

press release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Esplanade Turns 18!

Gradual re-opening with the launch of new Guided Tours and more, and the premiere of Lights Up!, a collaboration with Dream Academy that supports arts freelancers



SINGAPORE, 9 Oct 2020 – Singapore’s national performing arts centre Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay turns 18 on 12 Oct 2020. Since its opening in 2002, the centre has presented more than 49,000 performances and activities, drawing an audience of 32 million patrons and 112 million visitors. Following the pilot trial performances with live audiences which took place at several arts venues in Singapore including Esplanade in September, the centre looks forward to welcoming everyone back at #mydurian again.

While live performances with audiences are still not allowed, PIP’s PLAYbox, Esplanade’s dedicated space for children and families, and Jendela (Visual Arts Space) will re-open from 9 and 16 Oct 2020 respectively. Esplanade’s daily guided tours will also resume from 15 Oct 2020. As part of the anniversary celebrations, Esplanade will be launching two specially curated limited edition tours: a Family Tour & Play Date (where the little ones will receive a PIP’s watch) and a Night Tour which includes dinner at a participating Esplanade Mall tenant and a special collection #mydurian tote bag. In addition, free virtual tours on www.esplanade.com will also be available for those who prefer to experience and explore our venues from the comfort and safety of home. Please refer to **Annex A** for details on Esplanade’s upcoming *Visual Arts* programmes and **Annex B** for details on the Esplanade Tours.

Yvonne Tham, Chief Executive Officer, The Esplanade Co Ltd, said, “As Esplanade turns 18, we are excited to re-open all of our spaces safely and launch newly-designed tours around our venues. Last month the pilot trial performances not only cheered those who attended but gave us encouraging feedback. A vast majority of the respondents were very satisfied and extremely confident of Esplanade’s safe management measures, and ready to return to watching live performances. The past months have also challenged us and artists to innovate. We introduced so many different forms of digital programmes and activities to engage, uplift and inspire people. Many of these will continue, even as live performances resume. Esplanade turning 18 in such times reminds me that the arts are integral to an individual and a society’s resilience. I am grateful that many supporters and donors have stood by the arts, and I am confident that how artists, audiences and Esplanade respond to these challenging times will be testament of that resilience.”

The Esplanade Mall and public spaces including the waterfront, Roof Terrace and Forecourt Garden, and facilities such as toilets and basement carpark, remain open and accessible to all visitors and patrons.

Esplanade Offstage is One

While audiences are still unable to watch live performances at Esplanade, they can continue to enjoy the arts from home with *Esplanade Offstage* (www.esplanade.com/offstage). Launched in October 2019, this one-year-old multimedia platform has had close to 200,000 total users and garnered some 405,000 total page views, and continues to be an all-access backstage pass to the arts and performances at Esplanade, demystifying the performing arts in Singapore and Asia for newcomers as well as offering more in-depth perspectives and resources for art enthusiasts. Over the past year, *Offstage* has released more than 200 videos of performances and performing arts content as well as related podcasts, features, quizzes and educational resources.

Ongoing and upcoming *Esplanade Offstage* offerings to look forward to through the month of October include daily [Free Programmes](#), children’s festival [Octoburst! Online](#) till 18 Oct 2020 and thought-provoking digital programmes at [da:ns festival 2020](#) from 12 – 31 Oct 2020.

Lights Up!

Also premiering on *Esplanade Offstage* on 1 Nov 2020, Sun, 3pm, is *Lights Up!* which is presented by Esplanade in collaboration with Dream Academy with support from the National Arts Council (NAC). Filmed in the Esplanade Theatre from 12 – 14 Oct 2020, this production features more than 35 freelance artists, musicians, creatives, filming and technical crew, and

is part of a package of support measures for arts freelancers put together by NAC during the pandemic.

