

## 5 Singaporean Artists to Look Out For

What do a Grammy nominee, a Sotheby's online auction, an iPhone, and embroidery have in common? Well, they all point to Singaporean local artists. The art world may often seem daunting and abstract, only understood by the 'high-cultured'. But today, we will introduce 5 local artists who have made their mark with unique works that have brought an international spotlight on Singapore as well as made the arts a little more fun and exciting!

### **1. Irwan Awalludin**

At age 31, Irwan Awalludin has worked with some of the biggest names in rap including the likes of Ludacris, Wiz Khalifa and Meek Mill. But he is no rapper, neither will you see him in any music videos as Irwan's expertise comes in his artwork covers designed for artists's singles and albums. Little did he know that his album artwork for music-duo Intelxual self-entitled album would be nominated for Best Recording Package.

He is one of only three Singaporeans to ever receive a Grammy nomination. The first being Arun Shenoy's flamenco-inspired work 'Rumbadoodle' which received a nod for best pop instrumental album in 2012, while in 2015, conductor Darrell Ang was nominated for best orchestral performance: Zhou Long & Chen Yi: Symphony 'Humen 1839'.

Irwan's journey to the grammys started as a young boy where his artistic interest began by drawing pokemon characters. His pokemon-drawing hobby become a useful conversation starter for making new friends in school when Irwan and his family migrated to America. Describing the artwork process, "Everybody has a different process. Usually, it starts with them coming up with a name and a general idea. I'll listen to it and I'll try to create something impactful to help people want to click on the album cover and listen to the music." Intelxual's artwork cover was inspired by the human brain with each song represented by the vibrant free-form abstract visuals.

Taking much pride in his work, he opines that "The album's cover art, it's the visual representation of the music." So next time, you click on your Spotify playlist, you might wanna take some time to admire the art cover.



## 2. PHUNK



Hitting it closer to home is Singaporean-born and bred contemporary art and design collective, PHUNK.

Comprising of Alvin Tan, Melvin Chee, Jackson Tan, and William Chan, this 'quartet' has no lack of accolades. Critically acclaimed as "The Champion of Singapore's Graphic Scene" (Creative Review, UK), "Asia's hottest agency" (Computer Arts, UK), "one of the world's foremost cutting-edge design collectives" (Asia Tatler, Hong Kong) and "iconic representatives of the new wave of young Asian creators" (Get it Louder, China), PHUNK has pioneered Singapore's graphic art scene since 1994.

With twenty-five years of collective expertise and experience, PHUNK continues to break new grounds through their avant-garde, eccentric yet strikingly-grotesque works that draw from a myriad of influences including Chinese mythology, Japanese manga and western pop culture. Most recently, PHUNK's works have been listed in Sotheby's very first Southeast Asia online auction. Celebrating their 25th anniversary, PHUNK will also be holding a solo exhibition titled Control Chaos: 25 Years of PHUNK, at the National Design Centre from 12 February to 20 March 2020.

## 3. Ripple Root





Another rising star and the youngest artist to have their works auctioned off for thousands of dollars in Sotheby's first online SEA auction alongside PHUNK is artist-duo Ripple Root. Helmed by Liquan Liew and Estella Ng each embodying one-half of their name - Estelle being Ripple and Liquan being Root - they have literally taken over the streets of Singapore.

Inspired by the works of Henri Matisse, Ripple root's art has been described as "New-age Fauvism" known for its bright colors and patterns. Easily identifiable by their trademark - whimsical, colorful murals that adorn and enliven the streets of CBD, Keong Siak and into the interior spaces of fashionable cafés at Bâcari Cicheti and Straits Clan, just to name a few.

Many of Ripple root's paintings are often done at the spur of the moment and without any prior discussions. Taking pride and effort to create spontaneously and organically, both artists would often swap paintings while working side by side, adding elements to each other's work. A glimpse into their creative processes is "like a game of 'tag' — constantly swapping works after each individual has added his or her interpretation." Beyond their numerous commissioned instagrammable murals, Ripple root has not only garnered recognition and success locally but also internationally with exhibitions from London to South Korea. Be sure to keep a lookout for rippling artworks that will continue to pop up in life and color on the walls and streetscapes of Singapore.

#### **4. Darren Soh**

On the other hand, we have Darren Soh who unlike Ripple Root is not painting the streets of Singapore but rather, immortalising our landscapes and buildings through photos. A former professor turned architectural photographer, Darren is probably an artist name you've never heard.

One of Singapore's most prominent architectural photographers, he believes that "It's very urgent to take pictures to freeze these buildings in time and space because a large number of them will not exist in 50 years." Truly so, the impending demise of old complexes such as Pearl Bank Apartments reflects the urgency to record Singapore's 'lost' and disappearing landscapes.

With no lack of credentials himself, Darren Soh is one of the 10 winners of Apple's 'Shot on iPhone' 2019 challenge that was among millions of entries, and to top it off, being the only winning entry from Asia.



His winning entry pictured below showcases a Singapore HDB flat reflected through puddled water. Can you believe this was shot on an iPhone much less taken on a basketball court?!



Surprised by his win, Darren commented, “I was very thankful that the image that won was an image of a public housing block in Singapore. That has always been the Singapore that I wanted to show, rather than the glitzy side.” This year, Apple will once again host the #ShotOniPhone Night Challenge (go give it a shot all you iPhone users!), with Darren’s expertise no longer as a participant but on the judging committee. #Singaporerepresent!

##### **5. Teeteeheehee (Teresa Lim)**

Teresa Lim also known by @teeteeheehee is an embroidery artist and illustrator. Amassing a following of 80,000 followers and counting, Teresa Lim is threading on a whole new level of art. Her star-studded clients range from global fashion house Gucci, to homegrown label Charles & Keith and even Netflix. In addition, her Instagram won the ‘most creative feed’ in Buro Singapore’s 2018 digital awards.

Scrolling through her IG page, one would be mesmerised by the intricate yet colorful embroideries of iconic buildings, scenic landscapes and everyday streets across the globe. An ever-growing project she calls, ‘sew wanderlust’, along with unique experimentations on shoes and earrings. Acknowledging the power of social media and its ability to showcase her works to a larger audience, she credits the major role it has played in her success as an artist as well as becoming an accidental influencer.

Interestingly, Teresa’s beginnings as an embroidery artist were spawned from an unfortunate incident that occurred during an overseas trip in Perth. A battery-dead phone compelled Teresa to record the beautiful sunset with her threads instead of snaps. Little did she know, a sudden feature on Frankie (an Australian magazine), would soon see her meteoric rise and success with numerous notable clients. One of which was #GucciGram putting Teresa on the world map. Most recently, a special capsule project

with Charles & Keith featuring her alter-ego 'Anya,' an eccentric character contrasted with vivid floral illustrations.



Ultimately, weaving and embroidery are to her another form of storytelling, an extension of herself.