

ARTS

# Gillman Barracks celebrates 13 years, with end date in sight

Like the Projector, its story will close – but this weekend spotlights its extraordinary place in the arts scene

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The Red Club x Cartier art tour is among the many engagement activities held at Gillman Barracks. PHOTO: RED CLUB X CARTIER

[SINGAPORE] Gillman Barracks turns 13 this Saturday (Aug 30) with day-long celebrations held in conjunction with Singapore Gallery Month. Since 2012, the former army camp has transformed into one of Singapore’s most beloved contemporary art precincts, helping to normalise gallery-going among both the young and the old.

But its time is limited. Under the Urban Redevelopment Authority’s Draft Master Plan 2025, the site will be re-zoned for residential use once leases expire in 2030. Like other critical cultural institutions – such as the Substation and the Projector – Gillman, as we know it, will slip into the past.

For Audrey Yeo, founder of Yeo Workshop, Gillman’s foundational framework is its strength. “Galleries were handpicked from the beginning to come here. Today, while some came and went, and others joined over time, Gillman continues to be home to some of Singapore’s most dynamic galleries. They regularly update their programmes, nurture artists, and present groundbreaking exhibitions.”

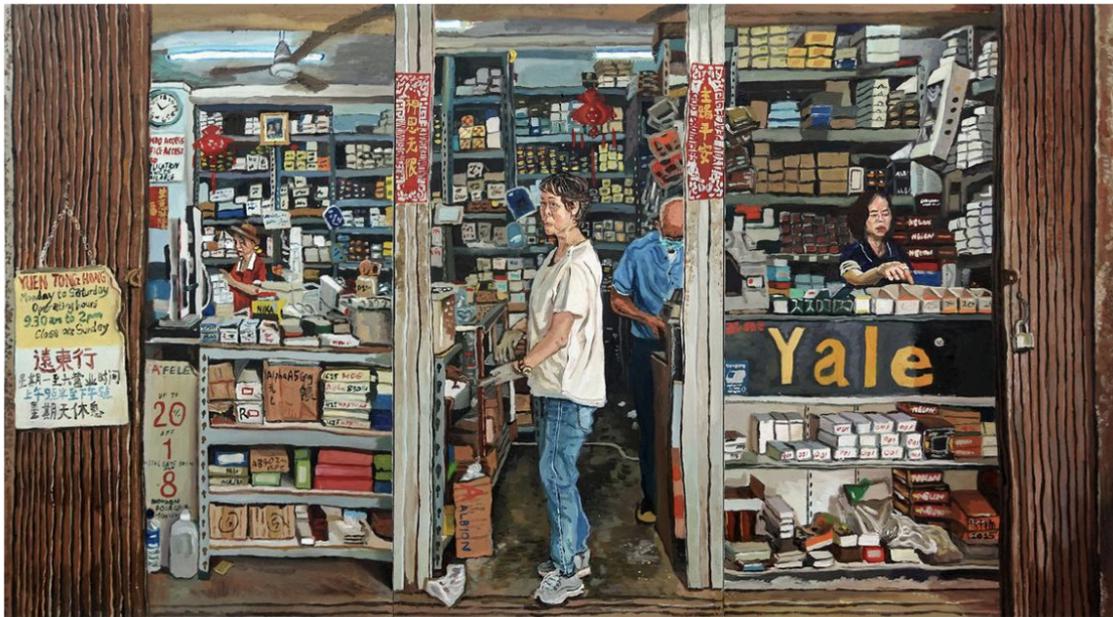


Over the years, events such as Art After Dark have helped normalise gallery-going among Singaporeans. FILE PHOTO

Audiences have grown steadily over the years. Theresia Irma, gallery manager of Mizuma Gallery, recalls the early days when footfall was uncertain. “In the beginning, people were shy about walking into a gallery. Now we see more local visitors, especially younger audiences in their 20s and 30s. The number of people who actually enjoy looking at art has improved significantly.”

Still, the looming lease expiry remains real. “Everyone has accepted the fact that, at some point, we will have to move out,” says Irma. “For Mizuma, as long as we can stay, we will. We’ve built an audience here and it makes sense to continue until the end.”

Yeo, who is also president of the Art Galleries Association Singapore, points to broader challenges. “There is limited government support for what is still a nascent industry in need of sustained growth. Public literacy and awareness of contemporary art are still developing. Even world-renowned art districts like Beijing’s 798 Art Zone took many years to flourish.”



