Encountering Cheong Soo Pieng

NUS MUSEUM

Cover image
Installation in progress

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NUS Museum

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Cheong Soo Pieng and ***Malayan Scenery***, a work commissioned by Cathay Organisation in 1955
Image courtesy of artist's family

Introduction
Encountering Cheong Soo Pieng

Cheong Soo Pieng is generally hailed as one of the most significant artists in Singapore and the region, acknowledged for his ground-breaking innovations and for shaping emerging artists of subsequent periods in Singapore history. This exhibition sets out to consolidate works by Soo Pieng on a scale that provides a testament to such claims, and facilitates new perspectives for appraising Soo Pieng, aesthetically, and historically.

The exhibition features works from private collections in Singapore and supplemented by the Museum's permanent collection, spanning from 1943 to the early 1980s and covers a range of artistic media. The works are chosen for their rich and enduring qualities; they provide a sustained viewing of his oeuvre and practice. Many of these works are being exhibited for the first time in years, enabling fresh appraisals of the breadth and depth of the artist.

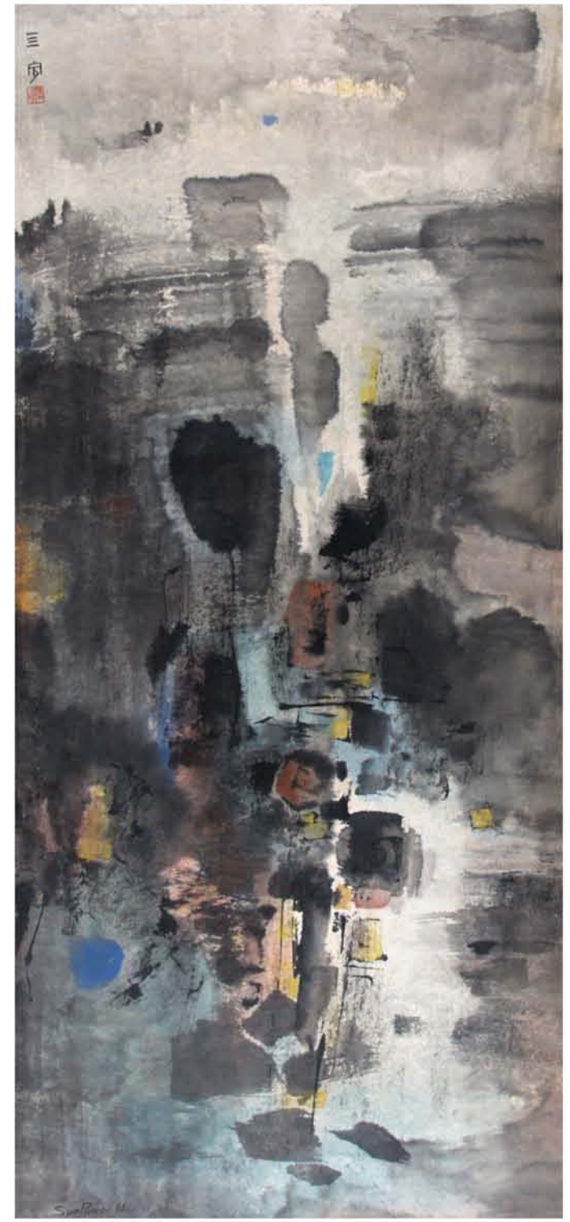
This display is set out in two broad sections, enabling differentiated viewing and appreciation. The first section provides entry points into Soo Pieng's practice, highlighting topical and formal interests, namely: picture making and its transformations, and the figure as subject and object. The second section is organized to make references to journeys undertaken as ways of representing the world of Soo Pieng, providing layered histories and stories that contextualize questions concerning the modern and modernity.

Curators
TK Sabapathy
Ahmad Mashadi
Karen Lim

Brochure text
Ahmad Mashadi

Brook
1953
Oil on canvas
61 x 79.5 cm
NUS Museum collection
S1964-0047-001-0

Untitled
undated
Chinese ink and colour on paper
46 x 95 cm
Private collection



Untitled
1961
Watercolour on paper
128 x 58 cm
Private collection

Untitled
1960
Chinese ink and colour on paper
93.5 x 41 cm
Private collection

The Topical and the Formal

Of course, I do not search for it (a style) consciously or create it deliberately. I doubt any artist does. But it is there. It is a way of bringing order and intelligence to what an artist is doing.

Images, content, subject matter...these are ways communicating that link (between scroll and easel painting traditions).

Cheong Soo Pieng
quoted in T.K. Sabapathy and K.C. Low,
"New styles from a turbulent era", Straits Times, 2 August 1983

These remarks by Cheong Soo Pieng were published in an obituary in 1983. The appeal of Soo Pieng's art is apparent and direct. More than others, he had articulated a range of artistic idioms conversant with the turns of the modern. The environments of Malaya and Southeast Asia provided an array of visual subjects, in particular their landscapes and figures. The styles of the School of Paris (Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism and Orphism) were engaged simultaneously along with Chinese brush and compositional techniques. Soo Pieng melded them into dynamic pictorial schemas and in doing so defined styles that are enduring, deeply influencing generations of painters after him.

