



A video still of Ngoc Nau's *Virtual Reverie: Echoes of a Forgotten Utopia*, 2023.
PHOTO: NGOC NAU

SEA AiR: Passages of discovery through the arts

The studio residencies for South-east Asian artists in the EU embody the rich spirit of dialogue and exchange that are hallmarks of the relationship between the two regions. **By Iwona Piorko**

ART is not just a powerful tool for sharing stories and emotions, it also helps to shine a light on our world in creative ways.

Together with art lovers from the region and beyond, I am looking forward to seeing how travels, cultural exchanges and the realities shaping our world have impacted and shaped the art practices of three talented artists from the region who are part of the second cycle of SEA AiR (Studio Residencies for Southeast Asian Artists in the European Union).

For me, experiencing the art in this truly inspiring project and setting is an unforgettable journey. This is reflected in the exhibition title of SEA AiR Cycle 2. *Passages* references the artists' journeys across geographical and cultural boundaries from one continent to another; the cultural exchanges that take place during this time; and the continuous development of ideas as they return to their home countries to create the thought-provoking artworks you will get to see in this exhibition.

This week (the exhibition opened on Tuesday, Nov 28) I will be experiencing the artworks in the presence of the artists: Priyagetha Dia from Singapore who did her residency at Jan van Eyck Academie in the Netherlands; Ngoc Nau from Vietnam who did her residency at Rupert in Lithuania; and Saroot

Supasuthivech from Thailand who did his residency at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Germany.

Through SEA AiR, we drive further the development of South-east Asia's contemporary art scene. The initiative serves as a springboard for dialogue between European art institutions and South-east Asian artists.

These established European art institutions have a long history of running residency programmes and offered the artists a three-month residency and an opportunity to create

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new works, inspired by their experiences, engagements, dialogues and interactions with the public in Europe. In the current geopolitical context, the artists also experienced the narratives dominating the European political and social landscape.

This artist residency programme launched jointly by the Delegation of the European Union to Singapore and Nanyang Technological University's Centre for Contemporary Art (NTU CCA) celebrates people-to-people connectivity and diversity. Through the second cycle of this proudly made-in-Singapore programme, the EU deepens its ties with Singapore and the region in the spirit of the Global Gateway initiative, which connects people around the world in sustainable ways.

SEA AiR is dedicated to artists who have not yet had a significant professional experience in Europe. It enriches the creative and cultural exchange between the EU, Singapore and Asean, enabling the EU to highlight a region that has historically been under-represented in most artist residency programmes in Europe.

The programme has built through two cycles a rich repository of art practices that resonate and connect beyond borders. The artists in the first cycle, Hoo Fan Chon (from Malaysia; residency at the Helsinki International



A screenshot of Priyageetha Dia's *Sap Sonic and Sap Script* installation mock-up render, 2023.
ILLUSTRATION: PRIYAGEETHA DIA

We are privileged to premiere *Passages* in Singapore as part of the much-anticipated Singapore Art Week 2024. This provides a platform for celebration and an opportunity to connect with audiences from the region and beyond, and spark ideas, conversations and exchanges.



Artist Programme, Finland), Citra Sasmita (Indonesia; residency at Wiels, Brussels, Belgium) and Vuth Lyno (Cambodia; residency at Villa Arson, Nice, France) have had successful career trajectories, with regular showings in established exhibitions and biennales around the world.

The programme was started in 2022 when the EU

and Asean commemorated the 45th anniversary of their partnership. It is only fitting that the second cycle is concluded during another landmark year, on this occasion for EU-Singapore relations, since 2024 marks 20 years of the establishment of the EU Delegation to Singapore. SEA AiR embodies the rich spirit of dialogue and exchange that are hallmarks of the relationship between the two regions.

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The writer is the European Union Ambassador to Singapore. SEA AiR Cycle 2 Exhibition: *Passages* opened at NTU CCA Gillman Barracks on Nov 28 and runs till Jan 28, 2024. The exhibition is part of Singapore Art Week 2024.



A virtual reality still of Saroot Supasuthivech's *Spirit-forward in G Major*, 2023.
ILLUSTRATION: SAROOT SUPASUTHIVECH