

ARTISTS

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PICTURES OF
PEOPLE AND
PLACES FROM THE
COLLECTIONS OF
KOH SEOW CHUAN
AND FRIENDS



Abdullah Ariff
Boo Sze Yang
Chen Cheng Mei (aka Tan Seah Boey)
Chen Shou Soo
Chen Wen Hsi
Cheong Soo Pieng
Chia Yu Chian
Chng Seok Tin
Choo Keng Kwang
Chuah Thean Teng
Chua Mia Tee
Foo Chee San
Ho Khay Beng
Khaw Sia
Koeh Sia Yong
Kuo Ju Ping
Lee Boon Wang
Lee Cheng Yong
Lim Mu Hue
Lim Tze Peng
Mohammad Din Mohammad
Ng Eng Teng
Ong Kim Seng
Tumadi Patri
Phua Cheng Phue
Anthony Poon
Seah Kim Joo
Tang Da Wu
Tay Bak Koi
Tay Boon Pin
Teo Eng Seng
Tong Chin Sye
Wee Beng Chong
Wong Shih Yaw
Yeh Chi Wei
Yong Mun Sen



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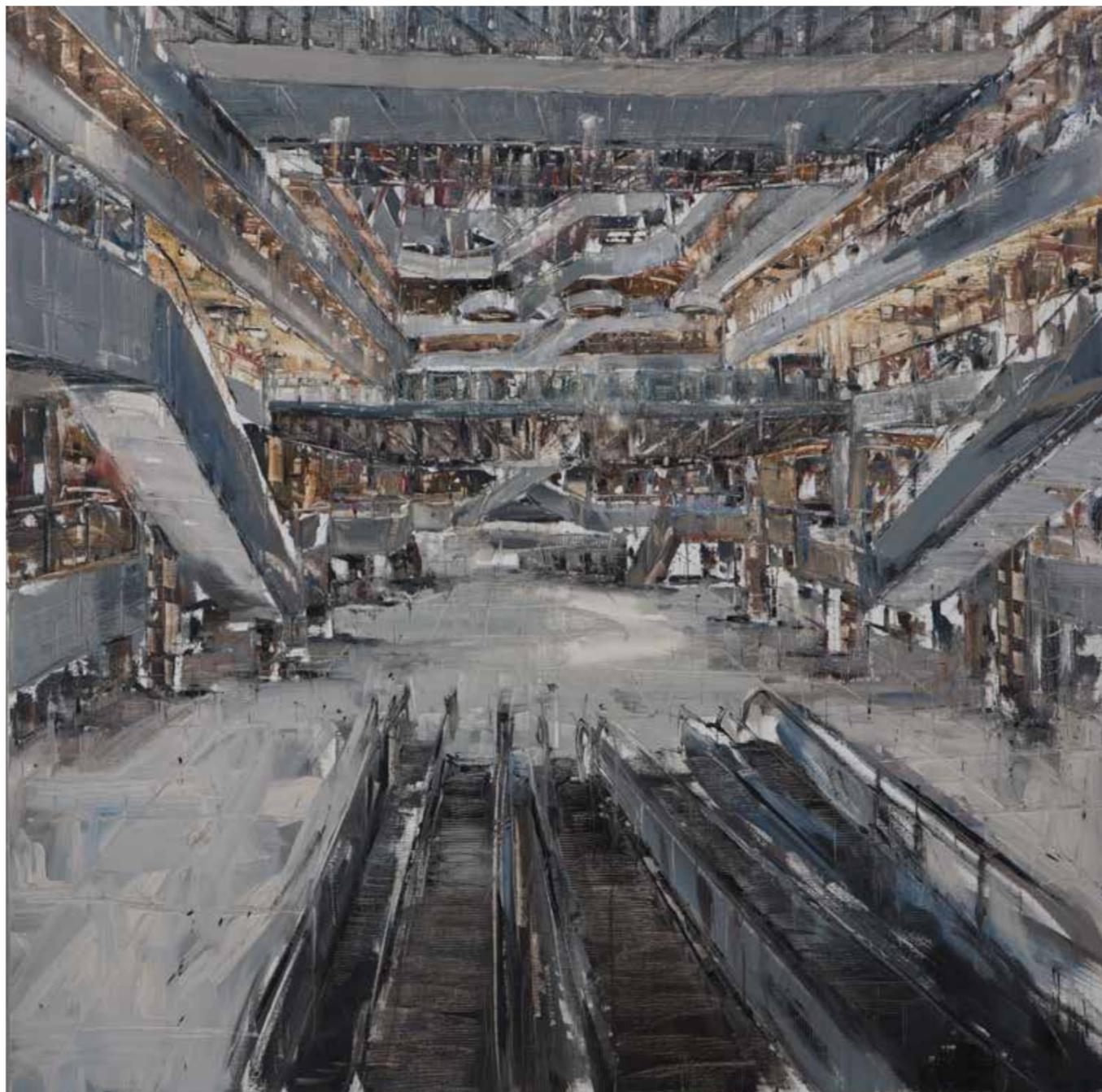
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Teo Hui Min

Pictures of people and places

Boo Sze Yang
The mall #19 (Plaza Singapura), 2011, oil on canvas, 180 x 180 cm



Introduction

Meeting together as a team (Bala Starr—curator, Helen Oja—architect, and me as writer) for one of our first discussions at DP Architects' office in the Marina Bay area of Singapore, Koh Seow Chuan gave us a brief insight into the flexibility, dynamism and collaboration that underpin his architectural practice. These were qualities that also informed our meetings, as Koh encouraged our different ideas and opinions while the exhibition took shape. In our discussions about the selection of works for the exhibition, its design, and the focus of the accompanying writing that would be produced, we often engaged in rewarding debates about the works themselves, and the development of contemporary art practice in Singapore. The artist groups and societies which characterized the early landscape, the mobility of these artists, the diverse influences that shaped their artistic expression, and the reasons why they were drawn to their various subjects of representation, were some of the questions which continued to motivate us throughout the process of our collaboration.

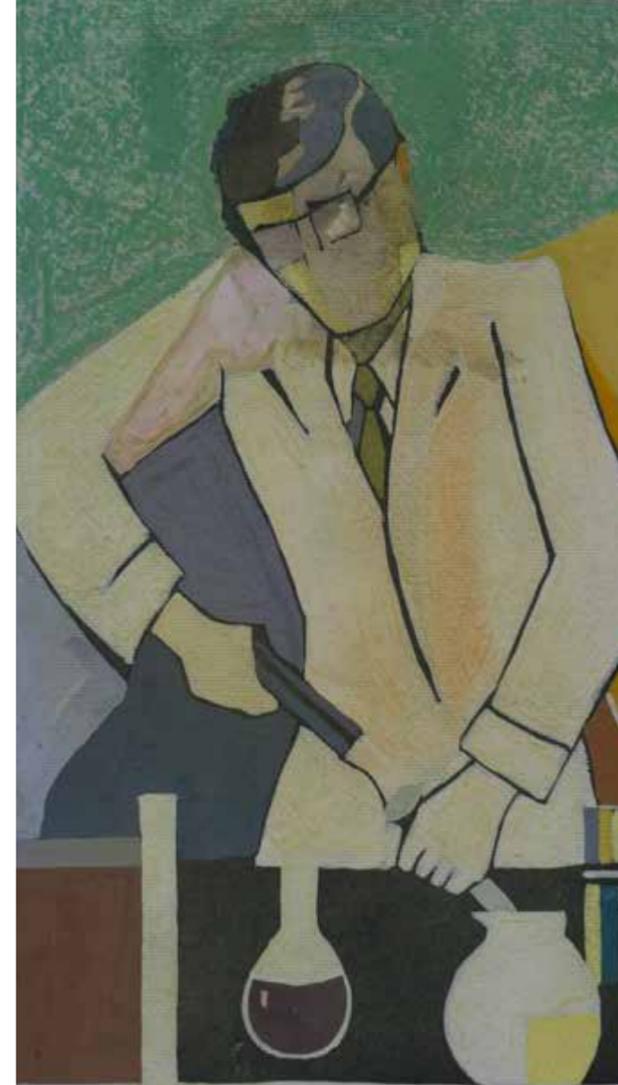
The broad theme of people and places provides space to consider the changes in our region's landscape over the years, but also, from the perspective of the artist, asks how subjects of representation, and the artists' own positions as people within these different environments, change over time. The 1950s to the 1980s is acknowledged as a key period of artistic development in Singapore (and the region) primarily due to the post-war, post-colonial context and, in the specific case of Singapore, a period that traces pre- and post-independence around the year 1965. This exhibition reveals the capacity of private collections to bring together a representative group of works focused on this period of development in the arts. Instead of attempting to present a broad, canonical narrative of Singapore art history, the exhibition focuses on the specific scenes and stories that caught the attention of these artists and, later, the collectors of their art. This relationship between collector and artist becomes especially interesting when we consider that commissions for personal portraits were as common as commissions for public art. Early patronage by individuals such as Tan Tze Chor and Dato' Loke Wan Tho was crucial to the freedom of expression that artists were afforded when alleviated of financial burden. Indeed, Singapore's short history as a nation and the relatively early development of its art market imply that the growth of artistic endeavour and ambition was in tandem with the desire from public and private individuals and institutions to collect and promote the arts. When considering the eighty-five works from thirty-six artists across different styles and periods that were made available to us through several private collections, it is worth reflecting on the means through which a collection, and what can be called a 'collecting focus', come about. While perhaps initially motivated by interest in a certain style, or particular landscapes or subjects, the commitment of a collector is most evident in their exhaustive, persistent search for works that might fulfil a desire to categorize and own representative works from the oeuvre of a single artist, or of a particular generation, theme, or group of artists.

In considering iconic images of Singapore that come to mind when thinking about the visual history of the nation, the centrality of the Singapore River, bustling street scenes, and a mosaic of ethnicities figure sharply. This visualization of Singapore is in line with the deliberate construction of a national consciousness in the post-independence period. However, the 'natural' fascination that artists of this thirty-year period had with depicting these people and places preceded any firm political articulation of 'Singapore', which suggests the reflexive relationship between artistic representation and how a diverse community of people can conceive of shared visual reference points when imagining what defines their nation. In the styles and methods of portraying these scenes, there emerge interesting variations that express the artists' individuality. One aim of this exhibition is to provide space and time to dwell on individual pictures, the circumstances of their production, and their position within a period of artistic production.

Yong Mun Sen
Untitled [Boats through the nets], 1936, oil on canvas on board, 49 x 58 cm (sight)



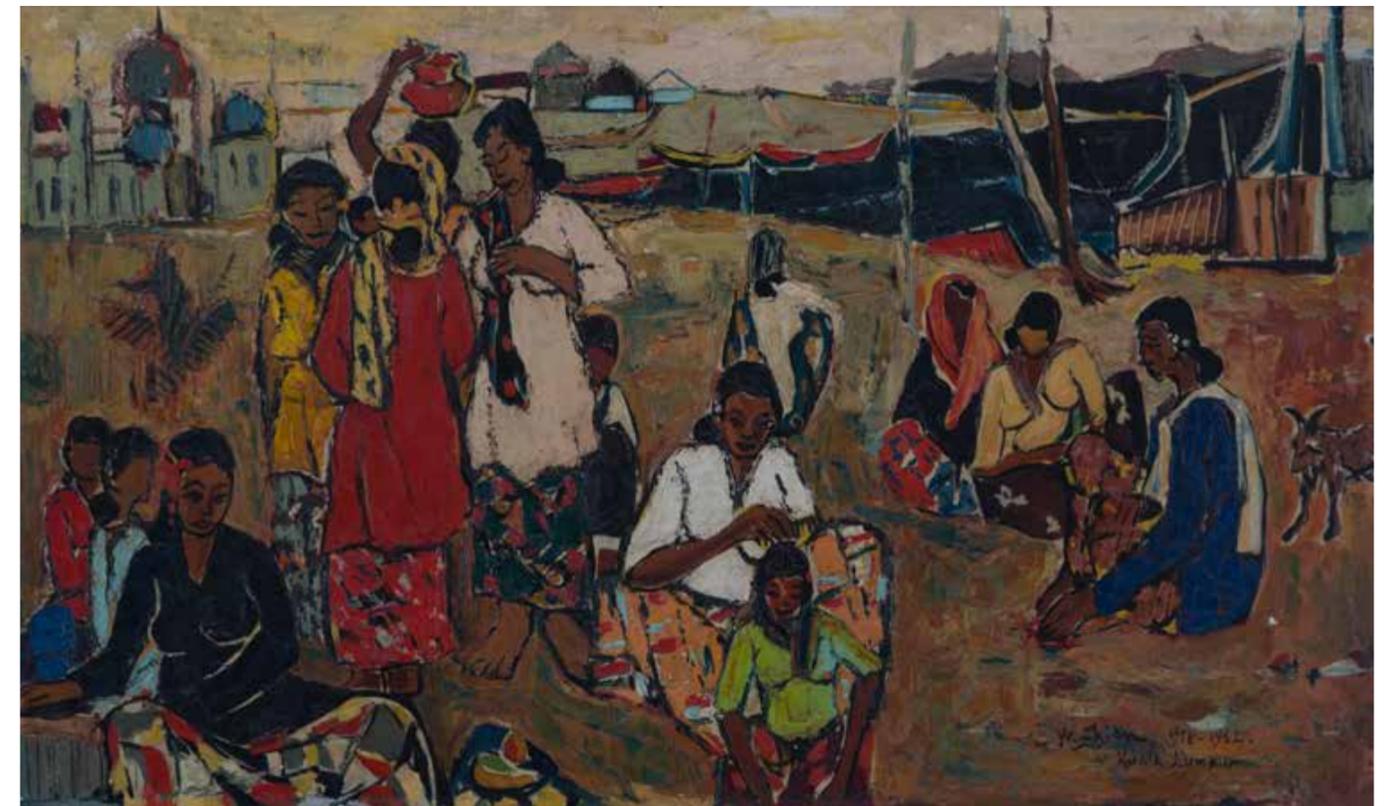
Lee Cheng Yong
Left: *Untitled [Man in laboratory]*, c. 1950, gouache on paper, 24.8 x 14 cm (image)
Right: *Untitled [Man with easel]*, c. 1950, gouache on paper, 20 x 14.5 cm (image)



spirit in the post-war period and lead-up to Malayan independence from the British colonial government in 1963. In these small paintings, people take precedence over the landscape and their surroundings. Lee Cheng Yong gives importance to the variety of life, and to the potential contained within the diverse peoples of the region.

