

President Tan opens Singapore Pavilion at Venice show



President Tony Tan Keng Yam viewing the Singapore exhibition's centrepiece - 81 glass lanterns illuminating photographs of HDB homes. With him is lead curator Wong Yunn Chii of NUS' Architecture Department. The exhibit offers a glimpse into the homes of ordinary Singaporeans and show how each family has created a space to call its own. ST PHOTO: JOANNA SEOW

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Singapore shows off collaborative nature of design at prestigious architecture exhibition

Ankita Varma and Joanna Seow In Venice

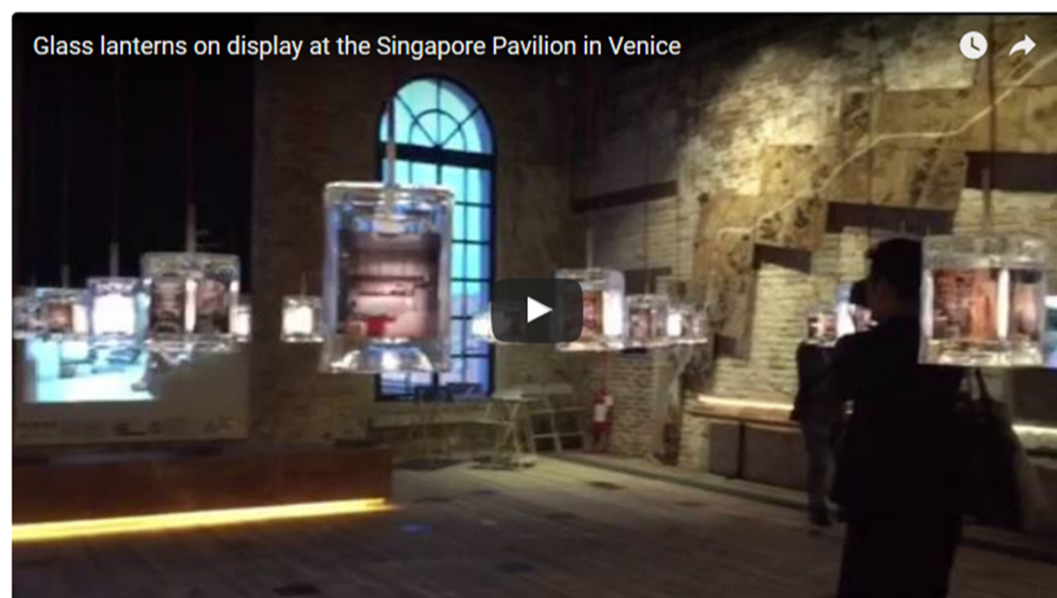
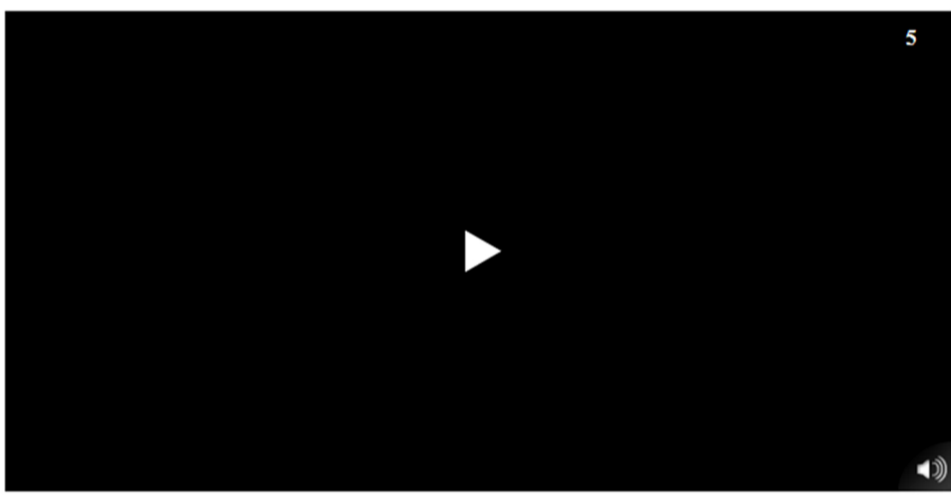
The Singapore Pavilion at the world's most established exhibition showcasing architectural design was officially opened by President Tony Tan Keng Yam yesterday.

