

A Social Portrait of Singapore: The critical years Photography by Loke Hong Seng

Loke Hong Seng is a fine art photographer shooting street portraits of Singapore during the period 1963 to 1985. These 22 years parallel a period of tremendous change in Singapore – from the fight for Independence through to modernisation of the country – during which he captured the emergence of a new republic against the backdrop of vernacular architecture and colonial buildings. He made a conscious decision to shoot more realistic images of daily life. Though his photographs adhere to classical modes of composition, his style has a contemporaneous aspect of depicting modern life. This is the first time the works have been exhibited.

The photographs in this exhibition are a selection of 20 photographs from Loke Hong Seng's extensive body of work depicting scenes of the development of Singapore from the kampong to high-rise apartment blocks, specifically Housing Development Board (HDB) flats. Although today the HDB flats are an inalienable structure of Singapore's landscape, their development and construction methods are hardly known.

This exhibition is the first time Loke's photographs will be exhibited together and the first time street art photography will be revealed by a Singaporean photographer who was working during the time of Singapore's historic beginnings as a modern independent nation. In the second half of the 20th century, it was rare to find a photographer in Singapore taking "street portraits" for the sake of fine art and not part of a journalistic assignment or a government project. This exhibition will encourage a new reading of early photography at a time when photography as an art form struggled to establish itself as internationally viable. Other than its former uses in documentary and archives, this selection exemplifies the crudeness of 20th century life.



Blueprint for a Beautiful Homeland, 1971/2015

90 x 90 cm
Digital print on dibond
Edition of 3



Singapore From Another View, 1969/2015

Image size: 35.6 x 56.8 cm; Framed dimensions: 59.6 x 80.8 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



A Splendid View During a Flood, 1973/2015

Image size: 43 x 43 cm; Framed dimensions: 67 x 67 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Trishaw, 1970/2015

Image Size: 53 x 35 cm; Framed dimensions: 77 x 59.5 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Poor Child, Peddling Cold Drinks Under The Hot Sun, 1970/2015

Image size: 51.4 x 35.6 cm; Framed dimensions: 76.4 x 59.6 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Making Way for a Brighter Tomorrow, 1971/2015

Image size: 46.7 x 43.1 cm; Framed dimensions: 70.7 x 68.1 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Left Behind, 1970/2015

Image size: 35.6 x 49.5 cm; Framed dimensions: 59.6 x 74.5 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Relocation, 1970/2015

Image size: 43 x 43 cm; Framed dimensions: 67 x 68 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Moving Into a New Home, 1971/2015

Image size: 51 x 35 cm; Framed dimensions: 75 x 59 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Vegetable Farm, Potong Pasir, 1970/2015

Image size: 39 x 56 cm; Framed dimensions: 59 x 76 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Samsui Women Walking As If On Wings, 1970/2015

Image size: 35.6 x 53.7 cm; Framed dimensions: 60.6 x 77.7 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Plain Tools, Hard Work, 1969/2015

Image size: 47 x 35.6 cm; Framed dimensions: 72 x 59.6 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



The Admirable Samsui Women, 1970/2015

Image size: 35.6 x 47.7 cm; Framed dimensions: 59.6 x 72.7 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Perseverance, 1969/2015

Image size: 50 x 39 cm; Framed dimensions: 70 x 60 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Toa Payoh: A New Estate, 1970/2015

Image size: 35.6 x 61.9 cm; Framed dimensions: 60.6 x 85.9 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Come rain or Shine, 1970/2015

Image size: 35.6 x 55.2 cm; Framed dimensions: 60.5 x 80.2 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



New Homes a Stone's Throw Away, 1970/2015

Image size: 43 x 42.5 cm; Framed dimensions: 59.6 x 80.8 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Built From the Ground Up, A Layer At A Time, 1970/2015

Image size: 59.5 x 77 cm; Framed dimensions: 84.5 x 101 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



On Our Way To Pasar Malam, 1968/2015

Image size: 35.5 x 64.7 cm; Framed dimensions: 59.5 x 88.7 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Unauthorised Zinc Attap Houses, 1968/2015

Image size: 35.6 x 55.1 cm; Framed dimensions: 60.6 x 79.1 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15



Vacated!, 1969/2015

Image size: 35.6 x 56.9 cm; Framed dimensions: 60.6 x 80.9 cm
Digital print on archival cotton paper
Edition of 15