

Cultural Medallion 2012 Recipients

Mr Jamaludeen Mohamed Sali (Literary Arts)

Born in 1939 in India, JM Sali came to Singapore at age 25 in 1964 and became a citizen later in 1990. He served as an Assistant Editor for the Tamil-language broadsheet, Tamil Murasu, from 1964 to 1971, and also briefly in 1983. In 1971, he had served in the same position at popular Tamil weekly Ananda Vikatan in Chennai, India where he was also Executive Editor of the Mayan Youth Magazine from 1980 to 1981. From 1983 to 2000, Sali worked as a Senior Broadcast Journalist at the Singapore Broadcast Corporation (later the Television Corporation of Singapore).

Throughout his extensive journalism career, Sali was an accomplished and prolific writer, having started writing at the early age of 15. He developed a wide repertoire of genres, writing some 30 novels, 400 short-stories, 80 plays and 200 articles, some of which have been translated into English, Hindi, Urdu and Sinhalese. His works garnered him numerous honours both locally and abroad. As early as 1958, Sali won the First Prize in the short story category for Patruk Kodu (Support) from the Muslim Murasu Magazine in Chennai, India. In 1963 and 1964, he won Best Short Story prizes for Velicham (light), Thraiyl Vizhuntha Meen (Fish Which Fell to the Ground), Makarantham (Pollen), Anulaavin Padaku (Boat of Anula) from Ananda Vikatan. The Tamil Nadu Government awarded him the Best Tamil Novel prize for Kana Kanden Thozhi (Friend, I Dreamt) and the Best Children's Book Prize for Ariviyal Munnodikal (Science Pioneers). In 1996, Sali received the Book Award for his short story collection, Nonbu, from the National Book Development Council of Singapore.

His extensive contributions to Tamil literature earned him the Tamizhavel Literary Award from the Association of Singapore Tamil Writers in 2001.

Besides his work as a writer, Sali also served as Contributing Editor to SINGA from 1987 to 1990 and as a member of the Editorial Team for the Anthology of ASEAN Literature Vol. II and III (Tamil Fiction) in 1988. Since 2004, he has been a member of the Editorial Committee of NADi, the Tamil publication of Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS). Sali has conducted several Tamil short story writing workshops at various organizations including the National Book Development Council of Singapore (1987), the National Arts Council and the National Institute of Education (1997). He has also been invited to speak at various universities in Tamil Nadu, India, including Bharathithasan University in Tiruchy and the Government College in Kumbakonam. His works have been prescribed as text books in colleges & universities.

Recent / Upcoming Activities

He will be a panellist at an upcoming Singapore Writers Festival event – JM Sali in Conversation with Ma. Elangkannan. Sali will share his experiences writing in Tamil and discuss the challenges and opportunities for Tamil writers in Singapore literature.

Ms Jennifer Tham (Music)

Jennifer Tham was born in Singapore in 1962. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Sociology from the National University of Singapore in 1985. She went on to pursue a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music, training as a composer, at the Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, from where she graduated in 1995.

Jennifer has directed the Singapore Youth Choir (now the SYC Ensemble Singers) since 1986, appointed by the conductor then, Mr David Lim. Under her leadership, the group has travelled to and excelled at numerous prestigious international choral festivals, including the Tallinn'94 International Choir Festival in Estonia (1994), the the Concorso Internazionale di Canto Corale "CA Seghizzi" and the Concorso Polifonico Internazionale in Italy (2004, 2010) and the Tolosa Choral Contest in Spain (2007). Awards include First Place in the Youth Choirs category at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod (Wales, 1989), First Place in the Light Music competition at the International Koorfestival (Arnhem, the Netherlands, 1991), Second Place in the Youth Choirs category at the Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod (Wales, 1998), Gold Award in the Small Choirs category at the International Festival of Christmas and Advent Music (Prague, Czech Republic, 2002) and the Festival Grand Prix and the Awards of the Marshal of Pomeranian Province, the Mayor of Gdansk and the Mayor of Sopot, at the International Choir Festival Mundus Cantat Sopot (Sopot, Poland, 2011). Jennifer is also the Artistic Director of the Young Musicians' Society (YMS) since its incorporation as a non-profit arts company in 1996. At YMS, she has helped developed music pedagogy programmes including the Kodaly Seminar Asia in collaboration with the Kodaly Institute of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest, Hungary.

Jennifer is actively involved in the international choral community. She is an elected Board member of the International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM). For IFCM, she served as the Artistic Director of the Asia South Pacific Symposium on Choral Music (Singapore, 2001) and a member of the Artistic Committee for the World Symposium on Choral Music (Kyoto, Japan, 2005), among other roles. She currently coordinates IFCM projects for the Asia Pacific region, including the Asia Pacific Youth Choir. She is Singapore's representative on the World Choir Council and has served as a juror at many choir competitions including the World Choir Games (2006, 2008, 2010, 2012), the Grieg International Choral Festival (2009) and the Tomohon International Choir Competition (2010).