Gillman Barracks helps nurture young artists like Yeo Tze Yang, whose latest painting *The Locksmith*, is currently showcased at Fost. PHOTO: FOST GALLERY

By 2030, Gillman Barracks will have lasted 18 years – longer than sceptics once predicted. But for now, its 13th anniversary is a chance to celebrate a space that continues to play a vital role in opening doors to contemporary art.

Here are the various gallery showcases at *Gillman Gatherings* this Saturday.

## Mizuma Gallery

One of the first galleries in Gillman Barracks, Mizuma’s ambitious show takes a playful dive into Japanese pop culture, where art, monsters, and video games collide. Twelve Japanese artists reimagine everything from Godzilla to glitchy game screens, blending nostalgia with sharp social commentary. Kenji Yanobe’s futuristic *Ship’s Cat* takes off in a sculptural “spaceship”, while others turn clay, paintings, and animations into creatures that straddle myth and modern life. Visitors can even play games inside the gallery, blurring lines between

artwork and entertainment. This Friday and Saturday, the artists and curators will be present at the gallery to discuss their works.



Takakurakazuki reimagines the mandala as a computer game. PHOTO: MIZUMA GALLERY



Kenji Yanobe's futuristic Ship's Cat blends humour and dystopia.  
PHOTO: MIZUMA GALLERY

## Columns Gallery

Kim Kang-Yong's *Boundaries Between Reality And Image* at the Columns Gallery elevates the humble brick into an optical puzzle. His pastel and monochrome cubes blur the line between painting and sculpture, light and shadow, and reality and illusion. The repetition and subtle variation creates a gently hypnotic rhythm, inviting viewers to question what is solid and what is imagined.

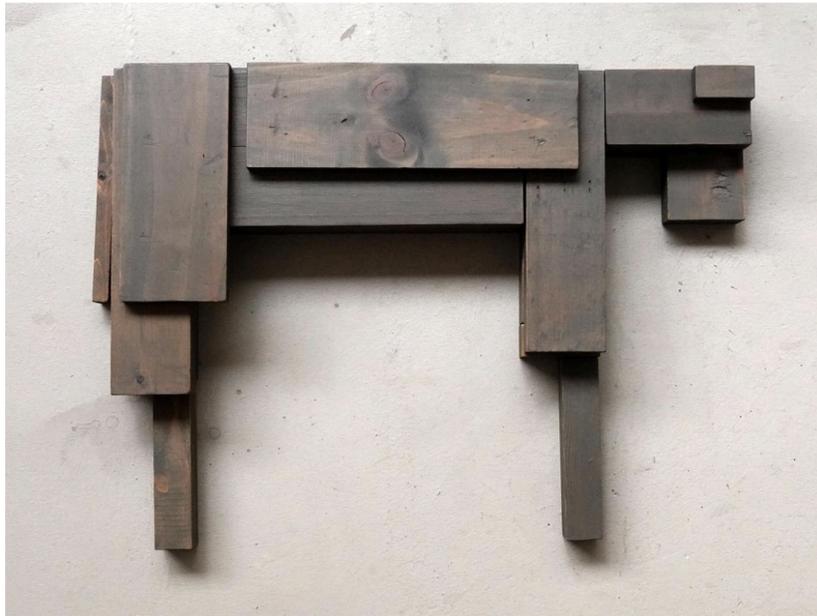


Kim Kang-Yong's optical illusions at the Columns Gallery. PHOTO: COLUMNS GALLERY

## **ShanghArt Gallery**

Love dogs? Don't miss Lai Yu Tong's first solo exhibition at ShanghArt, which centres on his encounters with a pack of stray dogs near his home. The show includes drawings, collages, sculpture, sound

and a performance, exploring themes of fear, empathy, and connection with creatures living on society's fringes. Using everyday materials like cardboard, wood, and paper, Lai renders the dogs as ghostly, elusive figures – a metaphor for beings who exist out of sight yet share our environment.



Lai Yu Tong uses everyday materials like wood to depict dogs. PHOTO: SHANGHART



Using ordinary cardboard, Lai Yu Tong renders an elusive image of a dog. PHOTO: SHANGHART

## Ota Fine Arts

Ota Fine Arts has always upheld an uncompromising vision – and its latest exhibition is no exception. *A Few Ordinary Parallel Lines*, the gallery's first solo presentation of Chinese artist Zhao Yao in Singapore, features 21 paintings from his eggshell-based series (2022-2025) alongside reproductions of his journals. The works are made by cracking, unfolding, and arranging eggshells into parallel rows on linen, subtly revealing variations in tone and texture. Inspired by the pandemic years, the series reflects on fragility, routine and the quiet distinctiveness of life through everyday materials and repetitive labour.



