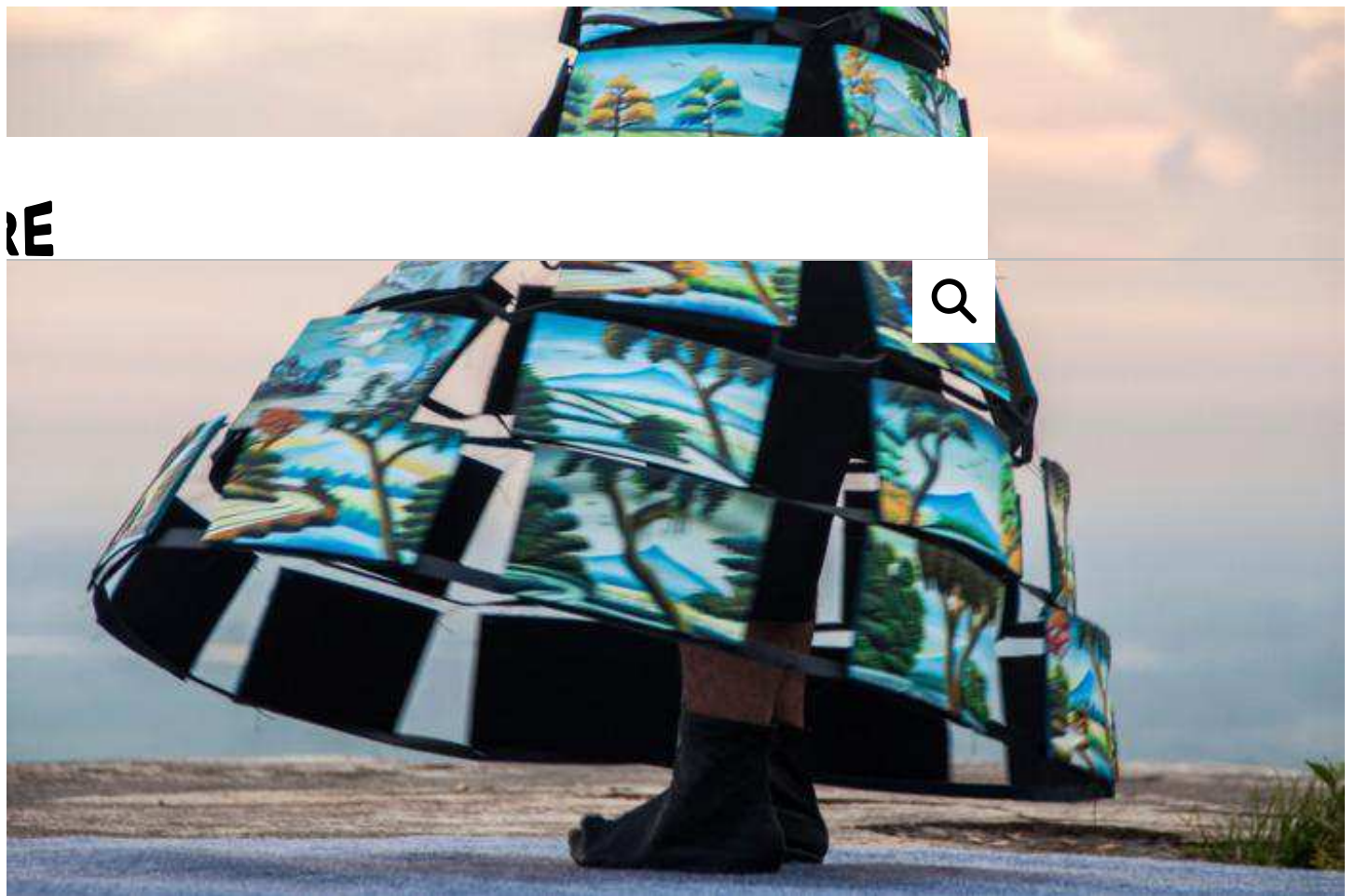


SEEN | DEC. 13, 2018

# Seen in Singapore: What Not to Miss Right Now in the Orderly City-State's Edgy Art World

By Harry Burke



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Mella Jaarsma, *The Landscaper* (video still), 2013; part of *Moving Pledges* (2018), ICA Singapore at LASALLE College of the Arts. Photo: © Courtesy the artist