The 45-minute revue features Singapore's veteran and emerging artists such as Sebastian Tan, Dwayne Lau and Hana Rosli who will perform their renditions of Selena Tan and Elaine Chan's classic musical theatre creations from *Dim Sum Dollies*, *SING DOLLAR!* and *CINDEREL-LAH!*.

Selena Tan, Founder Artistic Director, Dream Academy, said, "Elaine and I have been writing songs together since secondary school, but this is the first time our songs will be reinterpreted by other artists. We hope *Lights Up!* will put a spotlight on local theatre as well as the talented emerging artists featured."

Composer and Music Director Elaine Chan said, "We are happy and thrilled to hear these works revived through different artistic interpretations. We look forward to hearing them."

Please refer to **Annex C** for details on *Lights Up!*.

It is especially in these uncertain times that the arts can comfort, provide perspective and lift spirits. Please help Esplanade to do more to bring the joy of the arts to everyone at home. Support Esplanade at www.giving.sg/esplanade/artsforchange

About Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

Esplanade is Singapore's national performing arts centre. It has a year-round line-up of about 3,500 live performances presented by Esplanade, its partners and hirers. Esplanade also brings the arts virtually to audiences in Singapore and beyond, through its diverse range of digital programmes on *Esplanade Offstage*, an all-access backstage pass to the performing arts and guide to Singapore and Asian arts and culture, with videos, podcasts, articles, quizzes and resources.

As an arts centre for everyone, Esplanade also creates opportunities for seniors, youth, children and underserved communities to experience the arts. More than 70% of the shows that take place each year at the centre are non-ticketed.

The centre works in close partnership with local, regional and international artists to develop artistic capabilities and content, push artistic boundaries and engage audiences. Esplanade supports the creation of artistic content by commissioning and producing new Singapore and Asian work for the international stage. It also develops technical capabilities for the industry nationally.

To bring even more of the arts to a wider audience and provide more platforms to support Singapore's next generation of artists, Esplanade is building a new theatre along its busy waterfront. Named Singtel Waterfront Theatre, the 550-seat venue will open in 2021.

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay is operated by The Esplanade Co Ltd (TECL), which is a not-for-profit organisation, a registered Charity and an Institution of a Public Character. The Charity Council awarded TECL the Charity Governance Award – Special Commendation for Clarity of Strategy in 2016, and the Charity Transparency Award for four consecutive years since 2016.

TECL receives funding support from Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and its Community Programmes are supported by Tote Board Family, comprising Tote Board, Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club.

Visit [Esplanade.com](https://www.esplanade.com) for more information and [Esplanade.com/Offstage](https://www.esplanade.com/offstage) for an all-access backstage pass and insider's guide to Singapore and Asian arts and culture.

~ End ~

Issued by *The Esplanade Co Ltd*.

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Annex A

Esplanade Presents

VISUAL ARTS

Oct – Dec 2020

www.esplanade.com/visualarts

How could art provide avenues for us to listen, reflect and connect with each other in times of upheaval and extraordinary change?

The exhibitions in 2020 delve into the narratives, affinities and experiences that connect us, investigating how evolving states of proximity and relatedness impact the individual, communities and societies at large. These explorations and conversations have acquired more gravity in the wake of an evolving global pandemic.

In the second half of this year, the exhibitions explore how kinship is expressed either by foregrounding the spirit of collaboration and creative exchange in artmaking; or motivated by collective experiences, shared cultural histories and everyday life. An installation by This Humid House (Singapore) draws inspiration from shared cultural practices and stories about the human condition and our lived contexts. *Esplanade's Food Diary* features home-cooked dishes prepared by the centre's staff during the circuit breaker period celebrating the spirit of creativity while inviting discussions on community, identity and how we relate to one another. The group exhibition *Intersections* features prints by Singaporean artists that are created through collaborative processes that emphasise on artistic experimentation and inquiry. Co-presented by Singapore International Photography Festival and Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, *Combing for Ice and Jade* is a love note from artist Kurt Tong (Hong Kong) to his nanny Mak Ngan Yuk, one of the last remaining Comb Sisters. Unfolding through a variety of materials, the project is an exploration of her extraordinary life.

