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Art that teaches culture

Image caption (Top): A Scent of Lights is a wall mural by Lee Song Xuan ('SONG') along a shophouse at Clive Street. "In Indian culture, even light has fragrance," he said.

Image caption (Left): These three-dimensional red lotuses are by artist Tinu Verghis on a pedestrian walkway in front of Gayatri Restaurant. Stargazer's Wish, a mural by Susanna Tan, adds beauty to the walls of the Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society's headquarters.

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SONG has always wondered why Indians loved the jasmine flower and spices, and his colourful mural has answered this question. The former student of LASALLE College of the Art had the opportunity to participate in ARTWALK Little India 2019 as a mural artist, and his designated canvas was the wall of a shop house on Clive Street.

His goal? To create a drawing depicting the richness and vibrancy of Indian culture, and so he started researching about their traditions and everyday life.

"I didn't know anything about the Indian culture so I decided to use this opportunity to get to know them," SONG shared.

He spent months exploring Little India, interacting with shopkeepers and their customers, and the tourists who visited the neighbourhood. In time, he discovered various insights, such as the reason behind the widespread use of jasmine flowers and incense sticks. He also marveled at the difference in meaning of several motifs and colours common to both the Chinese and Indian culture.

Filled with emotion, he translated his newfound understanding of the culture into his wall mural *A Scent of Lights.*

For 2019's edition of the annual multi-disciplinary festival ARTWALK Little India, a total of five new wall murals were painted by alumni of LASALLE College of the Arts. A range of fringe activities, performances and exhibitions have also been planned for the duration of this cultural event, which began on Friday and will last till 2 February 2019.

A highlight not to be missed is a story-telling session by Kamini Ramachandran over dinner at CreatureS restaurant. Over several courses, she will relate the pivotal role eating, gathering and conversation has at the dinner table for migrant communities of the precinct.

ARTWALK Little India is annually co-organised by LASALLE College of the Arts and the Singapore Tourism Board, with the support of the Little India Shopkeepers' & Heritage Association (LISHA). For more, visit artwalklittleindia.sg.

Image caption (bottom): For last year's festival, artist Eunice Lim drew a bookcase on the wall of the Siyamala bookstore located at 82 Serangoon Road.