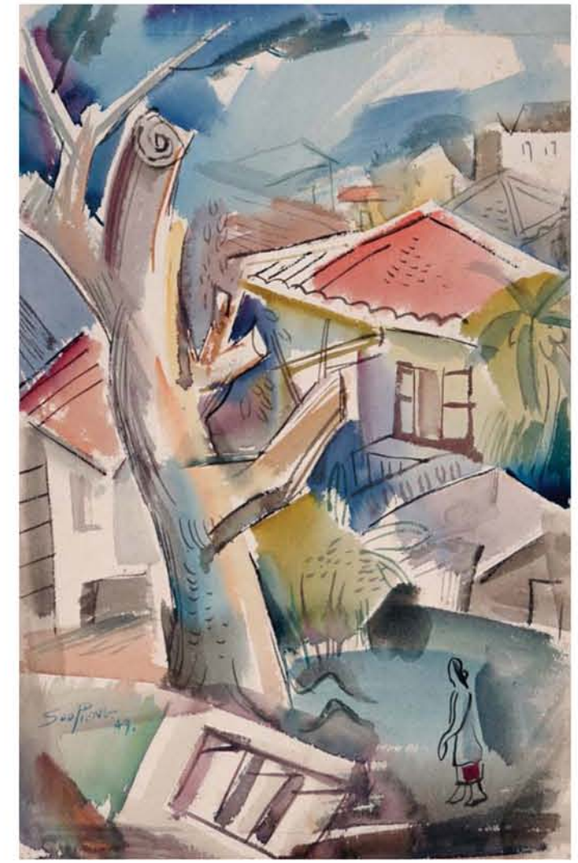
This section highlights aspects of Soo Pieng's topical and formal interests. Among these are picture making and its transformations, and the figure as subject and object. By locating his early experiments among his later works, this section hopes to highlight potential beginnings, continuities and shifts that occurred in his practice. Although specific pictorial interests are seen as sustained and developed further than others by Soo Pieng, such viewing also demonstrates the constant fluidity that marks his practice, where pictorial transformations are emphasized beyond their resolutions.

Three early works, part of Soo Pieng's frenetic foray into the styles associated with the School of Paris, provide points of departure for this section: *After Bathing* (1947), *Untitled* (1949) and *Forest* (1948). Collectively, works of this period clue us towards an artistic vista – the worlds of modernity Soo Pieng may have been introduced to earlier as a student in Amoy and Shanghai. Completed in Singapore, they express urgency: of the need to initiate and prospect possibilities. The subjects depicted are conventional, referenced by and large to styles being studied. Significantly these paintings foreground the range of thematic and formal interests - landscape and figure - as points of entry; the articulation of pictorial space as a polymorphic form through the use of angular lines and planes; the use of lines as expressive gestures; the transforming of the figure through stylization and distortions; and, the decorative tendencies demonstrated by rhythm and patterning. Having spent his formative years in China, he would have been aware of the debates concerning the introduction of the West into a Chinese culture defined by its artistic traditions; his practice would have gravitated towards such concerns. Yet, his practice will prove to be fluid, unburdened by the rhetoric of debate, but responsive to new stimuli, and informed by experience and the milieus that stimulated him. Malayan, Southeast Asian landscapes and subjects offered new prospects for advancing a distinct modern practice. The process of decolonisation and regard for identity became important signposts in apprehending significance of art activity in Malaya.

Placed in relation to these three works are clusters that approximate aspects of his formal and thematic interests. *Untitled* (1949) is remarkable for its use of cubistic forms, planes and a play of structures. The tree occupies a key position to anchor the composition, and various elements are arranged to provide multiple viewpoints and spatial ambiguity. This sense of play is significant in the later works culminating in pictures such as *Attap House* (1952) and *Malay Village* (1957). The devices deployed in *Untitled* are reinvoked, in particular, the division of the pictorial surface into smaller multifaceted spaces for compositional interests, often with the use of tree trunks as demarcating elements. Soo Pieng adapted his palette to the harsh light and colours of the tropics, using bold colours and string outlines. The integrity of the subjects depicted is sustained; limited faceting is deployed without totally fragmenting the figure which, in other examples, became a dominant part in his compositions. Such flirtations with the cubistic idiom also heighten Soo Pieng's play of lines as seen in the early and later ink works. The conventions of hanging scroll and the hand scroll are reinterrogated and transformed variously to consolidate designs that are organized along vertical, often elongated, divisions of compositional spaces as in *Waterfront Singapore* (1960). Such devices are also deployed in naturalistic works like the village scene, *Untitled* (1960), using the raised wooden footpath as a defining anchor for the picture. In these examples, Soo Pieng had established pictorial schemas that are not only significant for his own development, but also important in the reckoning of modern ink painting. The angular lines that dominate his pictorial constructions of naturalistic themes become pure motifs appearing as grids or negative spaces; and elsewhere they appear as rationalizing pictorial interests arising from newer experimentations in ink washes, and consequently in his oil or mixed media 'abstracts'.

Developed alongside such formal interplay of line, colour and design, is the figure. Soo Pieng developed it intermittently, oscillating between naturalism and stylization. *A Corner of Art Studio* (1947) and *After Bathing* (1947) are early examples in which approaches to the figure and representations were being explored and developed. Consecutively, his trips to parts of Southeast Asia, namely Malaya, Bali and Sarawak during the 1950s, became instrumental for articulating the figure, reaching a maturity by the 1960s. The village scapes provide key settings to these figures, which are predominantly female. They are depicted variously at work or seated or at rest, by and large proposing an idealized community within an idyllic landscape. These figures are rarely individuated, expressed by sinuous or angular lines, abbreviated facial features, and torsos and limbs that are elongated and exaggerated, producing outcomes that are sensuous and appealing. The seated figure dominates many compositions. Singly or in pairs, they are often placed centrally in the pictures; at times a figure is anchored by a voluminous sarong which the artist effectively embellishes with floral or other motifs. The relationship between figure and ground in such instances is keenly explored by way of contrasts and ornamentation such as in *Children* (1968) and *Nap* (1968). Such predilections for generalization, stylization, design and ornamentation are significant for Soo Pieng's quest in defining styles and the sense of the modern. Yet, they also bring forth questions pertaining to his regard, attitudes and perspectives into Southeast Asia and subjects he depicted. Indeed, such relationship may be cast in terms of the self and other, the colonizer and the colonized, male and female. Yet, to productively locate these issues and possibilities, it may be proposed that they are read in relation to the very modernity Soo Pieng had entered into and the directions he may have been compelled to take. Notwithstanding dissimilarities, we may note Liu Kang's disclosure: "All these Nanyang anecdotes and experiences are deeply ingrained and course through my blood...the images kept reappearing." Here, Southeast Asia appears as part of the Nanyang artists' quests for a modernity, defined by their origination and constituted as diasporic artists. The potency of Southeast Asia, arguably, is a necessary part of such projection.

