CapitaLand

The Art of Building Communities

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Art pieces and installations at CapitaLand properties are focal points to spaces — they are distinctive place markers for way-finding; landmarks where people congregate; sparks to ignite people’s imagination, spur conversation and bring joy to the communities.”

Mr Lim Ming Yan
President & Group CEO, CapitaLand Limited
Real estate is more than just creating landmarks. Our buildings have a lasting impact — when we build buildings, we create communities where people can live, grow and fulfill their dreams.

As a Singapore-headquartered company, we celebrate SG50 this year with a series of milestone events and a refreshed brand campaign. With the theme ‘Building People. Building Communities.’, these initiatives project our vision to create a stage for life, for the people and communities we touch as a real estate developer.

Whether you are a visitor, shopper, tenant or resident, we recognise that at the heart of what we build are opportunities for lives to flourish and connect. Our properties, spanning more than 120 cities in over 20 countries, are the backdrop against which beautiful moments are created. As we strive to be a leading global enterprise that enriches people and communities through high-quality real estate products and services, we promise to put our stakeholders first, and to build the right stage for them to construct moments of their own.

This book, titled *The Art of Building Communities*, shows the role art plays in building the right stage. Like architectural design, art brings life to what would otherwise be just structures of bricks, glass and steel, much like how backdrops and props complement actors on stage.

Art pieces and installations at CapitaLand properties are focal points of spaces — they are distinctive place markers for way-finding, landmarks where people congregate, sparks to ignite people’s imagination, spur conversation and bring joy to the communities.

Over the years, we have acquired works by both Singapore and overseas artists for our properties. To commemorate Singapore’s Golden Jubilee, this book features a selection of the art pieces displayed at our properties here.

The enjoyment of art pieces grows as we understand them more, and we invite you to join us in our journey in appreciating the art of building communities.

Mr Lim Ming Yan
President & Group CEO, CapitaLand Limited
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The Story of Art @ CapitaLand

Read about the evolution and uniqueness of Art @ CapitaLand and how it engages and brings joy to the communities.

Throughout history, art has always been an integral part of buildings. Greek temples, Roman villas, Gothic cathedrals, Moghul palaces and the abodes of Chinese scholars with walled gardens are just some examples of such fine integration. The art pieces — be they sculptures, murals, mosaics, stained glass, paintings or calligraphy — add beauty to architecture, which is itself a form of visual arts, sometimes conveying intriguing layers of symbolic meanings.

AN APPRECIATOR OF ART
CapitaLand sees the importance of art in its development projects, and this goes back to the days before the company was born out of a merger of two entities: Pidemco Land and DBS Land. We installed Juan Ripollés’ Sun Woman at Orchard Point and James Butler’s figures in the Avalon condominium, just to name a few, and developed Raffles City Singapore, which was designed by Pritzker Architecture Prize winner I. M. Pei. Pidemco Land and DBS Land also acquired artworks with an emphasis on Singapore artists for their respective offices, bringing art close to their staff. Some of these artists have since been conferred with accolades such as the prestigious Cultural Medallion, a Singapore cultural award to celebrate artistic excellence.

opposite: One of the latest acquisitions — a set of sculptures titled 2x2 II by world-renowned British artist Antony Gormley for CapitaGreen.
Opposite: Capital Tower, by Singapore watercolour artist and Cultural Medallion recipient Ong Kim Seng, is displayed in a meeting room in CapitaHub.

The first work of impact to the public after the birth of CapitaLand in 2000 was Han Sai Por’s large-scale installation Shimmering Pearls located at the plaza in front of Capital Tower. Combining static glass globes and stone drums with dancing water, this unique work has delighted many passers-by with its vibrant colours and graceful movement.

A STAGE FOR LIFE THROUGH ART
Fifteen years have passed and the installation has long since become a landmark of the area. CapitaLand, too, has gained prominence: it now operates in more than 20 countries globally and is one of Asia’s largest real estate developers. In Singapore, just as in other parts of the world, CapitaLand’s properties — integrated developments, shopping malls, serviced residences, offices and homes — have touched the lives of people in many ways, with specially chosen art pieces for their spontaneous enjoyment. Our buildings are where the communities live, grow and fulfill their dreams, the right stage for life’s most memorable movements. It is the right stage too for the artist community to showcase their creativity.

You get to enjoy art right at our properties or in the public areas of our very own office called CapitaHub at Capital Tower, if you happen to visit us. Most of the works are sculptures and paintings, but there are also ceramics, calligraphy and limited edition prints. Just like our geographical footprint, these works are by artists from many countries. Some of them are well-known, others may one day become famous. Regardless, we seek to create something extraordinary with these artists.
THE VALUE OF ART
CapitaLand curates its art pieces with the dedication of a museum, but our approach to acquiring them differs. First, a lot of our works are commissioned because they have to suit the particular site that they will eventually be displayed at. Second, we have a set of acquisition criteria: artworks must be joyful and easily understood by the public. Third, almost none of our art pieces are kept in storage. As each art piece is to be enjoyed and admired, each has a special place in our properties, often part of the art programme of a property, giving it a special quality.

BRINGING ART TO THE PEOPLE
The acquisition and display of art pieces are two important aspects of CapitaLand’s art management. The others are the maintenance and promotion of art pieces. The Art Management Unit, formed in April 2012, works very closely with other corporate departments, as well as the design management, project management, operation and communication departments of the business units, on all aspects of art management for the company.

It is not uncommon to hear people say that art is atas (a Singapore colloquial term meaning ‘high-class’) and only certain people can appreciate it. But art is for everybody and the story of Art @ CapitaLand is not only about acquiring and displaying art pieces to bring joy to the people, but also about ‘Building People, Building Communities’.

opposite: CapitaLand employees enjoying an art-jamming session after work at Pitstop, the social pantry in CapitaHub.
bottom: Mother & Child 34 by famous Chinese artist Han Meilin graces the lift lobby on the first storey of Capital Tower.
THE ART OF BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Since 2006, we have started art appreciation lunch talks for our staff and now these talks have been extended to our tenants. We also offer Art Management, Art Appreciation and Architecture Appreciation courses internally at our very own CapitaLand Institute of Business and Management (CLIMB). On a lighter vein, we run regular art jamming sessions in the evening and organise occasional weekend family art tours for our staff.

In addition, we have been reaching out to the readers of Inside Different Geographies, an e-publication by CapitaLand, through a special Art @ CapitaLand series. Each article features an art piece (or a series of art pieces) in CapitaLand, its concept, style, how it was made, its artist, and other interesting nuggets of information related to it. Each month, the magazine has a theme and it is amazing that we are usually able to match a piece of artwork to the monthly theme. These articles help the readers understand and enjoy each art piece better, and 28 of them have been compiled in this book.

The homes of these pieces can be the outstanding works of architecture by world-renowned architects such as Pritzker Architecture Prize winners Zaha Hadid, Toyo Ito and I. M. Pei, and President’s Design Award Singapore recipients such as Kerry Hill.
Mok Wei Wei, RSP and WOHA. They can also be historically significant pieces of architecture such as the former AIA building (now Ascott Raffles Place Singapore), once the tallest building on the waterfront of Singapore, and designed by Singapore pioneer architect Ng Keng Siang.

The theme of nature and people strongly characterises our art pieces. There is an emphasis on sculptures and paintings, and we have works by internationally renowned artists such as Olafur Eliasson from Denmark, Antony Gormley from Britain, Han Melin from China, Ju Ming from Taiwan, Hiroshi Senju from Japan, and Frank Stella from USA; we also have works by local artists such as Cultural Medallion recipients Ang Ah Tee, Chua Ek Kay, Chong Fah Cheong, Goh Beng Kwan, Han Sai Por, Iskandar Jalil, Lim Tze Ping, Ong Kim Seng, Milenko Prvacki, Tan Choh Tee, Tan Swie Hian and Thomas Yeo, among those of many other fine artists.

We hope that you can visit CapitaLand properties and appreciate the art pieces ‘live’ — yes, art pieces are best appreciated up close and not just in articles and photographs, for only then will you be able to sense their scale, feel their texture and see them in their true form and colour. In addition, you will also see how the works relate to their surroundings and how people might react to them and interact with them. Best of all, you can personally interact with them and enjoy them. Indeed, the purpose of our having art pieces at our properties is in allowing you — our stakeholders from all walks of life — to have endless possibilities to construct your own moments around them, moments that you will cherish in life. Art @ CapitaLand is about bringing the joy of art to the community.
Chinese New Year was around the corner and I was due to write an article for the February issue of CapitaLand’s e-publication, Inside Different Geographies. When I learnt that the theme was ‘Colour Me Red with Good Fortune and Prosperity’, I mentally went through our art pieces to see which one would best tie in with this theme. Bingo! The Jelly Baby Family sculptures fit the bill as the head of the family, Daddy Baby (an interesting oxymoron), is cast in a brilliant red. Besides, the Jelly Baby Family is fitting also because it is associated with food and should best usher in the auspicious spirit and the merry feasting during this Chinese New Year season.

JELLY GOOD LOOKING
The Jelly Baby Family was specially acquired by CapitaLand to be installed at the newly revamped Plaza Singapura. It greets passers-by as they walk along Orchard Road or emerge from Dhoby Ghaut MRT Station’s Exit E. This set of sculptures was chosen for its universal appeal. It brings out the child in many of us adults, for the candy Jelly Babies were a part of our childhood, and it certainly is pleasing to children.

This type of soft confectionery, shaped as babies in a variety of colours, has been around for almost 100 years. It was first launched as ‘Peace Babies’ by a British confectioner in 1918 to mark the end of World War I, and re-launched in 1953 as Jelly Babies.

While the Jelly Babies soft candies are tiny, the Jelly Babies sculptures are anything but that. Just to give you an idea: our bright red Daddy Baby stands 1.9m tall and weighs 350kg, ‘outshining’ any well-built full-grown man. Indeed, the Jelly Babies sculptures, made of pristine polyurethane resin, shine lustroously under the tropical sun and seem to glow magically at night, thanks to the special lighting effects specified by CapitaLand’s project team. Simply mesmerising.

COLOURFUL CREATOR
Daddy Baby is red, Mummy Baby is purple and their four kids are yellow, orange, green and blue. The brightly coloured family is the creation of Italian artist Mauro Perucchetti, whose life is just as colourful, if not more so.
Born in Milan in 1949, Perucchetti later moved to Rome and enrolled in theatre studies classes. From stage, he ventured into film and made his appearance with no less than superstar Elizabeth Taylor and renowned artist Andy Warhol in The Driver’s Seat (1974). More film roles followed and he set up a movie production company.

Changing course yet again, he relocated to London to set up an architectural/interior design company. Finally, in 2000, he sold off that business to embrace art full time. What a long and tortuous way of becoming an artist — and he made it!

Often labeled as a ‘Pop Artist’ for his enlargement of ordinary objects, use of bright colours and adoption of ‘multiples’ in his sculptures, Perucchetti denies association with any particular style or movement. As an artist, his most significant innovation comes in perfecting the formulation of polyurethane resin for big sculptures — a contemporary material giving an ancient art form a special appeal.

A HAPPY FAMILY

In terms of subject matter, Perucchetti addresses some of the fundamental issues of our time, such as the concept of cloning, which led to the creation of the Jelly Baby series some years back. In the beginning, he tried to capture the possible ambiguity and impersonality in a cloned human being, but later moved away from such a concept.

Currently, he sees the Jelly Baby Family, with its childlike innocence, as an embodiment of the preciousness of family unity and the multicultural aspect of modern society. All these are positive attributes, and indeed, when one beholds the Jelly Baby Family, the adjectives that immediately come to one’s mind are ‘fun’, ‘warm’, ‘lovely’ and ‘happy’. These are feelings that we hope Art @ CapitaLand pieces will evoke when the community interacts with them.

If you have a chance to visit Plaza Singapura, do take a moment to check out the Jelly Baby Family. Take a good look at it. Be delighted by the babies’ smiley faces, thrilled by the sheer transparency of the pristine resin (not a single bubble in sight!) and fascinated by the way the surroundings get reflected and refracted in their surreal bodies.

Do enjoy the Jelly Babies — aren’t they yummy!

This article was first published in the February 2013 issue of Inside Different Geographies, which has the theme of ‘Colour Me Red with Good Fortune and Prosperity!’.
Romance on the **Bench**

Be seduced by romantic tales of the *Man on the Bench*.

When you think of a bench, you can think of it romantically. Picture one placed by the tropical sea. In front of it, the waves are singing an eternal song. The setting sun is painting the sky in splendid hues. The breeze is blowing softly. What is lacking? A loving couple sitting on the bench. “How mushy!” You may exclaim, but aren’t things romantic often regarded as so?

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R FOR ROMANTIC

Well it all depends on what is meant by the word ‘romantic’. It is not always about love. ‘Romantic’ with a capital ‘R’ describes an essentially 19th century artistic movement that was concerned with expressing feeling and emotion. The works of my favourite painter, Caspar David Friedrich, come to mind. However, ‘romantic’ with a small ‘r’ is an adjective that can be used to describe something beautiful in a way that strongly affects your thoughts or feelings, and that is not mushy.

The sculpture titled *Man on the Bench* in our collection can be described as romantic as it openly invites viewers to respond with their thoughts, feelings and actions. The man is not to be left alone on the bench. One is most welcome to sit beside him, take a closer look at him, figure out who he is and observe what he is doing. This sculpture by Kurt Laurenz Metzler is only complete when you are engaged with it. Just like in any romance — and here the usage of the word is about love — you need two parties.
SEARCHING FOR MISS OR MR RIGHT
Just like in a tale of romance in which finding Miss Right or Mr Right is not easy, CapitaLand’s search for Metzler was not straightforward either. When the ION Orchard project team was looking into commissioning an artist to do an engaging piece of sculpture for the pavement in front of the mall, the former President & CEO of CapitaLand, Mr Liew Mun Leong, remembered some colourful human-figure pieces he saw at the Milan Railway Station in Italy. However, he could not recall the name of the artist. Efforts of enquiring from many quarters failed. It was by chance that he met gallery owner Mrs Jaya Mohideen on the plane during one business trip. He asked if she could help and she subsequently found the artist.

