

Today Online: Suzann Victor explores new media for her latest show

BY BRUCE QUEK



Suzann Victor's *Cloud Without Tears* is one of the artworks featured in her exhibition, *Imprint: New Works*.

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*Her exhibition *Imprint: New Works* is also a return of sorts for the artist*

SINGAPORE — While Art Week features a staggering array of arts events — bolstered, perhaps, by the frenzy of SG50-related reflections and celebrations — you won't want to miss the Singapore Tyler Print Institute's (STPI) offering, *Imprint: New Works* by Suzann Victor. As the title suggests, the exhibition features a bevy of new works by one of Singapore's most distinguished artists — Victor is the only woman,

to date, to represent Singapore at the Venice Biennale. The cherry on the pie is that she's working in print and paper media not typically associated with her practice. You can also catch her work at Art Stage Singapore: At the STPI booth and her seminal swinging chandelier *Contours Of A Rich Manoeuvre* is a public artwork in collaboration with Gajah Gallery.

It's potential that Victor sees in that lack of familiarity. To her, it is the "blindness and innocence to the process that's quite terrifying — but at the same time, that fear is very attractive". She added: "You get past it and work with it by getting into the material — discovering that it's quite fun — and then your instincts takes over."

It wasn't all gut feeling at play, with Victor poring over the outcomes of past residencies to see how they tackled an unfamiliar medium. The potential trap, in her mind, was that what someone new to a medium might consider a novel approach might very well be anything but. Despite that unfamiliarity, the show is a return for Victor in more ways than one. Firstly, the medium used is a return to her early days as an abstract painter, particularly in the series *Twice Upon A Juliet*, in which she painted acid onto copper plates used to print the series.

This sense of return, though, doesn't involve Victor returning to re-tread well-established ground. Instead, the artist embraces a spontaneous approach to the precise, pre-planned nature of printmaking. In the case of *We Cloud*, a multi-perspectival, modular artwork, the artist was very interested in how paper could be more than merely "a surface to receive marks and pigments". "In this case, the paper pulp is actually used as a pigment (and) used to paint onto these modular disks," she elaborated. "Effectively, the paper, which is usually the surface, is now both figure and ground, because the disks which are supposedly the ground, are quite transparent."

It's also a temporary return to Singapore for the Sydney-based artist and this is best seen in the series *I Was Like That Myself ... We All Held Each Others Hands*. In it, nostalgic images of old Singapore, embellished by Chinese New Year floral decorations, are obscured by a scintillating layer of Fresnel lenses, rendering it impossible to make out the underlying image with any real clarity. Based on the artist's own sense of dislocation — and perhaps our own rose-tinted view of old Singapore — Victor noted: “It left a very strong impression on me — in the amnesia of the changing landscape of Singapore, because it's constantly renewing itself, as though it's ageless — as though it's constantly, forever 21. I don't mean to trivialise it, but it's a shortcut to how I think.”

And what does the artist think of how resources and exhibition platforms for artists have grown over the years? Has the abundance of such resources coddled the arts scene?

“It's a very romantic notion, you know?” she said. “To say that, ‘Okay, did you suffer? Did you go through any adversity?’ If art is about prospecting new grounds in the way we think — and about daring to think; then, yes, it could create a kind of complacency.”

Imprint: New Works by Suzann Victor runs from Jan 18 to Feb 21, 10am to 7pm on Tuesdays to Fridays and 9am to 6pm on Saturdays at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute, 41 Robertson Quay. Closed on Sundays and public holidays. Free.