Malay Village
1957
Oil on canvas laid on board
60.5 x 80 cm
Private collection



Untitled
1949
Watercolour on paper
48.5 x 31.5 cm
Private collection

After Bathing
1947
Oil on wood
49.5 x 37.5 cm
Private collection

Untitled
undated
Watercolour on paper
77 x 57 cm
Private collection

Deep Feeling
1951
Oil on canvas
74 x 56 cm
Private collection

Children
1968
Oil on canvas
96.5 x 60.5 cm
Private collection

Departing and Arriving

Singapore, Tuesday...Well-known Singapore artist Mr. Cheong Soo Pieng will leave early next month on a one-year exhibition tour of Britain and Europe. Mr. Cheong will take with him for the tour more than 100 paintings – all with a strong Malayan touch.

Singapore Free Press, 26 September 1961

Soo Pieng's art is inextricably linked to his travels. Indeed, these trips were undertaken in search of environs and cultures that may provide fresh visual stimuli for artistic activity. Importantly, Soo Pieng undertakes these trips to prospect new formal and thematic grounds, while evaluating current and immediate directions. Sensations, observations, studies and materials collected (including indigenous sculptures) were then harnessed methodically over lengthy periods upon his return, producing bodies of works, each distinct in its correspondence to such experiences. The artist journeyed to Bali (1952), Sarawak (1959) and London and Europe (1961-1963); each was complemented by exhibitions that took place a year after in Singapore. These exhibitions projected newer imagery, challenging or further articulating his practice, and in doing so investing his activities with vitality and a new sense of purpose.

By far, a trip to Bali undertaken with three other artists – Liu Kang, Chen Chong Swee and Chen Wen Hsi – has been celebrated for having crystalised the thematic and formal underpinnings that define the Nanyang Style, establishing pictorial schemas for themes associated to the style (such as river-scapes, fishing villages and *kampung* scenes); these were influential and enduring and, as conventions, adopted by successive artists in Malaya. This trip is frequently regarded as providing a key turn, or even a foundational basis, to the development of Singapore art. This section however, aims to broaden our attention of Soo Pieng's other 'travels', regarded here as encounters with new places and cultures. It is not possible for us, presently, to estimate the artist's responses as an art student studying in Shanghai in 1937. Shanghai was a nodal centre of art learning where the question of Chinese modernity was keenly debated. The duration of his stay was short, his studies were disrupted by the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war, and there are no known works that are available and that may provide clues to his experiences. His travels to Hong Kong and Taiwan in 1945 are also largely undocumented.

Departing and Arriving conceives of practice as one that is linked to mobility and groundings. Such travels, including those undertaken before and after Singapore, are also conceived as cycles of creative processes that rely on encounters, both in terms of environments and cultures, as well as of differing or differentiated aesthetic discourses. In doing so, one may examine the significance of Soo Pieng's travels as complicating the central, near exclusive importance of the Bali trip. Further, such undertakings enable discussions on Soo Pieng's practice that are decentered, pointing towards multiple discursive emphases, co-locating them across geographies and times. Here, we may also prospect Soo Pieng's practice for elucidating aspects of Asian and global practices along perspectives such as origination, transmission, adaptation, and transformations of modern art.

As a section in the exhibition, *Departing and Arriving* begins with his entry into Singapore in 1946. A handful of early works by Soo Pieng completed in Amoy, China, have survived; one of them being *Untitled* (1943). It is a hill-scape, characterized by subtle washes and sparing use of lines, to highlight or demarcate various elements on the foreground. This single example would be insufficient to connect his artistic concerns with any specific interests in Chinese ink development to which he may have been exposed as a student. However, his invocation of feeling and essence, typical of traditional works, point towards a distinct awareness of questions or thoughts pertaining to aesthetic encounters. This painting is accompanied in the exhibition by other works completed during the first five years of his arrival in Singapore. They are remarkable for their varied formal interests, executed in all manner of styles associated with the School of Paris. Generous access to art materials, and being immersed in a new teaching environment at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts would have in part prompted such bursts of excitement. Importantly, Soo Pieng in his attempt to gain lost ground had sought to reinitiate himself into a rhythm of practice and experimentation, to comprehend, to test, and to prospect perspectives and directions. The light, landscapes, and peoples of urban Singapore and rural Malaya and Southeast Asia proposed to Soo Pieng conceptual and formal problematics that have to be measured and mediated by some of the above considerations regarding artistic models and sensibility.

Soo Pieng's London trip in 1961 heightens these considerations in specific ways. Unlike other artists of his generation who traveled to Europe to undergo art training, Soo Pieng arrived as a mature artist. Having enjoyed considerable success in Singapore, Europe was conceived as a frontier in which artistic practice can be expanded. Soo Pieng painted where he could, but he also brought with him over 100 paintings, prospecting the galleries and collectors in Europe, eventually holding three exhibitions. How he was received in Europe is difficult to ascertain given the paucity of information available for study. Upon returning, having been exposed to JMW Turner, his art evolved to emphasize light and atmosphere, transforming his interests in landscapes and ink.