Born in 1941, Metzler is a Swiss sculptor who studied the art of sculpture in Zurich, relocated to New York and then moved back to Switzerland. He took up an apprenticeship at a car body tinsmith’s workshop to learn the art of blacksmithing, and worked for various sculptors, before forging his own identity and reputation.

Today we have in our collection three of Metzler’s works: Urban People at ION Orchard; Building People at the lobby of Capital Tower and Man on the Bench in front of Capital Tower’s main entrance. They look very different from one another, but they all share something of Metzler’s personal style: distortion, contrast and humour.

THE MYSTERY MAN
Let’s examine our hero on the bench. He has a small head, big body and exceptionally big feet. The ideal human proportion is distorted to create a caricature effect. He seems much overdressed in contrast to his very mundane suitcase and umbrella, exuding some kind of humour. When you sit down next to the Man, he takes no notice of you, for he is too engrossed in his reading. Just what kind of text is he reading? Peep over his shoulder and you will see that the pages are blank. Mystery text, mystery person — just like what we sometimes encounter in life.

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ROMANCE ON THE BENCH

So, where is the romance on this bench? As one is likely not to fall in love with a mystery person (or perhaps some do, ever more intensely), the answer has to be with the bench itself. Look carefully and you will see that this is no ordinary bench, for Metzler has embellished it with fine details. There are cut-outs of tiny figures along the back rails, and of towering buildings under the arm rests. Who can resist the charm of such details?

Certainly not Mr Eric Kwan, End User Computing Manager at CapitaLand, who took a close-up photo of the bench details and found himself a winner of the CapitaLand ‘Building People’ Photography Competition 2012. “‘People’, part of CapitaLand’s mission, is incorporated into our everyday life through interesting details. I have captured these little ‘people’ to share with all my colleagues who may not have noticed their existence,” Mr Kwan explained.

To me, this is also a romantic photo — the soft lighting at dusk, the background deliberately thrown out of focus; what is lacking is a loving couple sitting on the bench. Mushy!

This article was first published in the March 2013 issue of Inside Different Geographies, which has the theme of "Of Love, Romance and Martial Dixie."

Rhapsody on Ice

Hear the music of this brilliant eye-catching wall sculpture.

In music, a rhapsody is a very passionate composition in free form, full of broad, sweeping melodies and brilliant passage work. It has an improvisational quality, sounding at times like a medley of themes stitched together.

We can find the parallel of some of these ideas in Israeli artist David Gerstein’s wall sculpture Rhapsody on Ice, which was specially commissioned by CapitaLand for its JCube mall in Singapore. This
work, installed on the wall at the top of a series of escalators that link the different levels of the mall, is most contextual as it is just a stone’s throw away from the mall’s ice rink — the first Olympic-size ice rink in Singapore.

A SKILFUL STITCH
Measuring 9m long by 0.75m high, Gerstein’s work depicts three types of activities on the ice rink: ice skating, ice hockey and ice dancing. These are the three themes of *Rhapsody On Ice*, and Gerstein has skillfully stitched them into an integral whole.

Born in Jerusalem in 1944, David Gerstein has studied art in Jerusalem, Paris, New York and London. He had his first exhibitions in 1970s not as a sculptor, but as a painter of figurative works. He experimented with painted sculptures in aluminum and wood in the 1980s. His breakthrough came in 1987 when he held an exhibition of sculptures that were colourful, cheerful, amusing and reminiscent of paper cutout. From 1995, he embraced the laser-cut technology to create steel sculptures painted with shiny car paint. In doing so, he created a unique type of sculpture.

*Rhapsody on Ice*, which consists of three hand painted laser-cut steel panels, is only 1cm thick. It is almost two-dimensional and yet looks three-dimensional by illusion. First, there is foreshortening in the human figures. Foreshortening is the visual effect that causes an object to appear shorter than it actually is because it is angled toward the viewer, but suggests depth. Second, human figures of different sizes are juxtaposed together, such that the smaller ones appear to recede into the background. Third, the metal panels are installed away from the wall plane. The shadows projected by the cut-outs give a layering effect.

Gerstein uses vibrant colours, giving the whole composition an overall cheerful feeling. The artist wants his work to be attractive to the people. That is also why he often chooses subject matters from everyday lives: people walking, cycling, dancing, playing sports.
Tales of a Glowing Mountain

Learn how the inspired art piece gets its glow, all thanks to a fable of a firefly.

Nestled among the greenery of a small hillock on popular tourist destination Sentosa stands a very special two-storey building. Once an old army barracks — a legacy of the British colonial period — it underwent refurbishment in 2007 and became the premises for the CapitaLand Institute of Management and Business (CLIMB).

As you climb the main staircase leading to the second storey where CLIMB’s training rooms are, you will gradually notice a magnificent work of art. It is a large painting of a mountain. A mountain that stands lofty. A mountain that seems like it is glowing. A mountain with interesting tales behind and on — yes, literally — on it.

FIRST OF ITS KIND

So far, Gerstein has not done any other ice-rink related artwork and hence this commission by CapitaLand is the first of its kind. Examine how he depicts the sense of movement through the dynamic postures of the human figures — be they energetic ice skaters, rugged ice-hockey players, or graceful ice dancers. The many horizontal brush strokes also suggest the speed at which the sportsmen move. Splendid!

The grand device that ties all three panels and themes is the many free flowing multi-colour curved lines that run behind and in front of the figures, seemingly tracing the paths of all their movement. If one likens these lines to the stave of music scores, then the figures must surely be the notes: notes that form melodies in joyful major keys, with harmonies that are rich and majestic.

When you admire this wall sculpture, you can almost hear the music playing — a rhapsody that you will not forget.
THE MAKING OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

Slightly more than a week before the official opening of CLIMB, former President and CEO of CapitaLand, Mr Liew Mun Leong, toured the premises. Generally happy with the outcome of the refurbishment, he nevertheless felt that the blank wall of the main staircase was lacking a work of art. He posed us a challenge: acquire a painting and mount it there before the official opening.

A challenge it was indeed! First, the wall is rather big and the painting had to be at least 3m wide by 2m tall to make an impact; such large works are not readily available. Second, if we were to commission an artist of standing for this painting, would anyone want to take it on given the tight time frame? With courage we said yes, for although delivery might be difficult, it was not impossible.

I searched in my mental database for an artist who could do this work. The name Tan Swie Hian was the first one to emerge. Born in 1943, Singapore cultural icon Tan excels in many fields of the arts, including painting and literature, and his work should exude a special quality appropriate to our learning institution. Also, he is able to speedily execute work — his performance painting and calligraphy are well known. I quickly called Tan to check on his availability. To my great delight, he was in town and willing to consider this commission. We met on site the following day.

right: A mountain that stands lofty and seems glowing.
Noticing that the various rooms of CLIMB are named after the great mountains around the world gave Tan an instant inspiration. He shared that he had written a fable titled *A Holy Firefly*, and the painting could adopt this theme. He then described most graphically what the work would look like. It was fascinating.

“But, can it be completed within the tight time frame?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said, “if the commission can be confirmed quickly, and if it is an acrylic painting on canvas without any picture frame.”

And that was how the painting titled *Holy Mountain* came to be.

THE SYNTHESIS OF THE GLOWING MOUNTAIN

On the day of the official opening of the CLIMB premises, *Holy Mountain* adorned the blank wall of the main staircase. It depicts a mountain in dark green strokes, with brilliant orange and yellow all over. It tells the fable of *A Holy Firefly*:

“Having discovered a holy mountain, a firefly lobbied continuously until he had attracted innumerable fireflies to the mountain. When night fell, the whole mountain and its heart phosphoresced, visible as well to the shore beyond.”

Take a closer look and you can see that all these words, as well as the Chinese version of the same fable, are written in blue on the painting itself. Hence, this work of art is a synthesis of literature, painting and calligraphy. Furthermore, while it is unmistakably a western-style painting, it embodies a subtle eastern spirit — I cannot help but think of the splendor of the northern school of Sung dynasty landscaping painting. Here, again, is synthesis.

In 2012, at the Poly Autumn Auction’s Modern and Contemporary Chinese Art Evening Sale held in Beijing, China, Tan’s oil and acrylic painting *When the Moon Is Orbed* was sold for RMB18,975,000 or S$3.7 million. This puts him as the first living Singapore artist to hit above the million-dollar mark in an auction. Reckoning that valuation of *Holy Mountain* must go up, some of my colleagues feel quite excited by the prospect.

Now, it is certainly exciting that one’s collection goes up in value, but that is not the main aim of Art @ CapitaLand. The main aim of Art @ CapitaLand is to delight the users of CapitaLand’s properties and to add a layer of sophistication to their routines, just like how *Holy Mountain* illuminates an ordinary stairwell at CLIMB, making the mundane climbing of steps somewhat extraordinary.
Decoding a Heavenly Script

Behold the *Heavenly Script* from world-renowned artist Han Meilin’s 34 years of collecting tens of thousands of pictograms and symbols.

Decoding a heavenly script? You must be joking. For if the script indeed comes from heaven and is meant to be a divine mystery, how can we mere mortals ever hope to understand it?

But the *Heavenly Script* that we are talking about here is the work of man. It is made up of characters and symbols created many, many years ago. Their meaning was long lost with the passage of time, but the passion of an artist drove him to collect and record them, and ultimately create unique works of art out of them.

The characters are archaic Chinese pictograms. They and the symbols were found among *jiaguwen* (甲骨文) — oracle bone script on tortoise shells and animal bones — and *jinwen* (金文) — bronze script on ceremonial bronze wares, as well as on stone drums, stone tablets, earthenware, rock carvings and rock paintings. They came from the years before Chinese characters were ‘standardised’ into *zhuanshu* (篆书) or seal script by Shi Huangdi, the first emperor of unified China. To this day, the seal script is widely used in seals, hence its English name.

Han-dling the Ancient Script

The artist is none other than Han Meilin, who is well known for his fine achievements in the fields of sculpture, painting, calligraphy and porcelain. There are several museums in China dedicated solely to his large body of works. Han was born in Jinan, Shandong province, in 1936. He recalls that he started to appreciate the beauty of seal script when he was only a primary school kid. He had chanced upon an old book of this script and some seals in a temple in his neighbourhood, and was enthralled by the characters that looked more like pictures than writing. In his own words, he loved ‘playing’ with them instead of shooting marbles or kicking shuttlecocks like the other kids did. Later in his life, Han’s love for ancient Chinese scripts developed further, and he would continue to regard them as painting rather than calligraphy.
It took the adult Han 34 years to collect tens of thousands of pictograms and symbols from the remotest corners of China, and several more years to record them. In 2008, his labour of love bore fruit — a book titled Tianshu (天书), translated as The Sealed Book, was published. It is amazing to go through this book to view the precious collection of Han’s handiwork.

REACHING FOR THE HEAVENS

Tianshu can also be translated as ‘heavenly script’, and this is the English name given to a piece of artwork that CapitaLand acquired from Han, proudly displayed in its Singapore headquarters. The work, in Chinese ink on rice paper and measuring 68cm by 408cm, is composed of characters and symbols from The Sealed Book. What is special about it is that the characters are arranged and linked together, so that they form a bigger picture.

All these were written, or shall we say, painted with the masterly brush strokes of Han, in the same tonal value of grey so that the viewer can focus on the shape of the characters.

What fascinating characters these are — some resembling animals, others natural features, and yet others not seemingly looking like anything. One admires the composition as if it is an abstract painting; the characters do not appear to have any meaning. The thought that what meaning the characters used to hold is forever sealed by time makes it all the more intriguing. We see it as a mysterious script from heaven, which nobody can ever hope to decipher; we enjoy its beauty all the same.

To complete our story, we are featuring another piece of Han’s ink and brush works in our collection, also displayed at CapitaLand’s headquarters. This is a painting of a bull predominantly in black but with traces of purple and brown, and it has a strong calligraphy feel. It is as if Han lifted one of the pictograms in The Sealed Book and expanded it to become a painting.

Here, no decoding needs to be attempted for the character speaks all too plainly for itself.

This article was first published in the June 2013 issue of Inside Different Geographies, which has the theme of “Sizzling Hot Pots, Fiery Ovens and Sweltering Furnaces”.
Joy & Love,
Growth & Togetherness

Artful, joyful and playful — Singapore sculptor Lim Leong Seng’s works leave viewers with plenty of room for imagination and interpretation of what it means to be a family.

I first came across the works of Singapore sculptor Lim Leong Seng at Telok Ayer Green some years ago. They depict a Chinese festive procession and Indian peddlers in 19th century Singapore. I was struck by the realism and attention to detail of these sculptures, which made street scenes of yesteryear come alive!

Realism is not the only expression this versatile artist adopts. He also uses discarded metal to create abstract sculptures, or fine bronze to sculpt semi-abstract works where the subject matter is highly stylised yet identifiable. Recently, he has produced two works using the latter approach for CapitaLand’s premium residential projects, Urban Resort Condominium and Urban Suites, which are both located near Singapore’s shopping belt, Orchard Road.

The two compositions are distinctly different and yet they share the same theme — family — and the same style — human figures being distorted and expressed as geometric shapes, with some parts of their anatomy missing, requiring the viewers to complete them with their own imagination. *Pool of Love* in Urban Suites depicts a family of four frolicking together in a pool suggested by a ring of swirling water — a lively work that celebrates joy and love, while *Together* at Urban Resort Condominium depicts a family of five, with a pregnant mother showing that the family is still expanding — a playful work that underscores family growth and togetherness.

**JOY AND LOVE: DEDICATION TO ART**

Some of my colleagues in CapitaLand and I had the unique opportunity to participate in the creative processes of these two sculptures, and in doing so we got to know Lim beyond his artistic achievements.
Now, a sculpture starts as a concept in the artist’s mind. For each work, Lim put down his concept in the form of a sketch for us to examine. After we approved the sketch, he made a small model: this is known as a maquette. We found the maquette satisfactory, and the full production process began in Thailand.

