

3 S-E Asian artists get to hone craft in Europe

Bryan Cheong

Artist Hoo Fan Chon was born into a fisherman's family that regularly hosted and attended seafood banquets. Fish, always a mainstay in his diet, has also become a recurring motif in the 39-year-old Malaysian's practice.

This year, he will be given the opportunity to research the plating aesthetic and the obsession with live fish typical of Chinese culture. He will also explore Finland's fish culture, consumption habits and industry.

This is made possible by SEA AiR – Studio Residencies for South-east Asian Artists in the European Union, a new programme developed by the Nanyang Technological University Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (NTU CCA). It is funded by the European Union's Foreign Policy Instruments.

The artists for SEA AiR's first cycle were announced by the EU Delegation to Singapore at Raffles City Tower on Monday. The other two artists are Citra Sasmita, 31, from Indonesia, and Vuth Lyno, 39, from Cambodia.

The three were picked from 24 candidates nominated by curators and artists from South-east Asia.

The other applicants will have to be re-nominated and re-apply for the next cycle, the selection process of which will be undertaken this year for residencies in 2023.

Hoo said: "This is overwhelming and I am thrilled to have been selected for SEA AiR."

Ms Iwona Piorko, EU Ambassador to Singapore, said: "2022 marks the 45th anniversary of EU-Asean dialogue relations and SEA AiR is a fitting start to this milestone year."

SEA AiR is dedicated to artists who have not had professional experience in Europe. Artists chosen this year are offered a three-month residency between March and June in Europe. They will be hosted by contemporary art institutions that are partners of SEA AiR.

This year's partners are Wiels in Brussels, Belgium, the Helsinki International Artist Programme in Finland and Villa Arson in Nice, France.

After their residencies, the artists will present their works to the Singapore public in a group exhibition curated by NTU CCA towards the end of the year.

Sasmita, who will be hosted by Wiels, aims to excavate pre-colonial Balinese culture and understand how the perspectives and aesthetic criteria formed under colonial rule still persist. She said: "SEA AiR is a golden opportunity to deepen my knowledge, enrich my experience and develop my artistic practice."