However, the trip and its circumstances provoke new questions about Soo Pieng as well as modern Asian art practice. The Nanyang Style with which Soo Pieng is associated, can already be understood as an aesthetic system that can be referenced to two overlapping discourse of modernities; one linked to the developments of 20th century Chinese art having their origins in centres like Shanghai, transacting with centres of Europe and Japan; and the other, the formation of nation states of Malaya and Singapore, each requiring a set of emblematic notions of identity related to concepts of land, peoples and founding myths including emigration and material transformation through nation building. Soo Pieng's London trip provides an occasion to test newer ways to understand art productions and their reception through the lenses of globality that, simultaneously or concurrently, acknowledge multiplicities of the modern experience, and entailing fragmented historical formations.

Singapore River
1951
Oil on board
56.5 x 73.5 cm
Private collection

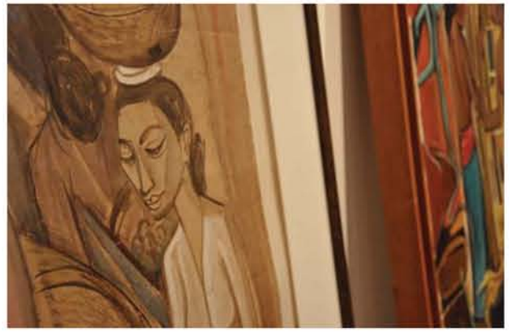
Untitled
1943
Watercolour on paper
47 x 31.5 cm
Private collection

Bali Girl
1952
Oil on canvas
83 x 63 cm
Private collection

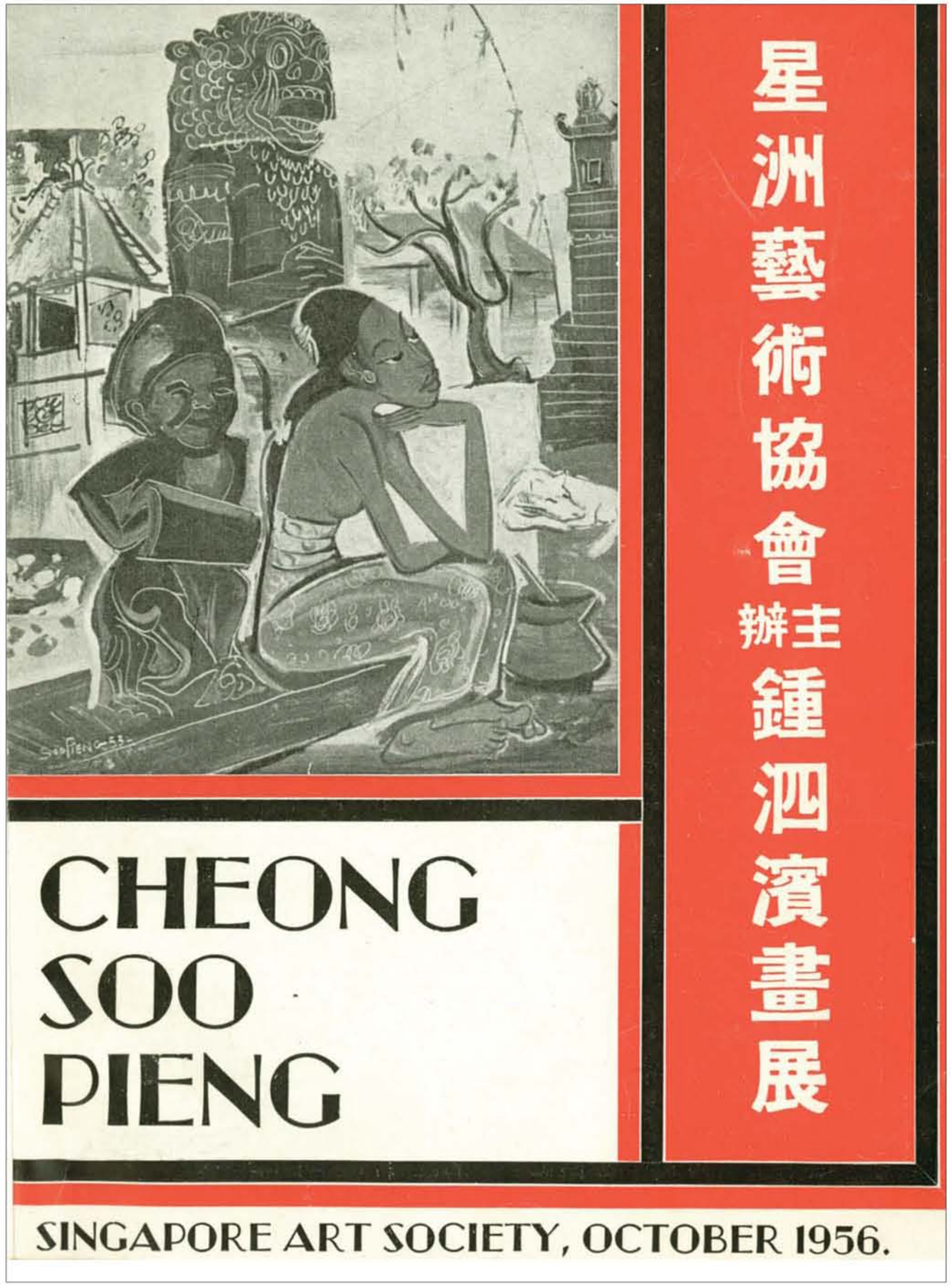
Untitled
1970s
Plaster
47 x 15.5 x 15.5 cm
Private collection

Untitled
undated
Chinese ink and colour on paper
69 x 128 cm
Private collection

Untitled
undated
Metal and mixed media on board
69.5 x 87 cm
Private collection



Installation of exhibition at NUS Museum



Cover and introduction (pg 18-19), courtesy of Singapore Art Society

THE ARTIST

SINGAPORE ART SOCIETY

presents

AN EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS

by

CHEONG SOO PIENG

in the

BRITISH COUNCIL GALLERY

to be opened by

LOKE WAN THO, ESQ., A.P.S.A., A.P.P.S.

at 5.30 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 10th, 1956.