It was during a trip to Thailand to see the full-scale wax models of the sculptures, enlarged from the maquettes, that I had the chance to talk at length to Lim about himself. On a long journey from Bangkok’s airport to the city’s Nong Khaem district where the enlargement workshop was located, we talked about his very own long, arduous, yet fulfilling artistic journey.

Lim was born in Singapore in 1950. After graduating from the now-defunct Baharuddin Vocation Institute in 1971, he took up various jobs before learning the art of sculpting from the masters in Thailand, where there is a long tradition of making Buddhist sculptures. He went on to become a full-time sculptor in 1990. His perseverance has paid off, as over the years the local market for large commissioned work and small collector pieces developed. He is in demand.

GROWTH: FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY
At the enlargement workshop, we saw the wax models alongside the maquettes. We examined the two models in detail, comparing them with the maquettes, and discussed areas of refinement. Lim took in our suggestions humbly and explained the process to us. Nowadays, enlargement is digitally masterminded: the maquette is scanned into a computer which is linked to a cutter; the computer then directs the cutter to cut blocks of polystyrene to the desired scale to become parts of a sculpture. By joining the parts, applying wax on them and sculpting the wax, the artist builds the full-size model.

TOGETHERNESS: THE WORK OF A TEAM
The artist’s work does not end after building the full-size model. After refinement, each model would be split into parts. Moulds would be made out of them using silicone and plaster of paris. For the two works, the moulds would later be transferred to a foundry in Ayuthaya, another city in Thailand, for casting, using the age-old lost-wax method involving molten metal and a wax model, joining, patination and polishing. After that, the sculptures would be packed and shipped to Singapore. Lim told us that he would stay behind in Thailand to see through the entire process, which would involve many co-workers.

When the two sculptures were finally installed on site, we beheld their unveiling with great delight, for they truly enhance the character of the grounds. No doubt they will continue to delight their viewers, but few will be able to guess the process of their making. A process, just like the end result, that speaks of joy and love, and growth and togetherness: the joy and love of a sculptor dedicated wholeheartedly to his art; growth of the works from concept to reality; and togetherness of the entire production crew in creating these wonderful works.
Digital Dreamscape

When you see trees of epic proportions layered upon familiar landmarks with fluttering butterflies in mid-air, you know you have entered the digital world of 21st century art.

When you think of a city in visual terms, you think of many images: high-rise buildings, some of them landmarks, others not; cars; people; lights, etc. Juxtapose these images and what do you get? Chaos — if you do it haphazardly. But the potential chaos can become a unique piece of art if you are skilful in orchestrating the images into a united whole.

21st CENTURY ARTIST
An artist that can do this with finesse is Dutchman Joseph Klibansky. CapitaLand officers were so impressed by some of his works they saw in an art gallery that he was specially invited to visit Singapore to do a commissioned work in 2012. He was to create a dreamscape of the Lion City for CapitaLand’s headquarters office.

I had a chance to meet Klibansky during his visit. I was surprised to find out how rapidly this young artist, then only 28 years old, had established himself in the art world. His life seems to be smooth-sailing — not your usual story of an artist who had to struggle to get recognised, or simply earn a living. Born in 1984 in Cape Town, he was fascinated by the possibilities offered by computer art and digital imagery in his teens. He started to merge hundreds of images into compositions, enhanced by computer work and often combined with a variety of hand-painting techniques. This unique style quickly captured the attention of many, and he soon found a place in the art world as a successful new media artist.

21st CENTURY DREAM ART
During his field trip to Singapore, Klibansky, together with his father who is a photographer, spent almost a week walking different parts of the city, taking many pictures of its clouds, its expanses of water, its architecture, its people, its flora and fauna. Back in the Netherlands, he made a work that was built up through hundreds of layers of photography on archival cotton paper. He then painstakingly applied acrylic paint onto the parts of the picture that he wished to highlight. Finally, he overlaid the paper with a liquid resin so that eventually it did not feel like paper anymore, but a thin sheet of transparent material with layers of images that seemed to pile up from the inside of it.

Not a photograph nor a painting, not on canvas nor exactly on paper — this is a new media work of the 21st century.
Beautiful Singapore, measuring 1.3m by 2.9m, is a work that immediately grasps your attention the moment you set eyes on it. At first, you think it depicts the waterfront of Singapore at dusk, as the sky begins to take on many hues and the city lights gradually come on. Soon, you realise that many aspects of it are surreal.

You see landmark buildings: colonial ones such as the old Supreme Court and Raffles Hotel, and modern ones among them like CapitaLand properties Raffles City Singapore, Capital Tower, Ascott Raffles Place Singapore, ION Orchard and Clarke Quay. These are not exactly where they should be. You see tall skyscrapers and low-rise shophouses of disquieting relative scales. You see trees — the Angsana, Traveller’s Palm and Rain Tree — taking on incredible proportions. Against this tapestry of static buildings and plants, people, clouds, boats and, most surprisingly, a rabble of butterflies fluttering their wings in midair, seem to be frozen in time.

If all these don’t make sense to you, it doesn’t matter — for a beautiful dream doesn’t have to make sense.
Water Music

Hear the water sing and revel in the sounds of music created by the huge glass bubbles of the *Shimmering Pearls*.

Recently, CapitaLand’s *Shimmering Pearls*, located on the plaza in front of Capital Tower, was featured on local TV channel OKTO’s programme, *The Art Bus*. In the show, a group of ‘art tourists’ went there to admire it. Many fell in love with it straightaway. Who wouldn’t?

Certainly, it was love at first sight for me when I encountered the work around the time of Capital Tower’s completion more than 10 years ago. It is colourful, cheerful and vibrant — where sculptures meet dancing water and create a magical effect. It reminded me of the Stravinsky Fountain near Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris I had seen in my university days: 16 whimsical moving and water-spraying sculptures by Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint-Phalle in a pool in an urban square.

BECOMING ONE WITH WATER

Of course the two works are vastly different. For the Stravinsky Fountain we see kinetic sculptures — sculptures that move and water that moves along with them. For *Shimmering Pearls*, the sculptures are static — it is only water jets independent of them that spray, gush or send forth screens of mist in different combinations according to three preset programmes. Both are engaging in their own ways.

Made mainly of glass and steel, *Shimmering Pearls* is not typical of the works of Singapore Cultural Medallion recipient Han Sai Por. Born in Singapore in 1943, Han is prolific in and renowned for her stone sculptures, which tend to be quiet and understated. This work of entirely different materials and mood is the only one of its kind by her in Singapore.

The artist departed from her usual expressions taking into account the context. Her work was meant to stand in the middle of a large pool, and she took the cue from that. At the conceptionalisation...
Stage, she stretched the idea of water to the extreme: this is not just a work on water, it is about water, and it is about sculptures that interact with water such that the two become one. For her, there was no better way to represent water bubbles than having glass globes of different sizes supported by stainless steel poles of different heights.

DANCING WITH WATER

The bigger globes are cast glass painted with colours, while the smaller globes are blown-coloured glass. Surely if they are to represent water bubbles, they should not have colours? If we have such a notion, it is only because we do not understand water. One afternoon, as I was walking past *Shimmering Pearls*, the sun was casting its golden rays on them at an angle. Lo and behold, a rainbow appeared amid the mist of dancing water. Yes, water does have colours!

It is the movement of water that brings about the total effect of this work. For that, the artist had to work very closely with the fountain designer. If we liken the glass globes to the main melody of a piece of music, then the moving water is its different voicing in the higher register, with four stone drums — all executed in the signature style of the artist — sitting quietly on the water surface, singing the part of the bass. What a magnificent piece of polyphony!

SINGING WITH WATER

In this fountain, water is also music itself. As the ground that the pool sits on is not flat, the water forms small cascades along Robinson Road. Take a walk along this stretch of the pool and you will hear a gentle splashing and trickling tune even if all the water sprouts are ‘taking a break’. This tune is especially refreshing on a hot day.

Nothing in the vicinity can be more mesmerising than *Shimmering Pearls* viewed at night, in the full glory of its lighting scheme — the result of the artist’s close collaboration with a lighting designer. When lit, the glass globes seem to glow, and their red, yellow, orange, green and blue hues take on an intensity that is most captivating. With that, the idea of ‘shimmering pearls’ seems like an understatement.
Flying High

Get ready to let your imagination fly high with French sculptor Etienne’s sculpture, *The Flight*.

If you have been to the newly renovated drop-off point at the office tower of Raffles City Singapore, you must have noticed that it is no ordinary drop-off point. For the steel structures supporting the glass canopy resemble trees with sturdy trunks and branches, and patterns on the glass panels appear to be foliage. What’s more, there is a bronze sculpture of a flight of birds installed on a pond next to the road. Steel, glass and bronze combine to give you a slice of nature.

**FLIGHT OF FANCY**

The birds are the most natural among these man-made versions of nature, and they are the work of French artist Etienne. This sculptor must have studied birds in flight very carefully, so that he is able to distill the essence of their form and movement and re-interpret them most masterfully in this creation.

But don’t compare them to real birds. No, Etienne’s birds are not real; rather, they are simplified forms, which have a more powerful impact: less is more.

Omission is certainly a frequent gesture in Etienne’s body of works. Take, for example, *La Conversation* displayed at CapitaLand’s headquarters office. This piece features two persons in conversation and many parts of their anatomy are omitted. That is why I find this work most intriguing. First, it involves the viewers in completing the figures in their own imagination. 

*French sculptor Etienne’s sculpture *The Flight* at Raffles City Singapore fits well into the architectural backdrop of the office tower’s drop-off point.*

*Intriguing — just what is going on at the back of the mind of these two persons in a seemingly intimate conversation?*
The graceful flight of birds on a pond exudes a dreamy tranquility amid the bustle of the city.

opposite: Etienne’s latest work, The Meeting, was specially commissioned for CapitaGreen.

imagination: second, it seems to embody a hidden message — the two faces are two masks with absolutely nothing behind them. You can’t really tell what is going on at the back of people’s minds in a seemingly intimate conversation, can you?

JOURNEY DEDICATED TO SCULPTURE
I had the opportunity to meet Etienne in person during working sessions both in France and in Singapore. Because of the language barrier, we did not have much conversation, but certain things did come across strongly even without speech. I can see that this artist, with a distinct white-haired, grandfatherly look, is very serious about his work. He is very sure about what he wants to achieve and will attend to every detail to make his sculptures perfect — if there is such a thing as perfection in art.

Born in Grenoble in 1952, Etienne spent his childhood and his youth in France, went to university in Canada and then returned to France to obtain a degree in plastic arts in Marseille. He also furthered his studies at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts (National School of Fine Arts) in Paris. He used marble, stone and wood for his first works, but soon opted for bronze, the potential of which he exploited to the full. In 1972, he started exhibiting his works in galleries and later would receive commissions both in France and overseas. One can say that he has dedicated his entire life to sculptural art.

TAKING OFF WITH GRACE
The Flight is certainly an exquisite piece of work from such a dedicated artist. Its form is simple, yet powerful: a flight of seven birds spreading their wings in formation, rising from water to air. The artist thinks that the birds symbolise liberty and peace, while the sky carries joy and hope. Notice how each bird is of a different size, with the four larger ones tilting their bodies dramatically and providing elegant visual contrast to the three smaller ones above them. The sculpture is both static and dynamic.

This work is also extremely well cast, polished and patinated. Despite its scale, it is just as refined as the sculptor’s smaller works. Etienne has always explored the chromatic diversity of patina and played with colour graduation, including the polished finish, in his sculptures. We can observe such subtleties in this work.

The image of Etienne’s graceful flight of birds on a pond exudes a dreamy tranquility amid the bustle of the city. The birds are ready to fly high, and so will the viewers’ imagination.

This article was first published in the October 2013 issue of Inside Different Geographies, which has the theme of “Sky’s the Limit.”
Food for Thought

Flying babies? Think again — that’s what Gao Xiao Wu’s *City Dreams* will make you do.

“Cute!” is the first impression that many may have of Chinese artist Gao Xiao Wu’s sculptures. Sculptures in his *City Dreams* series, for example. You see balloon-like ‘babies’ flying in the air, all chubby and happy. You may immediately fall in love with these fun babies.

From far, a group of Gao’s flying figures can even take on the appearance of a flight of birds. Such is the case of a set of five *City Dreams* sculptures, made of bronze and coated in red, specially acquired by CapitaLand for its residential project, The Interlace.

Floating above the green shrubbery and contrasting against the white background of The Interlace’s unique architecture, Gao’s creations, though small in scale, stand out from the surroundings and quickly become an eye catcher. This is exactly the intention of the CapitaLand’s design management team: Gao’s work, just like the works of other sculptors commissioned for the project, is a focal point giving identity to the space in which it is placed, helping residents and visitors to navigate the grounds.

CHEW ON IT

CapitaLand first acquired a work from Gao’s *City Dream* series in 2011. *Big Dream No 4*, a polished stainless steel ‘flying baby’ of about 2.3m high, is placed at the lobby of Capital Tower. At this scale and of this height, the sculpture engages its viewers in an entirely different way — the flying effect is no longer pronounced and the viewers can also find their own distorted images reflected on its surface. Are they now part of the sculpture? Is the big dream their big dreams? One may go beyond just uttering “Cute!” and start to ponder on these questions.
Born in 1976 in Fujian, China, and now living in Beijing, Gao studied sculpture both in Xiamen Art Academy and Central Academy of Fine Arts Beijing. I remember one incident that gave me a hint of his carefree character. Gao had been invited to the inauguration ceremony of Raffles City Chengdu — CapitaLand’s flagship integrated development project in that city. The dress code was shirt and tie. I bumped into him at Somerset Riverview Chengdu, the place where some of the guests stayed, just before they were to assemble to be transported to the venue. Gao seemed extremely awkward in his white, long-sleeved shirt and dark-coloured tie. He told me that he never put on such an attire before and asked to be excused from adhering to the dress code. I certainly did not have the authority to do so, but nevertheless told him to be himself. Gao quickly disappeared. A few minutes later, he reappeared in a black shirt, untucked, with sleeves rolled up and the front not fully buttoned up. He was himself again.

