The Asia-Europe Cultural Festival, a celebration of the vibrant cultural tapestries of Asia and Europe, made its debut in Singapore from 22 October to 1 November 2023.

Organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) with the support of the European Union, this year's festival is a testament to the power of art in transcending borders and fostering dialogue. Audiences in Singapore had the opportunity to immerse themselves in a diverse range of artistic expressions, including dance, film, photography, and music, with artists from Italy, Malaysia, Cambodia, France, Estonia, Japan, and Singapore.

Since 2018, the Asia-Europe Cultural Festival has showcased the rich tapestry of cultural exchanges between Asia and Europe, celebrating artistic collaborations, fostering dialogue, and igniting connections between two continents known for their diversity and creativity.

The festival kicked off on 22 October at the Asian Civilisation Museum with the Singapore premiere of the documentary film, The Perfect Motion, directed by French filmmaker Xavier de Lauzanne. The film tracks the creation of a production by Cambodia’s royal dancers called "Metamorphosis", and the history of the Cambodia Royal Ballet since 1906. Bringing Asian and European perspectives together, the film underscores how the unique artistic expression of the Royal Ballet gradually became key in reconstructing and rebuilding Cambodia’s national identity. The screening was followed by a live dance performance from the Princess Buppha Devi Dance School. Xavier, along with HRH Prince Tesso Sisowath, Director of the Princess Buppha Devi Dance School, also participated in a lively post-show discussion with the audience after.
1. Audiences experienced the elegance of a traditional Cambodian dance performance, Preah Thong Dance after the screening of The Perfect Motion © Asia-Europe Foundation

2. Post-screening conversation with Xavier Lauzanne, filmmaker of The Perfect Motion and HRH Price Tesso Sisowath, Director of the Princess Buppha Devi Dance School © Asia-Europe Foundation

On the opening night, with the support of the Embassy of Estonia in Singapore, Estonian director and choreographer Teet Kask's The Golden Temple made its Southeast Asia premiere at the Studio Theatre of the School of the Arts (SOTA). A multidisciplinary performance inspired by Yukio Mishima's novel "The Temple of the Golden Pavilion", this piece is an ode to the undefined depth of the human condition. In 2020, for the first premiere of The Golden Temple in Yokohama, Japan, the original music score was performed live by a cello player and a singer that become the protagonists of the tale, together with two movement artists (one Estonian and one Japanese). For the re-stage of the performance in Singapore, the director worked with Singapore-based cello player Robert Choi, adding a new dimension to this Asia-Europe artistic collaboration. A post show dialogue with Teet and Robert was held after, presenting an opportunity to hear questions and voices from the floor.

3. Snippets from 'The Golden Temple' at the Studio Theatre of School of the Arts (SOTA), which saw collaboration between artists from Estonia, Japan and Singapore © Asia-Europe Foundation

On 27 October, with the support of the Embassy of Italy in Singapore, the contemporary dance performance X by Italian choreographer Olimpia Fortuni and sound artist Katatonic Silenti, in collaboration with Malaysian dancer and choreographer January Low took the centrestage. This captivating performance inspired by Asian shamanic traditions and Western archetypal symbols, melded together sound, body, movement, natural and artificial architectures. The night concluded with a post-show discussion, where the performers highlighted how the piece was in continuous transformation, thanks to the addition of January's collaboration alongside the change in space and location. The show was presented on the River Terrace of Asian Civilisation Museum with a breathtaking view of Singapore night skyline.
The final event of the festival took place on 1 November with a thought-provoking roundtable discussion titled *Framing the Future: Photography’s Impact on Climate Awareness in Southeast Asia*. Presented in collaboration with the Embassy of the Netherlands in Vietnam and the NOOR Foundation, this conversation brought together photographers from Thailand, Cambodia, Viet Nam and the Netherlands as well as journalists and scientists based in Singapore. The discussion explored the pivotal role of photography in shaping the narrative of climate change awareness in Southeast Asia.

If you’ve missed the roundtable discussions, a recording of *Framing the Future: Photography’s Impact on Climate Awareness in Southeast Asia* is available for viewing:

ASEF LinkUp | *Asia-Europe Cultural Diplomacy Lab* took place alongside this year’s Asia-Europe Cultural Festival. This four-day gathering connected curators, arts managers and artists with diplomats and cultural attaches based in Singapore and the ASEAN region, facilitating the exchange of knowledge in cultural diplomacy. Find out more about what took place during the pilot edition of ASEF LinkUp here.

Find out more about the journey behind the artists’ productions put together for the *Asia-Europe Cultural Festival*:

- *The Golden Temple* [Asia-Europe Cultural Festival: 2023 | Interview with Teet Kask](#)
- *X* [Asia-Europe Cultural Festival: 2023 | Interview with ‘X’ | ASEF culture360](#)
Media Coverage of the Asia-Europe Cultural Festival:

- Review of *The Golden Temple* – Bakchormeeboy
- ANSA (Italy): Review of the Asia-Europe Cultural Festival

The Asia-Europe Cultural Festival is organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and funded by the European Union, with the generous support of the Embassy of Italy in Singapore, the Embassy of Estonia in Singapore, and Casa Asia. ASEF would also like to thank the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) and Dance Nucleus for their support.

ABOUT ASEF CULTURE360

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