *Singapore*, 2011-2013. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

From left to right:

***Untitled, from the series Singapore***  
2013  
Archival pigment print  
100 × 100 cm  
Collection of Singapore Art Museum

***Untitled, from the series Singapore***  
2013  
Archival pigment print  
100 × 100 cm  
Collection of Singapore Art Museum

***Untitled, from the series Singapore***  
2011  
Archival pigment print  
100cm × 150 cm  
Collection of Singapore Art Museum

***Untitled, from the series Singapore***  
2013  
Archival pigment print  
100 × 100 cm  
Collection of Singapore Art Museum

***Untitled, from the series Singapore***  
2012  
Archival pigment print  
100 × 100 cm  
Collection of Singapore Art Museum

# ARTWORK

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## ABOUT THE ARTWORK

- In his Singapore series, artist Nguan captures the feeling of loneliness in his homeland.
- Through candid portraits, he unveils urban dwellers' experiences of solitude.
- Nguan wanders the streets of Singapore, aiming to capture unique moments that are impossible to recreate in staged photography.
- Nguan's photographs are known for their distinct, pastel colour palette. His signature "Singapore Pink" tint evokes a sentimental and nostalgic atmosphere that encourages tranquil observation of present-day life in Singapore.
- These colours give a naive and gentle tone to his artworks, reflective of his fascination with Singapore since childhood, that is set in contrast to the darker themes that he explores.



## DID YOU KNOW?

- In his artworks, Nguan explores what it means to be human in Singapore. Photography helps Nguan connect with the world and with himself. He searches for faces on the street that capture his feelings.
- Every photo Nguan captures is only one piece of a story. It is up to the viewers to imagine what happened before and after the photo was taken.
- Living abroad made Nguan observe Singapore differently. He focuses on everyday life in Singapore and the city's backstreets, trying to capture the magic in ordinary moments.
- When Nguan was little, his family would take Sunday drives to his grandfather's home in Pasir Panjang. On the way, he would see a majestic lion on the rooftop of a building, which reminded him of fairy tales.
- He uses an old, mechanical film camera from the 1990s to take photos during the last two hours of sunlight each day, which gives his photographs a fantastical look. This technique was inspired by his impression of the city as a child.

# PRE-VISIT QUESTIONS

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## PART ONE

- Watch the [Nguan Learning Gallery video resource](#).



Stills from Learning Gallery | Nguan's Singapore, 2024. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.



- After watching the video resource, share your thoughts with the class about how effectively Nguan captures his ideas and feelings about Singapore.
- Discuss what you have noticed about the artworks that was not mentioned in the video.

## PART TWO

- In groups or pairs, share your past experiences with photography.
- What are some of your earliest memories of photographs?
- What or who do you like to capture in your photographs? Why?
- What kind of photographs do you take of Singapore?
- How do you decide the right moment to take a photograph?

## PART THREE

- Name other artists that remind you of Nguan. They do not have to be photographers.



# VIEW AND DISCUSS

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## OBSERVE THE FIVE PHOTOGRAPHS

- Describe what you see in the five photographs.
- What thoughts or emotions come to mind when you view the photographs?
- What do you think the people inside the photographs are thinking about or feeling? Why?
- What might their lives be like?
- Why do you think the artist chose these locations to take these photographs? Why is location important in photography?
- Can you relate to the experiences that Nguan highlights in his photographs?
- When was the last time you felt something like the emotions inspired by these photographs? How did you cope with this feeling?



## ADVANCED QUESTIONS

- Do you think the colours of the photographs are important? Why? (Hint: Think about how colours can inspire feelings of nostalgia.)
- How do you think the photographs were taken? (Hint: Street photography)
- Why do you think the artist chose to represent these subjects in his photographs?
- What effects and impact do you think Nguan's work has on audiences?
- If you could capture and highlight an everyday icon of Singapore, what would it be and why?



## REFLECTION

### SELF-AWARENESS

- Nguan mentions that photography helps him connect with himself. How can art help you understand your own emotions and experiences?
- Art is a way of learning about ourselves. What have you learned about yourself through creating art?
- Nguan's artworks focus on everyday life and backstreets in Singapore? How is it similar / different with your own experiences or feelings about the city?