Abdullah Ariff, credited alongside Yong Mun Sen as one of the founding fathers of watercolour painting in Malaya, also employed a European aesthetic in his art. *Untitled [Boats under tree]* (1960) (p. 45) is suffused with a warm light characteristic of Ariff's style, giving his works a hazy, dream-like effect. Interestingly, the scene depicted is one of idle leisure, unlike the majority of the artworks that have been brought together in this exhibition. The two figures under the tree, as well as the figure towards the centre of the painting, are seemingly carrying fishing poles, but the characters in Ariff's scene could not be more different from the bare-backed labourers of Yong Mun Sen's *Untitled [Boats through the nets]*. In the far left of the picture, two figures (presumably, by the lithe rendering of their figures, female) enjoy the restful scene. In spite of the realist detail and style of the painting, one questions the reality of a landscape that recalls an image of a picturesque European lakeside more than the tropical density of a Southeast Asian landscape. Where the majority of ethnic Chinese artists appear to have been preoccupied with an essentialized representation of indigenous Malay culture and expression, Abdullah Ariff produced romantic images of the Malayan landscape in a visual language descended from a Western tradition. With *Untitled [Boats under tree]*, a nostalgic fantasy of a sunny afternoon, Ariff effectively positions his mind's vision of rustic Penang within a universal aesthetic of watercolour painting, and offers an easily accessible window through which to appreciate the beauty of the land.

Another example of the artistic representation of people situated within the landscape, Chia Yu Chian's *Untitled [Malayan life]* (1958–62) (right) is largely centred on the now-familiar theme of *kampong* spirit, but interestingly presented here in an all-female context. One of the largest works produced by Chia, the painting finds parallels with Seah Kim Joo's smaller but similarly ambitious untitled scene of women around a well (1962). In Chia's work, flecks of colour represent the intricate patterns on the women's sarongs, and both works feature women in communal activity. The preoccupation with depictions of the female form and the trope of the mother and child are two of the most prevalent subjects in Southeast Asian painting. On a symbolic level, the female body has often been understood in relation to fertility, culture, and the regeneration of life. Depicted out of doors and in direct contact with the land, the women in both Chia's and Seah's paintings are firmly located in notions of nation and community building. Chia's figures, and his technique of thickly applying paint in bold colours and strokes, are strongly reminiscent of the style of Yong Mun Sen, whose figures were also painted in earthy tones to signify their indigenous identity. In the varying postures and perspectives that Chia presents, his subjects are almost character studies, or different vignettes brought together into a single composition. For example, the central two figures of a woman combing a girl's hair seem separate from the group of women standing behind them to the left, who in turn seem separate from the two parallel rows of women seated on either side of the central pair, balancing the composition. Chia attempts to create depth in the picture by eliminating the facial definition of four women on either side of the group, making them seem further away, but the proportions of the women are revealed to be out of sync when we look at the size of the standing group in comparison to the two faceless figures seated on their left. Not overly concerned with the accurate representation of depth, Chia was more interested to capture the thick, Gauguinesque forms of women who for him were a representation of Malayan life. The architectural structures of houses and a mosque in the upper background are reduced to flat simplicity in contrast to the dimensionality of the scene's characters. The thick, short brushstrokes used to render the surrounding ground give a sense of movement, and the flurry of colour on the women's skirts and dresses is reflected in the buildings and boats in the background.



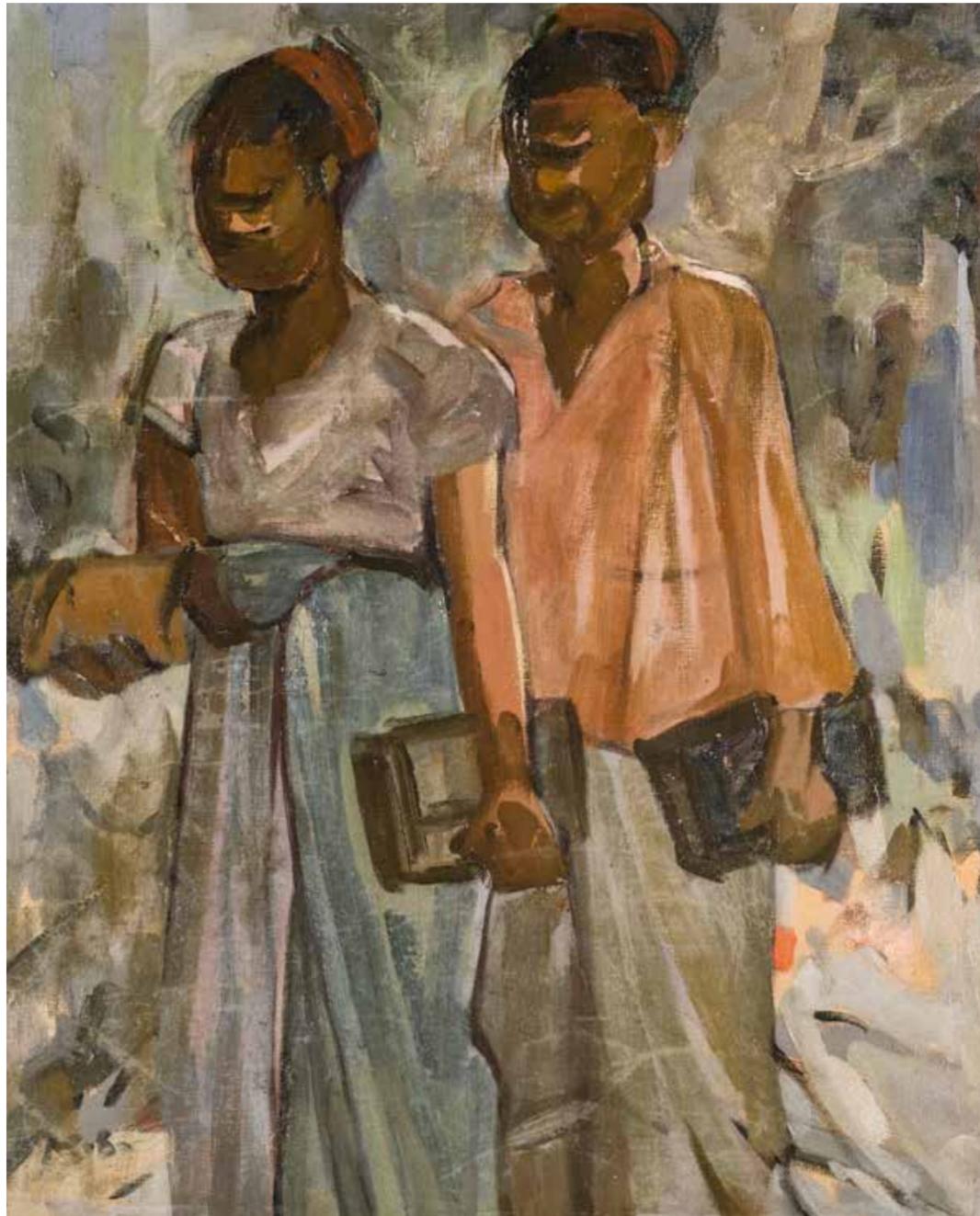
Chia Yu Chian
Untitled [Malayan life], 1958–62, oil on canvas on board, 71 x 120.5 cm (sight)

Shaping the landscape and people

When thinking about how we might situate the artists as inhabitants of Singapore, we can look to the subjects that captured their attention. This exhibition has attempted to gather, as far as possible, a representative selection of the people who make up Singapore. From the 'everyday' man in the street to the subjects of formal studio portraiture, we are given an insight into the artists' preoccupations at the time, and can consider the way in which their visual interpretations and representations have come to shape our view of the past, as well as the continued influence of their artistic innovation on the present generation of artists. Cheong Soo Pieng's untitled portrait of a Chinese girl (1955) (p. 54) is a work that stands out for Cheong's rendering of the piercing gaze of the sitter, who regards us (and regarded the artist) with a defiant confidence. Upon first glance, this is a highly controlled example of portraiture in line with European aesthetics, evident in the subject's deliberate posture, the interiority of the scene, and also the orderly application of paint in uniform strokes from right to left. The girl's dress is decidedly modern and Western, which is reinforced by the attention paid to her crucifix necklace laid against English lace. The bright red of her bows, her red lipstick, and even the red of her seat, however, immediately tap into a connection between the orange-red hue and its importance in Chinese tradition as a symbol of luck and good fortune. Using colour in this way as a subtle signifier, Cheong positions the girl between tradition, and the presumed modernity of the West. The portrait is modern also in terms of style; the girl's angular eyebrows and the absence of dimensionality create interesting surfaces for light and shadow to interact. The vertical red bar running down the right corner of the painting hints at the identity of this artist as one of the most innovative of his generation, the red streak acting to balance the right side of the composition as the sitter leans more towards the left. This is a work that displays Cheong's mastery of Western oil and compositional techniques. Far from being a straightforward emulation of Western art styles, however, the portrait represents a shift towards the development of a unique, and deeply self-aware, style.

Beneath this artistic proficiency lie the strong academic foundations of many of these early artists, and their places as prominent teachers and lecturers in the increasingly visible art institutions and art education programmes in the post-war period. The importance of what can be understood as the teaching tradition is worth examining in thinking about the relationship that these artists had to subsequent generations of artists, as well as the legitimacy that these artists attained through their links to academic institutions and collectives. The majority of ethnic Chinese immigrants had spent time studying at, or had graduated from, prestigious art schools in China. Indeed, this commonality of a shared educational experience and, hence, shared views about art production provided the basis for the formation in Singapore of the Salon Art Society in 1935, which was renamed in 1936 as the Society of Chinese Artists.⁷

Yong Mun Sen's *Untitled [The scholars]* (1945) (left) is a rumination on the image of the scholar, reflecting on the importance of education in a conception of modernity and progress. As seen in the earlier grand panoramic visions of Malayan culture and daily life, men and women are often depicted in separate spheres and performing separate tasks, with perhaps the exception of cultural festivities. In *Untitled [The scholars]* however, Yong places man and woman on equal par, from the upright elegance of their postures, the thick books carried by their sides, and even their headdresses. There is harmony in the pastel hues of their understated dress—plain and lacking the garish colour and intricate pattern of indigenous textiles—and they stride forward in step with each other, towards some place beyond the confines of the picture plane. Compared to the shirtless, hunched figures in *Untitled [Boats through the nets]*, the scholars are given a different kind of dignity. The fabric of their sarongs conveys the weight and luxuriousness of robes, and Yong has envisioned them in a style reminiscent of classical Greek scholars. Their earth-toned skin ties them to their Malay ethnicity, but conventional scenes of communal activity are absent here and, seen as a whole, the image lacks the symbols and colour that are commonly associated with works from the period. *Untitled [The scholars]* presents an elevated view of education and knowledge, but also the resulting distance from tradition. Without making any judgement however, on the difficulty of combining symbols of culture with symbols of education, the painting depicts an alternative view of Malay life in the late 1940s and early '50s, and acknowledges the changes and



Yong Mun Sen
Untitled [The scholars], 1945, oil on canvas on board, 56.5 x 46.5 cm (sight)

opportunities that were present at the time, rather than glorifying grand cultural tropes of the past. Yong himself did not receive a formal arts education, but his regard for scholarship, and the access it offered to different artistic styles and points of view was undeniable. Yong assisted in the establishment of the Salon Art Society by virtue of his experience with the Penang Chinese Art Club, and also encouraged the establishment of the first arts institution, the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, in Singapore in 1938.

One of the most well-known teachers at the time was Cheong Soo Pieng, an artist whose legacy continues through the work of his students and the current generation of artists. The variation of styles and techniques in his body of work deserves its own focus, especially his lesser-known foray into mixed media works and abstract compositions.

Cheong constructed his own pictorial vocabulary to represent the people of Southeast Asia. A clear example of this, *Untitled [Tin mining]* (1957) (p. 55), depicts a group of women standing in a bright orange landscape. It is immediately compelling first and foremost for the artist's choice of rich jewel-like hues. The loose trousers and top of the *samfu*—a simple, everyday form of dress commonly seen in Singapore and Southeast Asia—situate the women in the period of the 1950s and '60s. The image of the *samsui* woman, the Chinese female immigrant who worked a life of hard labour at construction sites, plantations and tin mines, has in current times become a symbol for the toil and assimilation of migrants within a rapidly industrializing city. The poses of the women are highly deliberate, with each woman offering a different study of posture and perspective of the female form. Cheong presents to the viewer his ideal types of working woman in Southeast Asia, women who were integral to the region's physical development. The angular forms of their bodies, made interesting by the inclusion of cubic elements, create complex surfaces and planes that are a fitting means to suggest the multifaceted stories behind the lives of these women. The bare, arid nature of the landscape they are set against is accentuated by the glaring orange of the soil, and conveys the harsh conditions of tin mines visible along the long drive from Singapore to Penang—a route Cheong frequently took to exhibit his art, visit fellow artists, and also to paint. Within this context, Cheong's choice of subject, and manner of representation, become clearer. In his portrayal of stoic working women, Cheong presents the stylized figures against the geometric form of the tin mine in the far (upper) background, and elaborates his own unique interpretation of the characters that made up the landscape of Malaya.

In *Untitled [Egg seller]* (1956) (right) as well, Cheong applies a flat, cubist perspective to the scene—the extended left arm and left leg of the woman seated at right are oddly truncated. A more straightforward depiction of the working woman, the egg seller is engaged in conversation with another woman, perhaps in a moment of reprieve from the day's work. Both women's features, however, express stoicism and peacefulness; partly hidden from us, they are similar to those of the women depicted in Cheong's *Untitled [Tin mining]*. What is significant here is the depiction of age and labour, evident in the hunched postures of the women, and their weathered faces. Cheong's growing reputation as an artist and lecturer in this early period was centred on his innovative attempts to depict the 'essence' of his various subjects.

Developing an initial identity around their shared migrant backgrounds and common educational foundations, the early Chinese migrant artists began to define themselves as members of a Nanyang school of art and expression. A term that evolved from a geographical reference for the region of the South Seas in relation to China, to a descriptor for literary works that explicitly focused on the subject matter and concerns of the region, it was not until the late 1920s and early 1930s that a distinctive belonging and practice under a Nanyang style came to be more commonly articulated.⁸ While largely also linked to the institutional affiliation of these artists (many of them meeting as fellow teachers at NAFA), their contributions to the art history of Singapore were part of a much broader story of migration and assimilation that mirrored the harmonizing of modern and traditional techniques within their art. Their impact as individuals and, most importantly, arts educators within this early landscape, can be seen most clearly in the work of their students.