Sayang-sayang by This Humid House (Singapore)

Esplanade Concourse
18 Sep – 29 Nov 2020



“Sayang”, a Malay expression, is a term of endearment used to express love and affection. When cooing a baby to sleep, parents will say “sayang-sayang” to convey a sense of tenderness and as an affirmation of their love.

This Humid House takes the familiar cradle net, or *sarong buai*, as the jump-off point to explore the influence of rituals and culturally situated practices on our vernacular experiences. Traditionally, *sarong buai* are batik cradles attached to hammock springs used in households across parts of Southeast Asia to rock babies to sleep. With the generous assistance of the National Parks Board, leaves sustainably harvested from bismarckia, corypha and coconut palm trees around Singapore are attached to automated machinery to mimic the movement of these cradles. By replacing the baby with leaves of larger-than-life proportions, the installation evokes a variety of associations, prompting the viewer to reflect on ideas of volition, protection, coddling, sustainability and culture.

The use of leaves references botanical motifs commonly found in batik. Viewed collectively, the leaves form a tapestry that celebrates the significance of batik in Singapore culture. Using leaves that are at varying stages of maturity, the colour palette is an evolving blend of green, yellow and brown hues with accents of gold—colours associated with the batik-making process. Since olden days, dried leaves have acted as a source of natural dyes in batik while paraffin wax the colour of molten gold is used to create intricate batik patterns. The installation pays tribute to the cultural practices and symbols of the past, which continue to reverberate into our future.

With thanks to the National Parks Board for their contribution of materials for this installation.

About the artist

This Humid House is a botanical design studio established in Singapore. It currently comprises a team of designers with extensive experience working in fields such as fine art, architecture, floristry, horticulture and landscape design. This Humid House aims to develop a contemporary design language expressed through plants and flowers that is also attuned to the climate, geography, history and people of Singapore.

Esplanade's Food Diary

Esplanade Community Wall
8 Sep – 13 Dec 2020



Food is essential to life, a necessity that provides nourishment and sustenance. It can also convey tradition and culture as well as the stories and values of those who created it. Cuisines and dishes constantly evolve and mirror the times, environments and cultures they are situated in. Whether the meals are prepared and consumed alone or with company, these are experiences that we can all identify with.

With the implementation of stay-home measures in Singapore in response to the COVID-19 pandemic earlier this year, the kitchen became a new focal point for day-to-day activities. Many began cooking and experimenting with new recipes both out of necessity and as a means of expressing their creativity while passing time. *Esplanade's Food Diary* presents some of the original recipes and dishes that were created by the arts centre's staff during this period. The exhibition showcases a diversity of cuisines while celebrating the spirit of creativity behind these tasty endeavours.

It may be that the rituals of preparing and partaking in meals allow us to stay connected and find comfort during these extraordinary times. The ways we cook and consume food not only embodies some of our most important shared experiences but also invites discussions on community, identity and how we relate to one another.

Intersections

Featuring the works of Chen Shitong, Chiew Sien Kuan, Chua Chon Hee, Hilmi Johandi, Izzad Radzali Shah, Lim Soo Ngee, Nhawfal Juma'at and Oh Chai Hoo, in collaboration with Pulp Editions (Singapore)

Jendela (Visual Arts Space)
16 Oct 2020 – 10 Jan 2021



Landscapes & Paradise Study no.2 (after Hyatt Regency), Hilmi Johandi, 2019. (Image courtesy of the artist.)

