

Immersive video installation at National Museum of Singapore's first digital gallery

By REENA DEVI SHANMUGA RETNAM



1 of 2

Art of the Rehearsal at National Museum of Singapore's new digital gallery is an immersive video art installation depicting dancers of different ethnicities practising their craft along back alleys at cultural districts all over Singapore. Photo: Wee Teck Hian

Published 31 JANUARY, 2017 UPDATED 31 JANUARY, 2017



Museum hopes to stay relevant in the digital age

SINGAPORE — If you were at the National Museum of Singapore (NMS) from Dec 10, you might have been pleasantly surprised when you wandered into a gallery and found yourself surrounded by — not physical artefacts — but larger-than-life video projections which you can interact with and immerse yourself in.

These are housed in the museum's newest gallery, Gallery10, which is also its first digital gallery.

NMS' director Angelita Teo said their move to employ digital technology in the art scene is very much part of the growing effort in museums to stay relevant and enhance the stories they want to share with visitors.

“The National Museum has always wanted to be relevant to what’s happening today. You cannot deny that we are in a digital age, with social media, the internet and everything. I think all museums are very active in employing a digital approach on how they want to tell their stories and provide experiences enhanced with digital technology,” she said.

The digital gallery, which is located next to F&B outlet Food For Thought, aspires to be an experimental space where people from different fields in the creative industries can come together to explore the relationship between art and digital technology.

Currently, it features Art of the Rehearsal — a three channel immersive video installation showcasing traditional dancers from different ethnicities rehearsing their performances against the backdrop of various back alleys at cultural districts all over Singapore.

Jointly presented by the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board and National Arts Council, it is a permanent showcase by Singaporean multidisciplinary artist Sarah Choo Jing in collaboration with commercial cinematographer Jeffrey Ang. The performances were carried out by dancers from traditional arts organisations Apsaras Arts Ltd, Era Dance Theatre and Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan Dance Theatre.

The new space comes at the back of NMS' successful launch of Story of the Forest, a larger-than-life interactive digital-art installation by internationally renowned Japanese digital-art collective teamLab, at the revamped Glass Rotunda in December last year.

“With the Story of the Forest, it was a difficult space and we used a very established artist collective teamLab to do the work. Here, it’s more of a lapsed space that we can try new things we have not done before. We put in a lot of technology, like lighting, which was state of the art, so that we can work with creative people — we don’t want to limit ourselves to just artists, we want to open ourselves up in the creative industry (and to) new ideas they want to try out, and we want to allow them to work with us in this space and test it out,” she added.

In line with that view, the gallery space will soon see more innovative projects and collaborations with creative organisations, the details of which will be announced at a later date.

On whether there will be more digital spaces in the museum, Teo said: “Inevitably yes, what we are hoping is that some of the concepts that are tested here and (are) really effective, we will use them in the main galleries as well.”

Teo added: “National Museum wants to be the space where creative people can come together to try new projects with us. We want to be able to do things that’s never been done before.”

Ultimately, said Teo, she hopes NMS will appeal to both the young and old.

“We really want people to understand that the National Museum is about keeping itself relevant to society today, because we represent Singaporean society and we want people to come to us with their new ideas, and hopefully this gallery can be a testbed for these concepts.”

Gallery10 is located at National Museum of Singapore, Level 1. Open from 10am to 7pm daily.