Cheong Soo Pieng
Untitled [Egg seller], 1956, gouache on paper, 37 x 47 cm (sight)

Early inspiration to compose such a grand totalizing vision of the Balinese landscape and its people stemmed from a fascination with their rural lifestyle, as well as an emulation of the myth of Southeast Asia that had been elaborated by European artists who had been similarly captivated by tribal cultures. The bright colours and boldly outlined figures of Gauguin were a strong influence on the lines and palettes of artists working in the region. Later, in 1993, Belgian artist Adrien-Jean Le Mayeur de Merprès exhibited a group of his impressionist Balinese paintings at the YWCA. Searching for a regional identity that could be visually expressed through art, the group of four artists travelled to Bali in the hope that they would be inspired to create works of equal vitality. The artist as traveller often assumes the position of observer and, unlike many of the scenes depicting Singapore, most of the paintings made while abroad represent an external perspective. The figures in Cheong's *Untitled [Bali life]* take on an early form of stylization in their elongated limbs and necks, which would become characteristic of his later art practice. This marked the development of Cheong's ideal figure-types—their beauty and poise accentuated with clean calligraphic lines, and an angular flattening of bodily perspective. Compared to the loose, uninhibited rendering of Yeh's mother and child painting, Cheong's work is controlled and precise. Underlying these two visually differing presentations are two distinct yet interrelated concepts regarding rural culture. Yeh's work emphasizes a deep, unmediated history of life across many generations, while Cheong presents his own interpretation of the beauty of Balinese forms and landscape. Both artists, however, remain enamoured by the ideal of the indigenous person, who is respected, but also necessarily 'other'.

This is a sentiment that carried through to the brightly coloured works of Chen Cheng Mei (aka Tan Seah Boey), a contemporary of Yeh Chi Wei in the Ten Men Art Group. The works gathered for this exhibition present the fresh, naive style that she developed as a means to best represent her impressions of the people and places encountered during her travels. Composed of bold primary colours, *Untitled [Kayan woman, Thailand]* (1994) (p. 46) contrasts the neat, spare geometric areas of colour that define the woman's figure and attire against the bright cyan background that Chen has chosen. The subject's expression is serene but, unlike Cheong's similarly calm figures, Chen's woman gazes at us directly. In what can be considered a portrait, Chen's work is decidedly informal, with the focus of the composition being very much the richness of colour, and also the exotic appearance of the Kayan women who adorn their necks with brass rings. Embedded in the search for a regional artistic identity was also the search for personal identity and, with that, the positioning of the self in relation to one's subjects of representation. From the perspective of the artists' relative comfort in Singapore and their understanding of what it meant to inhabit place, it becomes interesting to consider the varying depictions of 'self' and 'other' within the multiracial mix of the city.

The art of Mohammad Din Mohammad, and in this exhibition his assemblage of materials and objects, is a direct, tactile means of accessing a ritualistic past in a way that differs drastically from the notions of pastoralism that we have seen embedded in various attempts at depicting a wider Malayan or regional identity. Mohammad Din Mohammad's art is firmly located in his Islamic religion, as well as his strong connection with spirituality. *Issues and emotions* (1995) (right), as implied by its title, is a deeply introspective and personal work. Where we have acknowledged the predominance of male Chinese artists practising in the early 1950s and '60s, and their predilection for indigenous Malay culture and a deep Malayan identity, Mohammad Din Mohammad represents a personal perspective and representation of Malay history and culture including the imagery of the *wayang kulit*, traditional Javanese puppets that were used to dramatize Javanese myths and historical events. A symbolic link to the past, their gaunt, humanistic forms offer a very different representation of figuration in Southeast Asian art. Mohammad Din Mohammad's work proposes multiple views through the incorporation of different eyes and faces, creating pathways in and out of the work. Concerned with the tension between body and soul, *Issues and emotions* is a tumultuous work not so much about a generalizing experience of Malay spirituality and history, but a search for the self within a deep coagulation of history in the form of materials, images, and symbols. Along with the collection of found objects that crowd the canvas, the bright swathes of cool greens and blues, punctuated by an eruption of fiery red and orange in the centre of the composition



Mohammad Din Mohammad
Issues and emotions, 1995, mixed media, 105 x 136 cm (sight)



Cheong Soo Pieng
Untitled [Market scene], 1982, oil on canvas, 82 x 101 cm (sight)

Considering the wide variety of works that were selected for the exhibition under the theme of people and places, it has been rewarding to dwell on the individual works of art, the connections between them, as well as the individual stories of the subjects, and the artists who chose to represent them.

Perhaps most interesting for me has been the exploration of the production of iconic images of Singapore through the work of the early generation of artists. As many of these migrant artists gained familiarity and belonging in Singapore during a period that mirrored the nation's own political journey towards self-governance and nationhood, the visual articulation of Singapore was a crucial element in the larger project of constructing a national identity. Visualizing, shaping, and inhabiting the landscape of Singapore, these artists have provided a means through which we might think about Singapore's history, and their representations of Singapore remain a referent not only in terms of an accurate rendering of the past, but of the spirit and ideals that are contained in these early canvasses. The specific contexts of formal art institutions in the form of art academies and museums, as well as the early development of an art market, are among the factors that contributed to the vast proliferation of images related to the people and places in Singapore. In today's context, influenced by the innovation of the early migrant artists who etched out places for themselves within the new nation, practising artists face the challenges of rampant commercialism in the development of art as a viable alternative investment and economic sector, as well as governmental constraints on certain modes of expression. Part and parcel of Singapore's particularity as a nation, these artists must continue to search out their place and position within the contemporary landscape of Singapore.

While acknowledging the challenges—and limitations—of bringing together a canonical or representative selection of works, this exhibition comprises a body of works from private collections that proposes a narrative, but also allows space for the investigation of tangential stories that are equally important. Although I have been unable to address each individual artwork featured in the exhibition in depth, it has nevertheless been rewarding within the confines of this essay to look closely at works of art, and to perform a close examination of what such looking can reveal.

Thinking about the position of these artists, and the shift from occupying to inhabiting the landscape, reveals itself to be crucial to understanding their subsequent forays into artistic experimentation, and the eventual development of their distinctive artistic styles. Ultimately, it is hoped that this exhibition has created a space within which to contemplate what it means not only to depict, but to be a part of, the people and places of Singapore.

Notes

- 1 Seng, YJ 2012, 'Building a collection', in *Inside the collection*, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, pp. 6–14.
- 2 Tan, CG 1994, *Chuah Thean Teng retrospective*, Penang State Museum, Malaysia.
- 3 Hsu, M 1999, *A brief history of Malayan art*, Millennium Books, Singapore, pp. 1–3.
- 4 Tan, CG 1999, *Yong Mun Sen retrospective*, Penang State Museum, Malaysia, p. 10.
- 5 Lee, CY 1996, Penang State Museum, Malaysia, p. 33. Unfortunately the whereabouts of this artwork is currently unknown.
- 6 Hsu, M 1999, p. 64.
- 7 Kwok, KC 1996, *Channels and confluences: A history of Singapore art*, Singapore Art Museum, p. 16.
- 8 Kwok, KC 1996, p. 24.
- 9 Boo, SY 2012, *The new cathedral*, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore.
- 10 Yeo, W 2010, *The story of Yeh Chi Wei*, National Art Gallery, Singapore, pp. 36–43.
- 11 Yeo, W, Seng, YJ & Tng, G (eds) 2010, *Cheong Soo Pieng: Visions of Southeast Asia*, National Art Gallery, Singapore, p. 42.
- 12 Kwok, KC 1996, pp. 70–5.

Teo Hui Min (born 1990) is a Singapore-based writer. Her research interests include the social and cultural context of twentieth-century Southeast Asian art. She is currently a junior specialist for Southeast Asian art at Christie's.



Abdullah Ariff
Left: *Untitled [Two Chinese women]*, c. 1931–32, watercolour, 27.5 x 20 cm (sight)
Right: *Untitled [Boats under tree]*, 1960, watercolour, 37 x 54 cm (sight)





Chen Cheng Mei (aka Tan Seah Boey)
Untitled [Kayan woman, Thailand], 1994, oil on canvas, 55 x 45 cm (sight)

Chen Cheng Mei (aka Tan Seah Boey)
Untitled [Kashmir], 1971, oil on canvas, 65 x 47 cm (sight)





Chen Cheng Mei (aka Tan Seah Boey)
Untitled [Market scene], 1974, oil on canvas, 79.5 x 60.5 cm (sight)



Chen Cheng Mei (aka Tan Seah Boey)
Untitled [Lake Toba], 1967, oil on canvas, 101 x 129 cm (sight)

Chen Shou Soo
Untitled, 1948, oil on canvas, 39 x 49 cm (sight)



Chen Wen Hsi
Untitled [Singapore River], c. 1950–51, oil on canvas on board, 53 x 64 cm



Chen Wen Hsi
Untitled [Singapore River scene], 1960, oil on canvas on board, 61 x 76 cm



Cheong Soo Pieng
Untitled [Bali life], 1952-64, oil on canvas, 192.5 x 129 cm



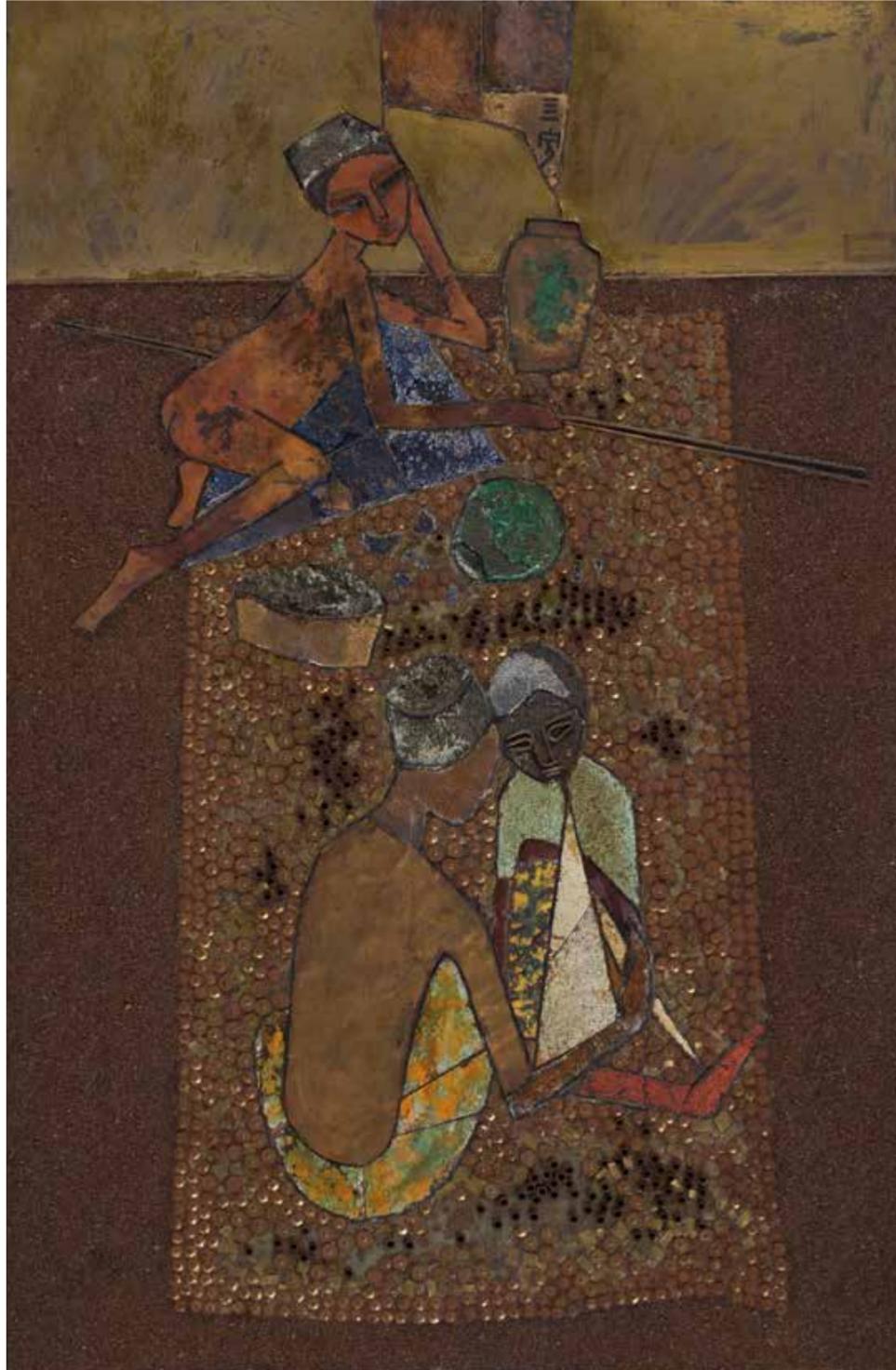
Cheong Soo Pieng
Untitled [Chinese girl], 1955, oil on canvas, 66 x 45 cm



Cheong Soo Pieng
Untitled [Tin mining], 1957, oil on canvas, 119 x 82.5 cm (sight)



Cheong Soo Pieng
Untitled, 1971, mixed media, 91.5 x 61 cm

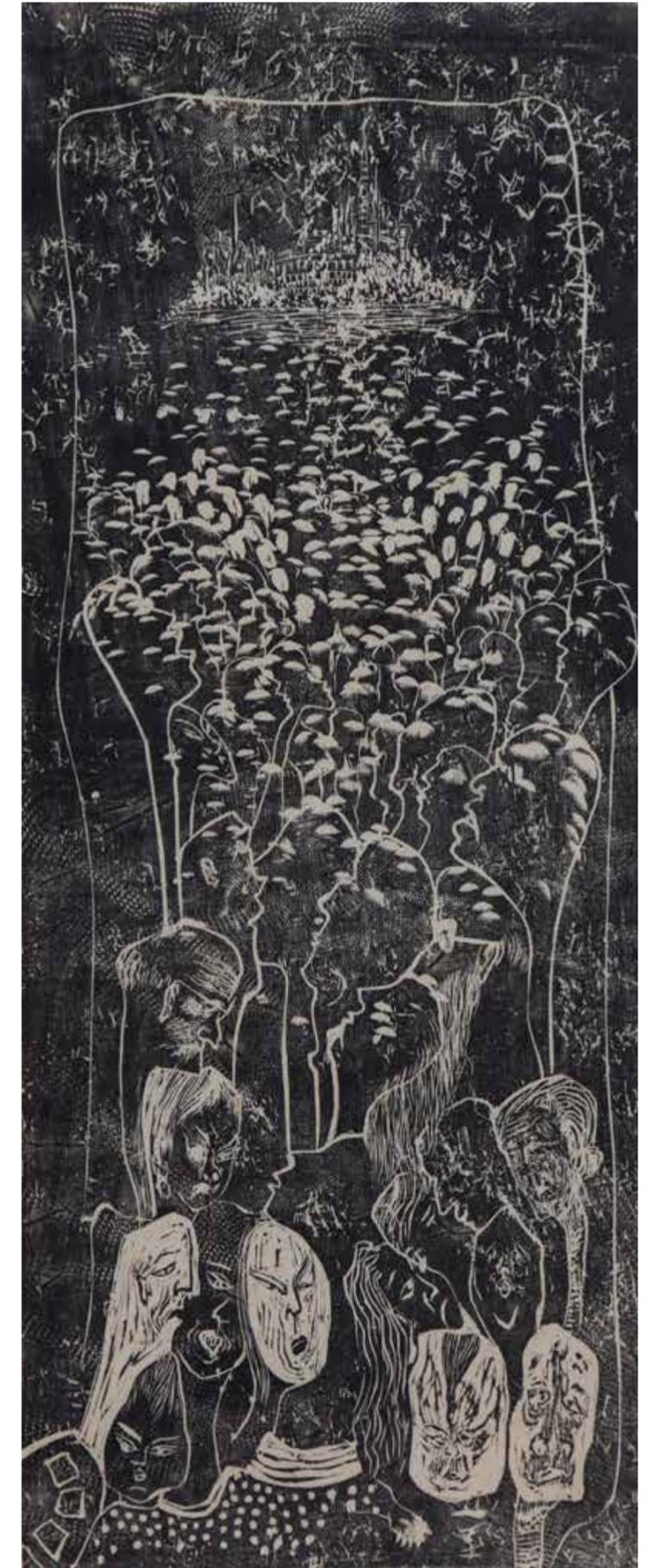


Cheong Soo Pieng
Untitled, 1982, oil on canvas, 92 x 103 cm (sight)

