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## Three South-east Asian artists get chance to hone artistic practice in EU



Winners Vuth Lyno (top), Hoo Fan Chon (left) and Citra Sasmita were selected from a pool of 24 candidates across South-east Asia. PHOTO: EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION TO SINGAPORE

**Bryan Cheong**

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

This year, Mr Hoo will be given the opportunity to research the plating aesthetic and the obsession of 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 Southeast Asian Artists in the EU, a new programme developed by the Nanyang Technological University Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (NTU CCA Singapore).

It is funded by the European Union's Foreign Policy Instruments.

Ms Citra Sasmita, 31, from Indonesia, and Mr Vuth Lyno, 39, from Cambodia, are the other two artists offered a three-month residency in an EU country to hone their artistic practice this year.

The three were selected from a pool of 24 candidates nominated from curators and artists from South-east Asia. They were chosen based on the quality of their work and relevance of their proposals.

The other 21 applicants will have to be re-nominated and re-apply for the next cycle.

The selection process for the next cycle will be undertaken this year, and the residencies will happen in 2023.

Said Mr Hoo: "This is overwhelming and I am thrilled to have been selected for SEA AiR. Through this residency, I'd like to exercise my ideas and share my projects with audiences with different cultural backgrounds and material sensibilities. This is to germinate productive questions and trajectories."

The artists were announced together with the partner institutions for the first cycle of SEA AiR at the EU Delegation to Singapore at Raffles City Tower on Monday (Jan 10).

Ms Iwona Piórko, 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 brings together the EU, Singapore and South-east Asia through the arts. It embodies the spirit of dialogue and exchange that are hallmarks of the relationship between our two regions."

SEA AiR seeks to position Singapore as a hub for artistic exchange between the EU and the South-east Asian region. It 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, the three institutional partners are Wiels in Brussels, Belgium, the Helsinki International Artist Programme (HIAP) in Finland, and Villa Arson in Nice, France.

These partners have long histories of running residency programmes, and nurturing artists through curatorial mentorship, peer-to-peer dialogues and public engagements.

They will also benefit from expanding their network through NTU CCA Singapore as a base to wider South-east Asia, a region that has been historically under-represented in most artistic residency programmes in Europe.

This is especially meaningful as the EU and Asean enter 45 years of dialogue partnership.

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(From left) Chair and founding director of NTU CCA Professor Ute Meta Bauer, European Union Ambassador to Singapore Iwona Piórko and NTU Dean of College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Professor Joseph Liow. PHOTO: NTU SINGAPORE

After their residency, the artists will present their works to the Singapore public in a group exhibition curated by NTU CCA Singapore. This will happen towards the end of 2022.

Professor Joseph Liow, dean of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at NTU, said: "We look forward to seeing (the artists') practice develop. SEA AiR is an excellent platform for artists to cultivate global connections and work with prestigious European institutions.

"These partnerships confirm NTU CCA Singapore's role as a synergic centre that brings forth innovative and dynamic collaborations between South-east Asia and the EU."

Ms Sasmita, who will be hosted by Wiels, said: "SEA AiR is a golden opportunity to deepen my knowledge, enrich my experience, and develop my artistic practice."

She aims to excavate pre-colonial Balinese culture, and understand how the perspectives and aesthetic criteria formed under colonial rule still persist.

Mr Hoo, who will be hosted by HIAP, said: "I want to take this opportunity to consolidate my past projects into a larger cohesive practice, and find a balance between object-based art making and research-led projects."

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