SAMâ??s The Present is Unstable opens at Tanjong Pagar Distripark with a display that keeps changing

Description

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Singapore Art Museum has opened SAMCollection: The Present is Unstable, a display of its own collection at Tanjong Pagar Distripark that will keep changing as works rotate in and out over the next nine months. The show opened on 2 Oct, runs to 18 Jul 2027 and is free for Singaporeans and PRs.

It is the third in a series drawn from SAMâ??s collection of more than 3,800 works, and a prototype for a more responsive Collection Gallery. Instead of a fixed hang, the display shifts as works are added, removed and regrouped, with some traces of earlier arrangements left in place so each version builds on the last.

Photo: Singapore Art Museum

What is on show now

The first set of works centres on the body and the act of looking. Sin Wai Kinâ??s The Time of Our Lives (2024) uses drag to question fixed ideas of gender and identity. Nadiah Bamadhajâ??s Casting Spells for the Movement (2021) intervenes in a monument to rethink how womenâ??s roles in history are shown. Hao Jingbanâ??s I Witness (2025) is a 54-minute video installation about people living with profound personal loss.

Also in the gallery are Manny Montelibanoâ??s Sorry for the Inconvenience (2011 onward), Chua Chye Teckâ??s Eternity (2007), Farida Batoolâ??s Kahani Eik Shehr Ki (Story of a City) (2012) and Wei Leng Tayâ??s Untitled (sister) (2022). The last three are photographic works.

The show rests on one question from chief curator Shabbir Hussain Mustafa: â??The Present is Unstable asks a simple question: how can works from the past help us understand the present?â?•

Two works visitors can step into

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Jason Weeâ??s Labyrinths (2017) is a walk-in path of fences that are oversized, truncated or oddly finished. Sections of tactile paving, the kind laid in public spaces to guide visually impaired people, run between them in Morse code rather than the usual pattern, spelling out fragments of a verse from â??Archipelagoâ?• by Singaporean poet Boey Kim Cheng.

In Gary-Ross Pastranaâ??s Water Cuts (stone) (2017), visitors ladle salt water onto a marble slab in a collective attempt to cut the stone, one scoop at a time.

Photo: Singapore Art Museum

What changes next

From the end of 2026, the room will gradually take in works by Lim Tzay Chuen, Singaporeâ??s representative at the 2005 Venice Biennale, along with Singapore-born artist Erika Tan, Naeem Mohaiemen, Loeum Lorn and Pio Abad.

A drop-in activity, Stop to Ponder, runs in Gallery 4 from 2 Oct 2026 to 1 Feb 2027, 10am to 7pm. Visitors pick a question raised by the artworks and leave one of their own for others. Free 60-minute docent tours of the exhibitions run during museum hours, depending on the docent on duty. A Docent and Deaf Guide Tour with Singapore Sign Language interpretation is set for Sat 23 Jan 2027, 3pm to 4pm, free with registration.

Exhibition merchandise is sold at the museum cafÃ©, SIP at SAM, open 10am to 6pm: a lenticular magnet at S$15, a charcoal soap bar at S$20 and a black T-shirt at S$32.

Hours, tickets and getting there

The exhibition is in Gallery 4 on Level 3 of SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark, 39 Keppel Road, #01-02, Singapore 089065. The museum is open daily, including public holidays, from 10am to 7pm, with last entry at 6.30pm.

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Ticket	Price
Singaporeans and PRs	Free for this exhibition
Tourists and foreign residents, adult	S$20 (general admission, all galleries)
Tourists and foreign residents, concession (seniors 60 and above, NSFs, overseas students and teachers)	S$15
Children 6 and below, local students and teachers, persons with disabilities plus one caregiver	Free with valid ID

The nearest station is Cantonment MRT (CC31). Take Exit 1, enter the Tanjong Pagar Distripark gate on the right and walk to Block 39, Lobby B. Buses 10, 30, 57, 80, 97, 97e, 100, 131 and 145 stop at bus stop 14061 (Opp Cantonment Stn Exit 4) on Keppel Road. Car parking at 39 Tanjong Pagar Distripark costs S$2.50 per entry on Sundays and public holidays.

On Mon 5 Oct, SAMâ??s Level 1, including Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness and the Learning Gallery, closes from 3pm for a private event and SIP at SAM is shut all day. Level 3, home to The Present is Unstable and Maria Taniguchi: Afterimage, stays open as usual.

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