Cheong Soo Pieng
Untitled [Mother and child], undated, oil on canvas, 97 x 61 cm



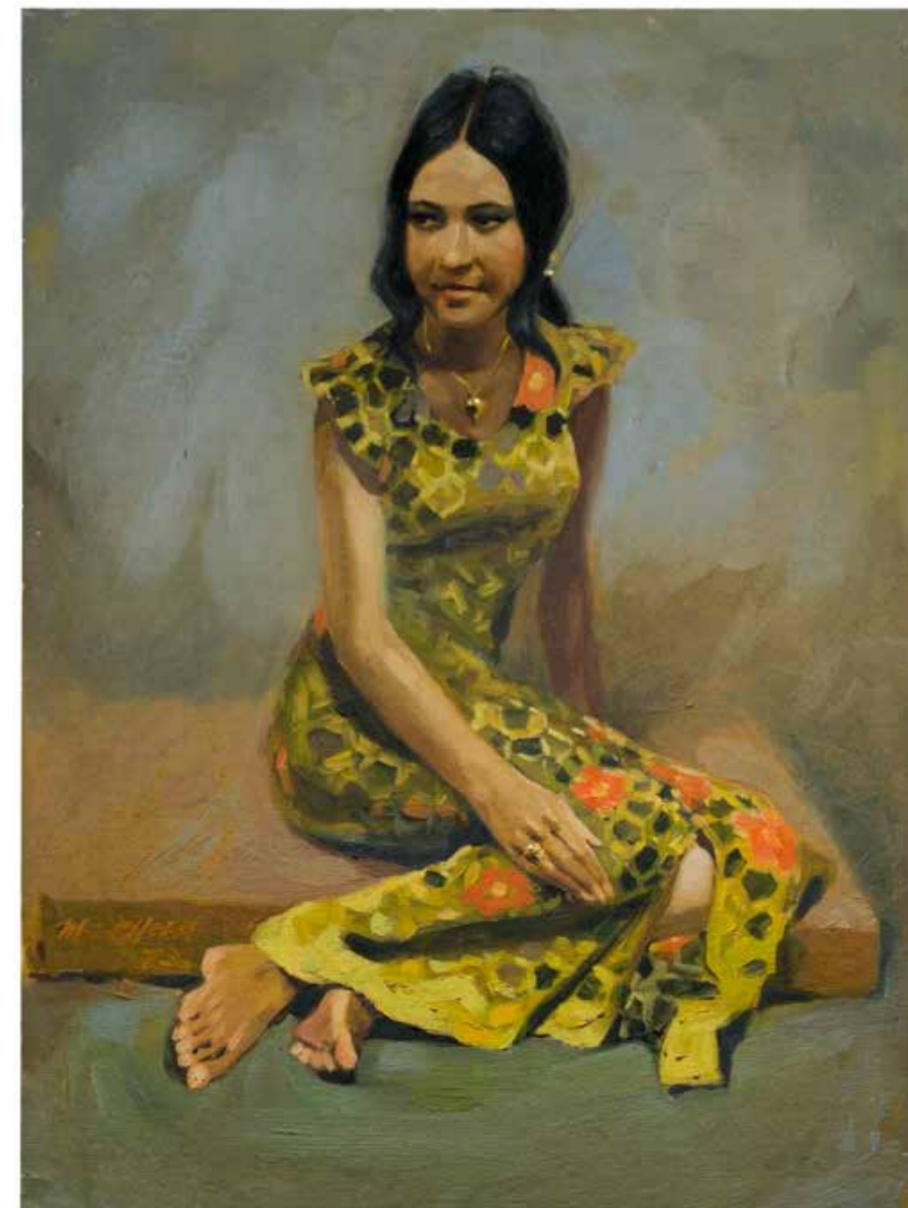
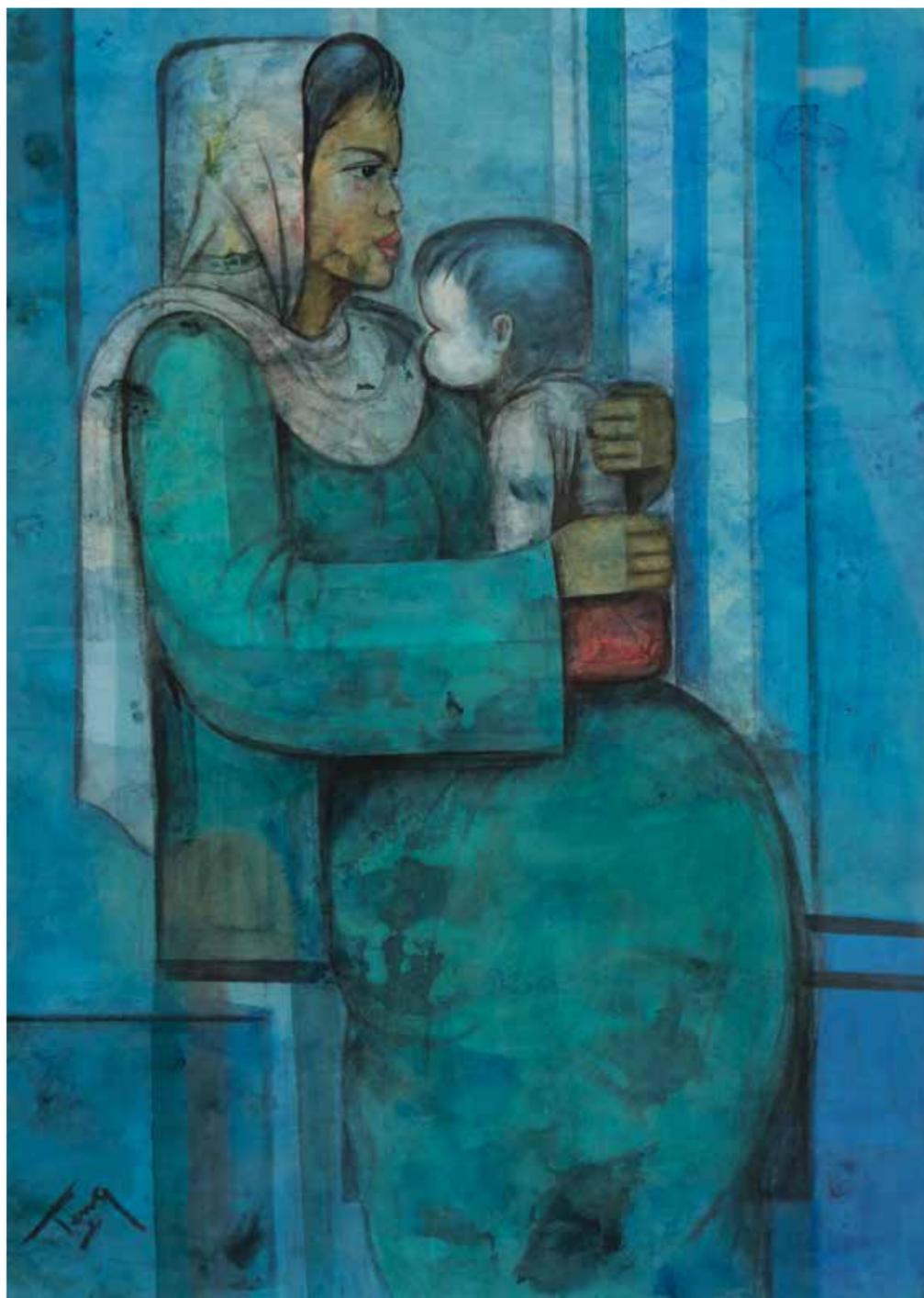
Chng Seok Tin
Dream castle, 1988, woodcut, 75 x 30 cm (block)





Choo Keng Kwang
Untitled, 1969, oil on canvas, 125 x 425 cm (sight)

Chuah Thean Teng
Untitled [Mother and child], undated, watercolour, 75.5 x 54.5 cm (sight)



Chua Mia Tee
Untitled [Portrait of a young lady], 1973, oil on board, 60.4 x 45.8 cm

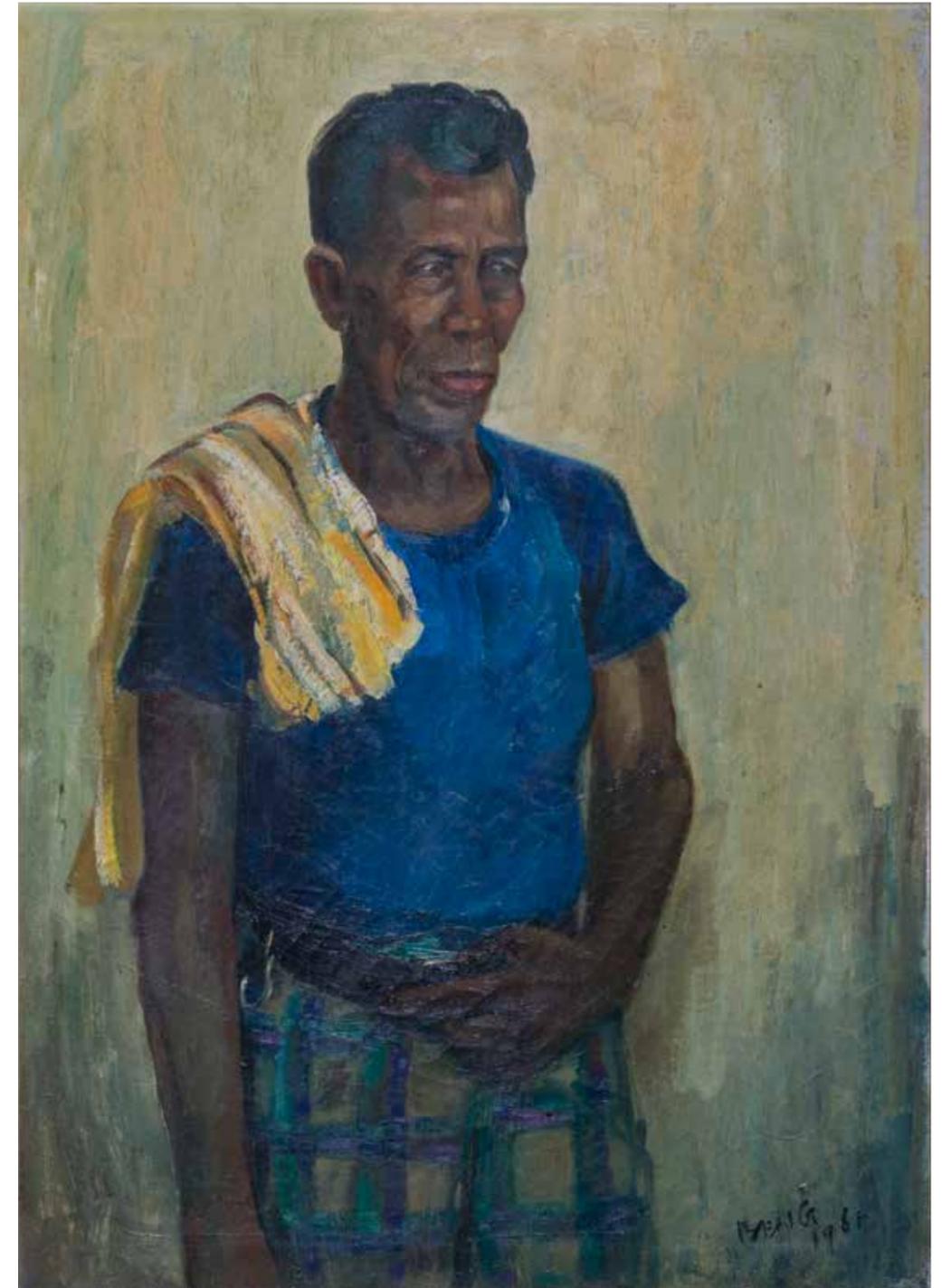


Chua Mia Tee
Smith Street, 1981, oil on canvas, 80 x 105 cm



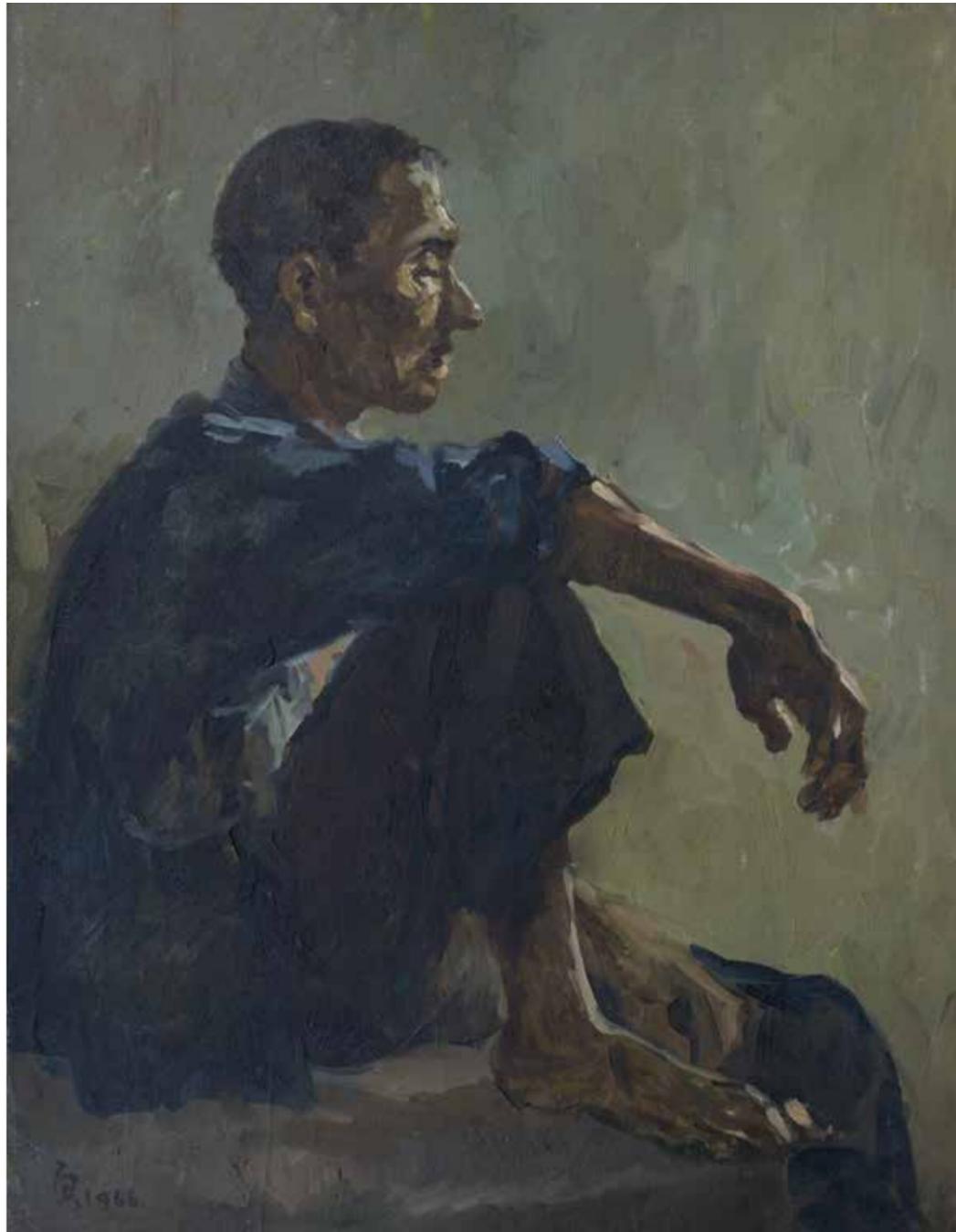
Foo Chee San
Untitled, 1992, ink and watercolour on paper, 68 x 75.5 cm (sight)