Open to the public daily from 11th to 20th Oct.

From 9.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

EXHIBITION ORGANISER: FRANK SULLIVAN.

FRONT COVER :— "TEMPLE IN BALI"

THE ART OF CHEONG SOO PIENG

In the world of art, unlike lawn tennis, there are no championships; usually there are more champions than one. So it is in Malaya. Whether or no Cheong Soo Pieng is the finest painter in either Singapore or the Federation today is a matter of personal taste. Certainly there could be no discussion of "the best artist" without Soo Pieng's name being among the finalists, the very last two.

Without question he is one of Malaya's top-ranking artists, and has held his place in this select category for the past ten years. In public esteem and in his own right he has reached the top flight through his innate talent, the consistent quality of his work, his continuing adaptibility and progress, and his wide influence as a teacher.

For Soo Pieng art is the beginning, the end and the meaning of all life. He has no other interest. Whether as a teacher in the classroom, or as an artist painting for pleasure in his own time, he is never far away from his brushes, colours and canvas. Other artists in Malaya may be as equally industrious, but none has managed to achieve the consistency of quality Soo Pieng brings to all his works. He is at home in all media, painting with equal facility in oils, water-colours, Chinese ink, or his latest interest, applying the batik method to art. The outstanding and original exhibition presented by the Singapore Art Society of the batik work of Chuah Thean Teng in March this year, not unexpectedly aroused Soo Pieng's deep and vital interest. Recently he spent a month in Penang working with Teng, and now he is showing batik paintings for the first time.

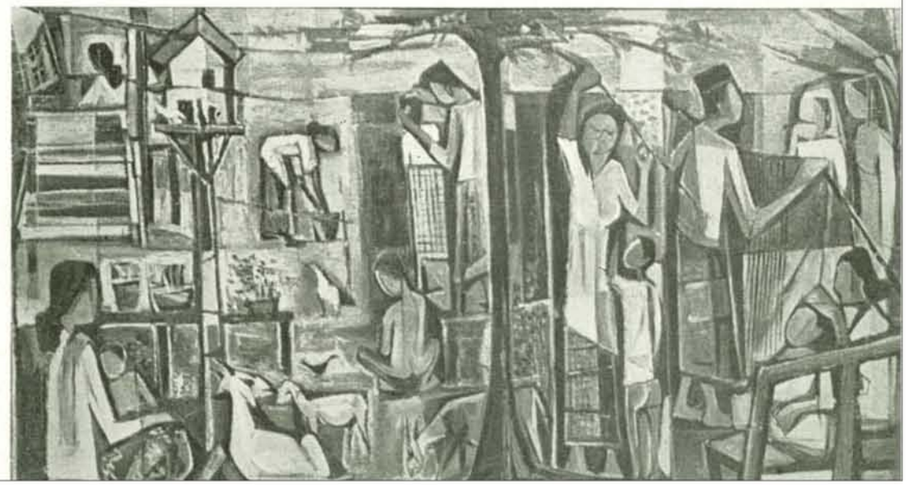
Although Soo Pieng is now 39 (he was born in 1917), the real fruition of his art has occurred during his ten years in Singapore, as his life shows. Soo Pieng was born in Amoy, and after schooling went to the Art University there for three years. At the age of 19 he studied in Shanghai for a year at the Hsinhua Academy of Fine Arts, returning then to Amoy to teach in the university for one year. He was then 21, and although he was painting all the time, he did not hold his first one-man show until 1942, when he was 25. All the exhibits were water-colours, a medium he uses with a rare and fresh delicacy. He had little opportunity to paint in oils, mainly owing to the scarcity of materials. In 1946, at the age of 29, he came to Singapore, joining the teaching staff of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. In Singapore, with a new atmosphere and plenty of art supplies to hand, Soo Pieng plunged into painting in oils. It is therefore true to say that his present mastery of this medium has been acquired in Malaya.

In fact, Soo Pieng is in many ways much more of a Malayan in his art than would have at first seem evident. In ten years he has been outside Malaya only once, a voyage of discovery to Bali in 1950 in company with three other Singapore artists — Chen Wen Hsi, Cheng Chong Swee and Liu Kang. Together they succumbed to the magic charms of Bali, and returned to Singapore to hold a joint memorable exhibition of the works each did there. In the past ten years, Soo Pieng's works have been on display only once outside Malaya. Last year, together with six other Singapore artists, he had seven paintings in an exhibition at the Imperial Institute in London, held under the personal supervision of the Art Society's President, Mr. Ho Kok Hoe. Eight of these works are on show in this current exhibition.

