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Singapore Art Week 2026

Over 43,000 at Art SG 2026, Singapore artist Anthony Poon breaks record at Sotheby's

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Lee Bae's works were sold for a collective \$3.47 million.

ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN



Clement Yong



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Summary ⓘ

- Art SG, attended by over 43,000 visitors, including celebrities, was praised for its curation and international appeal during Singapore Art Week.
- Galleries reported strong sales, with Johyun Gallery selling Lee Bae's works for US\$2.75 million and White Cube selling Raqib Shaw's tapestry for £275,000.

- Emerging artist Marigold Santos won the inaugural US\$10,000 Art SG Futures Prize; Sotheby's auction saw sales up 35 per cent.

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SINGAPORE – Attended by more than 43,000 visitors, including American singer-songwriter Nick Jonas and South Korean actress Ha Ji-won, Marina Bay Sands mega fair Art SG drew the curtains on its fourth edition on Jan 25 to general praise.

The anchor event of Singapore Art Week (SAW), Art SG now feels surer of its place on the international art calendar.

Its guest list of directors, curators and patrons was long, including artistic director of the Bangkok Art Biennale Apinan Poshyananda, director of collection for Tate United Kingdom Gregor Muir and director of international programmes at the United Arab Emirates' Sharjah Art Foundation Judith Greer.

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This edition was also widely recognised by collectors and hobbyists as better curated with more interesting works shown by over 100 galleries. It was also enlivened by the South-east Asian art show S.E.A. Focus and an excellent South Asian exhibition platform sponsored by automobile manufacturer TVS.

A push towards performance art injected some tension and spontaneity to the sterile art fair setting. Samoan artist Brian Fuata, red-faced and lop-shouldered in the persona of the trickster, wrapped his arms around a bystander's throat.



Performance artist Brian Fuata at Art SG.

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Indonesian veteran Melati Suryodarmo held up a 40kg sheet of glass over nearly three hours while murmuring “I love you”. The 83-year-old Singaporean Tang Da Wu climbed a chair to daub a wall with slogans while clad in a pant leg fashioned from paper and plaster.

For the first time, Art SG lead and founding partner UBS presented a US\$10,000 (S\$12,600) Art SG Futures Prize to an emerging artist in the young galleries section, Filipino-Canadian artist Marigold Santos.

Artworks snapped up

All this activity was matched by topline transactions, including Johyun Gallery’s sale of all works by South Korean monochrome painter and sculptor Lee Bae. Totalling US\$2.75 million, this included the monumental installation of his panels placed round a calligraphic sculpture that was one of the marvels of the fair.

Blue-chip gallery White Cube sold Indian artist Raqib Shaw’s tapestry of polar bears *The Pragmatic Pessimist* for £275,000 (S\$479,000). All of Malaysian artist Sean Lean’s automotive

paintings incorporating words written about the West's encounter with China sold for prices in the range of \$20,000 to \$25,000.

Ms Dawn Zhu, Asia director of blue-chip gallery Thaddaeus Ropac, says galleries are now more familiar with the considered pace of sales in Singapore. Unlike elsewhere, collectors know works will not be snapped up within hours, so they take their time.

Thaddaeus Ropac has been at Art SG for all four editions, one of two regular blue-chip galleries along with White Cube. It sold an Antony Gormley sculpture at £450,000 and another intricate enamel, glitter and rhinestone painting by Shaw for £475,000.

“We’ve always turned a profit,” Ms Zhu, a Singaporean who moved to London in the 1990s, says. “We are now sometimes surprised to see so many international institutions and collectors. It’s a good way to keep in contact with them.

“We are playing the long game. People want to know that you will be around. They want continuity.”