Ho Khay Beng
Left: *Untitled [Threshing]*, c. 1955, oil on board, 80 x 105 cm (sight)
Right: *Untitled [Indian man]*, 1961, oil on canvas, 71.5 x 51.5 cm





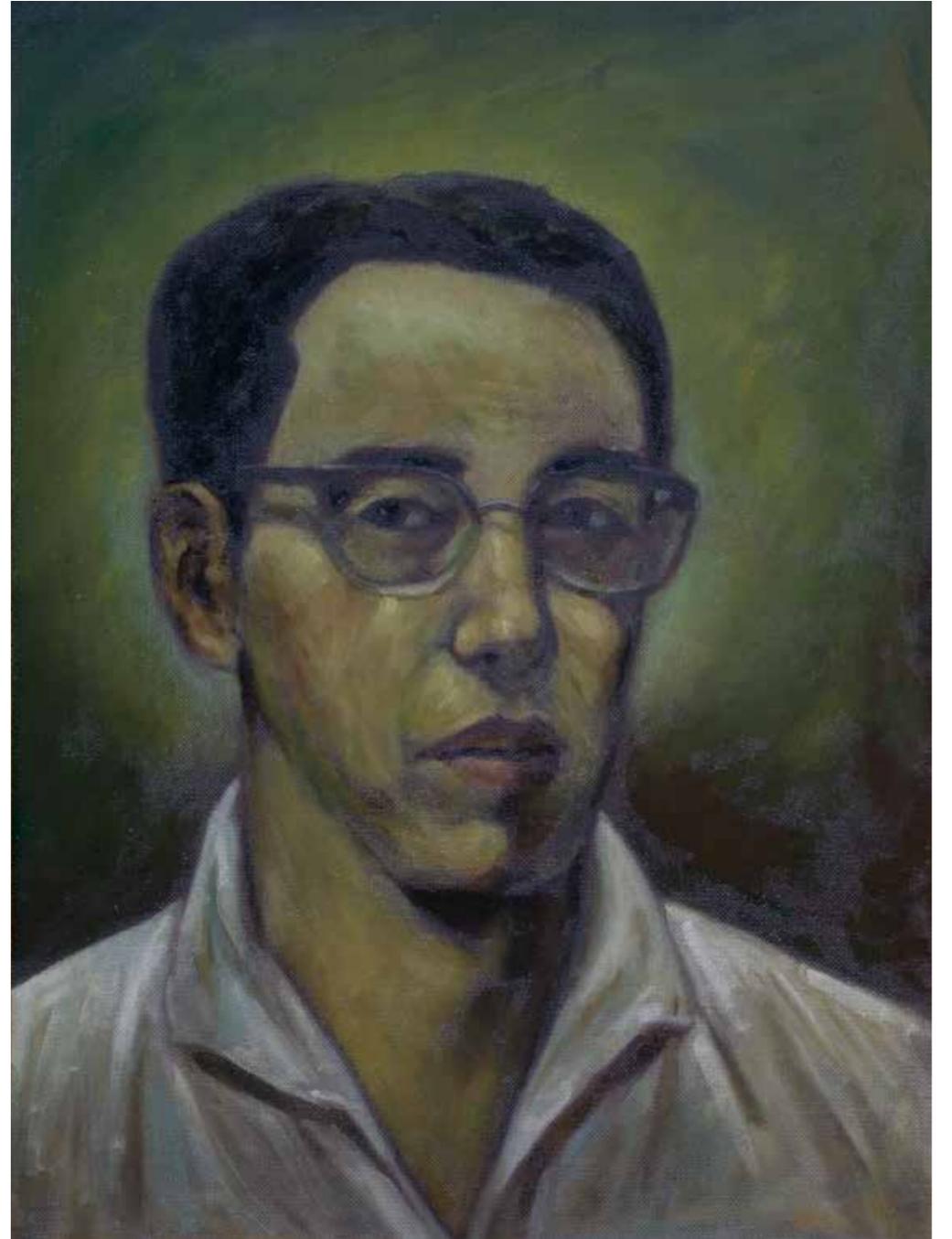
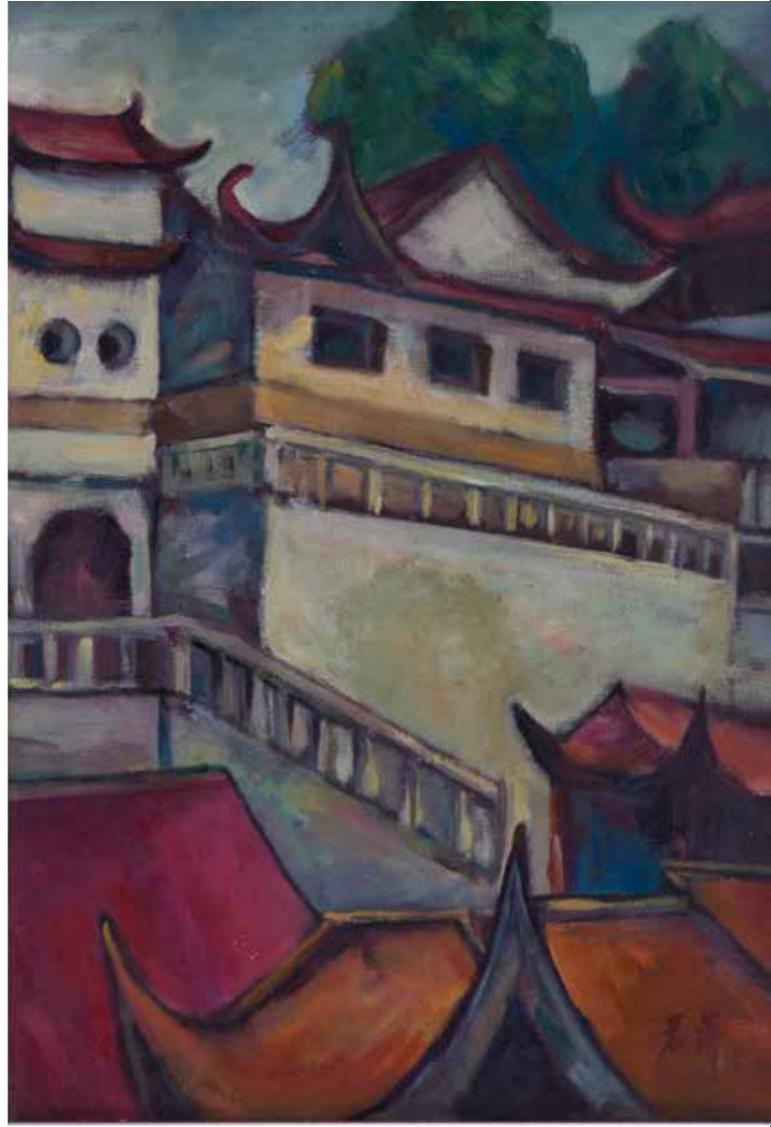
Koeh Sia Yong
Untitled [Old Tong Kang worker], 1966, oil on canvas, 65.5 x 50.5 cm (sight)



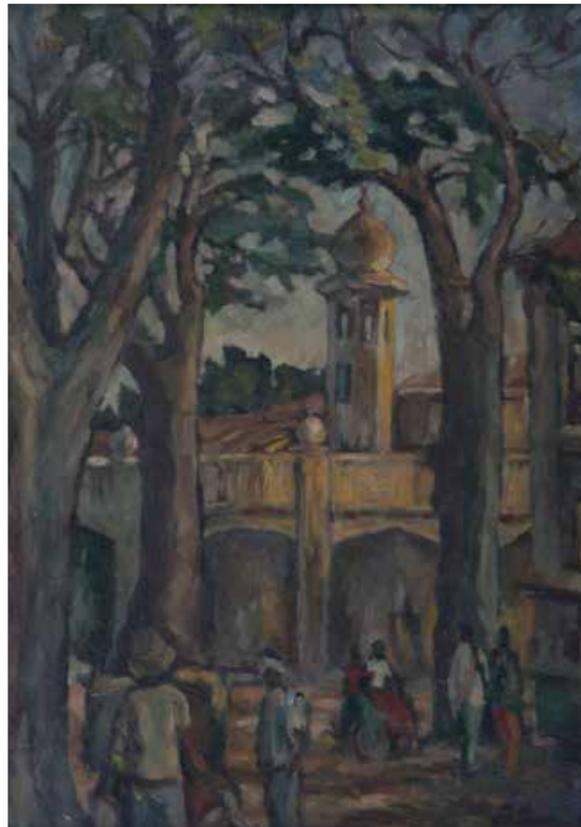
Kuo Ju Ping
Top: *Untitled [By the jetty]*, c. 1950s, oil on board, 38 x 47.5 cm (sight)
Bottom: *Untitled [Malaysian street scene]*, c. 1950s, oil on board, 36.5 x 54 cm (sight)



Kuo Ju Ping
Left to right:
Untitled [Chinese temple], c. 1950s, oil on board, 46 x 32 cm (sight)
Untitled [Chinese temple], c. 1950s, oil on board, 59.5 x 41.5 cm (sight)
Untitled [Chinese man], c. 1950s, oil on board, 60 x 44.5 cm (sight)



Kuo Ju Ping
Top left: *Untitled [Street life]*, c. 1950s, oil on board, 39.5 x 42 cm (sight)
Top right: *Untitled [Street scene]*, c. 1950s, oil on board, 51 x 63 cm (sight)
Bottom left: *Untitled [Street scene]*, c. 1950s, oil on board, 36 x 42.5 cm (sight)
Bottom right: *Untitled [Street view of mosque]*, c. 1950s, oil on board, 50 x 34.5 cm (sight)



Lee Boon Wang
Untitled [Malay man without shirt], 1958, oil on canvas on board, 47.2 x 39.2 cm



Lee Cheng Yong

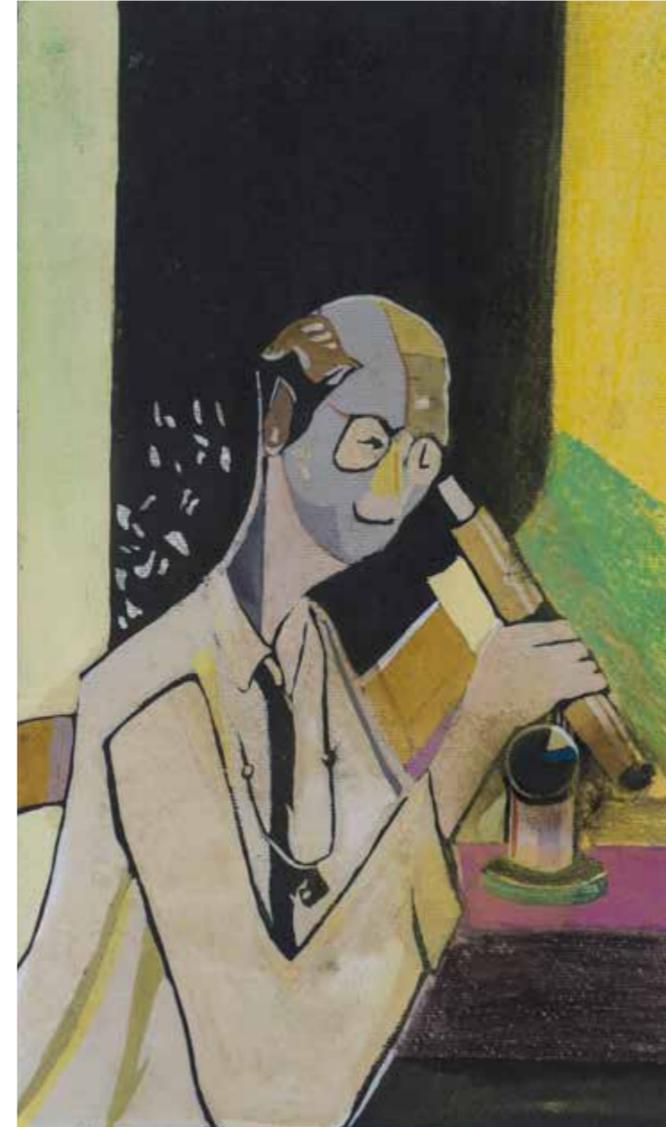
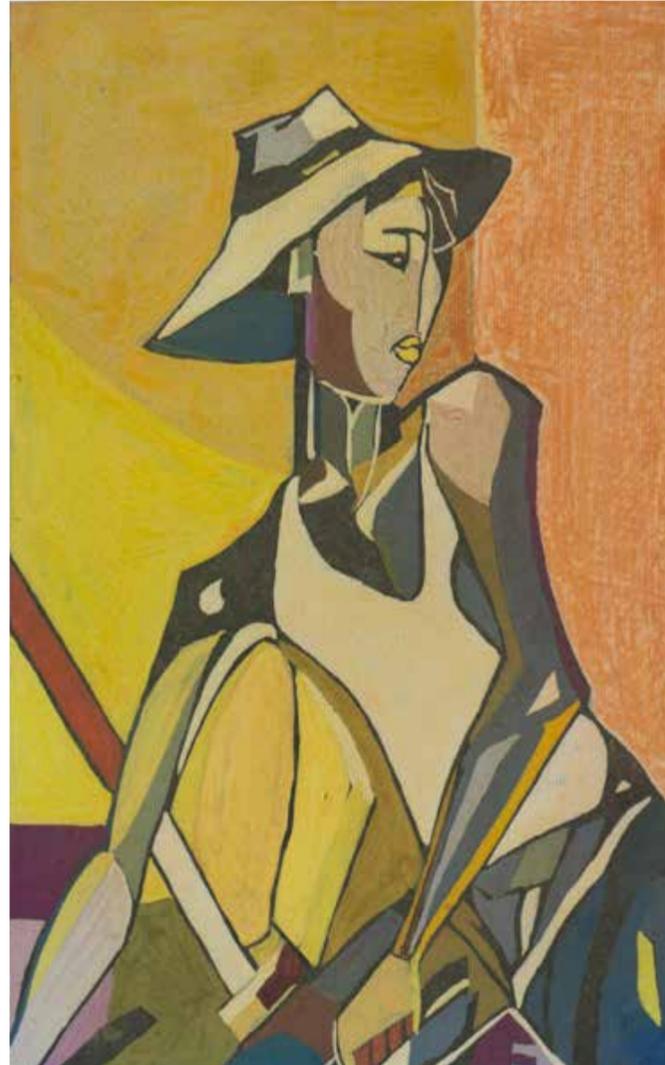
Left to right:

