

Han Sai Por:
The Forest and Its Soul

Singapore's eminent stone sculptor presents new evocative print and paper works on the life of the forest



Han Sai Por in STPI's Artist Studio

Opens to Public

9 April - 22 May 2022

STPI Gallery

Free Entry

“I like to experiment so as to discover the material that I’m working with through my hands-on approach. This is a language for me, allowing me to interpret the vision that I have. At STPI, it was about this kind of experimenting and discovering.”

– Han Sai Por

The Forest and Its Soul marks the second residency and solo exhibition of Singaporean artist **Han Sai Por** (b. 1943) with STPI. Following her first residency in 2013, the Cultural Medallion recipient and Asia’s foremost sculptor returns to the Creative Workshop to create 35 new print and paper works in a span of just three weeks. Using technologies that are new to the artist (such as photo intaglio and laser-cutting), the eventual works exemplify Han’s enduring spirit of artistic exploration that is not bounded by a singular medium, even at this stage of her decades-long career.

This body of work draws from the artist’s own experiences of walking through dense forests, of which Han has described as being “an emotional landscape”. Additionally, it serves to evoke a sense of boundless energy hidden behind the many layers and depth of the whole forest ecosystem, composed of many elements – the wind blowing, leaves dropping and dancing, rolling waters, micro-life teeming among the mud and detritus on the floor and more.



Han Sai Por, (left to right) ***Sea Vision*** and ***Sea Vision*** (detail), 2022,
Acrylic paint on paper cast, 127 x 166 x 3.5 cm.

The impression of layers and depth is achieved through a handful of techniques, such as with the paper cast “paintings”, *Sea Vision* and *Seascape*. For *Sea Vision*, even after the shape of the canvas has been formed through paper casting, Han continued to hand-sculpt areas of the work to accentuate its depth despite its seeming two-dimensionality. The idea of the flat landscape is further disrupted through masterful sweeps of colour throughout the cast, with the colours intentionally highlighting its sculptural characteristics. In this manner, the landscape comes to life in multiple perspectives, depending on the angle that one views it from.



Han Sai Por, *In the Silence*, 2022, Laser-cut STPI handmade paper, paper pulp, acrylic paint on paper cast, 35.5 x 46 x 3 cm.

The emotive, mysterious forest is further brought to life through novel technical additions to the artist’s repertoire. Working heavily with STPI’s laser-cut machine, many ghostly, skeletal trees were carved out of textured paper and subsequently layered one atop the other to produce a forest of trees within the final frame (for example, *In the Silence*, and her *Night* and *Day* series). With the laser etch technique, Han’s sketches transform into a fiery forest (as with her *Burning Forest* series). On STPI handmade paper, both methods leave a trademark “burnt” effect and colouration, which additionally enhances the granulated qualities of these works.

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Han Sai Por, *Inner Forest through the Artist's Eyes 1*, 2022,
Photo intaglio on paper, 59.5 x 75 cm.

A sculptor at heart and in line with the ideas she engages with for this show, Han seeks to capture depth even with her two dimensional prints. Presented with the possibilities of photo intaglio, the artist was able to capture her meticulously detailed sketches—where the highlights and shadows are skilfully expressed through the artist's hand—in the medium of print. Series such as *Inner Forest through the Artist's Eyes* and *Close Vision in Light & Shade* thus articulate the artist's long-lasting relationship with nature and its many components, and circles back to her view of it as a highly textural, multi-layered landscape.



Han Sai Por, *Native*, 2022, Wood stained cast mulberry paper
on canvas, 130 x 130 x 2.5 cm.

Other highlight works include *Blue Fruit*, *White Fruit* and the *Dancing Leaves* paper sculpture series, lithographic prints of landscapes from the artist's imaginations like *Wild Land* and *Dancing Waves*, and the powerfully raw piece, *Native*, formed out of flattened mulberry bark. Ultimately, the artist hopes for visitors to reacquaint themselves with the full breadth of nature, and to encourage care and reverence for the living world all around us.

Artist

Han Sai Por



A formidable artistic figure with more than 50 years of practice, Han Sai Por (b.1943, Singapore) is one of Asia's leading modern sculptors and a recipient of Singapore's Cultural Medallion Award in 1995. Her experiences have shaped her aesthetic language of understated, geometric, and organic forms; marble sculptures appear pliant, making for instantly recognisable works that speak of her years of experience.

Her education in Fine Arts and Landscape Architecture strengthened her keen understanding of nature and the environment that influenced her work. Most of her works are inspired by the flora and fauna in tropical forests of Southeast Asia. They often comment on the changing landscape in the region and the deforestation that adversely impacts on the environment and ecosystem.

Han has won international acclaim and participated in numerous international exhibitions and projects around the world. Her works can be found in the collections of many international institutions, public spaces and private collections from Singapore, Malaysia, India, China, Japan, New Zealand, Australia and United Kingdom and the United States, such as the National Gallery Singapore, Singapore Art Museum, National Museum in Beijing, the Australian Parliament, the Chancery of the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations in New York, the Singapore Embassy in Washington DC, Istana Singapore, and Changi Airport Terminal 3 in Singapore.

About STPI

STPI Gallery fosters the exchange of ideas in contemporary art with its diverse exhibitions and public programme. The gallery hosts specially curated exhibitions of works produced in the STPI Creative Workshop and regularly participates in international art fairs. This enables it to nurture and sustain local and international interest in both its residency artists as well as the mediums of print and paper.

STPI is a creative workshop and contemporary art gallery based in Singapore. Established in 2002, STPI is committed to promoting artistic experimentation in the mediums of print and paper, making it one of the most cutting-edge destinations for contemporary art in Asia. STPI sits alongside National Gallery Singapore and the Singapore Art Museum as part of the national Visual Arts Cluster of leading institutions in the region.