

The Singapore Biennale 2013

If the World Changed

By Marie Mol

The architecture and urbanisation of Singapore are some of the most spectacular achievements of the city state. However, while a futuristic Singapore was developing, traditional kampung life disappeared and the jungle receded to give way to well-groomed parks.

Designed by a French architect, François Roche, in collaboration with Camille Lacadée (founders of the Institute for Contingent Scenario Film and Architecture, in Bangkok), *Bamboo Bonsa-ing* is a multi-layered artwork that questions the place of nature in a modern megalopolis. The tunnel-shaped sculpture displayed in the Singapore Management University's (SMU) campus is entangled with bamboo sticks.



Bamboo Bonsa-ing, photo courtesy of New Territories, Camille Lacadée and François Roche

Through this installation, which combines architecture, botany and art, the artist alludes to the bondage of the natural vis à vis the artificial. In Singapore, the combination of the vegetal and technological refers both to the green walls of SMU and to the greenhouses of the Gardens by the Bay.



Syv Bruzeau, the butoh dancer, photo by Boaz Zippor

During the opening days of *Bamboo Bonsa-ing*, a Butoh dance was performed by Syv Bruzeau, in association with the artwork, which addresses the risk of acculturation in contemporary Asian mega-cities. *Butoh*, 'the dance of darkness', emerged from post-war Japan. Born from devastation, *Butoh* is "a dance that grows like a flower from rubble, its essence is crisis and growth (from Alex Ruhe's *About Butoh*).

In *Bamboo Bonsa-ing*, the dancer epitomises a feral child found in the depths of the Singapore forest. She is "the last wild anomaly in the Singaporean cultural and societal environment" surviving in the bamboo forest of the installation, which recreates the biotope in which she used to live and survive. During her performance, the dancer expresses the plaintive and fearful behaviour of this child when exposed to unknown human activities and a disconcerting urban landscape.

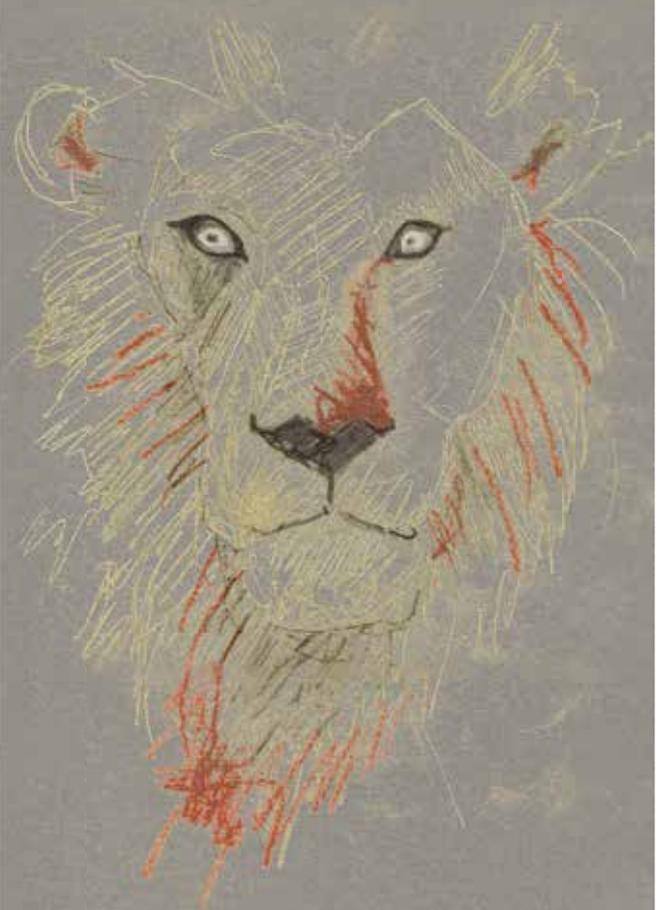
Bamboo Bonsa-ing is only one among more than 80 artworks to be discovered during the Singapore Biennale; there is no time to lose if you want to see them all!

To learn more about the Singapore Biennale, which runs through 16 Feb 2014, please go to: www.singaporebiennale.org

Marie Mol is currently the docent coordinator for the Singapore Art Museum.

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