



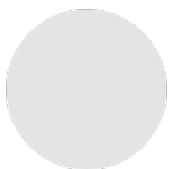
Lifestyle / Arts & Culture

Singapore SOS for exhibitors at cancelled Art Stage fair brings flood of offers to host shows

In a spirit of camaraderie, galleries, a hotel, homeowners and an art collector offer space for artists and gallerists already in Singapore to show works

Efforts continue to find a large venue to give exhibitors maximum exposure

Topic | Art



Enid Tsui

Published:

12:00pm, 18

Jan, 2019 ▼



Exhibitors and artists are still reeling from the cancellation of Art Stage Singapore just a week before art fair's scheduled opening. But a distinctly Singaporean spirit has come to the fore in the aftermath: a tremendous sense of camaraderie and a determination to be self-sufficient.

Within two hours of Art Stage founder Lorenzo Rudolf's official notification to the 45 exhibitors on Wednesday, a [Facebook group called Art Stage SOS \[1\]](#) was set up for artists and gallerists affected by the cancellation. It was also a cry for help: could anyone with spare space to accommodate exhibitions at the last minute please come forward?

By Friday, it had attracted 328 members and offers from all quarters.

Among the first to come forward was Artcommune Gallery in Bras Basah. It is a building with 10 galleries and auction houses that has a spare 1,000 sq ft space for use during the four days Art Stage was to have run – January 24–27).

“Artcommune would like to convey that they are doing this on the basis of goodwill, and are very open to reasonable rates depending on the respective situations of artists and/or gallerists who need assistance,” said the moderator of the Facebook group, Usha Chandradas.

The Art Stage SOS Facebook page.

“Hello we don’t have space but if anyone needs basic legal advice, I would be happy to help,” posted Ryan Su, a lawyer and collector.

Hotlotz, an online auction house in Singapore, has suggested hosting auctions for those affected to help them sell art.

Commercial galleries and non-profit art spaces have offered to show artworks already shipped from overseas to Singapore for Art Stage and to host, often at cost, individual artists who have now lost the opportunity to show their works at the fair. Individuals have also offered their private residences for the use of artists.

Artcommune Gallery in Bras Basah is a building with 10 galleries and auction houses that has a spare 1,000 sq ft space for use by Art Stage exhibitors.

Chandradas, a co-founder of Plural Art Mag, a publication set up last year to popularise contemporary art, said the one positive to have come out of the shock cancellation of Singapore's main contemporary art fair was how the community had pulled together.

“We set up the Facebook group just to provide a platform for ideas. What we've seen is a new determination to show the world that the Singaporean art scene is far from stagnant. There is a real sense of camaraderie and people are really excited now to see how next week is going to pan out,” she said.

There is concern among the group that a smattering of venues will not get the same footfall as a big event like Art Stage, and galleries are not keen to spend more since they have no idea whether they can recover the significant costs they have already sunk into Art Stage.



**What we've seen is a
new determination to
show the world that the
Singaporean art scene is
far from stagnant**

Usha Chandradas

There have been proposals to get as many of the Art Stage participants under one roof as possible. On Friday morning, a post said about 15 galleries were going to show at an undisclosed location. A local collector has offered, at minimal cost, his space in Changi Business Park and to handle the logistics of hosting a full-size art fair there. An unnamed hotel offered its 450 square metre ballroom for all of next week.

For all the excitement about the art community coming together, the shock and sense of betrayal remain fresh. Even well-established galleries are at a loss. Tang Contemporary Art and Richard Koh Fine Art both said on Friday that they hadn't had time to reflect on the situation because they were too busy setting up at the inaugural – and drama-free – Taipei Dangdai art fair in Taiwan.

Rudolf appeared to have launched a new diatribe against Singapore in a statement published on Wednesday on the website of Prestige magazine, which none of the exhibitors received directly.

In it, he suggested that it was unfair for the Singapore government to support a new, rival art fair, SEA Focus, to be launched in the same week as Art Stage.

Lorenzo Rudolf, founder of Art Stage Singapore, says fair organisers have often faced big resistance in their quest to develop the art scene and art market in Singapore. Photo: Enid Tsui

“With honest commitment, untiring commitment, as well as with large financial investments, Art Stage Singapore has always stood up for the independence of art, the art scene and the art market and has fought for their sustainable development, growth and acceptance, often against big resistance,” he wrote.

“As you can imagine, it was not an easy time – I could write a huge book about our experiences, with many episodes hardly to believe to be possible in Singapore.”

There were doubts about the future of Art Stage last year when it cancelled its Jakarta edition four months ahead of its scheduled opening and the Singapore office refused to comment on whether the Singapore edition would go ahead this month.

Thailand's art explosion, galleries' gender bias: Asian arts in 2018

[2]

Then, in December, Rudolf announced in a press conference that he was stepping back from the fair and handed over the reins to Marcus Teo, a Singaporean who has been handling the operational aspects of the fair since 2012. Teo told the Post on Wednesday that it was not his intention to cancel the fair, but refused to clarify.

The National Arts Council, the Singapore Tourism Board and the Singapore Economic Development Board issued a joint statement on Wednesday saying they understood that the cancellation was a commercial decision.

Source URL: <https://scmp.com/lifestyle/arts-culture/article/2182641/singapore-sos-exhibitors-cancelled-art-stage-fair-brings>

Links

[1] <http://www.facebook.com/groups/467867243743976/>

[2] <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/arts-culture/article/2180093/big-arts-stories-asia-2018-burst-thai-shows-new-hong-kong>