



Making exhibits come alive

Dancer Banupriya Ponnarasu performing against a collage of images of back lanes in Art Of The Rehearsal, Gallery10's first permanent installation.
ST PHOTO: NIVASH JOYWIN

Gallery10 is an experimental new digital space at the National Museum of Singapore which has advanced projection technology

Olivia Ho

In a back alley behind a row of shophouses, a dancer performs the Indian bharatanatyam by the light of a street lamp.

Another dancer rehearses silat moves in the street with the aid of plastic pails and a stick. On the rooftop above him, a third arches her back and spins a red parasol.

Their performances are projected on screens in Art Of The Rehearsal, a digital installation in the National Museum of Singapore's new space Gallery10.

The museum's 10th gallery, which had its soft opening on Dec 10 last year, is an experimental digital space equipped with advanced projection technology.

Museum director Angelita Teo, 44, at the gallery's media launch on Tuesday, called it a "laboratory space

where we can work with creative individuals, artists or otherwise".

In the pipeline is a food-related installation, slated to be out later this year. Ms Teo declines to reveal details, but hints that it could make use of projections, scents and edible art to create a new kind of dining experience.

Located in the space previously occupied by the dining hall of Chinese restaurant Chef Chan's, it is the first of the museum's galleries to allow food and drink and is open to the public for free.

Art Of The Rehearsal is Gallery10's first permanent showcase. The commissioned work by multidisciplinary artist Sarah Choo Jing and Shanghai-based commercial cinematographer Jeffrey Ang uses digital media to showcase traditional dance forms.

It is a three-channel video installation of nine dancers from various

cultures practising their steps in a setting that is a collage of the back lanes of Kampong Glam, Little India and Chinatown.

Choo, 26, says of the mishmash of locales: "It's everywhere and nowhere."

She and Ang, 45, wandered around these back streets at midnight to capture images, around 20 of which are used in the composite backdrop.

They filmed dancers from Apsaras Arts, Era Dance Theatre and Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan Dance Theatre practising their moves on green screen, then superimposed them onto the backdrop.

While the dancers come from different cultures, Choo and Ang were struck by what they had in common: the sheer amount of effort that went into their rehearsals and the vulnerability they revealed in these moments of preparation.

Dancer Banupriya Ponnarasu, 26, who appears in the installation dancing under a ladder, hopes it will endear traditional dance forms to younger generations.

"Traditional dance is like a chame-

leon," she says. "Its colour changes, but its body is the same."

The installation, which cost between \$200,000 and \$250,000, was funded by the National Arts Council.

Civil servant Lionel Louis, 33, who visited Gallery10 after it opened in December, calls it a "refreshing change" from static exhibitions. "The dynamics of how people appreciate things are changing. Not everyone is interested in still objects."

He feels, however, it is a pity that the gallery stands on its own, a short walk away from the main museum exhibits, where it could be easily passed over by visitors.

Gallery10 follows the museum's other major digital installation Story Of The Forest, a virtual rainforest which also opened last December in the revamped Glass Rotunda.

"Museums today are all about immersive experiences," says Ms Teo. "Digital technology is here to stay and we need to be open to featuring new ideas and concepts."

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VIEW IT / ART OF THE REHEARSAL

WHERE: Gallery10, Level 1 National Museum of Singapore, 93 Stamford Road (exit the main building at side door next to Flutes Restaurant and follow the blue lines on the ground)

WHEN: 10am to 7pm daily

ADMISSION: Free