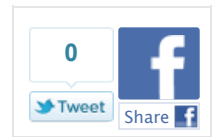


Lion City gets lion's share of art

From apocalyptic floods and karaoke killings to Thai migrant workers and California girls, the third Singapore Biennale highlights the diverse visions of contemporary artists

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Watching a relatively silent film, with only the sound of water gradually filling up a familiar fast food restaurant, was one of my first encounters with contemporary art at the Singapore Biennale 2011 (SB2011). The 21-minute *Flooded McDonald's* ended with the iconic red and yellow mascot floating along with the trays, drinking cups, paper bags and French fries before the eatery was completely inundated.



Stored in a jar: monsoon, drowning fish, color of water, and the floating world, 2010-11, by Tiffany Chung.

Of course, it wasn't a real McDonald's but a life-size replica created by Superflex, a trio of Danish artists who described the film as "a slow narrative of the destructive process, which we read and hear from the media every day."

First shown in 2008, the installation indeed represents recurring catastrophes _ the monster tsunami that swept Japan's northeastern coast and now the massive flooding in southern Thailand. Contemporary art like this clearly gets a message across to people on the street.

Screened at the National Museum of Singapore, *Flooded McDonald's* is one of the stimulating installations featured at the Lion City's largest international contemporary art event, which runs until mid-May.

The third Singapore Biennale, entitled *Open House*, gathers 63 artists from 30 countries, to present their works at three major venues: National Museum of Singapore, Singapore Art Museum, and Old Kallang Airport.

At the National Museum of Singapore, after absorbing Superflex's apocalyptic film, there's no need for doom and gloom since a nearby installation by Tiffany Chung shows us how mankind could survive in a floating city.





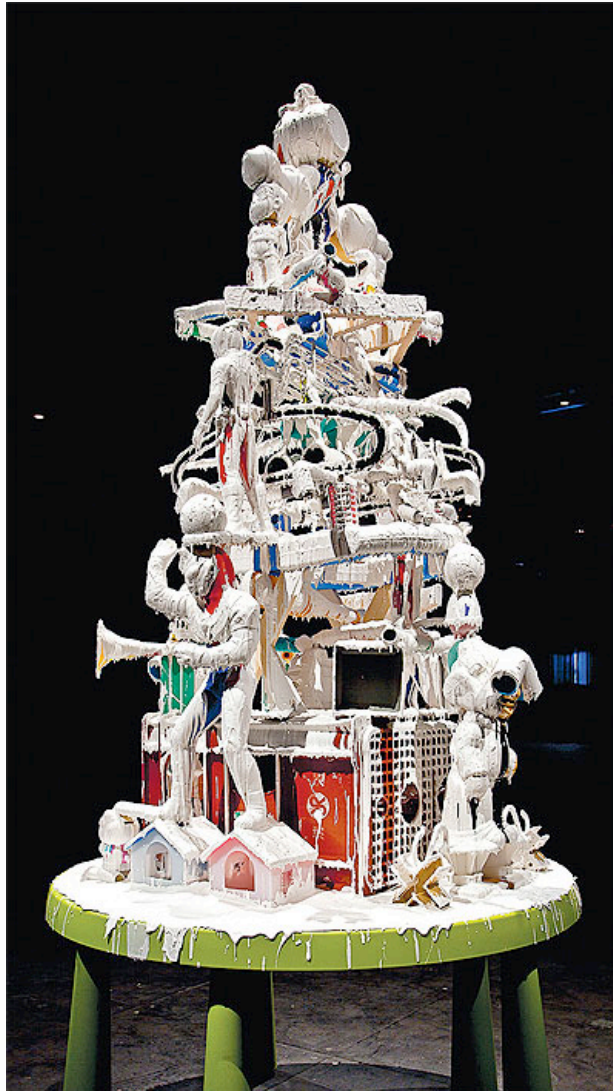
Superflex's Flooded McDonald's , 2008, which greatly relates to recurring catastrophes.

The Vietnamese artist raises issues of environmental degradation and global warming in her works. Growing up on the banks of the Mekong River, she experienced the 1978 historic flood which turned the river into a sea, and she could never forget the image of rising water.

These memories inspired One Giant Great Flood 2050, 2010, in which she uses micro-pigment ink, oils and alcohol-based marker on vellum and paper. If such a deluge happens, Chung's recent work for the Singapore Biennale suggests a solution _ that we should move to a houseboat estate.

The amazing installation actually features suspended small boats and futuristic houseboats as if they were floating on an imaginary surface of water, and the waterways seem like streets.

Other works at Singapore's oldest museum now with a modernist extension include Teppei Kaneuji's White Discharge (Built-up Objects #11) that had the Japanese artist pouring white polyester resin over a construction of plastic objects. Charlie White's amusing animation depicting two American teens and magazine covers with blonde girls is a part of his ongoing Girl Studies project, which looks into consumerism and social anxiety embodied in Californian teenage girls.



Teppei Kaneuji's White Discharge (Built-up Objects #11), 2010.

Thai artist Navin Rawanchaikul opens his Hong Rub Khaek (living room and punned as welcome khaek meaning guests as well as Indians) with the installation featuring video interviews with seven Indian migrants living in Chiang Mai. Mahakad, his recent painting of the diverse community around Chiang Mai's Kad Luang market, is also on display.

From the very first venue, the variety of contemporary art entices visitors to see more of it at the two other locations. Old Kallang Airport is where another Thai artist, Arin Rungjang, places furniture in a hall where during the course of the exhibition Thai workers living in Singapore can come to swap stylish Ikea items for their own domestic furniture. Based on his research on Thai migrant workers, the installation also presents video interviews of their personal stories in making a home in the Lion City.

Ming Wong's five-channel video installation has you walking in and out of five rooms to capture every scene of Devo Partire. Domani/I must go. Tomorrow. His video works refashion classic films, and this one commissioned by the SB2011 is his interpretation of Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1968 Teorema, a story about a handsome stranger who has sexual encounters with four members of a bourgeois Italian family as well as the housemaid. The Singaporean plays all the male and female characters and had to seduce himself in the filming.

Next door to Wong's installation is What a Difference a Day Made, which seems like a typical hardware store. The artist, Michael Lin had to purchase the entire contents of a

local hardware store, and recreated it in the exhibition space.



Candice Breitz's Factum, 2010, which features an interview with triplets.

The third venue, the Singapore Art Museum, showcases Louie Cordero's My We that depicts the karaoke-related killings in the Philippines, Candice Breitz's multi-channel video installations showing interviews with seven pairs of identical twins and a set of triplets, and Roslisham Ismail's food installation with six fridges based on his following of six diverse Singaporean families on how they buy, cook and eat food.

Special SB 2011 projects include The Merlion Hotel by Tatzu Nishi, who transformed the iconic landmark at Marina Bay into a one-room hotel. Moreover, there are parallel events to attract not only art lovers but anyone who may find viewing contemporary art fun, meaningful and entertaining.

The Singapore Biennale 2011 Open House runs until May 15. For more information, visit www.singaporebiennale.org.



Devo partire. Domani/I must go. Tomorrow , 2010, starring Singaporean artist Ming Wong in the male and female roles.



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