Singapore has made cultural engagement a focus of government, and public money fertilizes its vibrant scene. Its National Gallery boasts an authoritative collection of southeast Asian art, despite only just turning three years old. It opened an extensive minimalism survey last month to celebrate. Left of center, vital university galleries and artist-run spaces round out the island city-state's art ecosystem.

## Minimalism: Space. Light. Object. National Gallery Singapore & ArtScience Museum

*November 16, 2018 – April 14, 2019*

The minimalist canon is a little like German artist Charlotte Posenenske's serially reconfigurable "Square Tubes" — they can both be rearranged in endlessly pleasing variations. Bringing together over 100 artworks across two museums, this exhibition puts Posenenske's ventilation pipes in conversation with works by Mark Rothko, Anne Truitt, Yayoi Kusama, and Anish Kapoor, but reorganizes a familiar story with thoughtful and piquant expansions centering Asia. Zen Buddhism informed the art of many in the West, from John Cage to Walter De Maria, and it was powerful to see the delicate philosophical propositions of Myanmar's Po Po (who is influenced by Abhidharma texts) and the mid-'60s Japanese mono-ha movement (whose ephemeral artworks questioned traditional theories of representation) presented concurrently.



ICA Singapore at LASALLE College of the Arts

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*October 20, 2018 – January 23, 2019*

Manit Sriwanichpoom's *Horror in Pink* series (2001) adorns the back wall of *Moving Pledges: Art and Action in Southeast Asia*. Consisting of found black-and-white photographs of social violence overlaid with a shiny pink-suited figure pushing an empty shopping cart of the same hue, they critique consumerism in the context of Thailand's systemic state brutalities — but could likewise be said to represent the plight of socially engaged art, which often abets the exploitation it responds to. Fortunately, the exhibition considers a bouquet of strategies for troubling the spectacularization of crisis, from Wei Leng Tay's *Integration III* (2018) an audio work that questions performances of citizenship in our era of constant displacement, to Josephine Turalba's *Scandals* (2013), which invites the viewer to wear slippers fabricated from spent bullet cartridges.





## Moses Tan and David Portwood: Footnotes of a Failure: Invitation to Cluedo soft / WALL / studs

*November 22, 2018 -*

At soft / WALL / studs, a buzzing, collectively administered space for talking, learning, and exhibiting art, stickers and ephemera from past events layer over each other on the walls. When I visited, Moses Tan and David Portwood's "Footnotes of a Failure: Invitation to Cluedo" was on view, and took the "escape room," a commercial game in which participants escape a simulated danger, as a departure point for a series of conceptually driven statements exploring the traps of institutional visibility and the lures of sabotage. Next door to the gallery is the info-shop library wares, a bountiful safe haven for zines and publications on subjects ranging from anarchism to the prison-industrial complex, its shelves jammed full of more ways to escape a toxic world.

# President's Young Talents 2018 Singapore Art Museum

October 4, 2018 – January 27, 2019

Initiated by the Singapore Art Museum in 2001, the President's Young Talents is an official incubator of artistic prodigy — the cash award, through mentoring and commissioning, invests in emerging talent, though firmly links this to the state. Weixin Quek Chong won this year's seventh edition of the Grand Prize for *sft crsh ctrl*, an entrancing scaffolding of video, photography, and sensuous draperies washed in colored lighting. Debbie Ding's abstract investigations of local soil and Zarina Muhammad's *Pragmatic Prayers for the Kala at the Threshold*, an intrepid, spiritually dense installation, likewise glistened.

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