

Godalisation: A Revisionist Conceptual Framework for Singapore's Artistic Identity

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Abstract : The paper presents a conceptual framework which serves as an art model of Singapore artistic identity. Specifically, the study examines Singapore's artistic identity through the artworks of the country's significant artists covering the period 1950s to the present. Literature review will discuss the challenges of favouring or choosing one artist over the other. Methodology provides an overview of the perspectives of local artists and surveys Singapore's artistic histories through qualitative interviews and case studies. Analysis from qualitative data reveals that producing works of accrued visual significance for the country which captures its zeitgeist further strengthens artist's artistic identity, and consequently, their works remembered by future generations. The paper presents a conceptual framework for Singapore's artistic identity by categorising it into distinctive categories or Periods: Colonial Period (pre-1965); Nation Building Period (1965-1988); Globalisation Period (1989-2000); Paternal Production Period (2001-2015); and A New Era (2015-present). Godalisation, coined from God and Globalisation - by artist and art collector, Teng Jee Hum - is a direct reference to the godlike influence on Singapore by its founding Father, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, the country's first Prime Minister who steered the city state "from Third World to First" for close to half a century, from 1965 to his passing in 2015. A detailed schema showing important factors in different art categories: key global geopolitics, key local social-politics, and significant events will be analysed in depth. Main artist groups or artist initiatives which evolved in Singapore during the different Periods from pre-1965 to the present will be categorized and discussed. Taken as a whole, all these periods collectively add up to the Godalisation Era; impacted by the social-political events and historical period of the nation, and captured through the visual representation of the country's significant artists in their attempt at either visualizing or mythologizing the Singapore Story. The author posits a co-relation between a nation's economic success and the value or price appreciation of the country's artist of significance artworks. The paper posed a rhetorical question: "Which Singapore's artist will historian of the future - and by extension, the people of the country from future generations - remember? Who will remain popular? Whilst which artists will be forgotten." The searching question: "Who will survive, be remembered in the annals of history and, above all, how to ensure the survival of one's nation artistic identity? The art that last will probably be determined by the future, in the future, where art historians pontificate from a later vantage point.

Keywords : artistic identity, art collection, godalisation, singapore

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