



Revisit the fundamentals of figurative drawing and painting with Yeo Workshop, as it presents ***Points of Articulation***, Solamalay Namasivayam's first major retrospective exhibition. A master in life drawing and figure study, the artist is adept in depicting the human form with perceptual acuity, fluidity and spontaneity of his lines. While his significant contributions as one of the pioneers of figurative art in Singapore was previously overlooked, the gallery aims to bring his works and life as an artist-educator to light through this exciting and important archival project.

*"Life has not always been kind to artists. But it is the measure of the passionate artist that has made many misunderstood artists to drive them to express themselves continuously even though public recognition has not been forthcoming. My school art teacher S. Namasivayam or Nama as he was called, symbolizes the passionate creativity of a hidden artist whose story needs to be told."*

Dr Victor R Savage, Visiting Senior Fellow RSIS

*"We are honoured to be able to take on the research of this iconic and important artist who has contributed to the artistic and educational landscape in Singapore. We thank the family's trust in us."* Audrey Yeo, Founder of Yeo Workshop.

S. Namasivayam was a central figure to the development of figurative art in Singapore as a founding member of Singaporean art group, Group 90. With the group, he exhibited alongside prominent artists like Chia Wai Hon, Sim Tong Khern, and Brother Joseph McNally the Founder of LASALLE College of the Arts, in key exhibitions such as Group 90's inaugural exhibition *FIGURAMA* in 1990. Group 90 was the forefront of live drawing in Singapore and created opportunities for this important study in aesthetics and discipline in art to develop. The group gathered like-minded individuals who adhered to European artistic traditions of live drawing and the human nude as the foundation of art, to learn from each other as well as providing a platform to showcase figurative art.

*"My wish is to take my last breath with a drawn line."* S. Namasivayam. The Sunday Times. 2011, August 14.

At his death bed, the artist's close friend and fellow artist Sim Tong Khern visited him and said he was clutching a sketchbook, requesting a nurse to facilitate in making a final drawing. Sim was moved by Namasivayam's passionate, undying love for art. "He was able to create something on the drawing board simply because essentially, he was a born artist through his own belief. It was a truly wonderful thing. I was very touched, I was there, I saw it happen, I knew exactly what he wanted to do. I said "Nama thank you so much, this is marvellous"."

The exhibition showcases more than 20 works done in a variety of mediums to render the human figure; ranging from monochromatic charcoal or ink on paper, to coloured pieces done in pastels or gouache. A prolific artist, these works were carefully selected from his extensive oeuvre, that provide insights into his life and practice as both an artist and art educator. The exhibition and its accompanying publication also feature writings about art by Namasivayam extracted from his personal notebooks and lecture notes.

*Points of Articulation* wishes to provoke new inquiries into Singapore's art history and to acknowledge Namasivayam's significant contributions. The show invites visitors to contribute to the investigations into the artist's life and practice as an artist and educator, by committing a section of the exhibition to display archival materials and sketchbooks that the visitors can read. Four contemporary artists Alvin Ong, Jason Wee, Mike HJ Chang and Milenko Prvački were also chosen to create new works in response to Namasivayam's works and writings, and will be shown at our venue sponsor Art Outreach, to trace how figurative art has evolved but remains relevant today.



Mike HJ Chang, *Caught Flat Footed*, 2019. Glazed Ceramic with artist build wooden display case, 110 cm x 40 cm.

## MULTICUTURAL

Namasivayam's models were international travellers from various countries and featured both males and females, enabling him to study the anatomy of various ethnicities and both genders. Local sitters only appeared much later in the late 90s to early 2000s due to the conservative values and taboo view of nude modelling in Singapore then.



Solamalay Namasivayam, *Untitled*, 1997. Charcoal and pastel on paper, 91 x 119 cm.



Solamalay Namasivayam, *African Male Nude*, 1997. Charcoal and pastel on paper, 107 x 76 cm.



Solamalay Namasivayam, *Untitled*. Charcoal and pastel on paper, 119 x 89.5 cm.



Solamalay Namasivayam, *Untitled*. Ink and charcoal on paper, 84 x 61 cm.



Solamalay Namasivayam, *Untitled*. Ink and charcoal on paper, 83.5 x 60 cm.

## INK WORKS

Namasivayam is adept in using various mediums to convey the figure, from gouache and pastels to Chinese ink. In the late 90s to early 2000s, he was interested in capturing the figure in the most simple way using black and white, which led him to explore the use of Chinese ink. He learnt and experimented with various brushstroke techniques from other artists who were trained in Chinese ink painting, resulting in figures that were rendered in a unique and fluid manner that blends his Western training from his studies in Australia with Chinese ink and brushstrokes.



Solamalay Namasivayam, *Untitled*. Ink and pastel on paper, 58 x 85 cm.



