



Poetry in Motion

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Known for her striking conceptual works, Suzann Victor chats with Renata Wan about life and art this Singapore Art Week.

Swish. Swish. Swish...before the first whispered motion ends, another begins in a long chain of pendulums. Looking up, one notices a strangely mesmerising phenomenon: Twelve red chandeliers hung from the ceiling, marking the passage of time as if a metronome, entralling and drawing us like moths to flames.

This is *Contours of a Rich Manoeuvre*, an installation by Suzann Victor that takes pride of place at Art Stage, Singapore Art Week's foremost event, which takes place January 22-25 at the Marina Bay Sands Convention and Exhibition Centre.

One of the nation's leading contemporary artists — she represented Singapore at the 49th Venice Biennale — Victor has the remarkable ability to create visually striking, poetic pieces that work on several layers. Take, for instance, *Rainbow Circle: Capturing a Natural Phenomenon*, her installation within the National Museum of Singapore's rotunda for the 2013 Singapore Biennale. By directing a heliostat onto a curtain of water droplets, she created an indoor rainbow — an ephemeral arc that transcended the intangible to become a museum artefact.

Based in Australia since the mid-1990s, the 55-year-old first started out as a painter before rising to local prominence

by taking on the taboo and presenting works that dealt with the corporeal.

Apart from *Contours of a Rich Manoeuvre*, presented by Gajah Gallery, Victor's latest works created during her recent residency at STPI will also be showcased at Art Stage Singapore.

Who/what is your inspiration?

It is consistently the integrity of people when under the greatest pressure.

Where did you get your inspiration for Contours of a Rich Manoeuvre? What does the series represent?

It is actually from seeing how some artists from an Asian background "exoticise" themselves either through the use of materials or subject matter that reinforces a cultural stereotype. Hence, I decided to explore the deployment of material or symbols that are associated with a Western lineage — the chandelier — so as to deconstruct its conventional usage into something quite different, ie to perform an Asian iconography, such as a light-drawing of the Red Dragon swinging in mid-air like a coherent body. On another level, the work uses the science and physics of simple harmonic motion to engage the viewer as it is the most comfortable movement in nature; eg the joy of a child on a swing, the swaying of trees in gentle breeze or the soothing waves of the ocean.

How long does it take you on average to create an art piece, from conception to completion? And which was the most difficult piece to create?

It usually takes close to one year. The most labour-intensive work is *Panoramic Matrix* at the (former) Meritus Mandarin Singapore's lobby space.

What is your greatest fear? Does this manifest itself in your work?

Fear of failing people. Yes, it manifests itself in the amount of time I take to do a work, how it is conceptualised as a very specific response to a given space, to how I can design it for compactness, with packing, freighting and storage in mind. This is so that a work is "lovable" from labour and presentation, to delivery and, if not a permanent public piece, the thought that goes into storage.

Have you ever had an idea but were unable to see it unfold as a work of art?

I thought that being able to create time would be the most unrealisable idea. But that was only until I realised that the heart and mind still remains engaged in variable degrees to a work long after the actual encounter. For instance, thinking about the work of art — visual, filmic or sound art, or music — when driving or even midway in conversation long afterwards. Therefore, the experience is still unfolding after and away from the aesthetic encounter.

Are there any other forms of art you would love to explore? Which ones and why?

I would dearly love to be a stand-up comedian. It is very empowering.

How did it feel to be among the first to fly the Singapore flag at the Venice Biennale?

I was honoured. It was exciting and, at the same time, came with a sense of responsibility.

What are your aspirations for the future? What is your next goal in the vast world of art?

To engage even wider audiences and make a difference.

<http://www.prestige-singapore.com.sg/2015/01/poetry-motion#.VN7XjfmUeH->