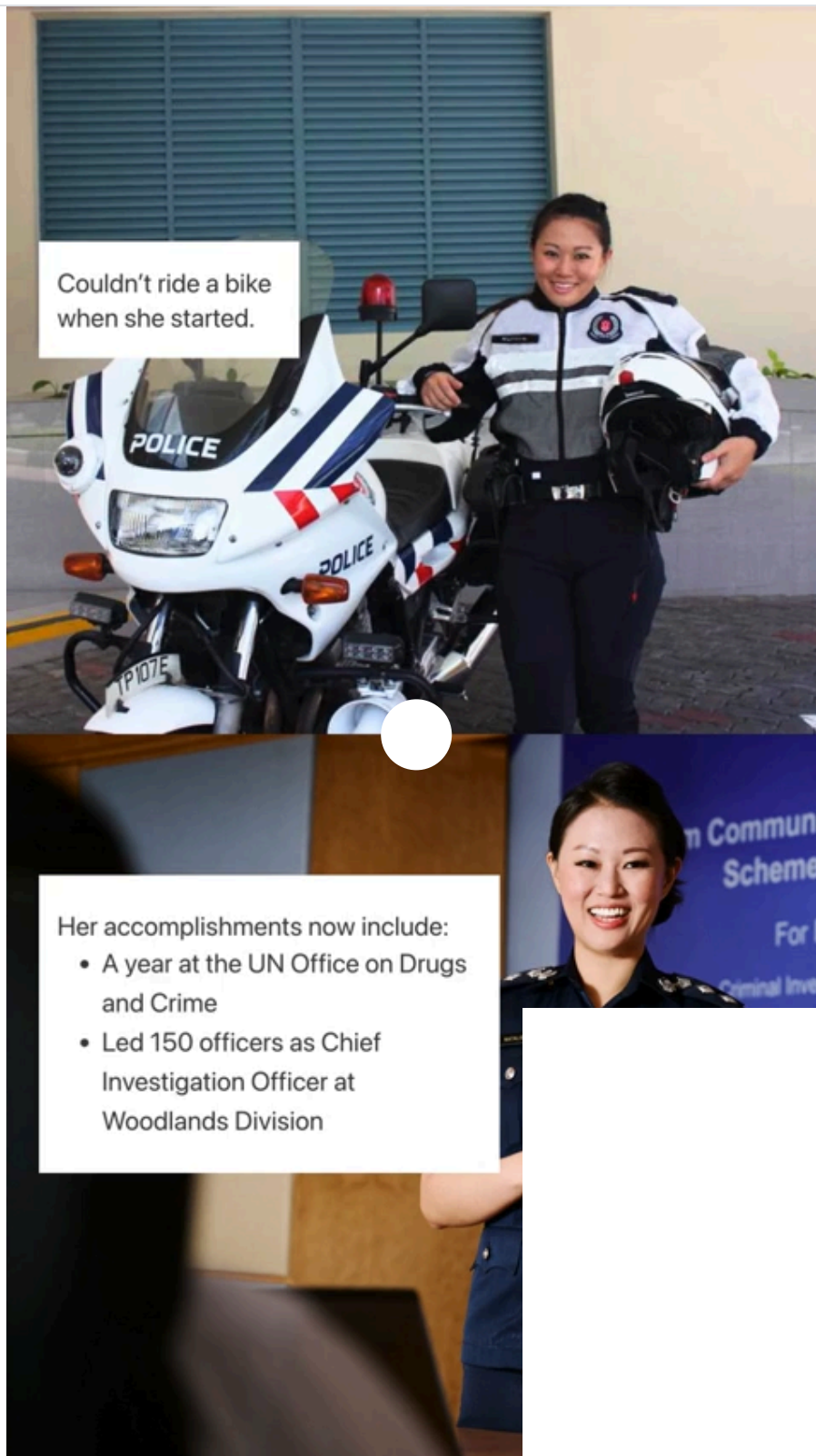
This year, Thaddaeus Ropac also brought a work made in Malaysia by American artist Robert Rauschenberg, which attracted serious interest.



Melati Suryodarmo's *I Love You* performance at Art SG 2026.

ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

The gallery will keep its works here for a month to give buyers more time to decide.



Singapore works making waves

Singapore galleries like JW Projects and Intersections Gallery also sold Singapore works to regional and foreign collectors. Organisers kept S.E.A. Focus rental at about \$8,000 in 2026 to

help with the transition. An Art SG booth could cost upwards of \$80,000.

At Art SG, JW Projects director Jingwei Wang placed works by Singapore artist Moses Tan with Museum of Contemporary Art Bangkok.

Ms Wang returned to Art SG after a break in 2025 because she realised there were more private foundations and collectors setting up shop in Singapore, especially around her space in River Valley. Her strategy of bringing lower-priced works paid off, from \$30,000 to \$50,000 in her last outing to between \$1,000 and \$31,000 now.

Co-founder of Intersections Gallery Marie-Pierre Mol says S.E.A. Focus' relocation to Marina Bay Sands from Tanjong Pagar Distripark motivated her participation in both fairs for the first time.

S.E.A. Focus saw larger crowds and a more vibrant atmosphere, especially on vernissage day when local collectors congregated there to signal their support.

But Intersections' best sales were still at the Art SG booth, where Singapore artist Calvin Pang's sunrise and sunset photos in tin cans were dispersed to collectors from the United States, United Kingdom and Thailand.



Visitors at the S.E.A. Focus section of Art SG 2026.

ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

Chennai gallery Ashvita's, a first-time participant at Art SG, committed to returning to the fair. Founder Ashvin E. Rajagopalan was overjoyed at the local and regional interest and said the presence of 10 Indian galleries – up from three in 2025 – was a real step up in Singapore's claims to a hub status.

The gallery sold a colour field work on galvanised iron sheet by Chennai-artist G. Gurunathan to a Singapore family, and another to a Bangkok Institution – more than breaking even.

“It's our first international art fair, and we are shocked at the non-Indian interest in our art. We thought we would appeal only to the diaspora,” he says.



American singer-songwriter Nick Jonas at Art SG.

ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

Over at Sotheby's auction, which the auction house began timing with SAW in 2025, sales were up 35 per cent compared with 2025, including new records for second-generation Singapore artist Anthony Poon and the Philippines' Pacita Abad.

Poon's *Colour Waves* (1986), part of the Raffles City Collection, doubled its low estimate to sell at \$165,100. Abad's fabric canvas appliqued with buttons and mirrors was the object of fierce bidding for five minutes and reached four times its low estimate to sell for \$495,300.



Anthony Poon's *Colour Waves* (1986) sold at \$165,100.

Other notable results for South-east Asian artists include sales of works by Singapore's Chen Wen Hsi and Indonesian pioneer I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih at over three times their low estimates.

Top lot sales were for three iPad drawings by English artist David Hockney for a total of \$1.07 million and a paper work by Russian-French painter Marc Chagall for \$736,600 – setting a new record for paper works sold in Asia.

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