FEAST FOR THE EYES

It must be this kind of spontaneity and non-conformity that has contributed to Gao’s creative output. Look carefully at the flying figures of the City Dreams series and you will find that they are not all babies. There are women and men, too. The men are all dressed in suits with ties or bow ties — garb that the artist would certainly dislike putting on. What make these figures look like babies are their roundness and their shortened limbs. Also, they all have the same smile that make them seem perpetually happy. Gao is likely taking a satirical attitude towards such ‘happiness’. One only needs to look at the tiny wings of the ballooned figures to get the hint: how can such tiny parts carry the much larger wholes to their dreams?

What dreams? Gao has reflected: “As a youth in the village, my dreams were of the city; as an adult in the city, my dreams are of the village”. He misses “the ‘naivety’ that we are all born with”, untainted by conventions.

Each of us can decide what our own city dreams are: wealth, fame, or power; a wonderful career, a happy family, or a good social standing. The choices are endless. May our hopefully not-too-tiny wings fly us all to our dreams.

“As a youth in the village, my dreams were of the city; as an adult in the city, my dreams are of the village.”

This article was first published in the December 2013 issue of Inside Different Geographies, which has the theme of “Food. Glorious Food!”
I can think of no other piece in our collection that can match this month’s theme of ‘Scaling New Heights’ better than Inbar Tolla’s bronze sculpture Sky is the Limit. Displayed at the top of the main staircase at the CapitaLand Institute of Management and Business (CLIMB), Inbar Tollar’s Sky is the Limit was acquired together with another of her creations. The second work, titled Accumulating Knowledge, is placed near the foot of the staircase at the main entrance of the Institute.

It is quite intriguing to see Sky is the Limit after one has climbed the two flights of stairs to reach the second storey of the CLIMB building where all the lecture rooms and classrooms are located. Suddenly, one comes face-to-face with this 2m-tall sculpture, which seems to mimic the upward movement that one has been executing, except that the scale has changed. The figures that continue the upward movement are much smaller than an actual human being. Suddenly, we are detached from our own action and we contemplate, from a lofty vantage point, the climb of a group of little people.

There are 10 little people to be exact — all in the same size and posture, walking up an imaginary spiral staircase. Or could it be just one little person, with each figure representing each step that he or she makes towards a goal whose limit is defined only by the sky? We can have our different interpretations, but only sculptor Inbar Tolla has the answer.
HIGHLY GROUNDED

Born in Germany in 1958, Tolla moved to Israel in 1971 and has since remained there. Besides studying the various forms of visual arts at a number of institutions in the two countries, she also completed a degree in Psychology and Sociology at Tel Aviv University. She currently lives and works in Udim in central Israel. She wrote about the purpose of her art:

“I try to make people stop from everyday activities and concerns, step out of the realistic and material race of our time, and take a moment to think about life.”

That is precisely what a work like Sky is the Limit makes us do. When we suddenly see it, we cannot help but take a moment to think about the little people in front of us. For we too are little people ourselves and we can identify with the climbing action they are making. We are all climbing, but where are we heading? What are our goals? Perhaps our goals are clear; perhaps not; or perhaps they change over time. The sculpture does not attempt to represent the goals, but instead just a continuous motion, a spiral motion. Tolla says of the spiral:

“Many things in nature grow in spirals, from ferns to seashells to whirlpools. They can be as small the double helix of a protein molecule, and as large as the spiral arms of the Milky Way. No wonder the spiral is universally recognised as a symbol for growth.”
AIMING HIGH
What are the ultimate goals of our climbing movement? To me, the answer must be about personal growth, about the fulfillment of the potential that each of us as unique individual has, and it cannot be represented in any physical form. One thing, however, is clear: to be able to reach our full potential, a lifelong learning journey is essential, and accumulating knowledge must form the basis of this journey.

For that it is most apt that Toll’s Accumulating Knowledge is placed at the foot of the main staircase of the CLIMB premises. Here, the use of books to represent knowledge may be understood as symbolic — for knowledge can come in many forms especially in the current age of information, and the best source must be life itself.

The Love of Life
Using a tightrope walker, dog walker and town crier, Belgian artist Dirk De Keyzer invites you to come and feel the pulse of his sculptures at Westgate.

Placed at prominent positions in CapitaLand’s Westgate in Jurong are three charming sculptures by Belgium artist Dirk De Keyzer. They are all centred on the subject of the human being, and at least one, if not all of them, will make your heart beat faster when you gaze upon it — if you can identify with what the figure is doing.

The figure is a slim woman dressed in a spaghetti top and tight pants, walking barefoot on a tight rope above a water feature. She has nothing to help her balance herself except her own limbs, and is in a most challenging position. Our hearts beat faster when we imagine ourselves in her shoes (even though she has none on), for we are not sure whether the next step we take will still leave us standing upright on the rope. We are not just spectators; we, too, are tightrope walkers in life’s various situations and need to execute our balancing acts well.

This article was first published in the January 2014 issue of Inside Different Geographies, which has the theme of “Scaling New Heights”.

right: Reflecting real life, the figure epitomises the tightrope walker in all of us, balancing life’s various situations.
THE ART OF LIFE
Here lies the uniqueness of De Keyzer’s sculptures — their ability to engage and move the viewers deeply. Indeed, it is the artist’s aim to invite the viewers into his world and have conversations with him. The artworks are snapshots of his world, and the intended conversations focus not always on the goal, but on the process.

Born in 1958, De Keyzer was initially sent away by his family to learn a craft and seemed destined to work in a factory. Instead, he ended up studying art at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Eeklo, Belgium, and has been a professional sculptor since 1985.

De Keyzer was fascinated by French sculptor Auguste Rodin and Belgian sculptors George Minne and Constantin Meunier, but he managed to move away from the classical idiom and developed his own language in sculpting, not linked to any trends or movements. He discovered his predilection for bronze while in the Academy and it gradually became the only medium of his sculptures.

For De Keyzer, the most important source of inspiration is no less than life itself, and he sees his figures as belonging to all cultures or none at all. He also sees humour as an important aspect in his work, in part achieved by his distortion of the human figures such that they take on the feel of a caricature. He strongly believes that humour rather than negativity is a mightier tool in the battle against the downside of our modern society.

THE HUMOUR IN LIFE
Besides The Tightrope Walker (originally named in French as La Funambule), you can also see The Walk (La Promenade) and The Loudspeaker (Le Haut Parleur) at Westgate, all thoughtfully positioned by the CapitaLand project team in the courtyards: The Tightrope Walker, as mentioned before, on a water body; The Walk amid planting beds; and The Loudspeaker in the square.

The Walk features a woman in a rather stiff posture being led by her sprightly dog. We may wonder: do we sometimes love our pets so much that they drive our lives? And what exactly are our ‘pets’?

The Loudspeaker features a man with exaggerated facial features
standing on top of a ladder, speaking through a big loudspeaker. We may wonder: just how often do we want to make ourselves heard, and what sort of message do we want to convey? Or we may put ourselves in the position of an audience eagerly waiting for someone high up to make an announcement; we can surely hear the sound of our pulsating hearts.

In these various ways, De Keyzer’s work truly engages the viewers. Why? Because the artist understands life with a sense of humour and shows the love of life in his works — L’Amour de la vie.

I have always been fascinated by glass objects. Roman glass objects in museums, for example, could be 2,000 years old, but already they have attained a high level of sophistication. The glass could have been cast or blown, and it came in a variety of shapes and colours. One thing that is very special about glass is that it allows light to pass through, and the light works its magic in it so that the objects sparkle and glow like gems. Indeed, the Romans have used glass to make jewellery.

Fast forward to the 21st century, where huge quantities of objects in glass are made by industrial processes serving functional purposes. Yet, there are some that are still made by hand and serve only an artistic purpose. The latter are often associated with the Studio Glass movement that originated in America in the 1950s, which emphasised on the artist as designer and maker, and focused on the making of one-of-a-kind objects.

What a Jewel!

B. Jane Cowie’s enchanting glass installation at the CapitaLand Institute of Management and Business (CLIMB) premises shines, sparkles and spurs new growth.

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Often working independently with a small glass furnace in a studio, the artist produces art from glass using the age-old method of casting and blowing, alongside modern techniques, with much richer colour, texture and shape. Such works can be fascinating.

**SPURRING NEW GROWTH**

Adorning the tranquil reading room in the CLIMB building is one such enchanting glass installation. Specially commissioned by CapitaLand, *New Growth* is created by Australian artist B. Jane Cowie.

Here, springing up from a water feature, are 20 glass flowers supported on polished stainless steel rods. They are of different heights and sizes, and all reaching upward. The overall effect is one of vitality, much befitting the context of CLIMB, where CapitaLand officers gather to learn and grow.

We all learn and grow, and sometimes that process can be touching. Such is the case of Cowie’s learning to become a glass artist. She gladly shares with us her experience:

> “After college I decided to travel. With a one-way ticket to Europe, I set off to see the world. While traveling around and doing itinerant odd jobs, I decided that I should focus. I started by contacting a number of glass artists to see if I could work with them as a volunteer assistant, to learn more about glass and art. And then I saw hot glass for the first time, immediately fell in love and knew that is what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.”

**SHAPING GLASSY WONDERS**

Since then, Cowie has been working with glass for over 20 years and has developed competent technical skills and an intimate understanding of glass making techniques and applications. This is most evident in the creation of each of the funnel-shaped, latticed flowers of *New Growth*. She explains the process:

> “It is built up with layers of hot glass. I am sitting at the glassmaker’s bench ready to receive the hot glass on the tip of the punty [a metal rod]. I turn the punty so as to pull and stretch the glass to the right diameter as each layer is added to my shape, cools and stiffen. I need to constantly re-heat the glass in the glory hole [furnace], otherwise the glass will cool too quickly and break. But the temperature must not be too high or it can collapse and be mishaped.”
SPAWNING SPARKLING BEAUTIES

The flowers are green, salmon, pink, clear, or a combination of colours. What is very beautiful is that the colours are not even, the effect being somewhat watercolour-like. Furthermore, the texture and transparency vary: some blossoms are matt and translucent, others are smooth, transparent and glittery. Seen as a whole, they complement and contrast with one another, offering a most delicious visual feast.

"Conceptually, glass offers contradictions of beauty and danger, hot and cold, flowing fluid and rigid mass. For me, glass symbolises life — the strength, fragility and wonder of life," Cowie shares. I am sure a lot of us agree.

Next time when you are at CLIMB, do take a good look at New Growth. It is best seen from different angles when one moves round it. The stainless steel stems and glass flowers overlap in ever-changing patterns. Close examination is a must for us to appreciate all its subtleties — what a jewel!

What’s in Store for Sun Woman?

Let’s take a look at the search for a new home for a piece of delightful sculpture by Spanish artist Juan Ripollés.

In Technopark@Chai Chee is a larger-than-life sculpture titled Sun Woman, which must have put a smile on many people who have walked past that part of the Technopark. With the sale of this CapitaLand property to a third party, the sculpture, which forms part of our collection, will soon be moved to another location.

This is not the first time Sun Woman has been moved. Originally, it stood in a pedestrian mall next to Orchard Point and was specially commissioned for the project by Pidemco Land, before the merger of Pidemco Land and DBS Land to form CapitaLand.
“The artist came to Singapore and we met him,” recalled Deputy Chief Development Officer, Asia and Head, Design Management CapitaLand Limited, Mr Poon Hin Kong. “We found his work light-hearted and would engage the people. So, we commissioned him,” added the long-serving employee, who is also an art lover.

THE FUN-LOVING SUN WOMAN

Sun Woman is certainly engaging. She is a curious sort of woman — surreal, in fact. First, she is oddly proportioned. The round face overpowers the extremely squat body, and the out-reaching hands are rather large by contrast. Second, she has no front and back, for she has two faces facing opposite directions (and subtle changes in colour for each aspect). Third, some of her body parts appear ‘natural’ — such as her hands — and some not so — such as her tube-like legs. Such a creation can only exist in an artist’s mind, and through his hands it becomes a reality — a surreal sort of reality.

THE MAN BEHIND THE SUN WOMAN

The artist, Juan Ripolles, was born in 1932 in Alzira, Valencia, in Spain. His early years were a struggle. He was at various times a horse dung collector, scrap collector and house painter. In 1954, he left for Paris with the desire to be an artist. Just four years later his dream came true; his creations were hanging on the walls of a prestigious gallery that had earlier exhibited the art pieces of the great Picasso, an artist whose work had influenced his.

Today, at the age of 82, Ripolles continues to be active. He has held exhibitions in different cities of the world and his sculptures adorn many squares and streets of cities and towns in Spain and overseas.

THE DELIGHTFUL SUN WOMAN

The two faces of Sun Woman are most delightful to behold. One of them is a combination of two faces in profile — the Cubist influence of simultaneous views of the same subject, while the other is pared down to the essentials — just three strokes of recesses representing one eye, the nose and the mouth. The ears, ‘shared’ by both faces, are like handles of a paella pan. Even household objects are part of his inspiration.

opposite: Basking happily in the sun, Sun Woman seems to be shouting: “Come join me!”
A sculpture such as this tends to delight the viewers, because it brings out the child in the adult and appeals to children naturally. It can be in any location, as long as the immediate surrounding is a good fit. Owing to the change of hands for CapitaLand projects and other factors, it has been uprooted and replanted more than once. With the sale of the Technopark, where will be its next destination?

This question occupied the minds of the CapitaLand design management team and a place was eventually identified: the roof garden of Twenty Anson, a 20-storey prime office building. It will not be a straightforward operation though. Sun Woman is too big to take the service lift, and she will have to be lifted up to the roof garden by a crane, probably in the wee hours, when the crane parked by the roadside will have the least impact on the traffic.