Untitled [Farmer], c. 1950, gouache on paper, 27 x 14.2 cm (image)

Untitled [Farmer], c. 1950, gouache on paper, 23 x 14 cm (image)

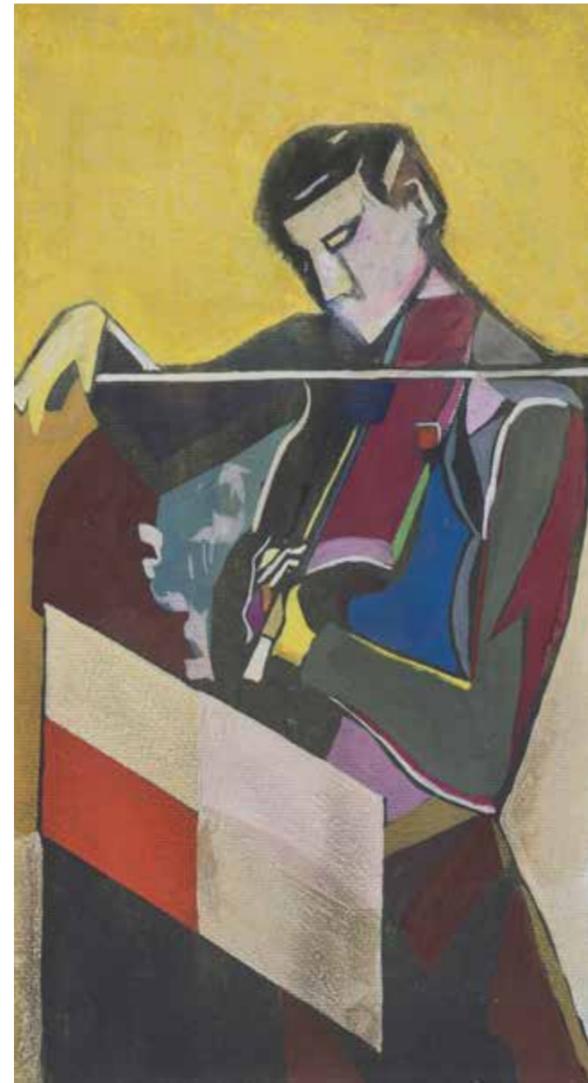
Untitled [Man with microscope], c. 1950, gouache on paper, 24.5 x 14.5 cm (image)

Untitled [Man with moustache holding stick], c. 1950, gouache on paper, 23.4 x 14 cm (image)

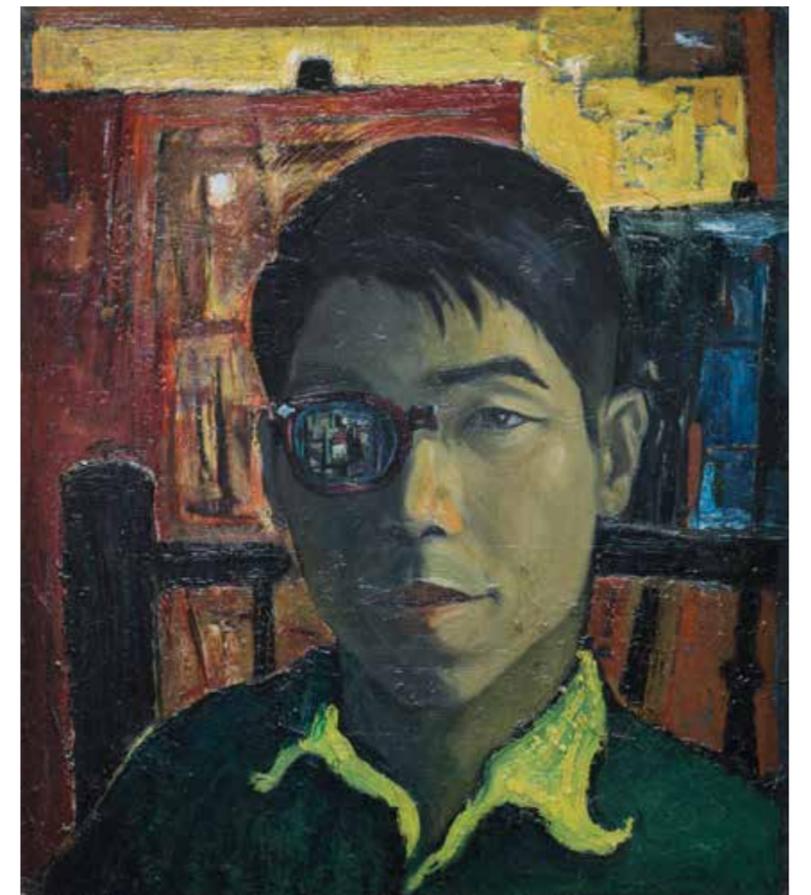




Lee Cheng Yong
Top left: *Untitled [Man with stick]*, c. 1950, gouache on paper, 23.5 x 14 cm (image)
Bottom left: *Untitled [Man with telescope]*, c. 1950, gouache on paper, 20 x 14.5 cm (image)
Right: *Untitled [Violinist]*, c. 1950, gouache on paper, 26.6 x 14.3 cm (image)



Lim Mu He
Top: *Untitled [Five boys playing cards]*, 1959, oil on canvas, 45 x 68.5 cm (sight)
Bottom: *Untitled [Self-portrait]*, 1963, oil on board, 36 x 31 cm (sight)



Lim Tze Peng
Fruit stall, 1989, ink on paper, 66 x 92 cm (sight)



Lim Tze Peng
Gestures in ink XI, 2006, ink and watercolour on paper, 69 x 138 cm



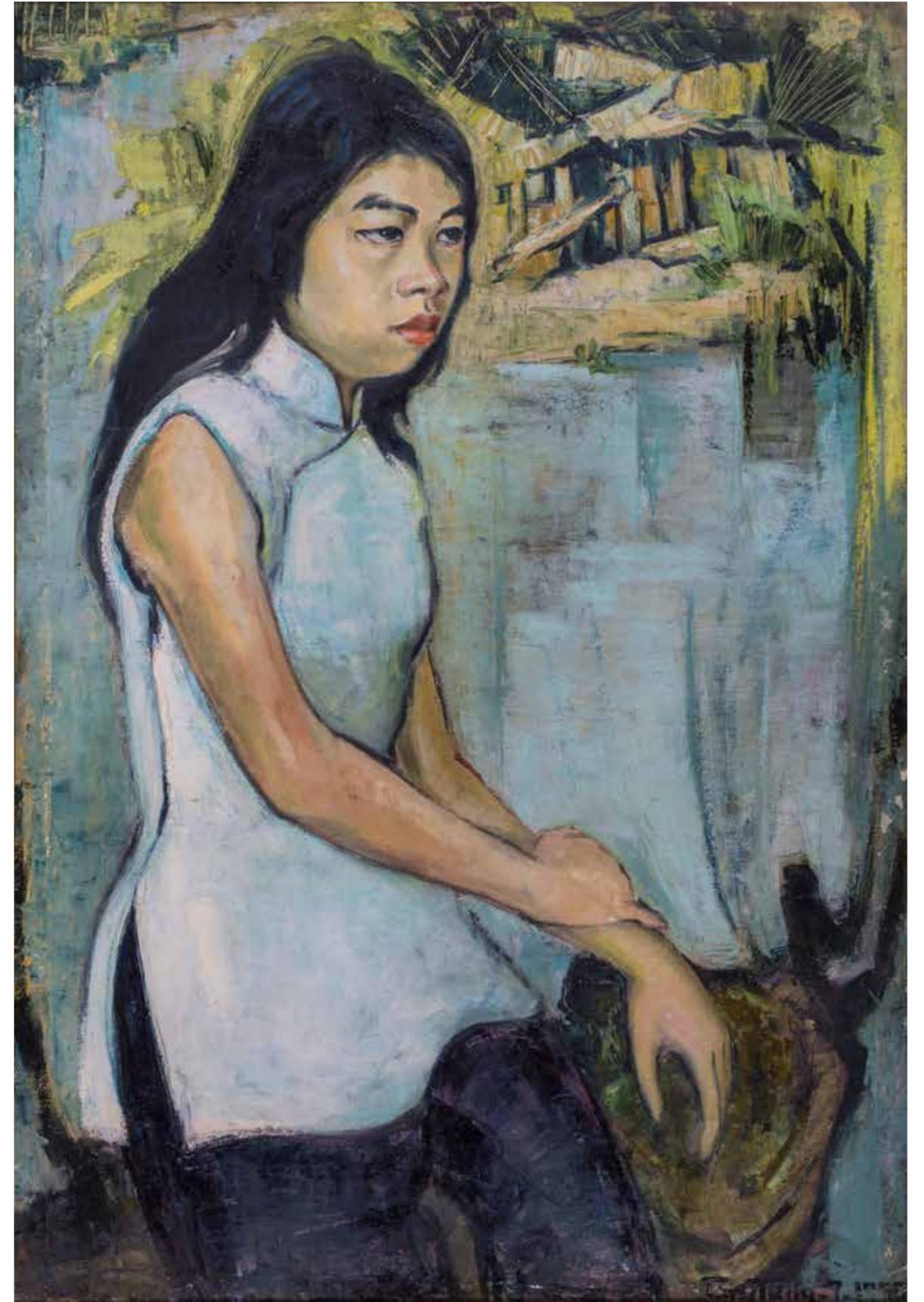
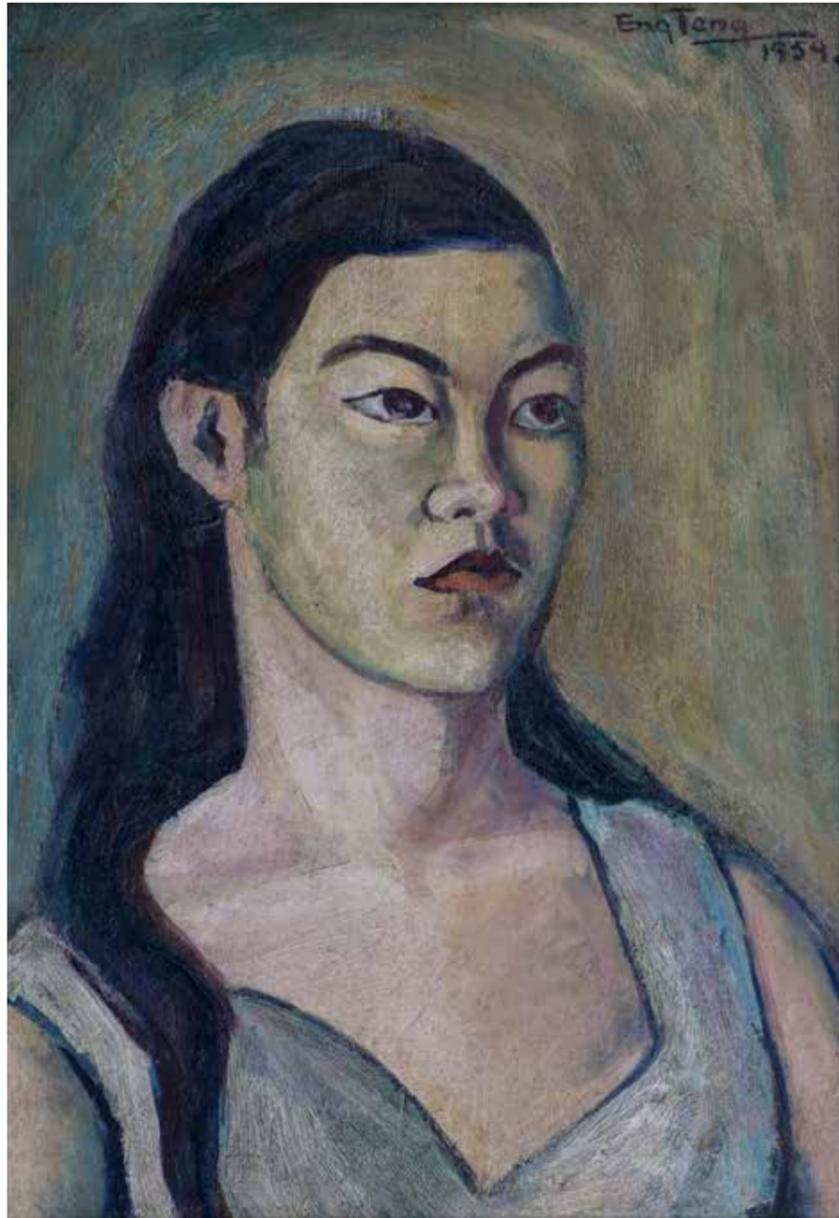
Lim Tze Peng
Untitled [Singapore River], 2006, ink and watercolour on paper
4 parts: 244 x 488 cm; (a) 244 x 118 cm, (b) 244 x 133 cm, (c) 244 x 117.5 cm, (d) 244 x 120.5 cm



Lim Tze Peng
Gestures in landscape II, 2006, ink and watercolour on paper, 82.5 x 151 cm (sight)



Ng Eng Teng
Left: *Untitled*, 1959, oil on canvas on board, 43.7 x 30.7 cm
Right: *Untitled [Chinese girl]*, 1960, oil on canvas, 85 x 58 cm



Ong Kim Seng
Towards South Bridge Road, 2013, oil on canvas, 50 x 100 cm



Tumadi Patri
The journey of Pak Dalang (details), 2014, polycarbonate film, adhesive film
14 parts: overall dimensions variable