Jennifer taught choral pedagogy and direction at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts from 2001 to 2008, and is on the teaching faculty at the Kodaly Seminar Asia. She has given workshops and lectures worldwide on choral conducting and pedagogy, rehearsal technique and voice-building as well as on the choral music of Singapore. She was the Principal Lecturer at the Lithuanian Conductors Summer Academy (2008), hosted in part by Lithuania's Ministry of Culture. Jennifer serves as music director and conductor of several school choirs including that of the Singapore Management University, Temasek Junior College, River Valley High School, Dunman High School, Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (Toa Payoh), Methodist Girls' School and St. Andrew's Secondary School. She was conferred the Young Artist Award by the National Arts Council in 1992 and the Artistic Excellence Award by the Composers and Authors Society of Singapore in 2011.

Recent / Upcoming Activities

She is currently working towards the SYC 50th Anniversary in 2014, with a series of concerts and tours happening from August 2013 to December 2014.

Mr Thirunalan Sasitharan (Theatre)

Thirunalan Sasitharan, affectionately known as Sasi, was born in 1958 in Singapore. An erstwhile journalist and former Philosophy teacher at the National University of Singapore, Sasi is now a prominent leader in the arts community. His involvement in the arts started when he began acting in school plays at the age 13. He gained a reputation as a fine actor, performing in seminal local productions such as late theatre doyen Kuo Pao Kun's *No Parking On Odd Days* (1986) and *Mama Looking For Her Cat* (1988), as well as Max Le Blond's rendition of *The Island* and *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* (1983).

Besides being an outstanding actor, Sasi's importance in the arts scene is cemented by his leadership of some of the most significant arts institutions in Singapore. From 1996 to 2000, Sasi served as the Artistic Director of the Substation where he led the institution through a process of professionalization and expanded the Substation's programmes and outreach efforts.

In 2000, Sasi and Kuo founded the Theatre Training and Research Programme (TTRP), now named the Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI), which aimed to provide rigorous training to aspiring contemporary theatre performers in theatre traditions spanning both Stanislavskian and non-Stanislavskian acting methods. Training students in traditions as diverse as Noh Theatre, Kuttiyatam, Beijing Opera, Wayang Wong and Balinese Dance, TTRP and ITI have been heralded for their trailblazing intercultural vision.

In addition, Sasi is presently one of the foremost thinkers in the local arts community. Besides his involvement as a practitioner, Sasi regularly contributes to the arts discourse in Singapore. As a journalist and later Arts Editor at The Straits Times Life! desk from 1988 to 1996, Sasi penned numerous insightful commentaries on issues du jour with respect to the arts scene. He is also frequently invited to speak at and contribute writings to arts-related conferences and publications. Some of the conferences he has participated in include the Conference on Civil Society: Harnessing State-Society Synergies organised by the Institute of Policy Studies in 1998 and the Asian Contemporary Theatre Festival Conference organised by the Esplanade and the Professional Photographers Association in 2002. His insight has also been sought internationally. In 2009, Sasi was the keynote speaker at the World Arts Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa and, in 2011, the Asia Intangible Cultural Heritage Performing Arts Forum in Hong Kong.

Sasi is widely respected in the local arts community as a leading thinker and activist, having played a large role in the community's push for an Arts Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) in 2009 and in coordinating the community's drive against censorship.

Recent / Upcoming Activities

He hosted the University of Buffalo's Singapore Summer School on The Construction and Constitution of Culture and the Arts in a Borderless World at Emily Hill from 1 to 9 June 2012. Sasi is the Director of Intercultural Theatre Institute, for which applications and auditions for the 2013 intake are currently taking place.

Mr Ho Ho Ying (Visual Arts)

Born in 1935 in Hainan, China, Ho Ho Ying majored in Chinese Language and Literature at Nanyang University. As early as then, he had become actively involved not only in making art but also in promoting art. With friends, he formed the Fine Arts Association at the university, inviting eminent artists such as Liu Kang to speak to students. After graduating, he became a lecturer at the National Youth Leadership Training Centre (now the National Community Leadership Institute), helping to develop youth leaders.

In an environment predominated by the Nanyang fine art tradition, Ho Ho Ying became one of the pioneers of Singapore's modern art movement. While he had been mentored by pioneer artist Chen Wen Hsi, Ho Ho Ying developed his own artistic style by marrying traditional Chinese ink painting and calligraphy with western abstract expressionism. He began his solo exhibitions in 1966 where it was first held at the National Library, Singapore. Since then, he was actively involved in a spread of exhibitions, both local and overseas, such as See It. Feel It. Love It. (Telok Kurau Studios, Singapore, 2003) and Beyond Image (Yisulang Art Gallery, Singapore, 2004). He also participated in the First Asian Art Exhibition (Hong Kong Conference Hall, Hong Kong, 1976), the Salon at Grand Palais, Paris in 1988, as well as at the Asian Contemporary Art Exhibition in Fukuoka, Japan, among others.

