

w e e k e n d p l u s

weekendstyle46
ACTIVATE THE POWER(SUIT)
weekendspeed50
X MARKS THE SPOT

THE ART OF FOOD

SOME EATERIES NOT ONLY OFFER A MOUTH-WATERING MENU, THEY ALSO SERVE UP A FEAST FOR THE EYES

ILLUSTRATION YEN YOK



WHERE THE ART IS

THE COFFEE CONNOISSEUR

Contemporary art. Ongoing exhibitions include Loh Khee Yew's "Yin Yang Poetry: The Unfinished Finish" at TCC The Gallery, 51 Circular Road and "Art Reach: Urbanization" by Nafa students at TCC-Nafa Art Boutique Caffe, 80 Bencoolen St

THE SONG OF INDIA, 33 SCOTTS ROAD

Contemporary Indian art. Artists including Parvathi Nayar, Vinod Kumar Singh and Sharad Sovani have exhibited there.

WARUNG M NASIR, 69 KILLINEY ROAD

Asian and local art. Current exhibition by Balinese artist Dewa Putu Rindy.

GONE FISHING, 15 CHU LIN ROAD

Contemporary art. Current exhibition by Indonesian artist Susan Olij, titled "Matter and Substance".

TAVOLO, 5 BOON TAT STREET #01-01

Most recent exhibition was in June, by artist Susan Olij.

THE MOOMBA, 52 CIRCULAR ROAD

Holds ad hoc exhibitions. Most recent was the "Cats of The World" photo exhibition in August.

SEE it, savour it, own it – there are various ways to enjoy art. The owners of The Song of India bore that in mind when they were setting up the fine-dining restaurant at Scotts Road last April.



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"We came up with the idea to have art on the walls by artists, to go with the art on our plates by chef Milind Sovani," said Mr Paul Joseph, 42, one of the restaurant's owners.

And to create a constantly changing dining experience for regular customers, the restaurant opted to hold temporary exhibitions instead of putting artworks up on a permanent basis.

The result is a fresh series of contemporary Indian art by up-and-coming artists greeting diners every two months.

Like The Song of India, a handful of eateries are spicing up the dining experience by hosting art exhibitions – some of which are professionally curated. These paintings are often for sale.

It is also evident that restaurants are becoming more popular

and respected as exhibition sites.

"At first, it was the artists who wanted to exhibit here. But now, it is the art galleries that enquire about exhibiting," said Mr Claude Verly, the managing director of art-management.com.

"Here" refers to the art space at The Coffee Connoisseur (TCC) – called TCC The Gallery – at Circular Road.

This is the outlet most famous for doubling as an art exhibition site. TCC also holds art exhibitions at The Pier @ Robertson and Raffles Exchange, all of which are managed by art-management.com

Dining outlets interviewed by TODAY said the benefits of hosting art exhibitions are obvious – they add to the overall ambience and bring a freshness to the interiors without involving expensive renovations.

SINGAPOREAN ARTIST LOH KHEE YEW
I SEE IT AS EXPOSURE AND GETTING TO
SHARE MY IDEAS WITH DINERS.

"It's not easy for a restaurant to change its decor and you can't do it so often," said The Song of India's director of cuisine Milind Sovani.

In return, many of these eateries sponsor the opening receptions of the exhibitions, hosting high tea or providing hors d'oeuvres like canapes for invited guests.

The Song of India, TCC The Gallery, Tavolo at Boon Tat Street and Warung M Nasir at Killiney Road are some eateries that do so.

"We create a small buffet for the 40 to 50 people invited. I will sponsor the *teh tarik*, fried rice, *kampung ikan bilis* and samosas," said Mr M Nasir of Warung M Nasir at Killiney Road.

Nasir, 38, has been lending his cosy *nasi padang* cafe to art students and professional artists to display their works for the last two and a half years.

He admitted being surprised, initially, that the art sold.

"The works are not cheap – the paintings displayed here range from \$300 to \$1,000."

Nasir also allows the artists to paint on his walls. In fact, he would like to see more students exhibiting their works because "the younger ones are more daring and expressive".

From the galleries' standpoint, the relaxed dining atmosphere at restaurants makes them ideal exhibition sites. The varied clientele and long opening hours of some outlets are added advantages. Plus, there is an additional venue apart from the main gallery where art works can be exhibited.

Said Ms Caroline Banerjee of Artmosaic Gallery at MICA Building, which specialises in Indian art and curates the exhibitions at The Song of India: "When people from out of town come to Singapore, they're less likely to go gallery hopping than for a really good meal. So, holding exhibitions at restaurants make sense."

How open are the artists themselves to holding exhibitions at dining places? Art consultant Claude said that some prefer to exhibit



SAVOURING THE ARTS: At The Song of India, nude drawings are only exhibited at the romantic Indigo Mist Round Table private room, which seats 8 to 10 people. Drawings in this picture are by Parvathi Nayar, the first artist to exhibit at the restaurant.

only at galleries, but Singaporean artist Loh Khee Yew, 73, had no reservations about showing his figurative, fine-line drawings, priced between \$800 and \$3,000, at TCC The Gallery. "I see it as exposure and getting to share my ideas with diners," he said.

But there are limitations when it comes to showcasing art at eateries. For one, there is always the risk of works getting damaged during the exhibition.

While some of the more professionally managed exhibitions – such as those at The Song of India and TCC – are insured, others on a smaller scale or with a lower budget may not be.

Subjects such as religion or nudity may not sit well in certain restaurant settings and, sometimes, the restaurants simply cannot accommodate the artists.

For example, Ritz-Carlton Millenia's Snappers restaurant (which will close at the end of September to make way for a new dining concept) stopped hosting art exhibitions last year after doing so since 2003. This was due in part to the rise in number of business delegations booking the entire venue, which limited exposure for the artists, said the hotel's public relations director Evelyn Yo.

"Our business levels demanded more and more of Snappers' space and we felt it would not be fair to the artists," she said.