Conceptual Chinese artist Zhao Yao makes his Singapore debut with eggshell paintings. PHOTO: OTA FINE ARTS

## Sundaram Tagore Gallery

*Soft Power* at Sundaram Tagore Gallery brings together nine international artists who show how art can persuade, provoke, and connect without force. The works highlight women's voices and overlooked cultures through bold paintings, striking sculptures, and powerful photography. Jane Lee's layered canvases push painting beyond its edges, while Tayeba Lipi turns razor blades into glittering household objects – a sharp reminder of gendered violence. Lalla Essaydi's photographs reframe traditional images of women, and Anila Quayyum Agha's intricate patterns transform space into something inclusive. Together, they question who holds power and how it is exercised.

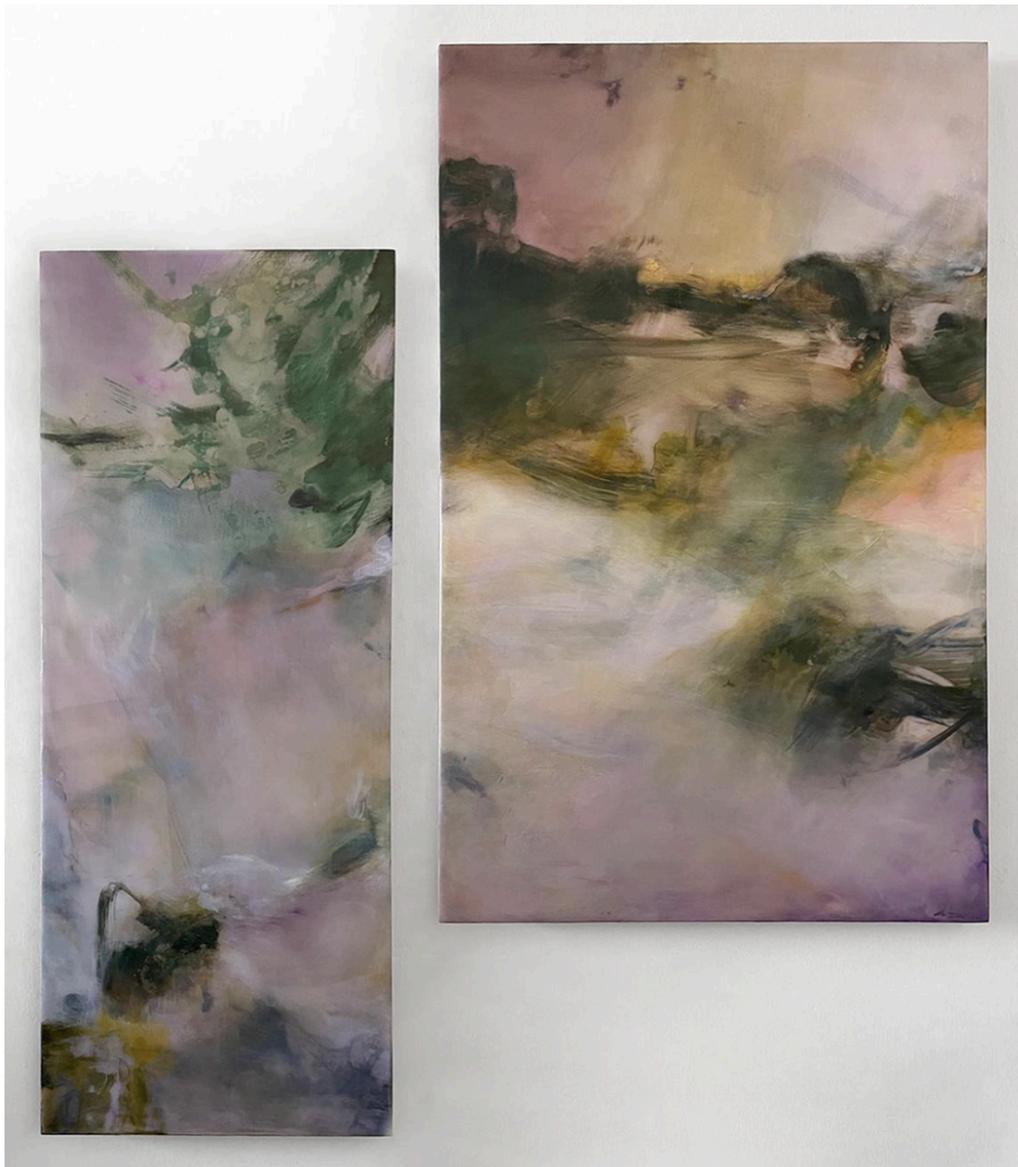


Tayeba Lipi's sculptures made of razor blades hints at domestic violence. PHOTO: SUNDARAM TAGORE

