



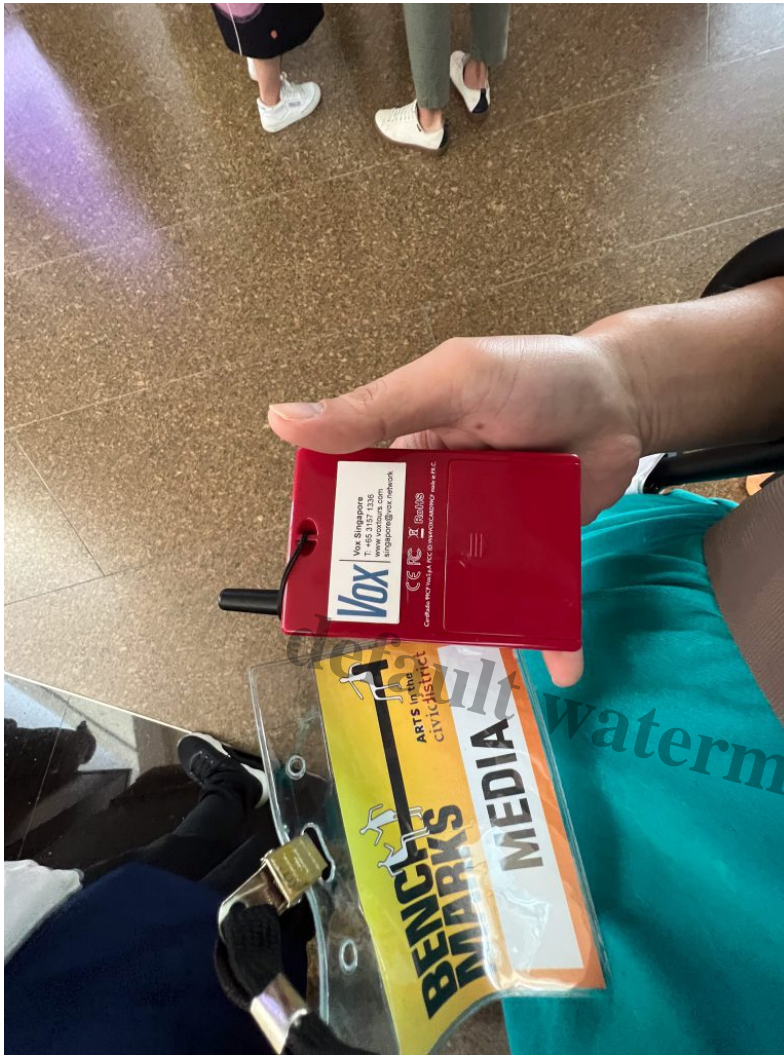
Benchmarks is a new public art trail.

## Description

For the uninitiated, Singapore does have a thriving arts scene. If you are hovering around the Civic District, this might interest you.

Benchmarks is a new public art trail commissioned by the Civic District Alliance. It is accessible from the 2nd of August 2023 until the 31st of July 2026. It will feature six public benches by Singapore-based artists, Lua Boon Kai, Joyce Beetuan Koh, Immanuel Koh, Yang Jie, Jeffrey Tan and Jason Wee.

While they may look like strange benches littered around the Civic District, there are stories behind the works of the various artists. We were invited to the Benchmarks Media Tour and we had the good fortune of having all six artists present. This guided tour of the public art trail was led by project curator Justin Loke.



This little red transmitter was connected to the presenter's microphone.

To accommodate such a huge group of people, technology was employed. Each of us were given a headset that was paired to the microphone of the speaker. This allowed all participants of the tour to walk around freely while still being able to hear what the artists or the project curator were presenting.



Our creative director Wilber was ready to go!

To be frank, I am not someone who is very well connected with the arts. Hence I genuinely could not appreciate fully the significance of the artworks. Hence, the description of the artwork was extremely helpful. Next to each bench stands a display which elaborates what each artwork represents and the inspiration behind the artwork.



It did help immensely that the artists themselves were part of the tour and it was refreshing to hear the inspiration behind the artwork. They shared the materials used as well as well as some process behind their work. While this helped participants during the media tour understand and better appreciate the artworks on display, I believe the general public may not gain the same level of understanding and appreciation as the artists will not be present at all times to explain their works. The implementation of technology to enshrine the words of the artists and perhaps encapsulate it in a video placed on a public platform like YouTube would help. Visitors and users of the artworks can then access the relevant videos by scanning a QR code. It is just a suggestion and I do hope that the curators and creators of such public art trails do take my suggestion of incorporating technology into their work. It is available and it can improve the experience.



The artists were there to present their works.

I must say that despite the sweltering heat of the mid-day sun, a walk along the Civic District is still very pleasant. I never would have imagined that there could be so many people, especially tourists, roving around the Civic District on a weekday afternoon! There were loads of stares at this large group of people moving around, taking photos of seemingly inconspicuous benches.



