

SINGAPORE BIENNALE 2011: OPEN HOUSE

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EDUCATION KIT – INTRODUCTION



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Introduction

This education kit has been developed by the Singapore Biennale 2011 (SB2011) as a resource for secondary school art teachers who are planning to visit the SB2011 exhibition with their students. In addition to discussion questions to engage students during the exhibition visit, this kit also has pre and post-visit questions and activities for further engagement.

The SB2011 education kit can also be used by teachers of other subjects and levels such as Social Studies, History, Geography, Literature and General Paper to explore these particular subjects, as contemporary art and the artworks at the Singapore Biennale are often informed by and address social and political issues such as urban conditions, migration, globalisation, gender and culture.

Teachers who are teaching different age groups e.g. those teaching General Paper or History at 'A' Levels can also apply the questions and activities in this kit to engage their students with the exhibition.

This kit can also be used by students of various secondary and tertiary levels as well.

Ways to Use the SB2011 Education Kit

The education kit is organised by venue and the artists in the order of the location of the artwork i.e. by a trail or route.

The framework of each artwork in the education kit is organised as such:

- Introduction to the artwork
- Process of creating the artwork
- Questions

Some artworks also have suggested activities to go with the questions.

This kit is specific to the exhibition visit to help students and teachers engage with the artworks, but it is also intended for use after the visit to the exhibition, to extend the life of the exhibition and to continue engaging students with the issues covered by the artworks at SB2011.

Overview

About SB2011: Open House

The third Singapore Biennale, titled 'Open House', features 63 artists from 30 countries, with over half creating new commissions or premiering new works. 'Open House' is presented across three main exhibition venues, each with its own particular character, that draw upon emblematic spaces in Singapore: Housing Development Board flats (Singapore Art Museum and 8Q), shopping centres and night markets (National Museum of Singapore), and international air and sea ports (Old Kallang Airport). A spectacular installation at Marina Bay, as well as special projects and events across the main exhibition venues, provide other points of access into the exhibition, and explore different ways of making and thinking about art in the world.

The Singapore Biennale 2011 (SB2011) curatorial team has described the third edition of the Singapore Biennale as one that focuses on artistic processes. Through a close consideration of how artists work, the Biennale creates **an open house into the artist's process, thus revealing what artists do, from the conception of their artwork, to its creation.**

In particular, the curatorial team is concerned with the artistic processes behind the artworks and their links to **the daily transactions and exchanges that take place between people, nations**, etc. These exchanges can take the form of (personal) conversations, economic transactions, to the national and international level.

SB2011 features a number of site-specific¹ or commissioned artworks that directly respond to the space and environment in which it is exhibited, some of which are not shown in galleries or museum environments, but which instead occupy public spaces and even a national monument in the form of the Merlion.

¹ Refers to a work of art designed specifically for a particular location and that has an interrelationship with the location. If removed from the location it would lose all or a substantial part of its meaning. (Tate Glossary)

Pre-visit Questions and Activities

- Singapore Biennale is an international contemporary visual art exhibition that is held every two years. What do you understand by the term 'contemporary visual art'?
- Conduct some research on the internet on other art Biennales around the world. What other Biennales are there around the world? Are they all similar? If not, what are some of the key differences in terms of themes, venues, artists, etc.?
- Visit the Singapore Biennale 2006 and Singapore Biennale 2008 websites at <http://www.singaporebiennale.org/2008/2006/> and <http://www.singaporebiennale.org/2008/> respectively. What were the themes of the previous Biennales, and what were the reasons behind choosing these themes? What were the various venues and how did they correspond to the different themes?
- Based on your research, how is the Singapore Biennale different from other art Biennales around the world?
- Art Biennales are often organised by themes, and artworks and artists are chosen according to the different themes. Based on your research of the different Biennales around the world, what are some of your favourite themes, and why?
- The title of the 2011 edition of the Singapore Biennale is 'Open House'. This title has been described as an 'attitude' by the Artistic Director of SB2011, Matthew Ngui. What do you understand by the phrase 'Open House'? Does it have any cultural significance to you? For example, does your family ever have an Open House day for visitors? Can you think of other examples of Open Houses? For example, does your school ever organise an Open House for visitors? Based on your own understanding of what an Open House is, how do you think it relates to the Singapore Biennale 2011?

Singapore Biennale 2011 Curatorial Statement

In Singapore, during Hari Raya, Deepavali and Chinese New Year, people open their homes to others, inviting them to visit, eat and talk. This is not only a gesture of hospitality and goodwill but also an opportunity to reflect, negotiate and exchange. The threshold between the private and the public is made permeable, if only for a moment, relaxing boundaries between individuals and barriers between groups. Contemporary art often emerges out of a need to communicate across such thresholds of difference that may be experiential, psychological, or grounded in social and political hierarchies. As such, artists' practices are not simply about something in the world; they are real attempts to exchange information, translate experiences and even trade places.

Borders may be guarded with force, yet artists find ways to embed themselves within such systems of control, turning unspoken desires toward unexpected ends. Sometimes artists displace or exchange objects, materials and information from one context to another, revealing unexpected connections between culturally divergent situations. The labour of constructing or deconstructing common objects and materials highlight the creative potential in seemingly mundane situations, suggesting fresh ways of seeing the world.

'Open House' examines these artistic processes and their links to the daily transactions that take place between people. From trading objects to swapping stories, from sharing food to dressing up, we are constantly making exchanges, as individuals, groups, cities and nations. In one of the world's busiest ports, a multicultural city built on trade, 'Open House' brings together artworks that offer multiple perspectives and myriad creative approaches to questions of how we move across borders, see other points of view, and form connections with others.