This exhibition shines the spotlight on the medium of printmaking and the latitudes it offers artists to explore new frontiers in their practice. *Intersections* presents prints created by eight Singapore artists during their residencies with local print studio Pulp Editions. Expanding upon the artists' aesthetic and material experiments with printmaking techniques, it seeks to broaden conversations around notions of experimentation, collaboration and negotiation. The exhibition also investigates the convergence of the planned and the incidental, as well as the different layers and dimensions of possibilities that emerge during the artmaking process. Set up within the gallery space, a printmaking studio lends insight into the different facets of the lithographic process. To extend the concept of collaboration, artists will be invited at various intervals to create prints at the studio.

About the artist

Established in 2018, Pulp Editions is a collaborative printmaking workshop dedicated to making fine art prints across all mediums with Singapore artists. Owned and operated by Chen Shitong, collaborations are driven by experimentation with traditional printmaking methods such as lithography, etching, relief printing and monotype.

Combing for Ice and Jade

by Kurt Tong

Esplanade Tunnel

5 Nov 2020 – 10 Jan 2021



Image from the project *Combing for Ice and Jade*, Kurt Tong, 2011-18. (Image courtesy of the artist.)

Combing for Ice and Jade is a love note from Kurt Tong to his nanny, Mak Ngan Yuk, who worked for his family in Hong Kong for nearly forty years. Not wanting to be forced into an arranged marriage, in her early twenties, Mak became one of the Comb Sisters—a community of women in Southern China who took a vow of chastity, declaring themselves free of obligations towards their parents, and leaving their hometowns in a bid to be financially independent. Considered an early form of feminism, the “comb up” ceremony granted women great autonomy and freedom. As Comb Sisters were not allowed to return home to die in their old age, many sisterhood homes sprang up where they lived and looked after each other in their old age as they grew older. Having only eight photographs of herself, this multimedia project is an exploration of Mak’s extraordinary and turbulent life. Working closely with his nanny for a period of seven years, Tong traces and reveals her story through a combination of materials from his family archive, found photographs from Mak’s extended family, new photographs, a Chinese ink painting and women’s magazines from China that span six decades.

Combing for Ice and Jade is co-presented by Singapore International Photography Festival and Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay.

S ingapore
I nternational
P hotography
F estival

About the artist

Working primarily with photography, the works of Kurt Tong (b.1977, Hong Kong) also incorporates elements of installation and sculpture. In his practice, he pushes the boundaries of photography and the possibilities of the medium as a narrative tool. Having grown up in the United Kingdom, his recent works explore issues related to the Asian diaspora, Chinese funeral practices and early Chinese feminism. He has participated in exhibitions at Shanghai Himalayas Museum, China; Finnish Museum of Photography and Rencontres d’Arles., France.

Annex B

Esplanade Tours

www.esplanade.com/tours

Family Tour & Play Date



Go into the heart of Esplanade's famous domes and learn about the history and science of a world-class performing venues on a guided tour. Learn how the Esplanade Concert Hall can be tuned to sound like a small room or a huge cathedral, how the Esplanade Theatre can change scenes in a flash and how Esplanade got its durian-looking exterior.

At the end of the tour, play, read, imagine and get creative at our children's arts space, [PIP's PLAYbox](#), which includes a cosy loft, a roomy arts and craft area and a reading corner filled with books by Singapore writers and illustrators.

Each child participant will also receive a welcome pack consisting of a PIP watch (U.P. \$19.90), stickers and a tour booklet filled with activities and trivia for the young ones.

For *Esplanade&Me* members only. Not a member yet? It's free, sign up [here](#)

The Family Tour & Play Date is available on the following dates only:

9, 10, 11 and 18 Oct 2020

1.30pm and 3.30pm

Approximately 2 hours

Recommended for ages 3 and above

Accompanying adult must be ages 16 and above

Adult and Child pair: \$30

Additional Adult/Child: \$20

Limited to 5 pax per tour.

For more information, email tour@esplanade.com

Book at www.esplanade.com/tours

Esplanade Night Tour



Go on this special Night Tour to get your moonlit #mydurian selfies. Be it with Esplanade's famous domes at the Forecourt Garden, or against Singapore's striking skyline at the Roof Terrace and Waterfront, this tour is the perfect opportunity for you to capture some dramatic night scenes.