### SELF-MANAGEMENT

- Nguan's work often brings up feelings of nostalgia. How can art help us process and manage complex emotions like nostalgia or sadness?
- How can engaging with art help us become more mindful and reflective?

### SOCIAL AWARENESS

- Nguan's photos often depict people alone. How do these images make you think about the experiences of others in your community?
- How can we use art to raise awareness about social issues like loneliness or isolation?

### RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

- It was said that art can enhance the quality of daily living. How can we use art to celebrate diversity, promote positive social change and contribute to a more inclusive and compassionate society/environment for everyone?

# POST-VISIT QUESTIONS

- What kind of Singapore do you want to see in artworks? Discuss this as a class.
- Conduct research on artists who explore themes related to Singapore in their work. When discussing their approaches, you may choose to focus on the differences between each artist's style and their perspective on Singapore.

Suggested artists:

## HEMAN CHONG



Installation view of *Calendars (2026–2096)*, 2004–2010. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

### ***Calendars (2026–2096)***

2004–2010

1001 offset prints with matte lamination

30 × 30 cm (each)

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

*Calendars (2020–2096)* comprises of 1001 images of Singapore that the artist Heman Chong took over a period of seven years. The scenes in the images were documented during periods in which the spaces were publicly accessible but devoid of human activity or traces.

## ROBERT ZHAO RENHUI



Installation view of *Queen's Own Hill and its Environs*, 2019. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

### ***Queen's Own Hill and its Environs***

2019

Photographs, videos and found objects in display cabinet

240 × 500 × 60 cm

Collection of the Artist

Singapore Biennale 2019 Commission

For over a year, artist Robert Zhao Renhui ventured into the forested areas surrounding Gillman Barracks to observe and study its significance. Taking its title from the former name of the area, *Queen's Own Hill and its Environs* comprises a cabinet of curiosities with more than 100 components including videos, photographs and found objects. Collectively, they chronicle the history of the land as well as its changing function as plantation, military barracks and illegal immigrant squatter settlement, before finally being reclaimed by nature and becoming the secondary forest it is today.

# SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

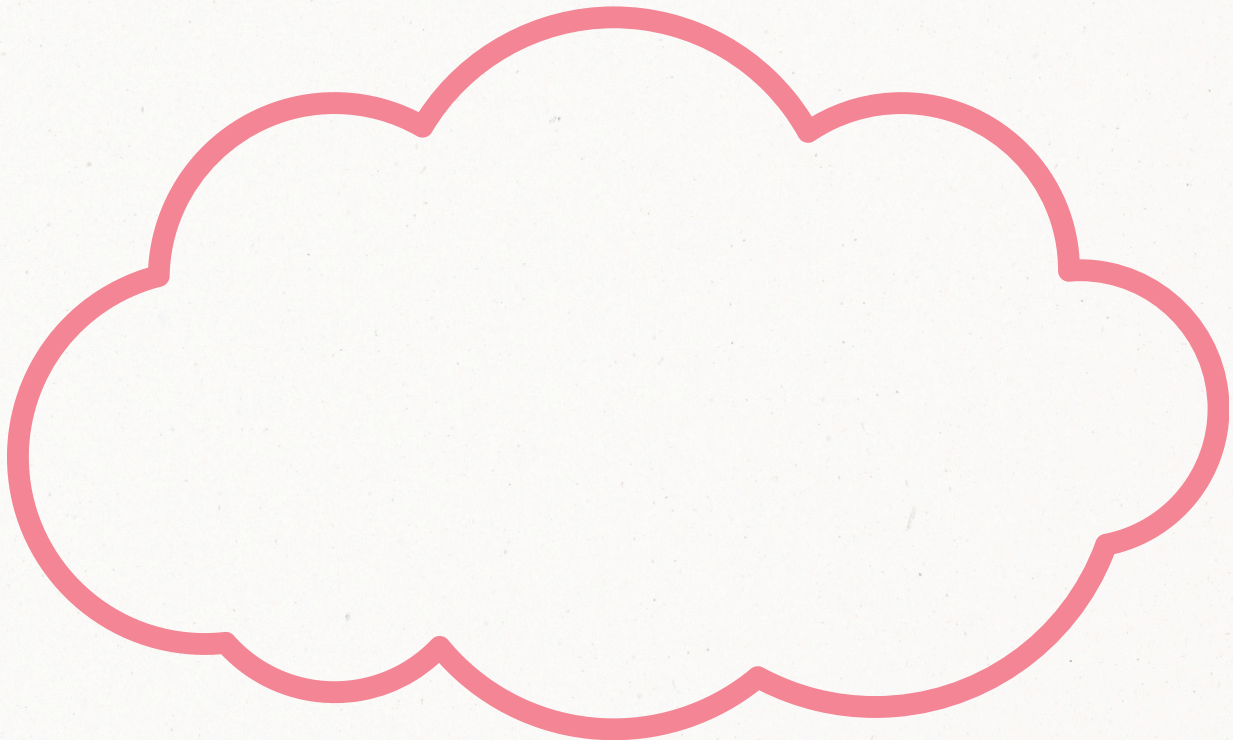


## ACTIVITY 1 – SHOW AND TELL YOUR EMOTIONS

- Lead students through a guided visualisation exercise in which they can imagine different scenarios that might evoke specific emotions (e.g. receiving a surprise gift, losing a favourite toy, winning a game, etc.).
- Ask students to demonstrate how they would express these emotions through facial expressions and body language.
- Additional questions to ask students:
  - What emotions do you tend to notice most in others?
  - Are there any emotions you find difficult to recognise or express?

## ACTIVITY 2 – PICTURE CLOUDS

Before capturing special moments, give yourself a set of rules as a photographer. Write down these prompts in the word cloud below.



### **ACTIVITY 3 – THE TEN STEPS CHALLENGE**

Try the Ten Steps Challenge:

- Choose a spot that will act as your home base. From this base, take ten steps in one direction. Capture one photo.
- Repeat this process until you have ten photos.
- Compile these images to appreciate the beauty in your immediate surroundings.
- Name your photography series and present it to others.

### **ACTIVITY 4 – CAN YOU BE AN ART CRITIC?**

- Assign a photography subject to the class, for example “Light.” Make a photo collage out of the images captured by everyone in class to showcase the diverse photos that can be created based on one theme.
  - Select a photo and write a response. You can also name your chosen image.
  - Ask a friend to write a response to the same photo. Compare and contrast your responses.
  - Gather students together to share their photographs in small groups. Discuss the emotions captured in the photographs and discuss how the photographers have used colour, composition and subject matter to convey different feelings.
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# FIND OUT MORE!

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## ARTIST

- *Nguan, photographer.* (n.d.). <https://nguan.tv/>
- *Nguan.* (n.d.). Nguan's Instagram Account. [https://www.instagram.com/\\_nguan/](https://www.instagram.com/_nguan/)
- *Nguan / blog.* (n.d.). Nguan / Blog. <https://www.nguan.tv/blog/>
- Singapore Art Museum. (2024, September 4). *Learning Gallery | Nguan's Singapore* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nopwCxAMqAM>

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Li, T. W. (2019, November 23). "Curators' art picks: Six works you don't want to miss at the upcoming Singapore Biennale." *The Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/arts/curators-art-picks-six-works-you-dont-want-to-miss-at-the-upcoming-singapore-biennale>
- NUS Museum. (2011). *Catalogue of Heman Chong: Calendars (2020–2096)*. Retrieved June 27, 2024, <http://www.hemanchong.com/stuff/calendars2020-2096.pdf>
- Singapore Art Museum & Individual contributors. (2015). *CONTEMPORARY ART FROM FOUR MUSEUMS ACROSS THE ASIA PACIFIC* (A. Maerke, Trans.). [https://singaporeartmuseum.sg/-/media/SAM/Files/Exhibitions/TOO/TOO\\_exhibition\\_guide.pdf?inline=1](https://singaporeartmuseum.sg/-/media/SAM/Files/Exhibitions/TOO/TOO_exhibition_guide.pdf?inline=1)
- Yap, S. (n.d.). "Data Entries with Heman Chong." Singapore Art Museum. <https://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg/about/our-collection/stories/data-entries>

# 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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