Solamalay Namasivayam, *Untitled*, 1964. Gouache on canvas, 75 x 102 cm.



Solamalay Namasivayam, *Untitled*, 2001. Ink and pastel on paper, 56 x 76 cm.

## COLOURED WORKS

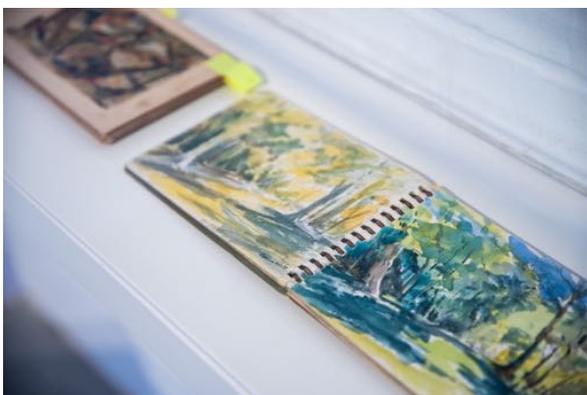
A passionate artist who studies his models before they start posing, Namasivayam connects with his figures on a personal level and is able to skilfully capture their personalities and emotions in bold, dynamic strokes. He was also invested in studying the technicalities of how to capture light and colour in his works, and also how these factors affect the mood of the drawing. His use of colours to capture the way the light reflects off the models at various angles and an atmospheric effect around the figure was characteristic of his artistic practice.



Installation shot of exhibition

## INSTALLATION SHOTS

The first major retrospective of S. Namasivayam was held at Yeo Workshop in November 2019, where the works were hung in a Salon-style and visitors were surrounded by his dynamic figures upon entering the gallery space. The gallery also invited four contemporary artists to create artworks to respond to Namasivayam's works, in trying to understand how figurative art has evolved today. The works produced included a sculpture, a text-based drawing, and an oil painting. Also displayed at the space were the artist's sketchbooks and personal notes on drawing the figure and anatomy for visitors to better understand his practice.



Namasivayam's personal sketchbooks



Installation shot of exhibition

## **ARTIST CV: SOLAMALAY NAMASIVAYAM**

1926 – 2013

S. Namasivayam was a Colombo Plan Scholar and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts, majoring in Figure Painting/Drawing (1961). He lectured at the Singapore National Institute of Education from 1962 to 1981, at the Singapore Educational Media Service (Ministry of Education) from 1982 to 1985, and at LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts as a Fine Arts and Specialist Lecturer in Figure Drawing from 1987 to 2001. At LASALLE, he introduced “Life Drawing” as a subject into the Fine Arts Curriculum in 1987. His works are collected by several private collections in Singapore, United Kingdom, Japan and, America.

### **EDUCATION**

- |             |                                                                                         |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1947        | Completed Secondary Education in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, as it was then known.            |
| 1950 – 1954 | Normal Training Certificate. Singapore Teachers’ Training College. Diploma in Teaching. |

### **PROFESSIONAL**

- |             |                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1957 – 1961 | A Colombo Plan Scholar/Graduate. Studied Fine Arts majoring in Figure Drawing/Painting. Sydney, Australia. B.F.A.                                                                      |
| 1962 – 1981 | Lecturer in Audio-Visual Education. Singapore Institute of Education.                                                                                                                  |
| 1982 – 1985 | Lecturer and Media Specialist.<br>Singapore Educational Media Service.                                                                                                                 |
| 1987 – 2001 | Lecturer in Fine Art and Specialist Lecturer in Figure Drawing.<br>LaSalle – SIA College of the Arts.<br>Introduced “Life Drawing” as a subject into its Fine Arts Curriculum in 1987. |

## EXHIBITIONS

2019	<i>Points of Articulation</i> . Yeo Workshop, Singapore.
2002	Nusense 2002 – Group 90.
1998	Group 90 4 <sup>th</sup> Exhibition.
1995	1 <sup>st</sup> Solo Exhibition – Mr Gopal’s Security Training Centre. Little India Arcade.
1994	Group 90 3rd Exhibition.
1993	Art in Asia – World Trade Centre.
1992	The Figure in Art and Forum NAFA.
1991	Indian Artists’ Exhibition.
1990	Indian Cultural Exhibition.
1990	Group 90 – Figurama.
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1991	Indian Artists’ Exhibition.
1990	Indian Cultural Exhibition.
1990	Group 90 – Figurama.

## COLLECTIONS

Professor/Dr. Victor Savage	Head/Dept. of Geography, National University of Singapore
Mr. S.R. Gopal P.P.A. PBM. PBS.	Singapore
Singapore Art Museum	
Singapore American School	
Other Private Collections	U.K. / Japan / U.S.A.