What is in store for Sun Woman?

Nothing short of love and care to place it in another good home!

Flower Power

The floral-themed paintings of Eric Chan give character to the lobby of Citadines Mount Sophia Singapore.

In 2009, a few months before the completion of Citadines Mount Sophia Singapore, a modern and stylish serviced residence property located near Orchard Road, some of my colleagues and I looked for suitable artworks for its public areas. We wanted something to tell international travellers about Singapore. The flora of this ‘City in the Gardens’ was certainly to be considered.
BUDDING YOUNG TALENT
We approached artist Eric Chan for a possible commission of a centrepiece painting for the property’s lobby. Born in Kuala Lumpur in 1975, Chan trained at the LASALLE-SIA College of Art (now known as LASALLE College of the Arts), and later at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. By 2009, he had won several awards, held quite a number of solo exhibitions, and was known for painting flowers in a distinctive personal style. Typically, in his oil-on-linen paintings, he would present them many times larger than their actual sizes and give the images a special blurring effect inspired by photography techniques.

We met Chan at his studio-cum-apartment in Singapore to discuss how this commissioned work might look. He suggested the ubiquitous bougainvillea as the subject. As the lobby is spacious, we needed a large piece to make an impact. He suggested doing a work that is made up of small mosaic panels joined together. All these ideas sounded good. He subsequently made a small mock-up of what he intended to produce. We liked it. After an internal approval process, we gave him the commission.

FLOURISHED WITH DETAILS
When I look at Chan’s paintings of flowers, I cannot help but think of artist Georgia O’ Keeffe (1887–1986), who can be considered as one of America’s pioneer modern painters. For about several decades in the 20th century, she painted enlarged versions of flowers among other things, focusing often on the centres of the flowers. Her style was influenced by photography.

The finished work of Chan’s bougainvillea, Crimson Passion, measuring 1.5m by 5m, consists of 15 square panels of 0.5m by 0.5m joined together. One can feel the strong presence of this painting as soon as one steps into Citadines Mount Sophia’s lobby. We must have seen bougainvilleas along the road and at the overhead bridges of Singapore many times, but we may never have seen it presented in this enlarged format. These branches of bougainvilleas with green leaves and red bracts — the paper-like modified leaves of the plant which people often mistake as flower petals — have now become very powerful. They dwarf the furniture in the room, as if a window has suddenly opened to Brobdingnag, the land of giants in the book, Gulliver’s Travels. Look at the painting closely and you will see the thorns on the stems, veins on the leaves, and white flowers amid some of the bracts.

right: The bird-like form of the Bird-of-Paradise flowers, of the Strelitzia family, complements the leafy form of the bougainvillea well.
IN BLOOM
We acquired at the same time another of Chan’s oil painting, Paradise Reflection, measuring 1.5m by 1.5m, and placed it close to the centrepiece. Here, the plants are much less enlarged, and the bird-like form of the Bird-of-Paradise flowers, of the Strelitzia family, complements the leafy form of the bougainvillea well. Paradise Reflection evokes another type of plant very commonly found by the roadsides of Singapore: the Heliconia, known as false bird-of-paradise.

The two works have surely provided good talking points to the residents and visitors of Citadines Mount Sophia Singapore, besides enhancing the beauty of its interior.

Twelve Cityscape Paintings

Brendan Neiland’s set of cityscape paintings at Capital Tower intrigues its viewers with its ambiguity.

As I sit down to write this article, the World Cup season is fast approaching. When I think of football, I can’t help but think of teamwork, an important factor in winning any match, and then my thoughts go to a set of commissioned works by British artist Brendan Neiland, now hanging at Capital Tower: 12 paintings that work together ‘as a team’ to make a statement.
I had a chance recently to meet the artist himself in Singapore at his solo exhibition, *City Portrait*, and we talked about this work. It was commissioned towards the end of the 1990s, before Capital Tower was completed. Neiland recalled using the construction lift to go up the tower and it was rather nerve-racking. He also studied and soaked in the atmosphere of its surroundings and these gave him the inspiration of the work. It is about bringing Capital Tower’s exterior landscape into its interior.

It is hard to miss these acrylic paintings as you move around Capital Tower. At first glance, they seem to be photographs. It is only when you look very closely at them that you realise they are created by a spray-painting technique. It is no mean feat to be able to apply this technique — which has to do with master drawings, templates, layering of colour, use of compressors, and almost nothing to do with brushes — so skillfully, and kudos must be given to the artist.

**HIGHLY SKILFUL AND DISTINGUISHED**

Born in 1941 in Lichfield, Stafford, Neiland pursued his art education at Birmingham College of Art and then Royal College of Art, London. He has had a distinguished career in the art world. The appointments he has held include Professor of Painting at University of Brighton and Keeper of The Royal Academy Schools where he was in charge of the graduate school. His works are represented at The Victoria and Albert Museum as well as The Tate Gallery London, among other institutions in Britain and in other parts of the world.

**REFLECTIONS OF A CITY**

Of the set of 12 drawings at Capital Tower, three — having in common the square grids of curtain walls — are arranged vertically at the Level 1 lobby. One, featuring a stone wall of Capital Tower, stands on its own at the Level 2 lift lobby. Six other pieces, with images of glass, stone and palm leaves, form a stunning backdrop to a sitting area on the 36th storey transit floor. Two are hung at the escalator well on the same floor, one highlighting the key stone of Capital Tower.

Neiland had determined the exact number of pieces and how they should be grouped and displayed. All of them look real and unreal at the same time, for many of the images — whether they are clouds, building façades or palm leaves, are all reflections on glass panels, distorted and juxtaposed together. When stone walls bathed in gentle light are depicted, the soft shadows of palm leaves, often joining their reflections, add another intriguing dimension.
Pet Pandas

Panda Family at Westgate by Julien Marinetti is becoming endearing to the community.

Pandas are such cuddly animals that many of us wish we could have them as pets. If this is not possible, hugging them or sitting on their laps and taking pictures with them would be just as wonderful — never mind that they are in fact, sculptures.

Even since Julien Marinetti’s Panda Family was installed at Westgate’s entrance next to the Jurong East MRT station, it has become immensely popular. Day or night, you see people going up the artificial grass mound where the family of four is situated, touching them and taking pictures in all kinds of loving poses. There is nothing stopping them to interact with these works of art.

AN AFFINITY FOR THE CITY

It was a joy to walk with the scholarly Neiland at his recent show and hear him talk about his works of the past decade, consisting mainly of brush paintings and limited edition prints. The subject matter is still all about the city, which he has a real affinity for. Reflection and juxtaposition, light and shadow — these are still the constants, but the range of expressions has widened. Vibrant, colourful and seductive are the words we can use to describe some of these works, and the portraits of cities such as Las Vegas, New York City, and Havana all reveal their individual souls, just like the ones at Capital Tower which underline the orderliness and somewhat clinical character of Singapore at that time.

Neiland shared that he had wanted to be a Catholic priest and studied in a seminary before he discerned that art was his true calling. Once he made the switch, there was no turning back. I can see that even today, he still approaches art with much zeal and passion.

Zeal and passion — surely these are very much part of the World Cup phenomenon too!

This article was first published in the June 2014 issue of Inside Different Geographies, which has the theme of “Football Fever!”.
THE PEOPLE’S PETS
It is the conscious decision of CapitaLand’s project team to display the pandas in such a way to engage the community. Of course, there is then a risk of vandalism, but the team felt that the more the works become endearing to people — in this case through an increased closeness, the less chance there is that they will do anything to harm them.

“Why use the pandas for Westgate?” one may ask. To understand why, we must go back to the successful installation of the same artist’s first Panda Family created uniquely for CapitaLand for its Raffles City Chengdu project (see page 89). It would be good to have a similar set of work realised in Singapore to mark CapitaLand’s sponsorship of the 10-year Giant Panda Collaborative Programme, which saw two lovely pandas, Kai Kai and Jia Jia, making Singapore their home since 2012.

THE PETS WITH A DIFFERENCE
Since the mid-1970s, Jurong has been given a certain Chinese character with the opening of the Chinese Garden. The garden’s pagoda and pavilions have long been a part of Jurong’s landscape: one would see them travelling along Boon Lay Way and they are just a short distance away from Westgate. The pandas reinforce the Chinese character of the Jurong area.

We gave Marinetti a special challenge during the making of Panda Family. Since each of the sculptures was to be hand-painted by him as if on a three dimensional canvas, they must reflect their unique context. What about showing the architecture of the Chinese Garden in his signature graffiti style?

At first, Marinetti did not seem to be receptive of the idea, but after some weeks he gave us a surprise. He would not do the Chinese Garden in graffiti. Instead, he would, in a special way of painting which suggests the presence of various features of Jurong, depict the Chinese architecture, the trees and the modern buildings. The result is something that looks abstract yet it is not, and is all the more engaging.

In January 2014, during Art Stage (the annual big art show of Singapore), Marinetti was in town. We had a chance to meet in front of the Westgate pandas. He recalled the challenge given and shared that he had personally visited Jurong to soak in its atmosphere before executing the paintings. He was very happy to see the pandas thus truly belonging to their location and being in close contact with their fans through the way they are displayed.
We revisited the subject of maintenance identified right from the start of the commission. Owing to close contact, people do inadvertently leave undesirable ‘trails’, such as shoe marks, on the endearing pets and we want the pandas to always look pristine.

“Think of them as nice sports cars,” said Marinette, who had executed these works with car paint and coated them with resin. “Wash them, shampoo them and wax them as you would take care of your precious Porsche.”

Now, CapitaLand’s operation team will have to see to this, with the same love and care that we would shower onto our pets!

Located prominently at the main entrance of CapitaLand’s Raffles City Chengdu in China is a family of four pandas that greet every visitor. They all have the same posture and expression, but some are more colourful than the others. Colourful pandas? Just what kind of pandas are these?
These are, of course, not real pandas, but panda sculptures — creations by contemporary French artist Julien Marinetti. Born in 1967, Marinetti discovered his artistic side during his youth. He ran away from school, which he considered boring, and spent joyful days wandering in museums. He later joined the famous Beaux-Arts School in Paris, but this stint lasted only 48 hours, as he felt like a stranger there. By chance he met the renowned artist Jean Dewasne, who taught him modern tonality and the art of painted metallic ‘anti-sculptures’. Marinetti started to develop his own distinct style.

By 2011, when CapitaLand invited Marinetti to do a special commission for Raffles City Chengdu, he was already well known for his Doggy John sculpture — a bulldog painted with vibrant colours and adorned with graffiti motives, a familiar form in a unique expression. He gladly took on the challenge of creating a family of four pandas, something he had not attempted before.

At that point of time, there was perhaps no other subject matter closer to the heart of CapitaLand than the pandas, as CapitaLand is the Presenting Sponsor and Conservation Donor of the 10-year Giant Panda Collaborative Programme between China and Singapore. Wolong, which is only 130km away from Chengdu, is one of the sanctuaries of the giant pandas and is also where Kai Kai and Jia Jia were raised. These two pandas have made Singapore their home for ten years, starting from September 2012. May they aspire to start a family of four, or even more!

UNIQUE INTERPRETATIONS

It is often interesting to see how someone foreign to a country interprets something that is very much a symbol of that nation or culture. Here, Marinetti has chosen a standard sitting posture for all four members of Panda Family — the parents and their twin children — regardless of their size, gender and age, with Papa Panda occupying a prime position, dominating and spreading his influence like a wise man. Is that how he sees a Chinese family?

In the early stage of the creative process, Marinetti wanted to paint the four in similar patterns and to mimic the natural look of the animal. But, gradually, this idea evolved into something far more interesting. Today, we can see that Papa Panda is pretty much black and white — providing a visual reference to the natural panda; Mama Panda has solid patches of colours alongside the black and white; while the Baby Pandas are layered with many hues. On close examination, one can see ‘graffiti’ inspired by Picasso’s work — Marinetti’s signature style — that is present on the pandas, with each having its unique ‘tattoo’ of human faces and abstract patterns, and there is even a sprig of green leaves on one of the twins. These pandas are surely hip!
COMBINING PAINTING AND SCULPTURE
It may come as a surprise that these hip sculptures were made using the ancient technique of bronze casting. While bronze sculptures often look and feel like bronze, the pandas look anything but bronze. This is due to the creativity of the artist, for Marinetti combines the art of sculpture with the art of painting. Layer and layers of enamel paint and lacquered were applied to give the sculptures the depth of oil painting on canvas and the smoothness of porcelain.

The idea of colourful pandas may sound like a joke, but it is not new in the art world. In 1983, American pop artist Andy Warhol created his *Endangered Species* series in which the panda took on bright colours — in one example red, ochre and magenta — with not even a trace of black. In fact, the colour palette of Marinetti’s works is inspired by Warhol’s art. Another source of inspiration is American pop artist Lichtenstein, who is known for his use of layering. Marinetti synthesises these two styles with Picasso’s and applies them to his three-dimensional sculptures to achieve an unprecedented effect. It is as if he has introduced a fourth dimension to the sculptures.

THE PANDAS’ CHARM
Before the colourful *Panda Family* was unveiled, there was a concern that the locals might not accept it and that there might be lots of controversy. But art is never about ‘playing it safe’ and avoiding controversy. With *Art @ CapitaLand*, we do allow controversy, albeit of the non-offensive sort. Most importantly, we want the community to be able to understand, discuss, enjoy and eventually fall in love with the collection.

So, how have our colourful panda friends fared? Judging from the remarks on popular Chinese microblogging platform Weibo, they have begun to charm the locals. Here is a sampling of what the locals are saying:

“What a lovely panda family!”
“*The pandas are no longer black and white, they can justify colour photos!*”
“This family of pandas is quite joyful. Every time I walk past, I will give it a glance.”
“When I have time, I’ll take a photo with these pandas that I love most.”

Such is the panda magic — colourful panda magic!
Falling Water

Hiroshi Senju’s mesmerising waterfall paintings evoke deeper feelings than photographs of waterfalls can.