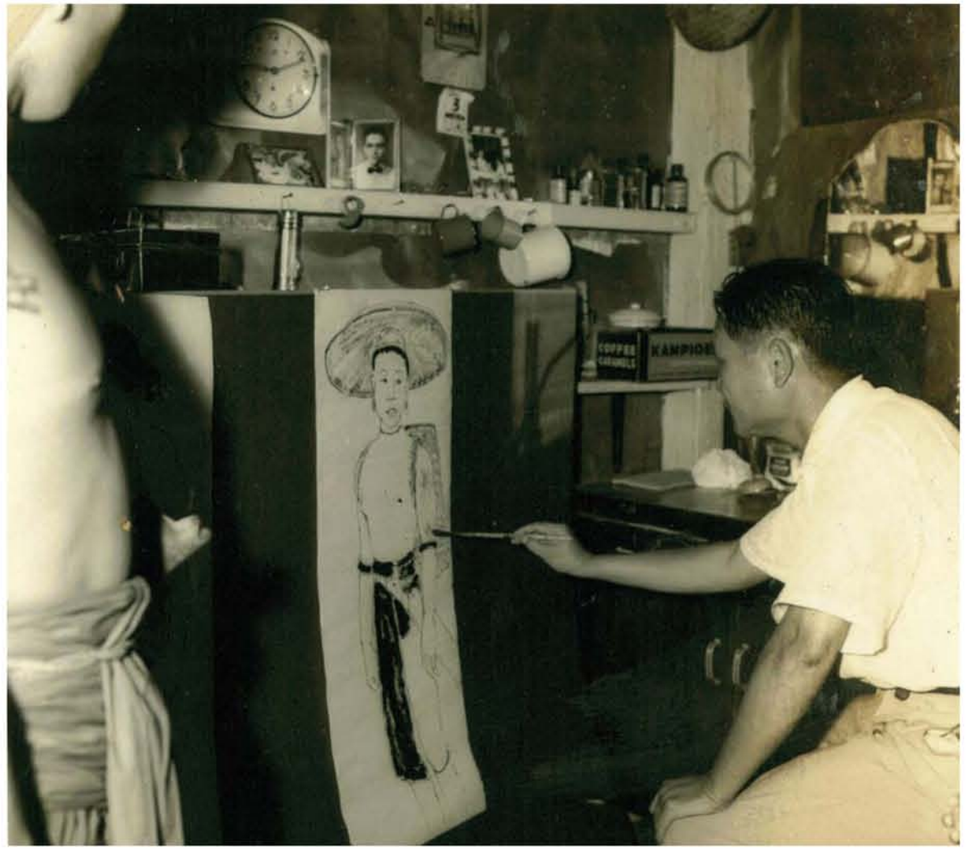
Although Cheong Soo Pieng has participated in every major exhibition held in Singapore in the past ten years, this is the first time he has held a "one-man show." The Singapore Art Society takes the greatest pleasure in presenting to the public of Malaya this wide-ranging exhibition, which justifies to all who love beauty the high place Soo Pieng holds in Malaya's world of art. This is an exhibition of which Singapore, the art capital of Malaya, can well be proud.

— F. J. SULLIVAN.

"Egg Sellers"



"Malay Life"



Cheong Soo Pieng sketching a portrait, with subject standing on the left, Sarawak, circa.1959
Image courtesy of artist's family

Sketching in a boat, Sarawak, circa.1959
Image courtesy of artist's family

1917 Born in Xiamen (Amoy), China, as the youngest of seven children.

1933 Studied under Lim Hak Tai (future head of NAFA) at Xiamen (Amoy) Academy of Fine Art for three years.

1936 Moved to Shanghai and furthered his studies at Xinhua Academy of Fine Art.

1937 Studies were disrupted by the war.

1942 First solo exhibition of watercolour works in China.

1945 Left China to visit Hong Kong and Formosa (Taiwan). Lived in Macau for 6 months during the war crisis.

1946 Moved to Singapore.

1947 Starts to lecture at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA). His students included Ng Eng Teng, Seah Kim Joo, Khoo Sui Hoe and Thomas Yeo. His tenure lasted from 1947 to 1961.

Worked with three major categories of art – landscape (fishing villages and riverine scenes), still life (local fruit, food and domestic utensils) and figure composition (depicting varieties of work, leisure, rituals and portraits) - in oil, watercolour and ink.

1948 Taught at The Chinese High School till 1961.

1951 The Singapore Art Society organizes *An Exhibition of Paintings by Four Singapore Artists, Liu Kang, Chen Chong Swee, Chen Wen Hsi and Cheong Soo Pieng*, at the British Council from 24 November to 28 December.

1952 Visited and painted in Bali with Liu Kang, Chen Chong Swee and Chen Wen Hsi.

1953 An exhibition, *Four Artists in Bali*, was held to commemorate the Bali trip and its results.

1955 Invited to showcase seven paintings at the Imperial Institute of London with other Singaporean artists such as Chen Wen Hsi, Chen Chong Swee, Lim Hak Tai, Tay Wee Koh and Suri bin Mohyani. The exhibition was organized by Singapore Art Society President, Ho Kok Hoe, and was graced by Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent.

Commissioned by Cathay Organisation to create a painting.

1956 First one-man exhibition entitled *Cheong Soo Pieng: Singapore Art Society*, October 1956, sponsored by the Singapore Art Society. It was held at the British Council Gallery and featured 134 of his works, including 12 batik paintings. The catalogue of the exhibition included a foreword by Frank Sullivan.

1957 Second one-man exhibition in Kuala Lumpur, sponsored by the Federation of Malaya Arts Council. Third one-man exhibition in Penang, sponsored by the Penang Arts Council.

1959 Visited and painted in Sarawak.

Commissioned by Singapore Telephone Board to create a mural.

1960 Work was featured in Singapore Art Society's annual exhibition at the Singapore Polytechnic.

Commissioned by Shell Company, Singapore to create a mural.

1961 Visited and painted in Sabah.

October: Left Singapore and travelled to Europe to learn about contemporary art. He took about 200 of his works along with him to exhibit in Europe. (Met Chia Yu Chian in London)

1962 March: Fourth one-man exhibition at Frost & Reed Gallery, London (Bond Street Galleries). 48 works were exhibited.

Travelled through Luxemburg, Brussels, Paris, Amsterdam, Venice, Rome and Munich.

November: Fifth one-man exhibition at Galerie Schoninger, Munich.

Selected to represent Singapore at the *Commonwealth Art Today* exhibition organized by the Singapore Art Society, held at the Commonwealth Institute in London.

Awarded the Meritorious Service Medal by the Government of Singapore

1963 Featured in the February edition of *Free World* magazine.

23 April – 17 May: Sixth one-man exhibition at the Redfern Gallery, London.

Seventh one-man exhibition at the Bean Lane Gallery, Oxford.

July: Returned to Singapore.