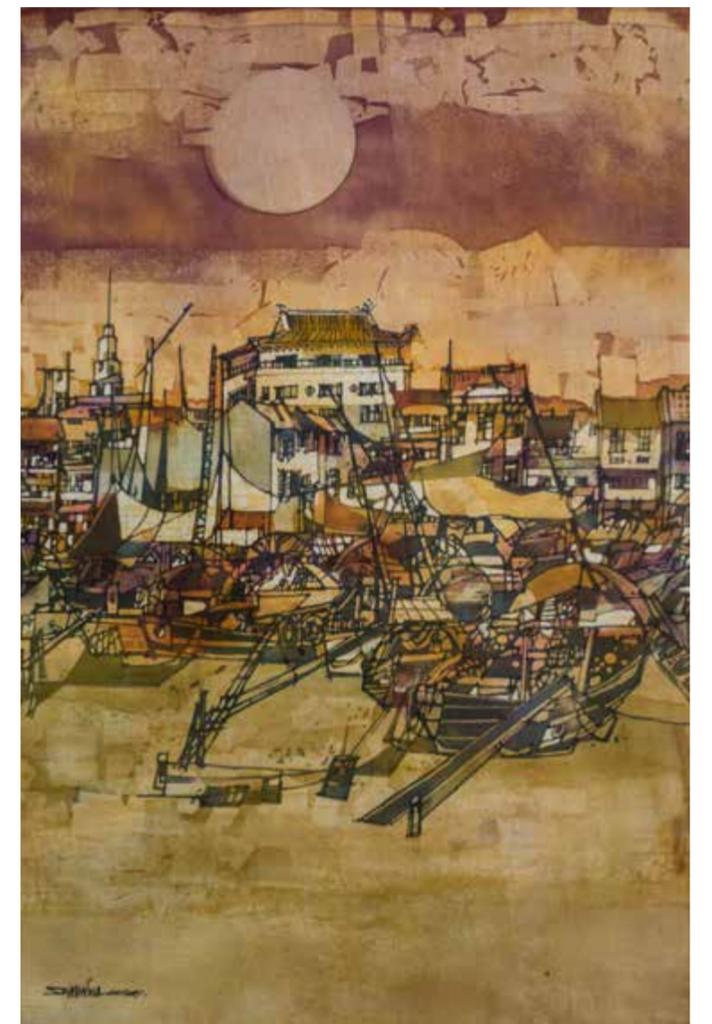
Phua Cheng Phue
Untitled [Three Indian women], 1972, oil on board, 51 x 75.8 cm





Anthony Poon
Fruit of the toil, 1964, oil on canvas, 80 x 61 cm

Seah Kim Joo
Top: *Untitled*, 1962, oil on canvas, 48 x 74 cm
Bottom: *Untitled [Singapore River]*, c. 1965, batik on cotton, 90 x 60 cm (sight)



Seah Kim Joo
Untitled [Malayan life], 1968, batik on cotton laid on canvas
5 parts: 256 x 691 cm; (a) 256 x 139 cm, (b) 256 x 137.5 cm, (c) 256 x 137.5 cm, (d) 256 x 138 cm, (e) 256 x 139 cm
LASALLE College of the Arts Collection, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore. Acquired 1996



Tang Da Wu
Left: *Mr Cheo Chai Hiang*, c. 2005, ink on paper, 103 x 69 cm
Right: *Untitled*, c. 2005, ink on paper, 102 x 69.5 cm



Top left: *Untitled*, c. 2005, ink on paper, 102 x 69.5 cm
Bottom left: *Untitled [Self-portrait]*, 2005, ink on paper, 103 x 68.5 cm
Right: *Untitled [Self-portrait]*, 2005, ink on paper, 102 x 68.5 cm



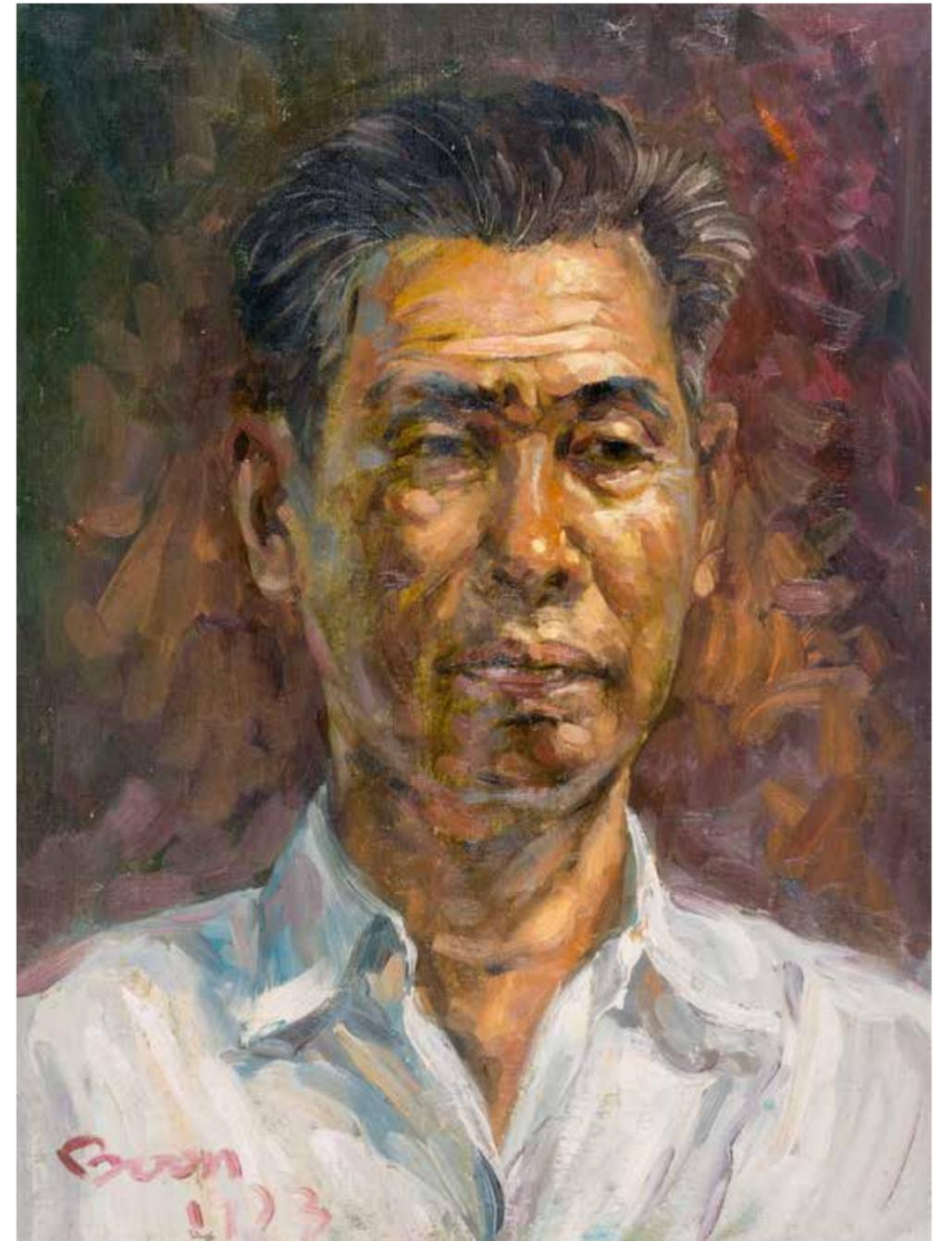
Tang Da Wu
Left: *Untitled [The Artists Village]*, 1988-2008, oil on canvas, 280 x 174 cm
Right: *Untitled [Georgette Chen]*, 2014, ink on paper, 260 x 152 cm





Tay Bak Koi
Untitled [Songs of fishermen], 1966, watercolour, 62 x 117 cm

Tay Boon Pin
Left: *Untitled [Old man with straw hat]*, 1962, oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm
Right: *Untitled [Portrait of a Chinese man]*, 1973, oil on canvas, 48 x 35.5 cm



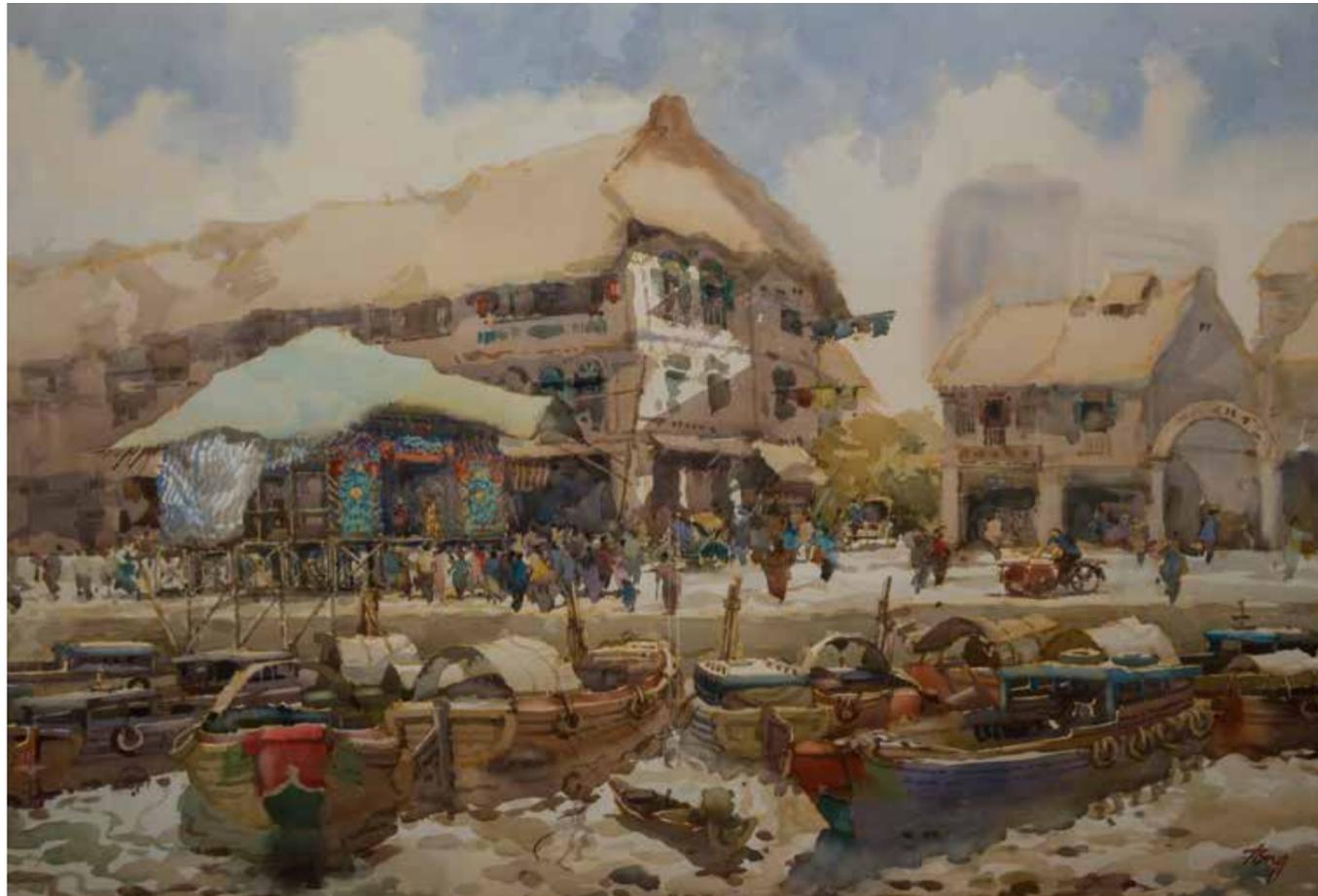


Tay Boon Pin
Untitled [Seated Malay girl], 1972, oil on canvas, 81 x 56 cm

Teo Eng Seng
Untitled [Self-portrait], 1958, oil on board, 71 x 50.5 cm



Tong Chin Sye
Left: *Untitled [Opera by the Singapore River]*, 1972, watercolour, 94 x 136 cm
Right: *Untitled [Puppetier]*, 1979, oil on canvas on board, 86 x 101.7 cm



Wee Beng Chong
Untitled [Wharf], 1962, oil on canvas, 89 x 180.5 cm

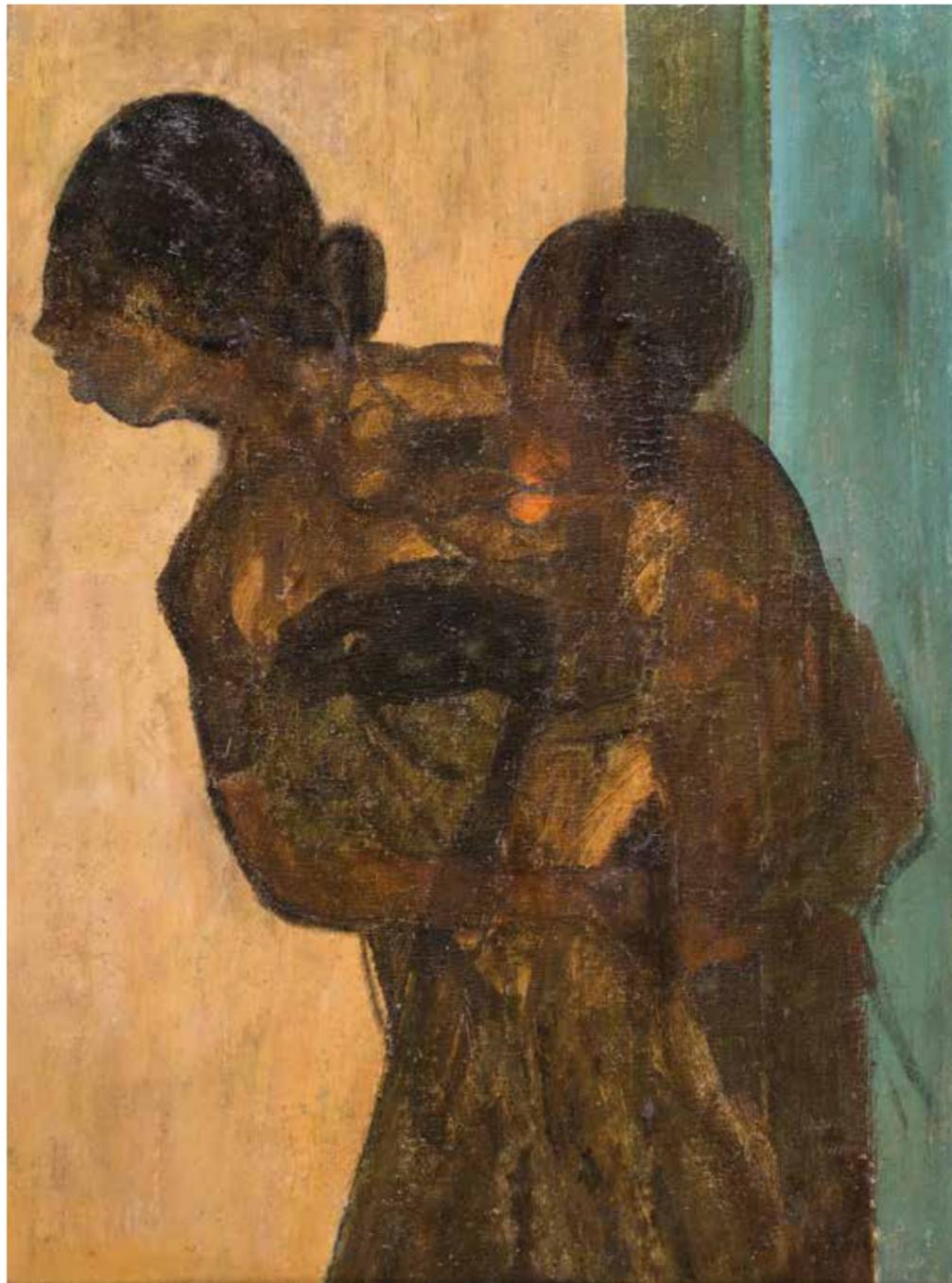


Wong Shih Yaw
In thee, 2002–03, oil on canvas, 94 x 124 cm (sight)



Yeh Chi Wei
Untitled (Mother with children), c. 1969, oil on board, 59 x 72 cm (sight)





Yong Mun Sen
Untitled [Mother and child], undated, oil on board, 53 x 38.5 cm (sight)



Yong Mun Sen
Untitled [Self-portrait], undated, oil on canvas, 55.5 x 49.5 cm
LASALLE College of the Arts Collection, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore

Catalogue
of works
in the
exhibition

Note: Dimensions are given in centimetres (cm), height preceding width followed by depth. Descriptive and attributed titles are in parentheses.

