



**Cloistered away in a former rice warehouse upstream of the Singapore River is a one-of-a-kind printmaking facility with a remarkable provenance.**

The Singapore Tyler Print Institute, established here in 2002 by American master printmaker and erstwhile director Kenneth E. Tyler, is the outcome of decades of experimentation and technical innovation in his previous facility, Tyler Graphics, in upstate New York. Working with modern artists spanning the likes of Josef Albers, Rob Rauschenberg, Frank Stella and Helen Frankenthaler, Tyler cut a figure in art history as a radical re-inventor of the medium.

Careering from that legacy and operating independently in Singapore ever since the government brokered the move of Tyler's massive stable of equipment and expertise to our shores, the



**PULLING IT OFF.**

Our Singapore-based correspondent **Yishan Lam** uncovers the second edition of the BMW Young Asian Artist Series at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute, the print and paper-making workhorse in the heart of the city that has definitely made a great impression.

1/ Phunk Studio putting the finishing touches to the silkscreen prints at STPI Artist Studio

2/ Donna Ong assembling meticulously cut pieces of printed imagery between layers of acrylic sheets at STPI Artist Studio

4/ STPI building

institute has sought to both push the boundaries of printmaking and engage with its geographically Asian context.

Working with contemporary artists at the rate of typically 6 to 8 residencies a year that are followed by exhibitions and sales, STPI has been responsible for an impressive body of works on paper by art market darlings and emerging artists, for the most part from China, India, Japan, Korea and Southeast Asia.

Coming alongside this seven-year stream of artistic production, BMW Asia has partnered with STPI to present the Young Asian Artists Series (YAAS), a \$50,000 grant over a 2-year run for the artists to undertake 2-week residencies at STPI, where new works are accomplished entirely on site and then sold.

While the first batch of residencies in 2007 featured five Asian artists under 35, the sophomore edition that opened in March this year features the work of three Singaporean artists, namely, David Chan, Donna Ong and :phunk studio.

Whether it is to produce something more intensive and massive than one could do within a small studio space, or to try one's hand at mastering all manner of production methods from lithography to silkscreen and flocking, STPI residencies are an incred-

ible opportunity for a young artist to experiment and produce work in a regional market swollen with big names and in a city where space, material and expertise in art are scarce.

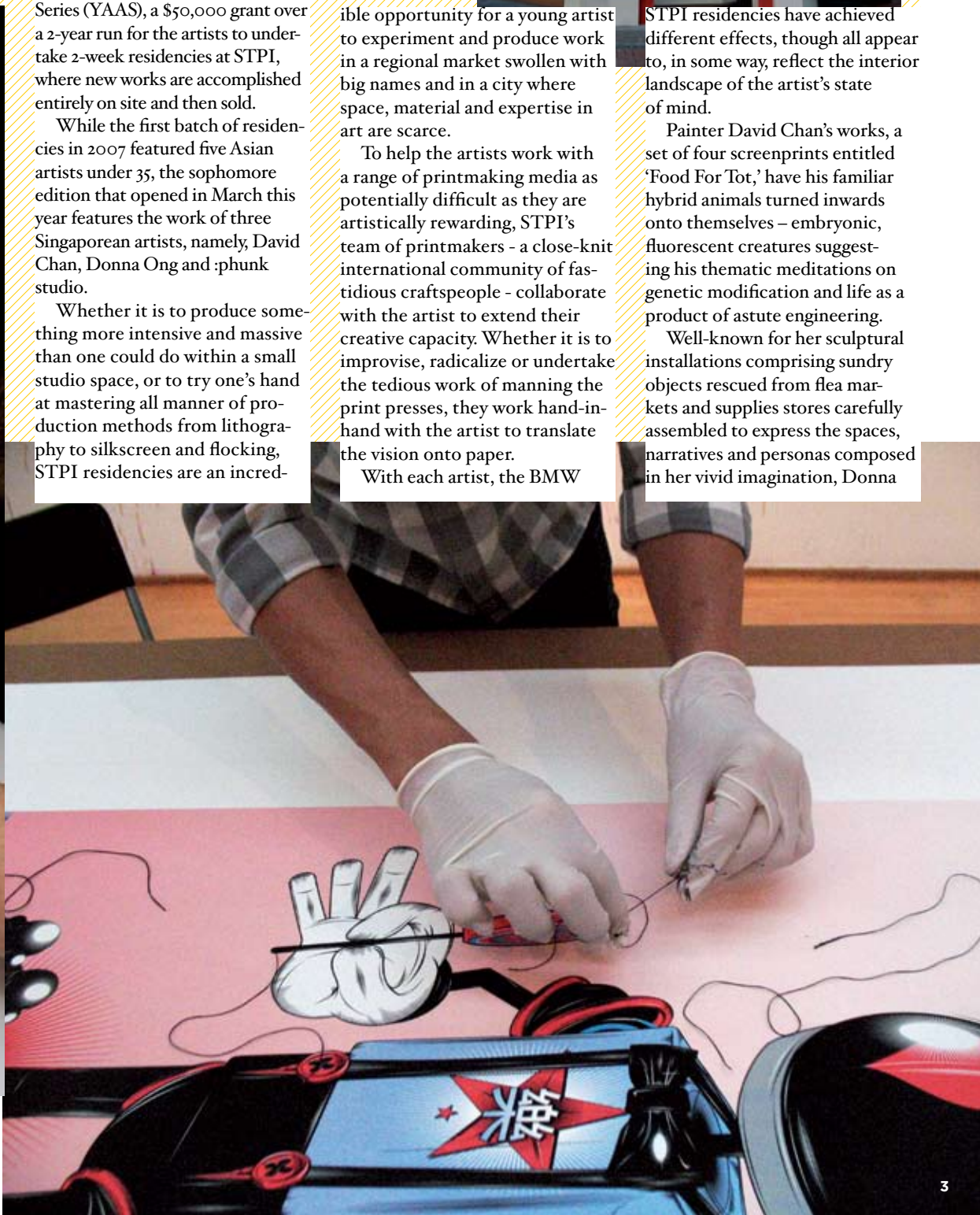
To help the artists work with a range of printmaking media as potentially difficult as they are artistically rewarding, STPI's team of printmakers - a close-knit international community of fastidious craftspeople - collaborate with the artist to extend their creative capacity. Whether it is to improvise, radicalize or undertake the tedious work of manning the print presses, they work hand-in-hand with the artist to translate the vision onto paper.