Eighth one-man exhibition at the Victoria Memorial Hall, Singapore from 30 October to 5 November. 180 oil and watercolour works with some done in Europe were exhibited, the biggest one-man exhibition in Singapore. Organized by the Singapore Art Society and opened by Dato Loke Wan Tho. Foreword of the exhibition catalogue written by Loke Wan Tho and Michael Sullivan. Sponsored by the Singapore Art Society, Society of Chinese Artists and NAFA.

Switch his medium to Violeen, a tough synthetic material which is used in dress making.

1964 January: Ninth one-man exhibition at Chatham Galleries, Hong Kong.

July/August: Tenth one-man exhibition at British Council Centre, Kuala Lumpur. Organized by Arts Council Malaysia and opened by the British High Commissioner in Malaysia, Lord Head.

May: Set up an art studio at 28-A Zion Road, Singapore 1024, giving private art lessons to students. Held a small exhibition, previewing 54 of his latest paintings to celebrate the opening of his studio.

20 May 1964: Commissioned by Singapore Tourist Promotion Board to create a mural in John Little's Building. The mural depicted the cosmopolitan life of "Lion City", projecting a blend of the Eastern and Western art in oils.

8 October 1964: One of his paintings was presented by the Singapore Public Service Commission to the Australian Public Service Board.

1965 Seven paintings were selected for the Malaysian Art Exhibition at the Commonwealth Arts Festival in Glasgow (September) and Dublin (November).

Commissioned by Bank of America to put up a huge mural painting at its Orchard Road branch office. The theme was "The Celebrated Spots of Malaysia".

Judged the Kellogg's Corn Flakes art competition for children under 14, organized by L.D Seymour and Co.

1966 Participated in the Malaysian Art Exhibition in London (January), Cologne (April/May), Berlin (July/August) and Hamburg (September/October).

August: Eleventh one-man exhibition at Samat Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur.

Donated artwork for exhibition for St. Andrew's Mission Hospital for children.

Commissioned by St Peter's Church to create a mural.

4 September: Along with nine other Singaporean artists, Cheong donated two art pieces to raise funds for the St. Andrew's Mission Hospital.

1967 Participated in the Malaysian Art Exhibition in St. Etienne (January) and Paris (April).

January: Twelfth one-man exhibition and first retrospective exhibition held in honour of his fiftieth birthday and 25th anniversary of his career as an art teacher. *Twenty Years of His Art* was held at the National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur. Opened by the Selangor Mentri Besar, Dato Harun bin Haji Idris.

Exhibited 234 paintings (147 oils, 76 watercolors and 11 works in other media).

April: Exhibited at *Sculpture 67*, Singapore's first sculpture show at the National library, Singapore, organized by Choy Weng Yang, Singapore Art Society. Opened by the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Toh Chin Chye. The first for Cheong Soo Pieng to present his sculptures. His sculptures were made with aluminium. Other artists were Lim Nang Seng, Vincent Hoisington, Aw Eng Kwang, Yeo Hwee Bin and Ng Eng Teng.

Thirteenth one-man exhibition at Rudy Koman Gallery, Sydney. Opened by the Singapore High Commissioner for Australia, Mr Stanley Stewart. Sponsored by the Malaysia-Singapore Airlines and Rudy Komon Art Galleries of Sydney. 30 watercolour paintings were featured.

1968 Fourteenth one-man exhibition at Grand Centre Art Gallery, Brisbane.

Exhibited at the first sculpture show *Five Singapore Sculptors* at the National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur. Other sculptors include Ng Eng Teng, Yeo Hwee Bin, Lim Yew Kuan and Lim Nang Seng. Opened by the Singapore High Commissioner, Mr Lien Ying Chow. Exhibited 30 sculptures.

October : *Works of 68*, Samat Art Gallery, AIA Building, Kuala Lumpur. Exhibited 40 works (30 oils, 10 watercolours)

1969 Second Singapore Sculpture exhibition featuring Aw Eng Kwang, Cheong Soo Pieng, Lim Nang Seng, Lim Yew Kuan, Ng Eng Teng, Vincent Hoisington and Yeo Hwee Bin from 1-4 November at the Victoria Memorial Hall. Foreword by Agnes Hoisington.

1971 12-man exhibition at Alpha Art Gallery featuring Khoo Sui Hoe, Arthur Yap, Tay Chee Toh, Thomas Yeo and Quek Wee Chew.

Exhibited mixed media work *Noon* (four pieces of metal and mixed media) at the Singapore Art Society's 22nd Local Artists Exhibition. Held at the Victoria Memorial Hall.

1974 Fifteenth one-man exhibition at Rising Art Gallery, Telok Ayer Street, Singapore. From 1-10 June. Participated in the ASEAN Mobile Art and Photographic exhibition.

1976 National Museum Art Gallery exhibition of Singapore sculpture entitled *Sculpture* from 6 November – 5 December 1976.

1977 Sixteenth one-man exhibition at East & West Art, Victoria, Australia; Hilton Hotel Gallery, Melbourne, Australia; Manyung Gallery Mount Eliza, Australia.

1978 Singapore Artists Art Exhibition in former Soviet Union at the Friendship House, Moscow from 9-28 August. Works featured were *Fabric* (1977) and *Resting* (1975).

1979 Visited China.

1980 Seventeenth one-man exhibition at Alpha Art Gallery, Taipei, Republic of China (Taiwan).

Eighteenth one-man exhibition at the British Council, Singapore. Opened by Parliamentary Secretary for Culture, Dr Ow Chin Hock. It was a first for the Council to organize an exhibition for a local artist.

April / May: Charity Art Exhibition and Sale. Opened by First Lady Mrs Benjamin Sheares.