## **Fost Gallery**

Fost, another pioneering gallery in Gillman, is showcasing *The Lie Of The Land: Sediments*. It brings together eight local artists to reflect on

Singapore at 60. Taken together, the works suggest how history, memory, and people build upon one another over time, like layers of sediment. Kray Chen's playful speaker sculpture recalls childhood pleasures of listening to the radio, while Yeo Tze Yang's painting of a family locksmith shop preserves its warmth and community. Grace Tan's fragile brick installation and Wyn-Lyn Tan's shifting landscapes show how balance is never fixed, while Lavender Chang's photo of election rally crowds captures a fleeting moment of collective life. The show quietly asks: what holds us together, and what shifts beneath our feet?



Wyn-Lyn Tan's dreamy paintings hint at a constantly shifting landscape. PHOTO: FOST

## Yeo Workshop

Six of Yeo Workshop's artists come together to reflect on how we navigate the systems that shape our lives. Aki Hassan's tender, handwritten letters honour queer kinships, while Marcin Dudek's fragile ladder installation becomes a metaphor for personal struggle and growth. Maryanto's monochromatic landscapes uncover the damage inflicted on forests by industry and exploitation, while Justin Loke's broken chairs question how we consume violence from the comfort of our homes. Completing the line-up, Noor Mahnun Anum's still life of everyday objects and Xue Mu's shifting abstractions offer their own perspectives on fragility, resilience, and care.



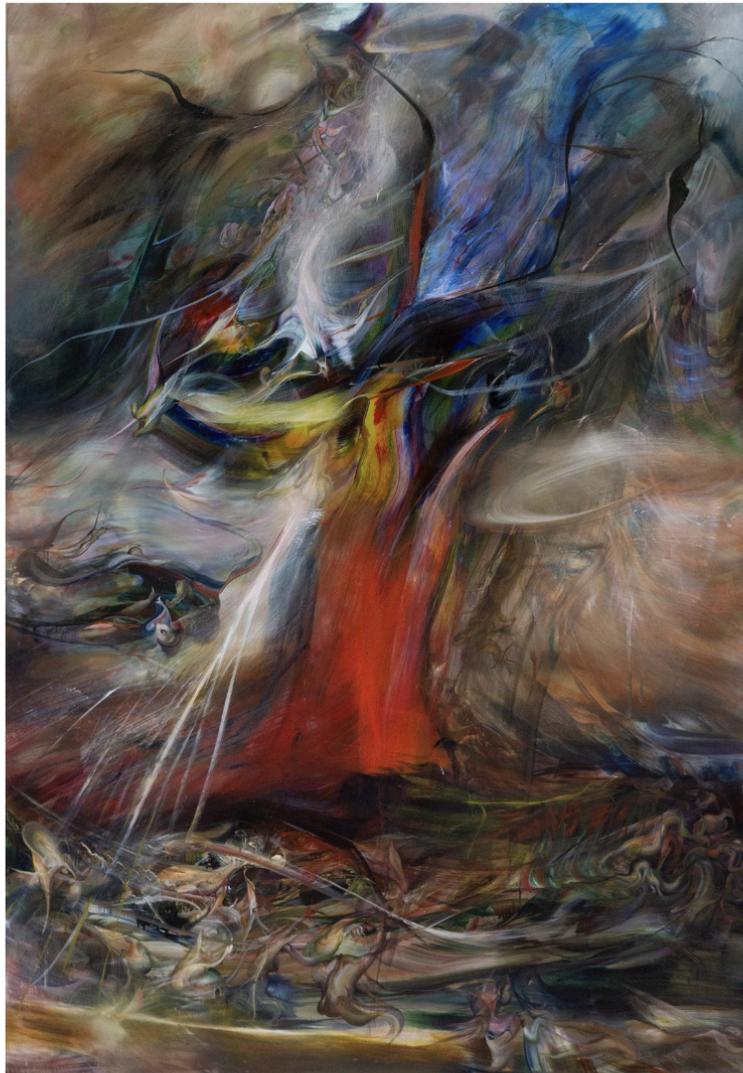
Trans artist Aki Hassan explores queer realities at Yeo Workshop. PHOTO: ALEXANDER PAUL ENGLERT