It was at one of the art fairs some years ago that I first saw internationally renowned artist Hiroshi Senju’s waterfall paintings. They stood out from the many art pieces on display and I was mesmerised the moment I set eyes on them. I remember a big piece of work, definitely taller than me, just grey and white but creating such a powerful presence of a waterfall. I stood before the painting for a long time. I could hear the waterfall’s thundering sound. I could feel the mist it gave off. Not even photographs with their realistic representation of the same subject matter could evoke such a deep feeling in their viewers.

MESMERISING ART AT WORK

It was very much later that I had a chance to see a video of Senju at work on one of his black and white waterfall paintings, and I became even more fascinated with them. He first grinds an ink stick — traditionally made of soot and a binding agent made from animal bone — on an ink stone with water to produce black ink, which he applies with a brush onto mulberry paper. This reminded me of my student days in a Chinese school back in Singapore’s 1960s, when we had to go through a similar process to get the ink to do our compulsory Chinese calligraphy homework.

Senju also makes white pigment by hand, a process that involves mixing a natural substance in powder form with water, kneading it, adding more water to the paste and then sieving it. He then pours the white liquid from the top of the paper, stretched like a piece of canvas on a frame, so that the liquid flows down from the top, leaving intricate trails of white.

But that is not all. Senju uses a spray gun — a comparatively modern device — to create the mist, and traditional brushes to do the final touch-up. What is amazing is how much the one component of the subject of the painting — the water itself — does the painting. It is falling pigmented water drawn by the sheer force of gravity that depicts the mighty waterfall, and it is misty pigmented water powered by the spray gun that creates the fine mist.
FALLING IN LOVE WITH WATERFALLS
Born in Tokyo in 1958, Senju was educated at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, from its undergraduate school all the way to its doctorate programme. He has been living in the United States since 1994, for he feels that after training in the Nihonga (traditional Japanese painting) school and also being influenced by Chinese art, he should distance himself from this kind of heritage, and find out where his place should be in the world.

Senju at first painted Tokyo with its buildings. But his interest shifted and after making forays into subject matters such as Tokyo’s surrounding landscapes and then the sky, he discovered the waterfall. He said in a 2009 interview with Asian Art: “As I saw it, not only did I find it beautiful, but also I felt something clicking as if I recognised some kind of DNA that I had in me, like a memory.

Something similar to a natural emotion came from my heart. I find that a lot of people, whether they are Europeans, Americans or Japanese, have similar feelings towards waterfalls. I find that these emotions go beyond the boundaries of East/West, or old/new.”

When the grand foyer of CapitaLand’s Six Battery Road was upgraded in 2011 as part of the overall asset enhancement initiative of the Grade A office building, the project team looked for artworks to grace the three ground floor lift lobbies. Senju’s waterfall paintings immediately came to mind and I was very glad the suggestion was taken up. These paintings truly enhance the theme of nature used for the foyer — a unique space dominated by a vertical green wall with many plant species creating a ‘live’ abstract mural, flanked by a back-lit wall of onyx whose natural grains hint at magnificent mountain landscapes. The foyer is flooded with natural light during the day through ample skylights, giving it an extra dimension. From this space, one goes into three smaller-scale lift lobbies, and it is here that one suddenly encounters Senju’s paintings, nicely fitted into the end walls of each lobby.

Ever so contemplative, ever so timeless, these captivating works of art change the experience of waiting for the lift into something that borders on the spiritual.
Behold how Singapore artist Jason Lim’s *Paradise* portrays the elegance of the Heliconia plant in fired clay.

If there is a genre of art that reminds one immediately of baking, it must be ceramic art. I had a chance to take pottery classes during my university days and got hooked on it. I remember fondly the steps of ‘wedging’ the clay, which is very much like kneading flour; ‘throwing’ or form-making on the potter’s wheel; ‘turning’ or finishing the hardened but unfired ware, glazing and firing. The feeling of moulding clay is therapeutic and the entire process of creation, most fascinating.

**ELEGANT GARDEN ‘BAKED’ WITH SKILL**

Singapore artist Jason Lim’s ceramic art piece, *Paradise*, likewise went through a fascinating process of creation, though not identical to the one described above. Featuring a segment of a tropical garden dominated by Heliconia plants, it is the centrepiece gracing the lobby of The Orchard Residences, a 54-storey luxury condominium in the heart of the city. From far, one may think that this is a Batik painting. It is only upon coming near to it that one suddenly discovers it is made up of many pieces of ceramic components, differing subtly in tonality and texture, laid out on a brown background. Both the subject as well as the look and feel of the piece give the lobby a subtle, elegant tropical accent.

**MASTER CERAMIST**

Lim was born in Singapore in 1966 and educated at Central St Martins College of Art & Design in London and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (LASALLE College of the Arts), where he obtained his master’s degree in Fine Arts. His repertoire includes many genres of art, but he is best known for his ceramics.

His works first came to my attention when he presented *Just Dharma* at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007. He created a chandelier made up of 1800 pieces of ceramic lotus flowers...
Clay is an organic material. It changes its state from being ephemeral during the making stage to being permanent after firing.

REFINING FIRE

However, the piece at The Orchard Residences is made to last, and much care went into its creation. Lim first did a master drawing of the overall composition on A3-size paper, and subsequently enlarged it to the actual size of the work of 5m by 3m. He then traced the enlarged drawing onto slabs of hand-rolled clay of about 2.5cm thick and cut each component piece to shape. He took care to label each piece to avoid confusion when the time came to assemble them. After drying the pieces, he fired them in a large gas kiln at about 1,200ºC for the desired effects.

suspended in the Singapore pavilion. On the opening day of the pavilion, the chandelier was made to crash onto the floor as part of a performance and the relic remained there for the entire duration of the show. It must have shocked the audience when the ceramic flowers came crashing down from high above and broke into many pieces in a loud crackling sound. It was brilliant both as performance art and ceramic art! The artist’s message about destruction being just as important as creation in both art and life must have come across strongly.

“Having rich experiences with this particular clay type and using gas for firing allow me to explore the possibilities of gas firing and playing with atmospheric firing conditions,” Lim said. “Controlling the supplies of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the kiln and placing the clay pieces at strategic spots allow for subtle variations of the fired work.” Lim kept away from using coloured glaze for this piece — and in fact for most of his ceramic works — to realise a Minimalist intent. Less is more!

When asked what he liked about working with ceramics, he shared, “Clay is an organic material. It changes its state from being ephemeral during the making stage to being permanent after firing. It is a material I can work directly with my hands and feel connected with. My mind and soul are transferred onto the material in the most direct way though my hands.”

The amateur potter in me could not have agreed more.
Let’s **Twist** Again

Singapore artist Kumari Nahappan’s red hot chilli sculpture sets our feet tapping.

“Come on everybody, Clap your hands! Now you’re looking good! I’m gonna sing my song and it won’t take long. We gotta do the twist and it goes like this…”

When writing this article and gazing at the photo of Kumari Nahappan’s sculpture, *Twist*, these lyrics and the very catchy tune of Chubby Checker’s *Let’s Twist Again* came to mind. Now, I must confess: up to a fortnight ago I did not know who Checker was, even though he is the famous ‘King of Twist’; nor did I know any of his hits, even though some of them hit the Billboard Hot 100, or won a Grammy Award. It was only when a kind colleague shared with me an audio version of *Let’s Twist Again* after attending a talk I gave on this work of Kumari that I was exposed to them. Then I knew what I had missed. But let me tell you more about that later.

For the moment, let’s just focus on Kumari’s *Twist* — a bronze chilli sculpture patinated with red and green pigment, an eye-catcher set against the white architecture of The Interlace. The chilli seems to defy gravity, standing on the tip of its somewhat conical and elongated body, supported only by a vine that extends from its top, coiling loosely around its body to reach the base.

**A TWIST TO THE ART**

Have you ever seen a chilli growing on a vine? I haven’t. I don’t interpret the long green coil as a vine either. Rather, it is the twisting movement of the red hot chilli, and I cannot help but quote Checker’s lyrics again: “Yeah, round ’n around ’n up ’n down we go again”. This swirling and twisting are all part of the dance movement. But, have you ever seen a chilli dancing?

“No” is the obvious answer that puts this work of Kumari in the realm of fantasy, and it is very different from another work that she did for CapitaLand a few years ago, *Nutmeg and Mace* at ION Orchard. Both spices, the nutmeg is the seed of the nutmeg tree, while the mace is the ‘lacy’ cover of the seed. This work is much larger than life: the simple fruit is sliced open to reveal the seed, looking magnificent blown up to 3.5m tall. In contrast, the chilli depicted in *Twist*, similarly ‘upsized’ to 5.1m, has another dimension: it is ‘animated’, dancing like a person. Indeed, *Twist* belongs to Kumari’s famous *Song and Dance* series featuring singing and dancing chillies and peppers. In fact, one work from the series, the 6.6m-tall *Tango*, was awarded the Sculpture of the Year at the 15th edition of the Shanghai Art Fair in 2011.
THE ARTIST WHO LOVED TO TWIST

Born in Malaysia in 1953, Kumari is a Singaporean who lives and works in Singapore. She was educated in interior design in the UK in the 1970s, and then in fine arts in Singapore and Australia in the 1990s. Over the past two decades, her artistic journey has seen her develop an extensive body of works, including paintings, sculptures and installations, which have been exhibited in Asia, Europe and the United States.

I had the opportunity to have several good talks with the artist in the course of the making of Twist, during our foundry visit to Thailand and the installation of it on site. She came across as a humble person and if there is any fire in her — as in her red hot chilli sculptures — it must be her passion in her art.

It was during one of these conversations that she shared with me why she wanted to depict the twist in this piece. She reminisced about the days when she was a student and would meet the guys at tea dances, which were held in the afternoon, as the name suggests. The parents would think that their children were staying back in school diligently doing homework, but in fact they would be twisting away, having a hell of a good time. As she related this story I saw a youthful Kumari, and she has looked after herself so well that no one can tell she is a grandmother unless she reveals the fact.

I must say my teenage life pales in comparison with Kumari’s. If I did not return home immediately after school, I would be diligently doing homework in school! My strict family upbringing also meant no other music genres for me other than classical music. Thanks to Kumari’s Twist, I have discovered Chubby Checker and his hits. And thanks to YouTube, I could even see how the dance was performed in the good old days. Now I, too, can tap my feet and hum: “Yea, let’s twist again, twistin’ time is here!”

This article was first published in the October 2014 issue of Inside Different Geographies, which has the theme of “Don’t Get Worked Up, Work Out.”
Old Lyrics with New Melody

Hear a festive tune as you marvel at Singapore artist Goh Beng Kwan’s abstract work at Ascott Raffles Place Singapore.

Ascott Raffles Place Singapore is a unique building. Constructed in the 1950s and known as the Asia Insurance Building, it was for many years the tallest tower in Singapore, dominating her sea front. In 2006, it was acquired by The Ascott Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of CapitaLand. In two years, it was transformed into a block of premium serviced residences, but with all the significant fabrics of the historic building carefully preserved.

How apt, therefore, is the title of Singapore Cultural Medallion recipient Goh Beng Kwan’s pair of paintings, or diptych, *Old Lyrics with New Melody*, in celebrating this amazing transformation. Not only that, but this work, consisting of two 1.8m by 4.3m panels and specially commissioned for the lobby of Ascott Raffles Place Singapore, also brings about much vibrancy and a festive mood to the interior.

The work is abstract, meaning it does not imitate or refer directly to the appearance of objects in the real world. One does not see any people, wildlife or landscape. Some find this form of art hard to understand, even though abstract art has been established in the history of Western Art for more than a century.
Abstract art is easier to understand when we compare it with music. Very often, instrumental music does not represent anything. The title of a classical piece can be something like Piano Concerto No 26, Violin Sonata No 5 or Symphony No 8. Occasionally the pieces have names such as Coronation, Spring or Unfinished. We enjoy the melody, harmony, rhythm and the changing mood of a piece of music as it flows; we often do not care much about the meaning of its name.

Now, let’s look at Old Lyrics with New Melody as if it were a piece of music. Red is predominantly present and it is a bright major key that warms our heart. We can see that much of this red ‘melody’ flows horizontally from one end of the left panel of the diptych through to the other end of the right panel. The texture changes along the way — some parts are dense, while others are thin. The harmony varies too; often consonant but at times deliberately clashing. Above all, the work evokes a feeling of jubilation.

FORGING AN ABSTRACT STYLE
I recall meeting Goh several times as the work was being made, from seeing his small mock-up to viewing the actual work at various stages of progress at his Telok Kurau Studio. In one of my visits, he explained to me the rhythm of the piece: how certain gestures were needed to articulate particular phrases. It was like we were talking about music, wasn’t it?

Goh was born in Indonesia in 1937. His family immigrated to Singapore when he was eight. He studied at the Chinese High School and took art lessons with Singapore pioneer artists Chen Wen Hsi and Cheong Soo Pieng. In 1962, he left for New York to study at the Art Students League and two years later transferred to Provincetown Workshop, Massachusetts. It must have been an exciting time to do art at New York — the birth place of Abstract Expressionism and the new centre of art after World War II — and Goh forged his abstract-style, mixed-media works with a tie to his cultural roots under the mentorship of prominent artists such as Leo Manso, often regarded as a leading influence in the art of collage.
A MAGICAL MELODY

In writing this article, I revisited the Ascott Raffles Place Singapore and studied Old Lyrics with New Melody in detail. It has lost none of its vitality since the first day I saw it: delightful to look at from afar, wonderful at a close distance. It is at close-distance viewing that one sees the various materials of the collage work at play — rice paper, cloth, impasto (or thick, textured paint) and perhaps bits of bamboo shaving, applied layer over layer to give the work its sophistication.

And I like to interpret this work as an orchestral piece, with the soothing sound of the strings, murmur of the woodwinds, fanfare of the brass, accompanied by the rolling and clanking of the percussion instruments. Occasionally, I hear the Chinese dizi (flute), Indian sitar and Indonesian gamelan — isn’t that magical?

