

Ramping up art initiatives



PHOTOS: NTU, CHRISTINE FENZL

By **CHEAH UI-HOON**
uihoon@sph.com.sg

THERE is the academic study of the arts and there are artistic productions. For the longest time in Singapore, the criticism has been that the former hasn't kept up with the latter.

The newly established Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) at Nanyang Technological University aims to redress that. Housed at Blocks 7, 37, 38 and 43 at Gillman Barracks, the centre will present contemporary art, host a research centre in collaboration with NTU's School of Art, Design & Media, and also host a residency and fellowship programme for artists and cultural producers from all over the globe.

"The CCA was envisaged as a platform for dialogue between research in the arts and the impact of globalisation on the art world," says Professor Ute Meta Bauer, founding director of the CCA at NTU's School of Art, Media and Design.

The CCA also hopes to serve as a hub for the arts in the South-east Asian region – that connects the local with the wider region and beyond. The CCA is developed as a research centre, supported by the Singapore Economic Development Board, with the aim to stimulate cross-disciplinary exchanges.

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search in the field," explains Ms Bauer, who was appointed following a global search by NTU.

She notes how the art world in South-east Asia is ambivalent. "On the one hand, it is highly professionalised, and on the other, it lacks basic infrastructure depending on what country or region we talk about."

Ms Bauer most recently served as Dean of the School of Fine Arts with London's Royal College of Art.

Prior to that, she was at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States, where she was an associate professor for Visual Art in the School of Architecture and Planning. She was also the founding director of the Programme in Art, Culture, and Technology, as well as director of the MIT Visual Arts Programme.

In Asia, Ms Bauer was last year's co-director with Hou Hanru of the *World Biennial Forum Number 1 – Shifting Gravity*, a conference organised by Gwangju Biennale Foundation and the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations in Gwangju, South Korea, with a focus on biennial phenomena in various Asian regions.

Having worked for over 25 years in the contemporary arts field, Ms Bauer notes that it's always been crucial for her to connect practice and theory, artistic production and its dissemination.

"This approach will form the core of CCA's activities where intellectual endeavour feeds back into exhibition and public programmes, and vice versa." It's also open to exploring lesser known areas such as trans-disciplinary collaborations, while "architecture and the future of cities, art and society, art and social change, will also be addressed, but through collaborations with various art centres in South-east Asia," highlights Ms Bauer.