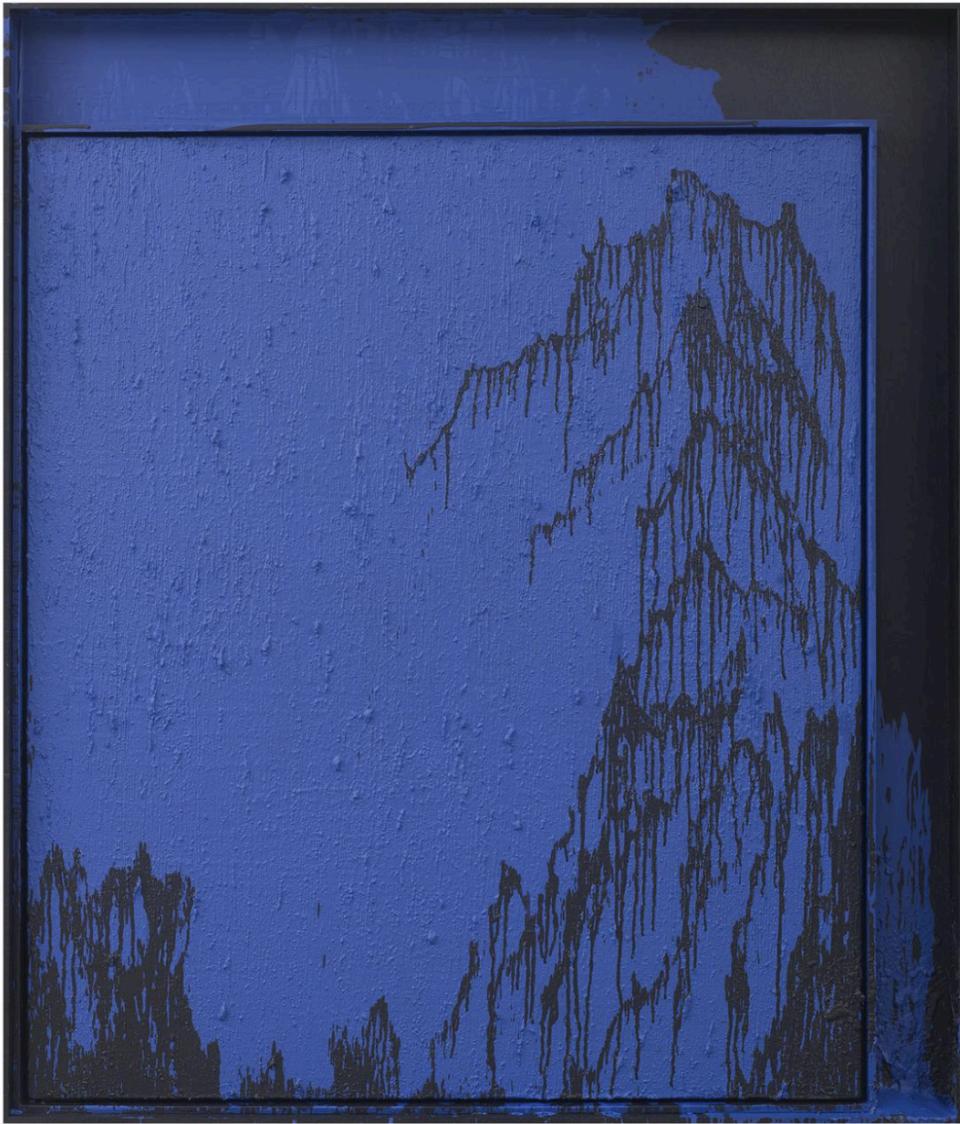
Also at Yeo Workshop are Marcin Dudek's conceptual abstracts. PHOTO: YEO WORKSHOP

## **Richard Koh Fine Art**

Richard Koh Fine Art brings together eight artists from Singapore and Malaysia in a lively cross-straits conversation. The works are strikingly diverse – from Ruben Pang's luminous, dreamlike paintings to Yeoh Choo Kuan's textured canvases that pulse with emotion. Hasanul Isyraf Idris draws on comics and folklore to create surreal narratives, while Samuel Xun and Siew Guang Hong bring fresh voices exploring identity through textiles and the body. Zelin Seah meditates on overlooked spaces, and Hu Qiren probes cultural dualities. Together, the show highlights the shared spirit and differences shaping two neighbouring art scenes today.



Ruben Pang's lyrical abstracts take inspiration from the scriptures.  
PHOTO: RKFA



Yeo Choo Kuan's abstracts are sought after by collectors. PHOTO: RKFA

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