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In conversation with Charles Merewether



The [Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore](#) (ICAS) is the curatorial division of LASALLE College of the Arts. It runs the LASALLE Galleries, comprising some 1500 square meters of gallery spaces dedicated to exploring new and experimental art, design and media practices. Its exhibitions and programme showcase international, Asian, South-east Asian and local contemporary art with the aim of

contributing to the artistic and cultural enhancement of students, artists and members of the public.

Bharti Lalwani speaks with the Director of ICA, **Charles Merewether** to find out more:

Bharti: Charles as the Head of the ICA department at Lasalle, tell us about your role.

Charles Merewether: My role is in essence to shape the program and oversee the office in regard to its administration, exhibition and public program and publications.

B: How does the ICA provide a cultural and educational platform for not only students but also Singapore audiences?

CM: ICA introduces these audiences to the world of contemporary art, it is an education of the senses, a cultural enrichment to their daily lives and those of others as articulated and explored by artists and those working in the arts.

B: I understand you are not only showcasing experimental art from the Southeast Asian region but also bringing exhibitions from beyond.

CM: Yes, we are seeking to broaden this experience to include the international and all of Asia. There are commonalities that exceed national or regional boundaries as well as difference and I believe we understand ourselves better through this sharing. I am not interested in themes or narratives per se unless a particular practice is an exemplary instance of a particular narrative.

B: Can you elaborate on ongoing public outreach programs?

CM: We seek to invite artists and guest curators involved in the exhibition program to come and speak or give workshops.



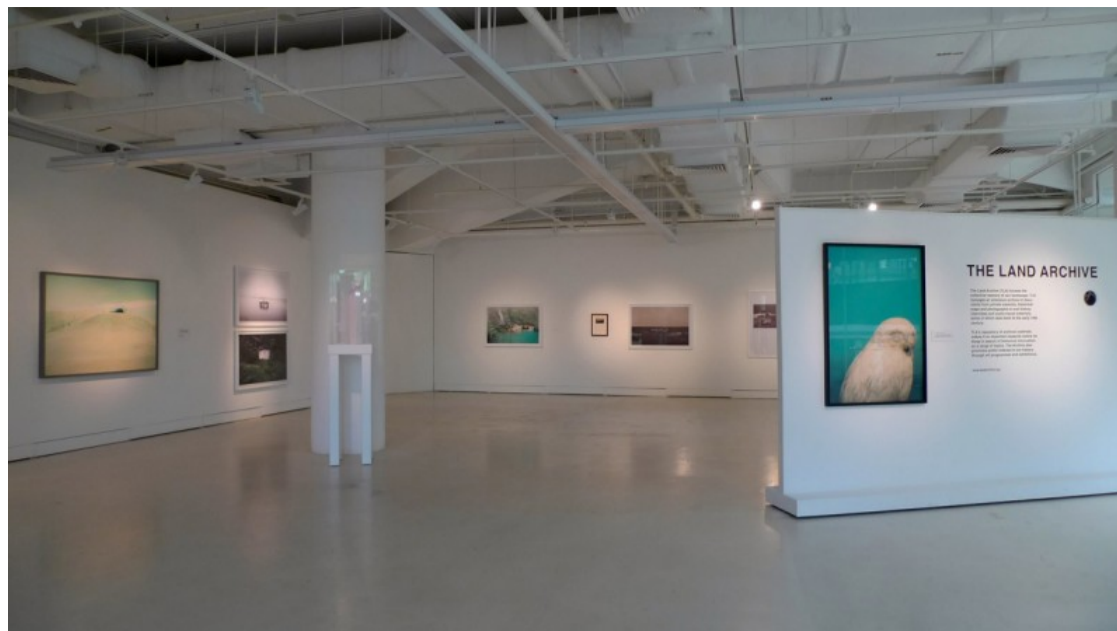
B: What sort of challenges do you face when putting these exhibitions together?

CM: Our principle challenge is the financial means of borrowing the work, especially in terms of freight and insurance. It is also the physical conditions of the two main galleries ICA 1 & 2 but are in the process of improving this.

B: ICAS holds an annual exhibition which is drawn from its permanent collection- What sort of art works are in this collection and is it expanding to include more regional and international art works?

CM: The permanent collection is about 600 works and we held an exhibition of some 50 works in 2010. This will be an occasional not necessarily annual. Our immediate audience are students and staff and the art community for which we often get over 500 a month and at best to date has been 1100. Our mission is to offer them a regular and high quality program of contemporary art from around the world which is deemed valuable to them. This is the most important project and our budget goes to this end. We are not a museum and do not have the proper space or facilities to build a larger permanent collection. This is the work of Museums. We are more like a kunsthalle

collection. This is the work of museums. We are more like a renaissance.



B: Please tell us about your current and future projects.

CM: We have a the first review exhibition of Ian Woo, some 17 years of his work. He is one of the principle artists working in Asia today, a great painter. Also we are currently hosting an annual event called 'Tropical Lab' organized by LASALLE and inviting some 15 artists from round the world for 10 days. In January we will open with a exhibition of 8contemporary artists from Thailand, an exhibition of contemporary video practice in China and a third exhibit of three women artists from Europe.

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