It is Singapore's fifth showing, since 2004, at the prestigious 15th International Architecture Exhibition (Biennale Architettura 2016) in Venice.

Also present at the opening ceremony were Minister for Communications and Information Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) S. Iswaran and Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Transport Josephine Teo.

Dr Yaacob said the Singapore Pavilion "reflects the pervasiveness of design in how Singapore has built our communities, shaped the living environment and made Singapore a lovable city".

Entitled Space To Imagine, Room For Everyone, the display goes behind Singapore's meticulously planned cityscape to showcase the role citizens have played in co-creating an innovative and socially harmonious society.



Showcased in three segments, entitled People And Their Homes, People Working The Land and People Engaging The City, the selection of works aims to uncover the creativity that is not only inherent in domestic life but also in the many local initiatives that have shaped the physical environment.

Said Dr Yaacob of the collaborative nature of the pavilion's exhibits: "The last 50 years have been, for lack of a better word, top down. But now we want something that is not just bottom up, but something that creates a synergy between government planners and the people.

"This is the era of co-creating solutions and the Government is prepared to learn because we want Singaporeans to feel that they have a stake in the country."

The exhibition's centrepiece is a display of 81 customised lanterns illuminating photographs.

These offer a glimpse into the homes of ordinary Singaporeans living in public housing and how each family has imaginatively created a space to call its own.

Complementing these lanterns are displays of artefacts and interview footage which tell the stories of how citizens are stepping out and taking action to adopt and own their environments.

The presentation is in response to the exhibition's primary theme: Reporting From The Front.

Commissioned by the DesignSingapore Council of the Ministry of Communications and Information, it was curated by the National University of Singapore (NUS) Department of Architecture. Mr Jeffrey Ho, executive director of the DesignSingapore Council and commissioner of the Singapore Pavilion, said the participation will help develop the Singapore Design brand and spur the growth and expansion of design firms internationally.

Singapore is one of 64 countries participating in the exhibition, which is open to the public and will run from May 28 to Nov 27.

Dr Tan, with his wife Mary, spoke to NUS architecture students who are guides at the exhibition and Singapore architects who are exhibiting at the Biennale.

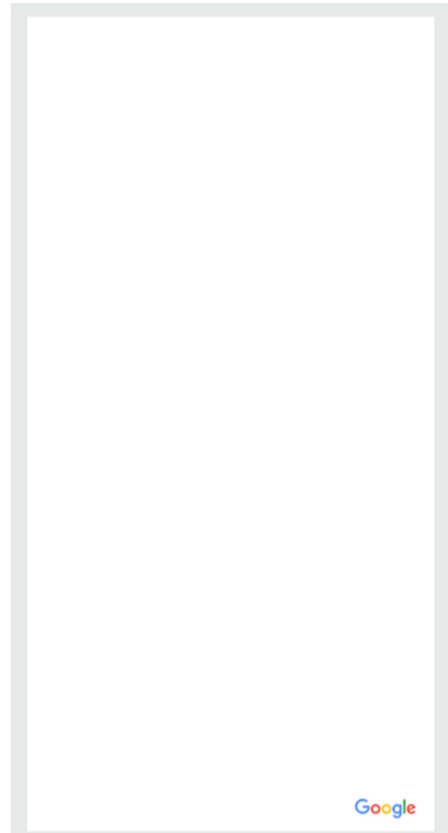
They also visited pavilions of other countries, taking in designs such as the clean lines and communal housing of downtown Tokyo, and the interplay of light and nature in the stepped interior of the Nordic Pavilion built around several trees.

They also toured the pavilions of Italy and Mexico.

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