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A Turner Prize Winner Returns to Singapore

By Kristiano Ang



Richard Deacon/Singapore Tyler Print Institute

Richard Deacon's 'Beware of the Dog' exhibition at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute was inspired by the zigzags on hazard-warning tapes.

One day last August, Richard Deacon was standing at a train station in London when he noticed a hazard warning tape marking off an area. It was a sight you might come across anywhere, but the tape's yellow and black zigzag lines served as inspiration for "Beware of the Dog," an exhibition of the sculptor's works that opens at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute on Saturday.

"Most of my motivation comes from visual stimuli rather than research," said the 63-year-old Welsh artist, best known for winning the Turner Prize in 1987. "As an artist, you get much more out of starting somewhere small than big. If you start with something big, it only gets smaller as you work on it."

With its name connoting the theme of anxiety, “Beware of the Dog” will feature works from Mr. Deacon’s two-part residency at STPI, which saw him creating 76 pieces over a three-week stint last year and over a fortnight in March. About half of these will be on display, ranging from paper that was floated on a mixture of oil-based paint and water before being turned into a sculpture, to UV prints of regional landmarks such as Singapore’s Marina Bay Sands resort.

The exhibition explores ideas of disruption and connectivity. “Think of a television screen where the image is flashing with an interference pattern,” Mr. Deacon said, noting that the interference could be seen as “a kind of folding. These two themes are quite closely connected.”

While he also draws and writes, Mr. Deacon is most frequently associated with his abstract sculptures, which are often made from easily available materials such as cardboard and paper.

Emi Eu, STPI’s director, says the organization was drawn to this versatility. “We invite artists who can challenge us,” she said, adding that the artist’s “conceptually rigorous practice involving various mediums [made it] natural for both of us to collaborate.”

Mr. Deacon, who has represented Wales at the Venice Biennale and shown at the Carnegie Museum of Art, calls himself “a bit of a novice” when it comes to Asian art. Nonetheless, he has longstanding links with the region.

Not only did his mother work as a doctor in Singapore immediately after the Japanese Occupation, but Mr. Deacon’s first brush with sculpture came in Sri Lanka, where he lived with his family from late 1955 to 1958. “The Buddhist sculptures at Polonnaruwa were the first things I saw where I was interested in them as art,” he said. “It was a very strong experience of positive and negative space, and the very first sculpture experience I’ve ever had.”

Though Mr. Deacon has shows coming up in New York and Copenhagen in November, and has a museum project in the works for the Tate Britain in London, he has no future shows planned in the region. Audiences might still find traces of Asia in his future work, however. He says he is curious about “the way the hair of the Buddha is depicted in sculptures,” and has a particular interest in “absence and presence in relation to Buddhist art.”

Source: Wall Street Journal

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