With each artist, the BMW

STPI residencies have achieved different effects, though all appear to, in some way, reflect the interior landscape of the artist's state of mind.

Painter David Chan's works, a set of four screenprints entitled 'Food For Tot,' have his familiar hybrid animals turned inwards onto themselves - embryonic, fluorescent creatures suggesting his thematic meditations on genetic modification and life as a product of astute engineering.

Well-known for her sculptural installations comprising sundry objects rescued from flea markets and supplies stores carefully assembled to express the spaces, narratives and personas composed in her vivid imagination, Donna





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- 5/ Andrea Nathysand  
Christine Ackermau
- 6/ G-o-H, Marketing  
Director BMW  
Group Asia, Ramesh  
Divyanathan delivering  
opening speech
- 7/ Guest-of-Honour:  
Marketing Director BMW  
Group Asia, Ramesh  
Divyanathan and STPI  
Deputy Director, Emi Eu

Ong's works at STPI are emblematic of her recent explorations into other media including miniatures, photography, film and sound.

For the eight editions entitled *In the deep: not all who wander are lost*, Ong created abstract, cavernous landscapes for the viewer to visually wander into, by means of photo-etchings on delicate Misu paper, cut and placed in perspective between the acrylic sheets.

Toying with the two-dimensionality of print, the works were presented in a wider environment of whitewashed furniture, submerging the experience of 'print' even deeper into the work.

Crossing over from the post-industrial world of graphic design to fine art print, :phunk studio could well be the joker in the deck for the show. The group of four, comprising Alvin Tan, Melvin Chee, Jackson Tan and William Chan, have mined their collective growing-up memories of the New World amusement park in 70s Singapore, Hong Kong wu xia flicks, Daft Punk and other mythologies to produce a glittering set of lithography and screen-prints in DayGlo colours.

A whirligig of culture references distilled into the portmanteau character of Monsieur Robo, an imaginary Frenchman in a robot costume, the prints (some extending to an impressive 2.57m) are at once happy and dystopian meditations on globalization and the brave new world ahead of us.

In selecting the artists for the residencies, one can imagine that the challenge for STPI is to identify the right talents who will exploit the medium, possessing

the sensitivity, imagination and appetite for technical innovation in order to embrace even the troublesome aspects of print-making. In this, the institute has often excelled.

As an unparalleled vehicle for content creation in a country that lacks a focal point for art production, it perhaps also has a hitherto untapped potential for collaborative community and participatory use, trickling down the value chain as it were, a mandate that the state of the market has restricted it from answering to. Ultimately, works are made in the intense two-week space of a residency and then sold to buyers for private appreciation, after a brief period of public consumption. This, conversely, makes the opportunity of a residency all the more precious - and exclusive. With regards to the potential for greater *communitas*, as Ong meditated, some measure of creative mingling between artists during the residency may have set off other kinds of sparks.

In an economic climate such as this, the private sponsorship of BMW Asia provides valuable support for local content creation and activity in the art and design landscape - seen elsewhere in the



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setting up of the strategic design consultancy BMW DesignWorks USA in 2005 and BMW Art Car exhibition in 2006. That the corporation has decided to continue supporting the STPI YAAS into a third season is an encouraging signal.

The most exciting part of making a print is the moment where, having run it through the press, you lift the paper off the plate. We at Blueprint Asia await the next edition with bated breath.



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