The Night Tour also takes you to Esplanade's crown jewel, the Concert Hall, and the majestic Esplanade Theatre, and gives you an introduction to Esplanade's architecture and design. All participants will receive your own photo memento at the end of the Night Tour.

Esplanade Night Tour

Mon and Tue, 7pm (excluding public holidays) from 2 Nov onwards

Approximately 1 hour

Admission for ages 4 and above

Adults: \$25

Seniors[^], Students & NSF: \$20[^]

Esplanade&Me Special: \$20

[^]For seniors ages 60 and above

For more information, email tour@esplanade.com

Esplanade Night Tour (Birthday Edition)

In celebration of Esplanade's 18th, the Night Tour will be launched with a special package that includes dinner at a participating restaurant (Barossa, Harry's, Jiak Modern Tzechar, Noosh Halal Noodle Bar and Grill, Old School Delights, Straits Chinese Signatures) and a limited edition Esplanade tote bag.

The Esplanade Night Tour (Birthday Edition) package is available on the following dates only:
19, 20, 26 and 27 Oct 2020, 7pm.

Approximately 1 hour (for tour only)

Admission for ages 4 and above

Adults: \$40

Seniors[^], Students & NSF: \$35[^] (

***Esplanade&Me* Special: \$35**

[^]For seniors ages 60 and above

Book now at www.esplanade.com/tours

Esplanade Tour



Experience the sublime acoustics of the Esplanade Concert Hall and take a seat in the majestic Esplanade Theatre. This tour gives you a peek under Esplanade's famous domes, taking you into the auditoriums of our Concert Hall, Theatre and other front-of-house spaces.

Along the way, find out about Esplanade's architecture and history and pick up other interesting nuggets of information such as how the Esplanade Concert Hall can be tuned to sound like a small room or a huge cathedral, and how external noise and vibration is prevented from travelling into the performance venues.

Sun – Fri, 1pm (excl. public holidays)
Approximately 1 hour

Admission for ages 4 and above
Adults: \$20
Seniors[^], Students & NSF: \$10
Esplanade&Me Special: \$15
[^]For seniors ages 60 and above

Tours are available from 15 Oct 2020. Book now at www.esplanade.com/tours

For more information or for a Mandarin speaking guide, email tour@esplanade.com

Annex C

Esplanade Presents

Lights Up!

www.esplanade.com/lightsup

In collaboration with Dream Academy with support from National Arts Council Singapore
Featuring Sebastian Tan, Lim Kay Siu, Neo Swee Lin, Sarah Cheng de Winne, Timothy Wan,
Dwayne Lau, Andrew Marko, Gino Babagay, Sharon Sum, Isaac Ong, Shafiqhah Efandi, Hana
Rosli and Miss Lou

Premieres 1 Nov 2020, Sun, 3pm
(Available online till 31 Dec 2020)

Watch on *Esplanade Offstage* and Facebook
Free

The cream of the crop of Singapore musical theatre join hands with a slew of upcoming stars to present a refreshing spin on Singapore musical theatre classics. *Lights Up!* features songs from the *Non-Essential Chan-Tan Songbook*, drawing from definitive productions such as WILD RICE's first-ever pantomime *CINDEREL-LAH!*, Dream Academy's cult classic *Dim Sum Dollies* and *SING DOLLAR!*

Directed by Jo Tan with musical direction by Joel Nah, this musical revue is created against the backdrop of the biggest disruption to the Singapore arts scene to date. This reinventive take on Singapore theatre stalwarts Selena Tan and Elaine Chan's quintessential musical theatre creations is guaranteed to leave you in stitches.

Lights Up! is organised as part of National Arts Council, Dream Academy and Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay's commitment to provide support to freelance artists during this challenging COVID-19 period.

(45mins)