

## Life!

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Oct 9, 2010

### Arts fair takes boutique route

Only 50 galleries are taking part in ARTSingapore as the event opts for an intimate setting

By corrie tan



Size does not matter, says ARTSingapore fair director Chen Shen Po of the downsized event at Suntec this year. -- ST PHOTOS: SAMUEL HE

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It is the big one-oh for ARTSingapore, Singapore's longest-running contemporary art fair, which is on till Monday at Suntec Singapore.

Small is beautiful for ARTSingapore, which has repositioned itself this year to be a boutique fair with a more intimate setting, rather than the sprawling event it had been earlier this past decade.

The number of galleries from Singapore and the globe showcasing work by Asian and international artists at the fair dropped from 110 in 2008 to about 50 this year, but fair director Chen Shen Po, 45, is not fazed.

At the media preview on Thursday, she said: 'Size doesn't matter. What we want to be is a boutique fair, a comfortable space showing quality work that brings back the intimate feeling among collectors, galleries and artists.'

'We grew too big in 2008, and people got frazzled and lost with too many things to see. Some people told me that they had 'overdosed' on art and wanted to go shopping.'

She added that ARTSingapore will continue in this boutique direction, but at the same time remain flexible to respond to the new challenges that each year poses.

The most expensive piece this year is Colombian artist Fernando Botero's Horse, a voluptuous bronze sculpture going for about \$850,000.

But budding collectors need not be daunted by the six-figure price tag. The New Finds section of the fair focuses on emerging galleries and newer artists. For \$250, you can buy Slovenia-born artist Tjasa Iris' psychedelic painting Singapore Garden, the lowest-priced work.

Gallery directors are optimistic about the Singapore art market.

New York-based Sundaram Tagore, 48, art historian and director of his eponymous gallery, compared the first time he was at ARTSingapore, in its first year, and this year. He said: 'The Singaporean community in the artistic context has matured. You see so many more museums, and the Government is taking a greater interest in art.'

Sundaram Tagore Gallery's selection at the fair includes work by award-winning Canadian photographer and artist Edward Burtynsky, who is known for his large-format photographs of bleak industrial landscapes.

Korean gallery owner Sunny Sung, 52, has stayed loyal to ARTSingapore since 2000, the year it began. While Simyo Gallery had little luck the first year in terms of sales, Sung kept coming back with better results each time. She was hopeful about this year's takings. She said: 'Every year I come back, I understand collectors' tastes a little better.'

At the same time, Singaporean artists are not neglected at the fair: Eight of Cultural Medallion recipient Ang Ah Tee's acrylic paintings are for sale, including one of his latest paintings, which the 67-year-old completed a few months ago, titled Wedding Chamber. His works, with their signature choppy texture and dashes of red, start at \$12,800.

Organisers have also thrown new media into the mix, joining the established mediums of painting and sculpture. Local artist Tan Kai Syng, 35, a PhD student in fine arts in London, is showcasing the event's first-ever new media installation.

In the interactive work, her alter-ego and virtual avatar, Kaidie, runs through various dimensions in an exercise in digital storytelling. Titled A Rough Guide To (The Meaning Of A Life 3.0), it contains images, video, text and maps in various platforms, such as performance, film and installation, as well as a travel blog.

Visitors to ARTSingapore will be able to talk to her live via Skype today at 4pm and tomorrow at 6.30pm. This is Tan's first participation in ARTSingapore, and she said that selling her work is a new thing for her. Prints of images from her work are for sale from \$1,500.

Ms Chen said: 'We've come of age. We evolved and learnt and grew, and this year we're ready to be the debutante at the ball, to show people that ARTSingapore is ready.'

[corriet@sph.com.sg](mailto:corriet@sph.com.sg)

#### Book it

##### ARTSINGAPORE 2010

**Where:** Level 4, Suntec Singapore

**When:** Today and tomorrow, 11am to 8pm; Monday, 11am to 5pm

**Admission:** \$10 per entry; \$20 seasonal ticket (unlimited entry). Free for children under 12 and students.

**Info:** For details of events, go to [www.artsingapore.net](http://www.artsingapore.net)