

an hour @ the museum

In this weekly column, we visit museums and art spaces and highlight what you must see if you have only an hour to spare.

Early Singapore Art, an exhibition of works by first- and second-generation Singapore artists, features more than 30 artworks ranging from Chinese ink to watercolours. On display are paintings by famous names such as pioneer artist Cheong Soo Pieng and Ong Kim Seng, who specialises in watercolours.

Where: Artcommune Gallery, Bras Basah Complex, 02-43, Block 231 Bain Street
MRT: Bras Basah **When:** Till Jan 20, noon - 7pm daily **Admission:** Free **Tel:** 6336-4240
Info: www.artcommune.com.sg

Deepika Shetty

1 KAMPONG LIFE, UNDATED

By Cheong Soo Pieng, 49x60cm, Chinese ink on silk

The late Cheong Soo Pieng (1917-1983), one of Singapore's most influential artists, was among the pioneers of the Nanyang style, which is a blend of Western art styles and South-east Asian sensibilities and subjects. Besides oils, he excelled in Chinese inks and brush paintings of landscapes, and was ahead of his time in his abstract, innovative artworks. This work, most likely done after an exhibition tour of China in 1978, was part of an ambitious project to paint a series of ink works that linked his Nanyang-styled art with the tradition of Chinese masters.



PHOTOS: ARTCOMMUNE GALLERY

2 KELONG, 1957 (right)

By Cheong Soo Pieng, 30x42cm, Chinese ink on paper

Through this Chinese ink on paper work, one gets an insight into how the artist injected great energy into a small painting with complex compositions and a clever use of lines and colours.



3 GIBBONS, UNDATED

By Chen Wen Hsi, 34x44cm, Chinese ink on paper

The art of Chen Wen Hsi (1906-1991) marries Chinese calligraphy work on rice paper and Western composition, ranging from Cubism to Abstract Expressionism. His early subjects included fishing villages and Indian temples. Later, he depicted his favourite animals, which included gibbons and egrets.



4 CRANES, UNDATED

By Chen Wen Hsi, 53x25cm, Chinese ink on paper

While Chen's work was mainly influenced by traditional Chinese art, he was also inspired by Western forms of composition, harmony, balance and construction of lines. This is best exemplified in his paintings of birds. Lines are used to create the birds. The brush strokes are fluid and there is little emphasis on light and shadows.



5 EMERALD HILL, 2005

By Ong Kim Seng, 73x52cm, watercolour on paper

Ong, a watercolourist and Cultural Medallion recipient, started out painting landscapes in earthy colours almost 50 years ago. His fine impressionistic renderings of Singapore cityscapes often bring to life old houses and quiet streets.

6 PARK TOUR, UNDATED

By Chuan Keng Boon, 34x54cm, ink on paper

Chinese landscape painter Chuan has found inspiration in the concrete jungle. His painting in Chinese ink, HDB Beauty, which portrayed a very Singaporean landscape, won him the first prize in the traditional Chinese medium category at the Painting Of The Year Competition organised by the United Overseas Bank group in 1993. This work shows the artist's mastery in ink. The foliage is shown through generous washes of ink and a fine control of ink tonalities. Such ink washes require great skill to execute as water and ink need to be controlled in the exact proportion.



7 A VIEW FROM NICOLL HIGHWAY, 1970S

By Tong Chin Sye, 40x50cm, watercolour on paper

Boats on the shore and skyscrapers in the distance - this was the view from Nicoll Highway in the 1970s. Tong uses earthy colours to create this work laden with atmospheric charm.



8 PONTIAN WATER VILLAGE, 1995

By Tan Choh Tee, 53x65cm, oil on canvas

Oil-painter Tan, a Cultural Medallion recipient, is well-known for his picturesque landscapes and paintings depicting Chinatown. The versatile artist shows his mastery over his medium through this complex work which combines colours, shapes and lines while portraying a river house on stilts.