Following from The First Modern Art Exhibition (National Library, Singapore, 1963) – the first exhibition in Singapore which featured only modern paintings, Ho Ho Ying co-founded the Modern Art Society, Singapore in 1964, which has since become one of the most established local art groups. From 1992 to 1996 & 1998 to 2003, he served as the President of the Federation of Art Societies (FAS). In 1998, with other FAS members, Ho Ho Ying conceptualized the Kalang-guni Art Exhibition which utilized unwanted objects creatively in works of art.

Of the many aspects of Ho Ho Ying's works in the art, the most important is his invaluable contribution to intellectual artistic discourse in Singapore. Since the 1950s, Ho Ho Ying has written prolifically, providing critical commentary on subjects such as the different schools of thought in art, the state of the arts in Singapore and other artists' works. His writings in Chinese are documented in *美术论衡* (Perspectives in Art) (Singapore Art Museum, 1999) and are also selectively translated into English in *Re-Connecting: Liu Kang and Ho Ho Ying: Selected Writings on Singapore Art and Art Criticism* (Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, 2005). Over the years, he has engaged in conversations with eminent artists and thinkers such as Liu Kang and Cheo Chai-Hiang, enriching the landscape of artistic discourse in Singapore.

Even in his 70s, Ho Ho Ying's passion in the arts remained undeterred. He continues to stay engaged in the arts scene. In recent years, he has participated in several group exhibitions including *Remade, Relived: Modern Art in Singapore* (NAFA Galleries, Singapore, 2009), *New Interpretation in Retrospect* (MICA Atrium, Singapore, 2011) and *Retro Revival* (Art Exhibition, Ion Art Gallery, Singapore, 2012)

Recent / Upcoming Activities

He participated in a recent showcase at Retro Revival 2012, a group exhibition presented by the Federation of Art Societies, Singapore at the ION Art Gallery from 5 to 11 Sep 2012.

Mr Milenko Prvacki (Visual Arts)

Milenko Prvacki was born in Vojvodina in the former Yugoslavia in 1951. He earned his Master of Fine Arts in painting from the Institute of Fine Arts in Bucharest, Romania. In 1992, after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, he came to live and work in Singapore and attained Singapore citizenship in 2002. Before he moved to Singapore, he had already established himself as an artist, having exhibited extensively. His solo exhibitions in this time include Trophy Paintings (ULUV Gallery, Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, 1986; The Coast Gallery, Piran, Slovenia, 1989) and Islands – Paintings (Gallery of Contemporary Art, Pancevo, Yugoslavia, 1984).

Milenko's artistic output since his arrival in Singapore has deeply enriched the visual arts scene here. In The Ultimate Visual Dictionary exhibition (Caldwell House Gallery, Singapore, 1997), he questions the ability of painting in representation and carries out the deconstruction of a dominant visual language. Construction Site (Institute of Contemporary Art, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, 2002) further explored these issues, examining the process of constructing things and ideas. The exhibition subsequently travelled to Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro and Australia when he participated in the 2006 Biennale of Sidney (Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, Australia, 2006). Other individual exhibitions include Now You See It, Now You Don't (Combinart Studio, Singapore, 2008) and Trajectory (Combinart Studio, Singapore, 2009) with wife Delia, as well as Remembrance of Things Past (iPreciation Gallery, Hong Kong, 2012).

Milenko's art has earned him numerous honours, including the Museum of Contemporary Drawing Award and Faber Castel Award awarded by the International Drawing Triennial in Nuremberg, Germany in 1982 and the Special Jury Award at the International Painting Exhibition, Cagnes sur Mer, France in 1985. More recently in 2010, he was awarded the Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government.

Since 1994, Milenko has been an inspirational figure at LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, serving as the Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts from 1994 to 2010 and as Senior Fellow in the Office of the President since 2011. He has influenced many young Singaporean artists such as Jane Lee and Ruben Pang. Milenko started the Tropical Lab programme in 2005, providing opportunities for LASALLE students to interact with student artists from around the world.

Milenko has also been widely consulted on issues related to the arts. He served on the Renaissance City Strategic Plan Strategic Planning panel (Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, Singapore) and the Marina Bay Advisory Committee (Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore). In addition, he has been actively involved in creating an arts rehabilitation project at Singapore Prisons.

Recent / Upcoming Activities

From July to August 2012, he led Tropical Lab #6 – the sixth edition of Tropical Lab which brought together 26 postgraduate student artists from leading arts institutions around the world over a 14-day period to research, collaborate and create works around the theme of Land. Milenko is also one of the selected artists currently showcased at the Singapore Art Museum's Panorama – featuring recent art from contemporary Asia. He has an upcoming Solo Exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts on 1 Nov 2012.