1981 Nineteenth one-man exhibition at National Art Gallery, Taipei, Republic of China (Taiwan).

1983 Died of heart failure at the age of 66 on 1 July, buried at Choa Chu Kang Cemetery.

11-27 November: Third Pioneer Artists of Singapore Exhibition. Third in the series on *Pioneering Artists*, co-sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and the National Museum. 200 works from artist's collection; 100 from private collection.

National Museum Art Gallery staged a retrospective of his works four months after his death, titled *Cheong Soo Pieng Retrospective*. The exhibition included works rendered in oil, Chinese brush and his sketches. Opened by Mr Wan Hussin Zoohri, Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Culture.

1985 Video documentary films on pioneer and outstanding artists, a special project initiated by the Ministry of Community Development.

1986 *Singapore Art: Past and Present* exhibition at National Museum Art Gallery. The first attempt at a thematic presentation from the National Museum's permanent collection. Aims to tell the history of Singapore art.

22 May: Tax reliefs for art donations to National Museum, announced by the Acting Minister for Community Development,Mr Wong Kan Seng when he accepted on behalf of the museum, a gift of three oil paintings by Singapore artists - Chen Wen Hsi, Liu Kang and Cheong Soo Pieng - presented by US investment bank Goldman Sachs. First private party at the museum.

1988 *Masterpieces from Private Collection* exhibition organized by the Arts Festival, exhibited at National Museum Art Gallery. *Bali Girls* (1953) was featured.

1990 *25 Years of Singapore Art* held at the National Museum Art Gallery in conjunction with the National Day Celebrations. Held from 18-31 August.

1991 June: *The First Ink* exhibition held at the Marine Parade Community Club in conjunction with the Chinese Cultural Festival. Opened by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong. Organised by Marine Parade Community Club.

September: First public viewing of the works of Cheong Soo Pieng at the National Museum Art Gallery.

Many in One: 25 Years of Art from Singapore exhibition curated by T.K. Sabapathy, held at the Meridian HouseInternational in Washington D.C. Exhibited *London Scene* (1962).

1994 *Reminiscence of Singapore Pioneer Art Masters* art exhibition at Takashimaya Art Gallery on 11 March.

1997 Represented Singapore with the work *Tropical Life* (1959) in the *Asean Masterworks* exhibition held to mark the informal 30th Asean Summit in Malaysia. Exhibition ran from 14-16 December at Mines Resort in KL and from 15-30 January at National Art Gallery, Malaysia.

1998 *IMPRINTS on Singapore Art: Works of 40 NAFA Artists*. The exhibition was officially opened at the Singapore Art Museum on Friday 28 August 1998 by Dr Ow Chin Hock. In celebration of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts' 60th anniversary. Organized by Singapore Art Museum, in association with NAFA and the NAFA Alumni Association.

2002 Works featured in *Nanyang 1950-1965: Passage to Singaporean Art* organized by the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum. Work featured in *Singapore Modern: Art in the 1970s* held at the Singapore Art Museum.

2005 4x4 - Episodes of Singapore Art, Episode one: *Cheong Soo Pieng - A Dream of Tropical Life,* aired on 20 Sept 2005 on Arts Central, TV 12. Scripted and directed by Ho Tzu Nyen.

2006 Works featured in *Cubism in Asia*, 18 Febuary – 9 April, organized by the Singapore Art Museum, The National Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, The Japan Foundation and The National Museum of Modern Art in Korea.

2007 Works featured in *Pioneers* exhibition organized by Valentine Willie Fine Art. Works were culled from private collections. *Seaside* (1951) was featured in *From Words to Pictures: Art During the Emergency*, an exhibition held at the Singapore Art Museum which ended 31 October.

NUS MUSEUM

NUS Museum is a comprehensive museum for teaching and research. It focuses on Asian regional art and culture, and seeks to create an enriching experience through its collections and exhibitions. The Museum has over 7,000 artefacts and artworks divided across four collections. The **Lee Kong Chian Collection** consists of a wide representation of Chinese materials from ancient to contemporary art; the **South and Southeast Asian Collection** holds a range of works from Indian classical sculptures to modern pieces; and the **Ng Eng Teng Collection** is a donation from the late Singapore sculptor and Cultural Medallion recipient of over 1,000 artworks. A fourth collection, the **Straits Chinese Collection**, is located at NUS' Baba House 157 Neil Road.

NUS MUSEUM

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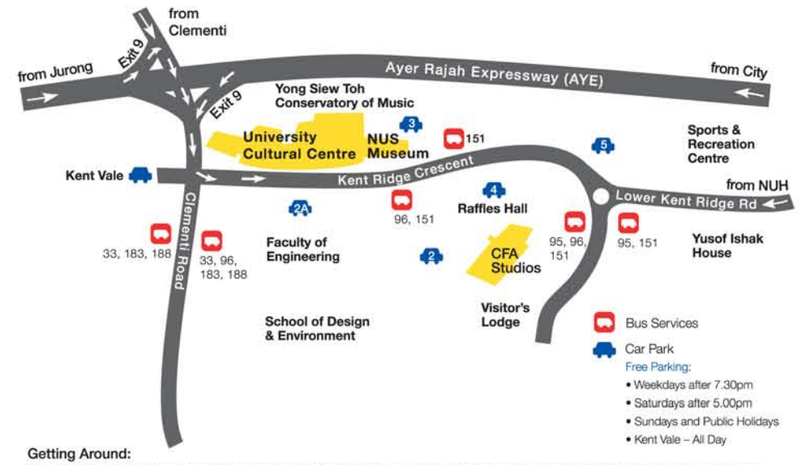
Opening Hours

10am – 7.30pm (Tuesdays – Saturdays)
10am – 6pm (Sundays)
Closed on Mondays and Public Holidays



Getting Around:
SBS Bus No. 96 from Clementi Bus Interchange / No. 151 from Hougang Central Interchange / No. 33 from Bedok Interchange
SMRT Bus No. 188 from Choa Chu Kang Interchange.

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