

## Sex objects removed from art show



Multidisciplinary artist Loo Zihan received the Young Artist Award at last year's Cultural Medallion ceremony. PHOTO: BT FILE

🕒 PUBLISHED FEB 16, 2016, 5:00 AM SGT

### Two items were withdrawn from artist Loo Zihan's installation at queer-themed exhibition



Lee Jian Xuan (<mailto:jianxuan@sph.com.sg>)

---

Two sex objects have been withdrawn from a queer-themed exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) Singapore, which is part of Lasalle College of the Arts.

The objects are part of an installation comprising 81 objects by multidisciplinary artist Loo Zihan, titled *Queer Objects: An Archive For The Future*.

His installation is part of an exhibition by six artists from Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, New York and Australia, which addresses the queer experience.

*Fault-Lines: Disparate And Desperate Intimacies*, at the institute in McNally Street, opened to the public last Friday. It is curated by guest curator Wong Binghao, a Singapore-based curator and writer.

In a statement to *The Straits Times*, Loo said the objects in his installation were on loan from homosexual and heterosexual individuals.

## VIEW IT / FAULT-LINES: DISPARATE AND DESPERATE INTIMACIES

WHERE: Earl Lu Gallery, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, 1 McNally Street

WHEN: Till April 13, noon to 7pm (Tuesday to Sunday), closed on Monday and public holiday

ADMISSION: Free, Advisory 16 for mature content and coarse language

INFO: [www.lasalle.edu.sg](http://www.lasalle.edu.sg)

They include used perfume bottles and torch lights used at the annual lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender event, *Pink Dot*. They were presented without context, to "permit viewers to construct their own narratives for the objects based on their individual experiences".

He said three objects were initially removed from display.

A fourth, a 2007 calendar featuring a photograph of a reclining nude male with no frontal or rear nudity, was flipped so that the image was hidden from view, he said.

He said the objects were removed because the institute was concerned that they contravened Section 292 1(a) of the Penal Code, which prohibits the display of obscene materials.

After discussions, the institute reinstated one of the three exhibits and displayed the calendar with the male image visible.

He replaced the other two objects with black vinyl stickers outlining their shapes and requested the exhibition guide state that only 79 objects out of 81 are on display.

In response to queries from *The Straits Times*, ICA director Bala Starr said one of the goals of the exhibition was for it to be a space for conversation and exchange of experiences among people from different generations.

Ms Starr said: "It is intended to be inclusive, particularly bearing in mind that we have young as well as mature students at Lasalle, many from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

"Ours is an open, highly visible gallery with a full glass facade. Due to the nature of two objects, which could potentially be considered offensive to some members of the public, we discussed with Wong Binghao and Loo Zihan, the artist, the possibility of removing the items, which were both sex toys. After our discussion, everyone agreed to exclude the items before the exhibition officially opened."

She added that Lasalle wanted to make the exhibition accessible to all, "including our students, half of whom are under 18 years old". The school had a responsibility to balance the interests of stakeholders too, she said.

She said: "We have put in place notices to advise visitors that Fault-Lines is rated Advisory 16 as it includes mature content and coarse language."

Loo, 32, a multimedia and performance artist, received the Young Artist Award at last year's Cultural Medallion ceremony.

He has dealt with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues in his work, such as *With/Out* (2015), a reconstruction of an Aids patient's monologue and *Cane*, a 2012 re-enactment of Josef Ng's 1993 pubic hair-snipping performance, which was staged in response to police entrapment of gay people in Singapore.

Other artists in the exhibition include Singaporean transgender artist Marla Bendini and trans South Asian performance art duo DarkMatter, known for their work exploring transgender issues.

Loo said in response to the pulling of the exhibits: "The ICA and I hope to continue the discourse on the display of 'obscene materials' and the definition of 'obscenity' in the context of an art exhibition or performance.

"This is necessary for arts managers, curators and artists to clarify the implications on the exhibition and making of art in Singapore. The only way to advance this conversation on the definition of 'obscenity' is by constantly questioning what is visible and permitted to be seen."

This is not the first time that displays have been removed from an exhibition.

In 2011, the Singapore Art Museum removed gay pornographic magazines from British-Japanese artist Simon Fujiwara's art installation, *Welcome To The Hotel Munber*, prior to the opening of the Singapore Biennale.

The museum cited legal prohibitions against the display of pornographic material.

There were also concerns that the pornographic magazines, which belonged to a collector, could be handled by the public.

The exhibit was closed for most of the two-month biennale.

---

SPH Digital News / Copyright © 2015 Singapore Press Holdings Ltd. Co. Regn. No. 198402868E.  
All rights reserved | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Data Protection Policy](#)