Fantasy by Design

A windmill, flower or person? Lebanese sculptor Nadim Karam’s Wishing Flower is specially designed to let your fantasy take flight!

When CapitaLand’s premium residential project d’Leedon, designed by world renowned architect Zaha Hadid, opened its gate for its occupants to move in, an extraordinary sculpture greeted them at the entrance. This work by Lebanese sculptor Nadim Karam, titled Wishing Flower, is extraordinary because it brings us into the realm of fantasy — we do not see a creature like this in real life. Is it a flower, a windmill, or a person?

At d’Leedon, even the architecture has an element of fantasy, for the architect thinks of the buildings as flowers. Imagine the 36-storey towers as giant buds pointing towards the sky, with their petals peeling away as the flowers start to open. In fact, you don’t have to imagine — the seven ‘flower towers’ of the estate are ready for all to see in their full splendor.
Born in 1957, the architect-painter-sculptor grew up in Beirut, Lebanon. He received his education in Beirut and later in Tokyo. His disciplined approach to projects manifested very strongly when it came to the execution of this work. The whole sculpture, consisting of the body as one piece and each flat blade or petal as distinct parts, was manufactured in a workshop in Beirut, assembled for checking, taken apart for ease of transportation to Singapore, and finally assembled again on location. Karam himself came here to supervise the installation.

**DESIGNED FOR PERFECTION**

While on location, Karam made two significant changes to his own creation. First, the creature would walk towards the estate instead of away from it as originally conceived. We liked it, as this carried the message of ‘coming home’. I like to think of the creature as going into the estate to attend a party at the sculpture park, meeting Spanish artist Juan Ripollés’ Enchanting Girl and dancing to the guitar music.
of Singapore artist Lim Leong Seng’s *Melody of Life*, being coolly observed by the ever evasive golden bird perching on Chinese artist Xie Ai Ge’s *Infinity Tree*. *Oops* — pardon this indulgence in fantasy on my part!

The other change had to do with the title of the sculpture, which was originally *Windmill Flower*. Karam was suddenly inspired to rename it *Wishing Flower* after seeing the sculpture at its final setting. What a wonderful name! We were all excited and, together with Karam, developed a lyrical text that appeared in our Art @ CapitaLand information plaque displayed alongside the work:

Part child, part flower, this playful work by Lebanese sculptor Nadim Karam engages us in the realm of fantasy. Within the petals are overlapping characters taken from the artist’s rich vocabulary of whimsical forms, reminding us of his larger family of city sculptures which he fondly terms ‘Urban Toys’. Karam says of this sculpture: “*Wishing Flower* is the instance when childhood dreams, innocent and fantastical, scatter their magic to the wind.”

Poetic, isn’t it?

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**Working Together as One**

Let Danish artist Olafur Eliasson’s *above below beneath above* take you deep into the ‘woods’ that bond as one with the unique architecture of the brand new CapitaGreen building.

At the heart of Raffles Place in Singapore, a premium Grade A office building has just been completed. Designed by world-renowned architect Toyo Ito, this building, with a large proportion of its elevations covered by green plants, stands tall and handsome, like a tree in the tropical rain forest that once upon a time thrived on this island. Right on top of the building and visible from far away are wind
scopes bringing fresh cool air into the office interior. Bundled together, these scopes resemble a giant red flower, atop the crown of the tree.

**OF ONE ACCORD**

At ground level, there is also a strong presence of the tree, thanks to renowned Danish artist Olafur Eliasson’s installation above below beneath above. Inspired by the aerial root systems of trees, this installation has many steel tubes working together as one to give visitors the experience of walking through a mesh of prop roots, which are aerial roots hitting the ground and developing into strong props that aid the spread of branches. It works beautifully as one, too, with CapitaGreen’s architecture to complete the tree metaphor which Ito had in mind.

**ONE ARTIST IN MIND**

Commissioning of this work happened at the early stage of the project. “The architect recommended the artist, and we found Olafur’s proposal highly appropriate,” recalled Mr Poon Hin Kong, CapitaLand’s Deputy Chief Development Officer, Asia and Head, Design Management. Indeed, as the concept of this installation was very powerful and wonderfully suited to the context, it became a unanimous decision by all to have it installed at CapitaGreen.

Born in Copenhagen in 1967, Eliasson was educated at the Royal Danish College of Fine Arts. He set up a studio in Berlin in the mid-1990s and has been operating from Germany since. He is most well known for his very bold installations. One of them was the Weather Project at London’s Tate Modern in 2003, where a giant ‘sun’, made up of hundreds of mono-frequency lamps, radiated yellow light in a fine mist that filled the Turbine Hall. Another was the New York City Waterfalls project where four man-made waterfalls, each over 30m high, roared in the New York Harbour in 2008. Such bold works take inspiration from natural elements and phenomena such as light, wind, fog, and water. They evoke sensory experiences, captivate the viewers, and often carry a strong message.

*Top: The roots twist and turn, while the crystal seems to float in mid-air.*
Work in progress—the crew assembles the enormous roots, each measuring between 15m and 15.6m. The glowing crystals cast magical images on their surroundings at night.

"above below beneath above refers to aerating roots," Eliasson wrote, “the part of a plant that grows above ground as an extension of the subterranean system of roots, yet is located below the trunk, branches and foliage. The work is suspended between the structural roots of our society — sewers, power lines, utilities — and the lives of the humans above.” He tries to make “the connection between the sky and the ground; between the all-encompassing atmosphere and the life-giving minerals and values of the earth” tangible.

Hence, this poetic work not only has the aerial roots (56 steel tubes of elliptical sections arranged in clusters, twisting, turning and spanning the entire distance between the ceiling and the ground outside the lobby), but also minerals or crystals (16 polyhedral spheres made of stainless steel frames and coloured glass tiles) seemingly floating amid the roots. The overall scale is enormous: each root measures between 15m and 15.6m. That is almost four storeys high! And they go around three sides of the building’s perimeter. By contrast, the jewel-like crystals of 0.75m diametre appear tiny.

ONE MAMMOTH TASK
The production of such a mammoth work, done entirely in Germany, is no mean feat. For the roots, that involved pressing 2mm thick steel plates into a mould under high pressure. The segments were then welded together, polished and painted with a triple layer coating system. Everything was done with great precision and all the components were shipped to Singapore and assembled on site by a team of nine workers from Germany, over a period of just over one month.

ONE UNIQUE EXPERIENCE
It is remarkable to be at CapitaGreen to experience this work. The naturalistic forms of the sturdy roots contrast with the disciplined architectural language of the building; the complex geometry of the delicate crystals in turn contrast with the roots. The roots overlap in different ways as you move around them, giving numerous visual combinations. The crystals look fabulous both from afar and at close scrutiny.

At night, a magical effect prevails as the crystals glow from within and cast soft light on the roots. The roots become highly modulated in light and shadow. All these are possible only because the lighting scheme works as one with everything else.

This article was first published in the January 2015 issue of Inside Different Geographies, which has the theme of “The Power of ONE.”
Born-again Beauty

Students of LASALLE College of The Arts give recyclable bottles a new and colourful lease of life that charms all at Wilkie Edge.

Some months ago, a Partnership Focus Group in CapitaLand came up with a wonderful proposal: to collaborate with students of the local art schools to install works of art in some of CapitaLand’s properties. For a start, we approached the famed LASALLE College of The Arts.

We met its Senior Fellow, Milenko Prvacki, himself a well-known artist and a recipient of the prestigious Cultural Medallion, to explore the possibility of such collaborations. It turned out to be a good discussion, which ultimately led to a pilot project supported by CapitaLand’s top management: a festive Christmas installation that adorned the interior of our Wilkie Edge property.

A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

The brief was simple: to create a set of decorations using whatever material that is deemed suitable, within a certain budget and a certain time frame. The atrium of the property was the mutually agreed location as it was most prominent.

A team of three students, under the artistic direction of Prvacki, came to us with a refreshing initial proposal: tying recycled plastic bottles together to make geometrical globes, with each globe encasing a light bulb, so that they would all become individual lights. The idea was to veer away from the traditional and loud festive lighting to create an eco-friendly installation that sends a meaningful message.

A COMPOSITION OF COLOURFUL COMPLEXITY

The installation, though appearing simple, would be rather complex and varied. There were to be three different designs for the lights: the flat ends of the bottles facing outward, the pointed ends with the caps facing outward, and a combination of the two. Besides the mixed designs, the colours of the bottles — be they green or transparent — as well as the different sizes of bottles would all add to the richness of the composition.
The CapitaLand team liked the proposal and the students went ahead to develop it further. Along the way they worked out how the installation was to be mounted below the skylight of the atrium: by a grid of ordinary PVC conduits, both for suspending the globes and for running electrical wires. I like the idea that this supporting frame is also made of ‘found objects’ — objects or products that are not normally considered art. They further suggested that the recycled bottles could be collected from the tenants, a suggestion which we took up gladly.

Responding to the comment that the work should be more cheerful, the students switched from adopting the natural colours of the bottles, to using only the transparent ones which they would spray-paint. They selected luminous paint because it allows light to pass through.

**COLOURFUL COLLABORATION FOR ALL SEASONS**

This installation of 35 globes — all assembled by hand using a total of 200 plastic bottles collected from six CapitaLand properties through CapitaLand’s tenant engagement effort — is impressive. The soft glow of the globes in red, magenta, blue, green, orange and yellow captivates the viewers, much like the many different colours of the anemones, and Anemone is the title that the students gave their work. The installation is reflected off the various glass surfaces of the building interior, and so the number of anemones seen has multiplied in an unexpected way. The result is so attractive that we decided to extend the display period from Christmas all the way to Lunar New Year.

The leader of the team, Tinu Verghis, then a third-year student in the Faculty of Fine Arts, said of her experience: “This project gave us an opportunity to understand how to materialise a simple idea into a full-fledged installation. It is very interactive in that we constantly sought the client’s feedback and input, which were invaluable. We enjoyed every bit of this project as it opened our eyes to the possibility and challenges of recycling and public art.”

Imagine a bottle of mineral water in the hands of a tenant. He or she could have just thrown it away after consuming the water. But, with him or her responding to CapitaLand’s call to give it a new lease of life, and with the creative input of the LASALLE team, it has become a petal of one of the globe in the beautiful sea of anemones presented to all who visited Wilkie Edge during the festive season.

This is an excellent collaboration between the community, art school and CapitaLand! May there be more of such projects to come, including some that are permanent in nature, so that in years to come, perhaps a renowned artist might look at one of them fondly and say, “Hey, that’s my student project!”

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*This article was first published in the February 2015 issue of *Inside Different Geographies*, which has the theme of “Colour Me Green with Envy.”
Ordinary & Extraordinary

A CEO? A gardener? A delivery man?
Two ladies in pink? Who are these 10 unique characters in Taiwanese artist Ju Ming’s *Living World* series for CapitaGreen?

I first came across Taiwanese artist Ju Ming’s sculptures when they were exhibited at the National Museum of Singapore. The ones of his *Taichi* series had left a great impression: they looked like blocks of stone but somehow had captured the movement of Chinese shadow boxing. So did one of the *Living World* series, featuring four seated figures seemingly made of bundles of fabrics: both ordinary and extraordinary.

That was in the 1980s. Who would have imagined that more than 20 years later, I would be sitting face to face with Ju Ming, as part of a small team from CapitaLand, discussing the possibility of doing a new installation for CapitaGreen, a premium office building in Singapore?

**MORE THAN ORDINARY**

It was on a beautiful spring morning that we met Ju at his unpretentious abode near scenic Yangmingshan, to the north of Taipei. Prior to that, we were taken around the Ju Ming Museum, further north, which has ample indoor and outdoor space displaying many of the master’s works, including the various characters in his *Living World* series — soldiers, businessmen, shoppers, etc. Impressive!

Our meeting with the unassuming artist went well and he was commissioned to do the work. Subsequently he produced a
maquette (or small model) illustrating his proposal — an assembly of 10 characters consisting of two women in pink carrying parasols, a group of five men predominantly in white engaged in a discussion, two men in yellow and gray stooping down, and a man in black carrying an umbrella standing all by himself. These were tiny figures sculpted from polystyrene and painted by the artist himself.

The CapitaLand team had some reservations to his proposal: the characters might be a bit whimsical; the way they dressed might be too ‘temperate’ for tropical Singapore; the stooping figures did not seem elegant. We conveyed our thoughts to the artist, who did not take long to pen his thoughts to us.

He wrote: “Years ago, when I was a guest in a Singaporean friend’s home, we naturally talked about the weather. I cannot forget the look of amazement on the faces of his grandchildren when I told them about the wet and cold winter of Taipei, when we had to have open fire, put on warm clothing and layers of quilts. What’s the point of an art piece mimicking our mundane daily life? Much better to be discovering something new and different…”

EXTRAORDINARY SHOW OF CHARACTER

We made another trip to Taiwan to see him. This time, we saw a strong Ju underneath his outward gentleness. He reiterated the points in his written note. On the stooping figures, he said, “There is absolutely nothing wrong with this posture. It is something you and I naturally do when we pick up things.”

He further explained that the different postures of the figures and the way they were grouped together all had to do with the composition as a whole. What was presented to us was varied and balanced. Nothing could be changed without affecting the overall artistic merit of the installation.

AN EXTRAORDINARY MASTERY OF ART

It must be this strong conviction about what he is doing, and that he is doing it right, that has seen Ju through his illustrious career. Born in 1938, Ju did not go through any art school to learn his craft. Rather, he was an apprentice, first with a master wood carver, and later with renowned sculptor Yuyu Yang. It was Yang who arranged the first solo exhibition for Ju in 1976 for his Nativist series and paved the way for his Taichi series, which won him international acclaim.

