

Art and Literary Scene in Singapore

By

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Abstract

Singapore is a prominent hub in Southeast Asia, be it trade, finance, the economy, or the creative arena. It excels and lives up to its name, Singapura, derived from the Sanskrit word (सिंहपुर) for lion city. Other countries look up to the island nation to ape its key model to success in a short span of time.

Keywords

Arts, literati, statutory bodies, organizations, museums

Introduction

Singapore is a vibrant multi-ethnic, and multi-diverse nation. There are art galleries, multilinguistic platforms, forums, museums, and theatres blooming the literary and cultural scape, both in a contemporary and historical way. Be it the Singapore Writers Festival, Singapore Art Week, Art Fairs, or Online poetry-sharing platforms, the list is endless.

Singapore is a well-structured society where the organizations are constructively devoted to uplifting and bringing out the latent talent that seeps the multifaceted nation. It also provides the required impetus and opportunities to established and emerging writers and artists.

Arts

National Arts Council is a body that connects creative communities globally. The council supports and organizes literary, performing, visual, traditional arts, and theatre.

The richness of art we see in public spheres as we explore the lanes, malls, gardens, etc., speaks about the single-minded focus on creating a platform of equal significance to all.

Be it admiring the sculptures such as *Watching Clouds* by Paul Vanstone at the Gardens by the Bay, *Urban People* by Kurt Laurenz Metzler on ION Orchard, Chong Fah Cheong First Generation bronze sculpture along the Singapore river, all reflect the significance Singapore places on preservation and depiction of art and culture.

The organization also provides research grants and scholarships to deserving students.

The Arts House

The Arts House is a historic building that offers rooms, chambers, and spaces to host art events.



Image 1: The Arts House

Festivals

Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA), held annually, is organized by Arts House Limited for the National Arts Council. The festival is usually held in mid-year for one month and incorporates multifaceted dimensions of art. Both local and international artists participate in the festival. Each year SIFA curates CREATION, Life Profusion, and SIFA X. The island nation is widely showered in myriad art displays at several avenues.



Image 2: SIFA

Singapore Art Week (SAW) celebrates the art landscape, giving individual artists and art galleries opportunities to thrive and showcase their work with particular emphasis on sustainable art. The National Arts Council helms SAW.

The Singapore Writers Festival is a multilingual biennial festival celebrating Singapore's four official languages – English, Malay, Chinese, and Tamil. The festival had gone digital during the pandemic. It is an all-inclusive festival giving equal opportunities to specially-abled individuals mainstreaming them in Singaporean society.

The Poetry Festival of Singapore (PFS) celebrates the poetic word. PFS came into being in 2015. It organizes competitions, book launches, panel discussions, etc., to reflect the island nation's multicultural, multigenerational, and multilingualism.

The Association of Singapore Tamil Writers also organizes annual literary festivals to inculcate a love for the language and nurture young writers. The association conducts book launches and workshops in Tamil as well. The same goes for Chinese and Malay Festivals; competitions, debates, and seminars are regularly executed and attended by students and those who have an artistic bend of mind.

Indian Heritage Centre in Little India displays the history and legacy of Indian Singaporeans.

Awards

There are several Literary awards like the Golden Point Award to give due recognition to the writers of the creative works produced in the year. Golden Point award is conferred in all 4 languages, whether a short story, poetry, or translation. The Cultural Medallion is the highest accolade for recipients whose art has enriched the Singapore landscape.



Image 3: The Cultural Medallion

Galleries and Museums

Several Art galleries thrive in Singapore. Affordable Art Fair, Bank Art Fair, and Global Art Fair, where artists and galleries worldwide participate in depicting their rich cultural heritage, further adding to the scene.

Singapore Art Museum focuses on contemporary art in Southeast Asia. Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore Art Museum, or the National Art Gallery and Philatelic Museum are a treasure trove that preserves and maintains a record of its heritage. It has a collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian modern art, aiming to create an all-inclusive community.

The National Museum of Singapore held an exhibition, Picturing the Pandemic through stories, objects, photographs, etc., related to Covid-19 in collaboration with the public.

National Library Board has digital and physical collections of books, photographs, rare printing presses, and general Singaporean and South Asian literature. I have a National Library Board membership and sometimes attend literary events online and in person.



Image 4: Asian Civilizations Museum



Image 5: National Gallery



Image 6: Art in Public Spaces

Conclusion

It is wise to conclude that Singapore has successfully carved its place and is leaving its artistic mark nationally and globally. Singapore should be on the bucket list of creative nomads as a visit will inspire and open their souls to more extraordinary creative endeavors.

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About the Author

Alka Balain loves to paint and write. Her writings have appeared in Usawa Literary Review, kitaab.org, AISphere, The Poet mag, Poetry India, The Hooghly Review, Visual Verse, Readomania, and several other journals. Her poems have been published in a few anthologies, including the well-earned poems by Hawakal. She chairs the Writing Enthusiasts' Club of the Indian Women's Association, Singapore, and is also the Chapter Head, Singapore of the Asian Literary Society.