Abdullah Ariff
born Penang, Malaysia, 1904; died 1962

¹
Untitled [Two Chinese women],
c. 1931–32
watercolour
27.5 x 20 cm (sight)
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²
Untitled [Boats under tree], 1960
watercolour
37 x 54 cm (sight)
p. 45

Boo Sze Yang
born Singapore 1965, lives Singapore

³
The mall #19 (Plaza Singapura), 2011
oil on canvas
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p. 14

Chen Cheng Mei (aka Tan Seah Boey)
born Singapore 1927, lives Singapore

⁴
Untitled [Lake Toba], 1967
oil on canvas
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⁵
Untitled [Kashmir], 1971
oil on canvas
65 x 47 cm (sight)
p. 47

⁶
Untitled [Market scene], 1974
oil on canvas
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⁷
Untitled [Kayan woman, Thailand], 1994
oil on canvas
55 x 45 cm (sight)
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Chen Shou Soo
born Wenchang, Hainan, China, 1915;
died Hong Kong 1984

⁸
Untitled, 1948
oil on canvas
39 x 49 cm (sight)
p. 50

Chen Wen Hsi
born Baigong, Guandong, China, 1906;
died Singapore 1991

⁹
Untitled [Singapore River], c. 1950–51
oil on canvas on board
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p. 51

¹⁰
Untitled [Singapore River scene], 1960
oil on canvas on board
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p. 52

Cheong Soo Pieng
born Xiamen (Amoy), Fujian, China, 1917;
died Singapore 1983

¹¹
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¹²
Untitled [Chinese girl], 1955
oil on canvas
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¹³
Untitled [Egg seller], 1956
gouache on paper
37 x 47 cm (sight)
p. 29

¹⁴
Untitled [Tin mining], 1957
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119 x 82.5 cm (sight)
p. 55

¹⁵
Untitled, 1971
mixed media
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p. 56

¹⁶
Untitled, 1982
oil on canvas
92 x 103 cm (sight)
p. 57

¹⁷
Untitled [Market scene], 1982
oil on canvas
82 x 101 cm (sight)
p. 38

¹⁸
Untitled [Mother and child], undated
oil on canvas
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p. 58

Chia Yu Chian
born Kota Tinggi, Johor, Malaysia, 1936;
died Malaysia 1991

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Untitled [Malayan life], 1958–62
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Chng Seok Tin
born Singapore 1946, lives Singapore

²⁰
Dream castle, 1988
woodcut
75 x 30 cm (block)
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Choo Keng Kwang
born Singapore 1931, lives Singapore

²¹
Untitled, 1969
oil on canvas
125 x 425 cm (sight)
pp. 60–1

Chuah Thean Teng
born Chenkiang, Fujian, China, 1914;
died Penang, Malaysia, 2008

²²
Untitled [Mother and child], undated
watercolour
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Chua Mia Tee
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lives Singapore

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Untitled [Portrait of a young lady], 1973
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60.4 x 45.8 cm
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Smith Street, 1981
oil on canvas
80 x 105 cm
p. 64

Foo Chee San
born Hainan, China, 1928;
lives Singapore

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Untitled, 1992
ink and watercolour on paper
68 x 75.5 cm (sight)
p. 65

Ho Khay Beng
born Penang, Malaysia, 1933; died 1986

²⁶
Untitled [Thrashing], c. 1955
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80 x 105 cm (sight)
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²⁷
Untitled [Indian man], 1961
oil on canvas
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Khaw Sia
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died Penang, Malaysia, 1984

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Untitled [Kampong spirit], 1967
gouache on paper
21 x 152 cm (image)
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Koeh Sia Yong
born Singapore 1938, lives Singapore

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oil on canvas
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Kuo Ju Ping
born Chinzian, Fujian, China, 1913;
died Penang, Malaysia, 1966

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Untitled [Chinese temple], c. 1950s
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³³
Untitled [Chinese temple], c. 1950s
oil on board
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p. 72

³⁴
Untitled [Malaysian street scene], c. 1950s
oil on board
36.5 x 54 cm (sight)
p. 71

³⁵
Untitled [Street life], c. 1950s
oil on board
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p. 74

³⁶
Untitled [Street scene], c. 1950s
oil on board
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p. 74

³⁷
Untitled [Street scene], c. 1950s
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36 x 42.5 cm (sight)
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³⁸
Untitled [Street view of mosque], c. 1950s
oil on board
50 x 34.5 cm (sight)
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born China 1935, lives Singapore

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Untitled [Malay man without shirt], 1958
oil on canvas on board
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born China 1913,
died Penang, Malaysia, 1974

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Untitled [Farmer], c. 1950
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Untitled [Farmer], c. 1950
gouache on paper
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Untitled [Man in laboratory], c. 1950
gouache on paper
24.8 x 14 cm (image)
p. 21

⁴³
Untitled [Man with easel], c. 1950
gouache on paper
20 x 14.5 cm (image)
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⁴⁴
Untitled [Man with microscope], c. 1950
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⁴⁵
Untitled [Man with moustache holding stick], c. 1950
gouache on paper
23.4 x 14 cm (image)
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⁴⁶
Untitled [Man with stick], c. 1950
gouache on paper
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⁴⁷
Untitled [Man with telescope], c. 1950
gouache on paper
20 x 14.5 cm (image)
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⁴⁸
Untitled [Violinist], c. 1950
gouache on paper
26.6 x 14.3 cm (image)
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Lim Mu Hue
born Singapore 1936,
died Singapore 2008

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Untitled [Five boys playing cards], 1959
oil on canvas
45 x 68.5 cm (sight)
p. 79

⁵⁰
Untitled [Self-portrait], 1963
oil on board
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Lim Tze Peng
born Singapore 1923, lives Singapore

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Fruit stall, 1989
ink on paper
66 x 92 cm (sight)
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⁵²
Untitled [Singapore River], 2006
ink and watercolour on paper
4 parts: 244 x 488 cm; (a) 244 x 118 cm,
(b) 244 x 133 cm, (c) 244 x 117.5 cm,
(d) 244 x 120.5 cm
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⁵³
Gestures in ink XI, 2006
ink and watercolour on paper
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p. 81

⁵⁴
Gestures in landscape II, 2006
ink and watercolour on paper
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Mohammad Din Mohammad
born Malacca, Malaysia, 1955;
died Singapore 2007

⁵⁵
Issues and emotions, 1995
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Untitled, 1959
oil on canvas on board
43.7 x 30.7 cm
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Untitled [Chinese girl], 1960
oil on canvas
85 x 58 cm
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born Singapore 1945, lives Singapore

⁵⁸
Towards South Bridge Road, 2013
oil on canvas
50 x 100 cm
pp. 88–9

Tumadi Patri
born Singapore 1959, lives Singapore

⁵⁹
The journey of Pak Dalang, 2014
polycarbonate film, adhesive film
14 parts: overall dimensions variable
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born Singapore 1934,
died Singapore 2004

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Untitled [Three Indian women], 1972
oil on board
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born Singapore 1945,
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oil on canvas
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oil on canvas
48 x 74 cm
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Untitled [Singapore River], c. 1965
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p. 87

⁶⁴
Untitled [Malayan life], 1968
batik on cotton laid on canvas
5 parts: 256 x 691 cm; (a) 256 x 139 cm,
(b) 256 x 137.5 cm, (c) 256 x 137.5 cm,
(d) 256 x 138 cm, (e) 256 x 139 cm
LASALLE College of the Arts Collection,
Institute of Contemporary Arts
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ink on paper
103 x 69 cm
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ink on paper
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⁷¹
Untitled [Georgette Chen], 2014
ink on paper
260 x 152 cm
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Tay Bak Koi
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⁷²
Untitled [Songs of fishermen], 1966
watercolour
62 x 117 cm
pp. 100–1

Tay Boon Pin
born Bagansiapiapi, Sumatra,
Indonesia, 1936; lives Singapore

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Untitled [Old man with straw hat], 1962
oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm
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Untitled [Portrait of a Chinese man], 1973
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Untitled [Self-portrait], 1958
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Untitled [Wharf], 1962
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Wong Shih Yaw
born Singapore 1967, lives Singapore

⁸⁰
In thee, 2002–03
oil on canvas
94 x 124 cm (sight)
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Yeh Chi Wei
born Fuzhou, Fujian, China, 1913;
died Singapore 1981

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Untitled [Mother with children], c. 1969
oil on board
59 x 72 cm (sight)
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Yong Mun Sen
born Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, 1896;
died Penang, Malaysia, 1962

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Untitled [Boats through the nets], 1936
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49 x 58 cm (sight)
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⁸⁵
Untitled [Self-portrait], undated
oil on canvas
55.5 x 49.5 cm
LASALLE College of the Arts Collection,
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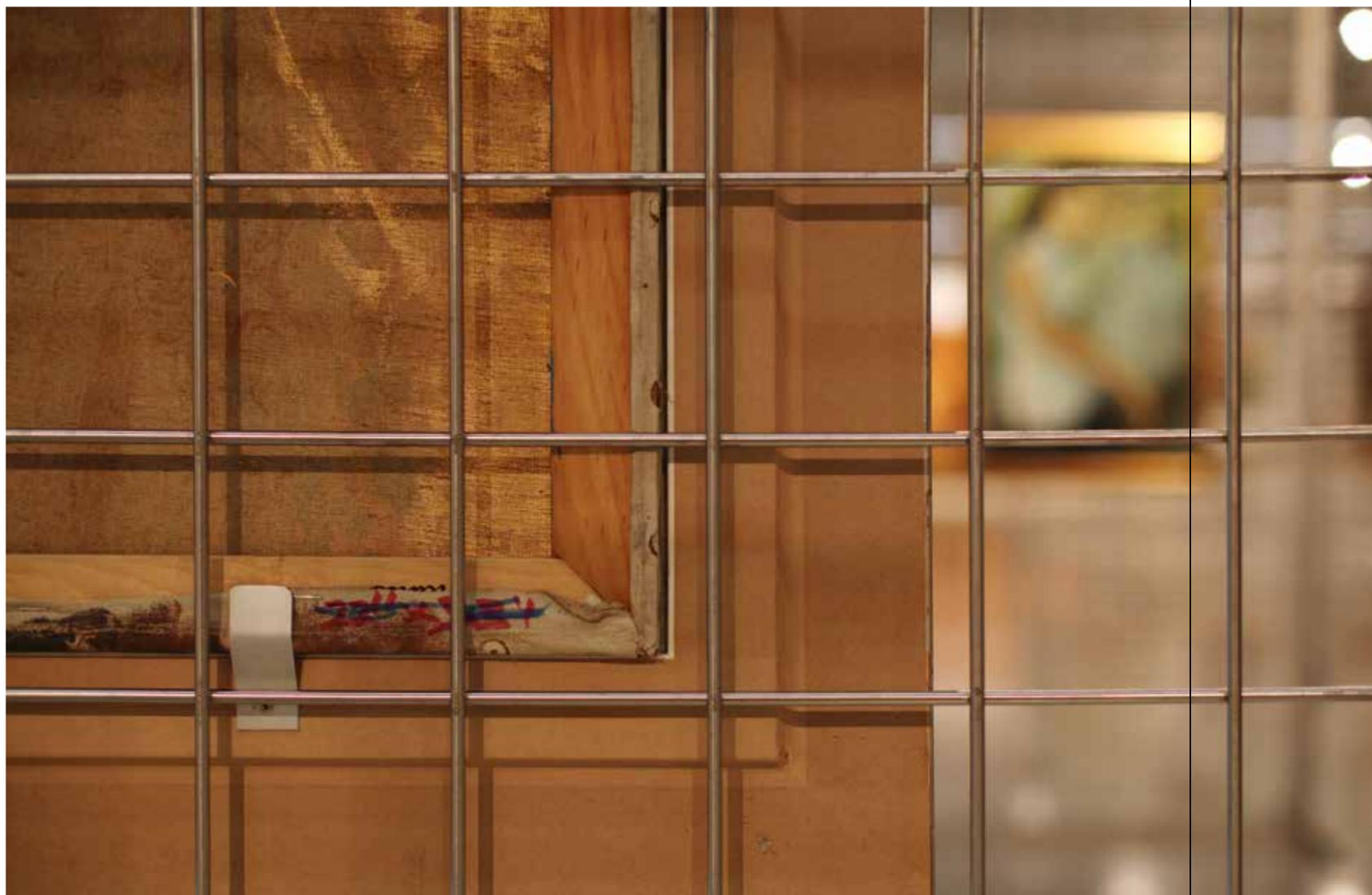
All works held in private collections in Singapore
unless otherwise noted.

Brief
artists'
biographies









Artists imagine a nation: SG50. Pictures of people and places from the collections of Koh Seow Chuan and friends

Published by the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore on the occasion of the exhibition *Artists imagine a nation: SG50. Pictures of people and places from the collections of Koh Seow Chuan and friends*, 13 February to 19 April 2015.

Editor: Bala Starr

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Front cover image:
Teo Eng Seng, *Untitled [Self-portrait]* (detail), 1958, oil on board, 71 x 50.5 cm

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