Nothing could be changed without affecting the overall artistic merit of Ju’s installation at CapitaGreen. So, what you see today is essentially what he first conceived with his maquette, albeit with a few minor adjustments, for example, in the angles of the umbrellas so they don’t poke at a passer-by unwittingly. Of course, the actual work has a lot more details than the maquette. The spontaneity with which Ju cut the polystyrene — yes, even the actual work was first sculpted in this material before moulds were made and figures of bronze cast and painted — comes across very strongly. To me, it has the feel of wooden sculptures, and the coarse look has a very xiāng tu or rustic appeal, although some of the figures are wearing very formal urban attire. This special quality can only come from the hands of Ju.
I must say that this installation of the 10 figures, both extraordinary and ordinary, does make a striking piece of public art, and it somehow fits in with its location. Passers-by will naturally be drawn to it, take pictures with it and perhaps wonder, what characters are these 10 people?

“What characters are these 10 people?” Ju wrote. “CEO? Gardener? Delivery man? Yes, and no. They can be ‘ourselves’ at a particular point of time. We can be office workers in our suits, delivery men with hands full of stuff helping our loved ones, casually attired travellers without revealing our own identity. Now isn’t that true?”

Against All Odds

Marvel at the amazing life journey of Singapore’s visually impaired artist Victor Tan and the making of his latest sculpture, Hummingbird.

Imagine a young man, born into a poor family in 1969 Singapore, who had just finished his mandatory national service. He took on drafting as a job to earn a living and enrolled in a part-time architectural technology course to better himself at the same time. One morning, as he woke up, he found that something had covered one of his eyes. He could not get rid of it. Optic neuritis (an inflammation of the optic nerve) had crept in and within a few months, his visual faculty had greatly degenerated, leaving a large cloud permanently blocking much of his left eye and brilliant hues constantly dancing in his right eye.
One might easily have given up under such trying circumstances. But not Victor Tan Wee Tar. As he could no longer do drafting or pursue the architectural technology course, he explored other avenues. As fate would have it, Tan found working on ceramics in a class conducted at the Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped therapeutic. He applied to pursue Fine Arts at the LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts (now LASALLE College of the Arts), and fulfilled his childhood dream of becoming an artist, in spite of his visual impairment. Today, he is an established artist, with many of his works commissioned and installed at various locations in Singapore, the latest being Hummingbird at Sky Habitat, a premium residential project by CapitaLand.

I first met Tan last year when my colleagues and I visited him at his Telok Kurau studio to review the maquette (small model) for Hummingbird. He came across as a cheerful and easy-going person, who candidly shared with me his unique artistic journey. In the first semester of his art course, Tan had to do a drawing module using pencil and paper like the rest of the students. It did not work for him but the school would not let him quit that module. So he experimented with other drawing media, and found steel wire most suitable. He completed the diploma majoring in ceramics and subsequently a degree course majoring in sculpture. In 1998, a gallery approached him to do an outdoor work. Tan took inspiration from his wire drawings and created his first stainless steel wire sculpture for the Singapore Expo. The rest, as they say, is history.

Made with Steel

What is very special about Tan’s wire sculptures is that he creates them right from the small maquettes to the finished works of several metres, all by himself. He uses his gift of touch to do so and he enjoys the process thoroughly. The soft stainless steel wire, which comes in different diameters — 0.8mm, 1.0mm, 1.2mm and 1.6mm, is a fascinating material. It can be moulded into any shape by hand with simple tools, but when layered and intertwined into three-dimensional forms, it assumes an unexpected rigidity. Being a finished product with a permanent silvery sheen, it needs no additional layer of finishes or colours.

Tan varies the tone of his sculptures by using wires of different diameters, which he likens to be the pencils of different graphite scale — 6B, 4B, 2B, etc — in drawing to achieve different effects.

Made with Joy

Hummingbird at Sky Habitat depicts a hummingbird, many times its real size, diving from the sky to take the nectar from one of seven flowers sitting on a pond. While the flowers are static, the bird can move with the wind, seemingly flapping its wings. This is a lovely image: Tan captures the brief moment of the bird’s encounter with the flower, taking only what it needs from the
flower to sustain itself, while at the same
time giving it back something, by spreading
its pollen and enabling the plant species to
sustain.

While the bird itself is a labour of love entirely
by Tan, the flowers, whose form is determined
by Tan, is produced by his fellow artist and
friend Chua Boon Kee. The flowers are made
of stainless steel tubes, each bent to shape
at Chua’s workshop and laced subsequently
by Tan with stainless steel wires to maintain
visual coherence with the bird. Chua provided
valuable technical support for the entire
project, ensuring that all the flowers, including
the crucial one that has to support the bird, are
well made and well installed.

It is wonderful to behold Hummingbird at Sky Habitat, whether
from the pool deck where one can see both flowers and bird,
or from the drop-off point, where one just catches a glimpse
of the bird. The free-form work contrasts beautifully with the
well-disciplined architecture, acts as a stunning eye-catcher, and
conveys many meaningful messages: about giving and taking;
about co-existing in harmony; and about being joyful, responsive
and resilient — traits that the tiny hummingbird is well known
for. I cannot help but relate these traits to the artist and his
amazing journey through life.

Cool Frames Celebrating a Bond

Belgium Artist Daisy Boman creates hot ‘bo-men’ in cool frames for Sky Habitat.

I remember learning to represent human figures in
drawings when I was a first-year architecture student. We
need not draw every detail of the human being; just the
outline would suffice. We used these ‘hollow’ figures in 1:50
or 1:20 architectural elevation and section drawings so that
we would have an idea of how our buildings would look
and feel in relation to the human scale — a very important
consideration.
Never did I imagine that many years after becoming an architect, I would get a chance to experience these outline figures in the context of a real building, and with the figures being all ‘scaled up’ to human size. They come as a family in Belgian artist Daisy Boman’s sculpture, The Elevation of Togetherness, a visual focal point amid the lush landscape of the 50m lap pool area of CapitaLand’s prestigious residential project Sky Habitat. Now, isn’t that cool?

COOL, REFRESHING AND NEW SPHERE

This set of frame sculptures belongs to the ‘bo-men’ series of works by the artist. But while all the previous ‘bo-men’ are made of ceramics, these five are in stainless steel, powder-coated in bright red. This marks a departure for the artist. “So that I can cover new grounds,” said Boman.

Indeed, the artistic career of Daisy Boman has seen several changes in direction. Born in 1948, Boman grew up near Antwerp in Belgium, where she studied interior design and photography at the Academy of Fine Arts. She then experimented with ceramics. In 1981, her architect husband was offered a job in South Africa and the couple relocated to Johannesburg. There, she started creating artworks with an African ethnic influence and was selected for the National Ceramic Exhibition several times. In 1987, one year after they moved back to Belgium, she held her first exhibition in Antwerp, but it was not until after 1992, when she first created her ‘bo-men’ that she began to establish herself in the art world. Today, she has many pieces in private and public collections, and has held a number of exhibitions in Belgium and overseas.

HOT LOOK, COOL APPEAL

Having a universal appeal, the ‘bo-men’ are faceless figures with cube-like heads. Boman lets them interact in many different ways to tell different tales. The first generation ‘bo-men’, made of ceramic, have a strong sense of mass. The frame ‘bo-men’ on the other hand, are light, elegant, transparent and almost abstract. We can still tell they are ‘bo-men’ because they all have square shape heads — ‘blockheads’ if you like — because the artist thinks that “our societies and systems have made us so”.

left: The ‘children’ soon after being erected on site.
The frame figures look as if they have been bent from a flat piece of steel 60mm wide and 12mm thick, but they are not. While the straight parts are steel strips, the other parts that seem to have been bent are in fact all cut by a diamond cutter from a piece of 60mm thick steel to look like a strip of steel. One figure therefore consists of some 20 parts welded together, polished and powder-coated to achieve a seamless effect. For the whole fabrication process, Boman had her architect husband, who is now semi-retired, to help supervise. Could he too have learnt to draw outline figures when he was a student?

While each figure looks flat, the way Boman has grouped, orientated, linked and assembled them makes them appear three-dimensional as a set. Particularly exciting are the places where the figures overlap. As you move around the work you see changing patterns. What is seemingly simple suddenly appears complex.

What tale does The Elevation of Togetherness tell? To Boman, who has been a grandmother of two for a few years now, it depicts the strong bond among family members, and their unconditional love for one another.

To me, there is another layer of meaning: the magic of hollowness. When we empty ourselves — of pre-conceived ideas, of prejudice and of our ego — we get to experience many more wonderful things in life.

This article was first published in the June 2015 issue of Inside Different Geographies, which has the theme of “Turning Up the Cool Factor!”.
Visit the Art @ CapitaLand showcase at art.capitaland.com
Selected Art Pieces at CapitaLand Properties in Singapore

**INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT**

**Raffles City Singapore**
- The Flight, Etienne, office tower drop-off point

**SHOPPING MALLS**

**ION Orchard**
- Namng & Mace, Kumari Nahappan, plaza
- Urban People, Kurt Laurenz Metzler, external steps
- ION Waterfall, Troika, L1

**Plaza Singapura**
- Jelly Baby Family, Mauro Perucchetti, plaza
- Urban People, Kurt Laurenz Metzler, external steps

**Westgate**
- Panda Family, Juilen Marinetti, plaza
- Urban People, Kurt Laurenz Metzler, external steps

**ION Orchard**
- Paintings by Phua Cheng Phue, L1 & L8
- Horse 1016, Han Meilin, L8

**SOMERSET Liang Court Singapore**
- Paintings by Eric Chan, plaza
- Melody of Life, Lim Leong Seng, sculpture garden

**Westgate**
- Woman, Juan Ripollés, roof garden

**One George Street**
- Mother & Child 36, Han Meilin, outdoor landscaped area

**Six Battery Road**
- Paintings by Hiroshi Senju, L1

**CapitaGreen**
- Living World Series, Ju Ming, plaza
- The Meeting, Etienne, plaza
- above below beneath above, Olafur Eliasson, L1
- 2x2 II, Anthony Gormley, L1

**BEDOK MALL**
- Shopping for the Family, Kim Gyung Min, main entrance

**HOMES**

**Bedok Residences**
- King of the Sea, Juan Ripollés, e-deck
- Installations by Edwin Cheong, e-deck
- Joy, Victor Tan, north lobby
- Paintings by Brendan Neiland, north and south lift lobbies

**L’Edeon**
- Wishing Flower, Nadim Karam, main entrance
- Enchanting Girl, Juan Ripollés, sculpture garden
- Infinity Tree, Xia Ai Ge, sculpture garden
- Melody of Life, Lim Leong Seng, sculpture garden

**The Interlace**
- Twist, Kumari Nahappan, entrance plaza
- City Dreams, Gao Xiao Wu, central plaza
- Good Fun!, Chong Fak Cheong, theatre plaza
- INTERLACE Panda, Julien Marinetti, bamboo courtyard

**The Nassim**
- Infinity Grain, Kumari Nahappan, entrance porch
- Column with Birds, Etienne, pool deck
- Sculptures by Lee Jae-Hyou, basement lobby foyers
- Drawings by Jimmy Ong, basement lobbies

**SKY HABITAT**
- The Elevation of Togertherness, Daisy Boman, lap pool
- Hummingbird, Victor Tan, e-deck

**Urban Resort Condominium**
- Together, Lim Leong Seng, drop-off point
- Paintings by Fan Shao Hua, lift lobbies
- Paintings by Wong Keen, lift lobbies

**CAPITALANd OFFICES**

**CapitalHub @ Capital Tower**
- Beautiful Singapore, Joseph Klibansky, L30
- Capital Tower, Ong Kim Seng, L30
- Cosmopolis, David Gerstein, L30
- Flower Market, Tran Luu Hau, L50
- Heavenly Scrip, Han Meilin, L50
- La Conversation, Etienne, L30
- Suzhou In Spring, Liu Maoshan, L30

**CapitaLand Institute of Management and Business (CLIMB)**
- New Growth, B. Jane Cowie, L1
- Accumulating Knowledge, Sky is the Limit, Inbar Toll, L1 & L2
- Holy Mountain, Tan Swie Hian, L2

**URBAN SUITES**
- Pool of Love, Lim Leong Seng, main lawn
- Paintings by Fan Shao Hua, lift lobbies
- Paintings by Ling Yang Chang, lift lobbies
- Paintings by Wong Keen, lift lobbies

**LEGEND**

Art piece(s) that can be accessed:
- 24/7
- during opening hours
- by tenants, residents, and visitors only
Moments of sharing need a stage.

There's magic to be found in every act of life. It just needs the right stage to unlock it. With everything we build, we build people, we build communities.

Building People Building Communities

INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENTS • SHOPPING MALLS • SERVICED RESIDENCES • OFFICES • HOMES • REITS & FUNDS

CapitaLand

A selection of the building images were from the CapitaLand-National Geographic Channel “Building People” Photography Competition
This book includes 28 articles originally published in the Art @ CapitaLand column of CapitaLand’s Inside Different Geographies magazine. They tell the stories of the wonderful array of art pieces displayed at CapitaLand properties in Singapore: who their creators are, how they were made, and how they can be appreciated and enjoyed.

If CapitaLand properties are the stage for you to build your special moments, then the art pieces are the special props which will be ever endearing to you.

About CapitaLand Limited  
(www.capitaland.com)

CapitaLand is one of Asia’s largest real estate companies headquartered and listed in Singapore. The company leverages its significant asset base, design and development capabilities, active capital management strategies, extensive market network and operational capabilities to develop high-quality real estate products and services. Its diversified global real estate portfolio includes integrated developments, shopping malls, serviced residences, offices and hotels. Its two core markets are Singapore and China, while Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam have been identified as new growth markets. The company also has one of the largest real estate fund management businesses with assets located in Asia.

CapitaLand’s listed real estate investment trusts are Ascott Residence Trust, CapitaLand Commercial Trust, CapitaLand Mall Trust, CapitaLand Retail China Trust and CapitaMalls Malaysia Trust.

Visit the Art @ CapitaLand showcase at art.capitaland.com

Building People, Tan Lawrence Yee

Cover photo by Jennice Ong (Singapore), CapitaLand ‘Building People’ Photography Competition 2014