I have no idea who was that guy.

All in all, it was a very interesting tour to partake in. I believe the artists are the ones who added great colour and vibrancy to the experience.



I would say that unless I was drawn to these works, I personally would not have known that these are curated works of art.



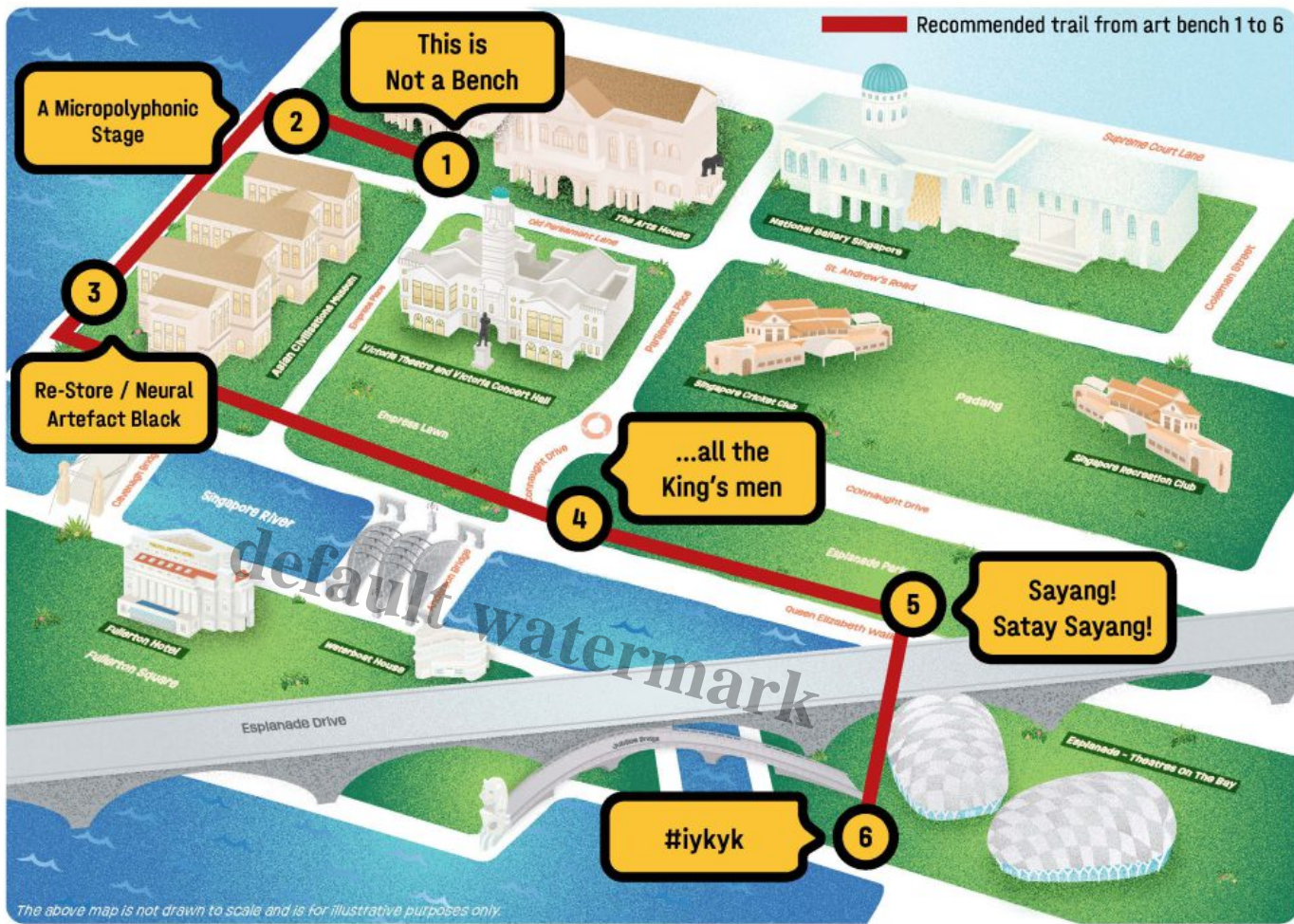
Looks like a bench, feels like a bench, well, it is a bench. And it's art as well!

At the end of the tour, we had the opportunity to mingle with the artists and also understand the processes and the people behind the whole tour.



I must say, it is a lot of effort to put together something like this. For the effort, my take is that it should receive much more attention that it is currently receiving. The arts scene is alive and present in Singapore. Whether the benches on display remain as just benches to the public or that they are recognised and appreciated as art pieces will depend greatly on how much effort is placed into marketing such an art trail. Like I previously mentioned, I believe it is time for technology to play a greater role in enshrining the experience for all.

For those who want to walk the art trail, and I encourage you to, here is the map of the Benchmarks art trail.



Here are the size benches on display. Hey, if for some reason you bump into the artist behind the work, just say â??hiâ?!













Yours sincerely,

Daryl



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