

Sharing Spaces

The Singapore Pavilion at the Venice Biennale's Architecture Exhibition highlights distinctively Singaporean living spaces. **BY TAY SUAN CHIANG**

WITH much of the world in various degrees of lockdown since 2020, the question of How Will We Live Together is a timely one, especially in today's context, where many have been living under imposed isolation because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Hashim Sarkis, curator of the ongoing 17th Venice Biennale International Architecture Exhibition, puts forth this question to the 112 participants from 46 countries. The question is also the theme of the biennial exhibition, considered the world's most prestigious platform for architecture. The Biennale Architettura first took place in 1980.

The Lebanese architect says he is asking architects this question because he believes his contemporaries have "the ability to present more inspiring answers than politics has been thus far offering in much of the world".

In response to the theme, the Singapore Pavilion showcases an exhibition titled *to gather: The Architecture of Relationships*, featuring 16 built and speculative architecture that show the Singaporean way of gathering and living.

The Singapore Pavilion is commissioned by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and DesignSingapore Council (Dsg) and curated by the National University of Singapore (NUS). This is Singapore's seventh exhibition since first taking part in 2004.

The projects are categorised under four subthemes: *Communing Relationships* shows how collective histories and memories can be kept alive while inspiring new ways of gathering; *Framing Relationships* looks at how communities work and live within a single space; *Uncovering Relationships* focuses on multi-sensorial interactions between users and their surroundings; and *Imagining Relationships* taps on digital technology to show what a future Singapore could be like.

The projects include the proposed restoration of four wooden Malay houses on Pulau Ubin; Our Tampines Hub – a popular gathering spot for Tampines and its neighbouring residents; and a conceptual design research project exploring environmentally sustainable residential buildings.

Lead curator of the Singapore Pavilion, Professor Ho Puay-peng, who is also the head of Department of Architecture at NUS, says the projects were selected based on their innovative concepts, inclusivity and relevance to the local context.

There are plans for the Singapore Pavilion to be restaged in Singapore in 2022. The Singapore Pavilion and the 16 projects can be viewed at to-gather.sg.

Hawker Centres in Singapore by Lai Chee Kien

Hawker centres may be seen as places to buy food, and have a meal with family and friends, but to Adjunct As-



Above: Hawker Centres in Singapore by Lai Chee Kien.
Right: Architecture of Sharing Culture by NUS-Tsinghua Design Research Initiative: Sharing Cities. PHOTOS: LAI CHEE KIEN, NUS-TSINGHUA DESIGN RESEARCH INITIATIVE SHARING CITIES

sociate Professor and architect Lai Chee Kien, they are an outstanding example of public community spaces in Singapore. For this exhibit, a round table is filled with food trays and stacks of coloured melamine crockery. Each stack of plates shows visitors different aspects of Singapore's hawker centres from its history, forms, design evolution and cultural revival.

Rail Corridor: Choa Chu Kang Housing Development by MKPL Architects

Who can forget the sight of crowds thronging Singapore's parks during last year's Circuit Breaker? Many in Singapore would like to live as close to nature as possible. But in densely populated Singapore, maintaining a symbiotic relationship with nature is a challenge that architects face.

MKPL Architects' The Rail Corridor: Choa Chu Kang Integrated Housing Development, a proposal submitted for a competition shows the ways that nature and a residential estate can co-exist.

HABIT@AT by Atelier HOKO

Head to any housing estate and chances are, there you're likely to stumble upon a community cat or two lazing at the void deck.

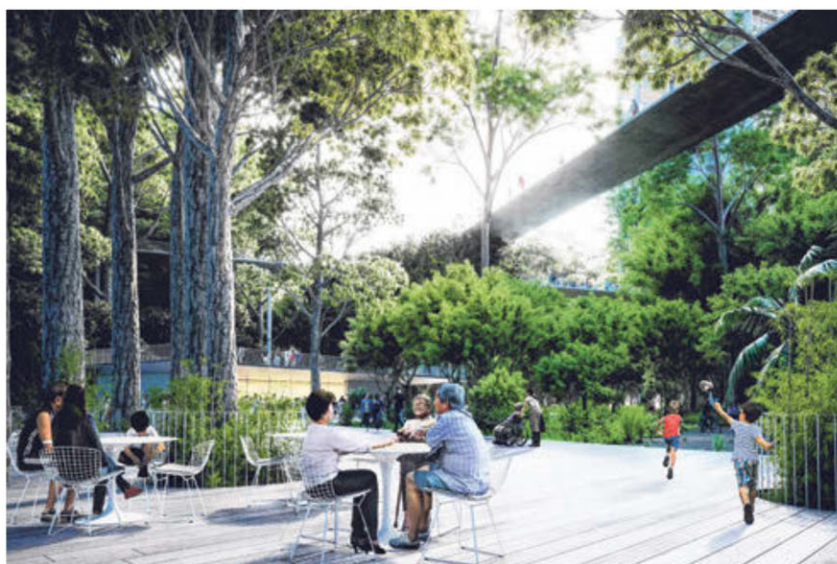
Independent research lab, Atelier HOKO, looks at how street cats inhabit man-made spaces and our urban landscape. By following the daily routine of four community cats as they wander around a block of flats, visitors get to see the estate down to little details such as the gutters from a feline perspective.

Architecture of the Sharing Culture by NUS-Tsinghua Design Research Initiative: Sharing Cities

Through the use of augmented reality technology, visitors get a peek into the Singapore of the future. The NUS-Tsinghua Design Research Initiative believes it will be a future where communities will live together sustainably and equitably.

The culture will be one where individuals come together to co-create, co-manage, co-own and co-consume resources. To meet this sharing culture, architectural spaces are designed to meet the needs of this future society.

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Far left: Rail Corridor: Choa Chu Kang Integrated Housing Development by MKPL Architects.

Left: HABIT@AT by Atelier HOKO.

PHOTOS: MKPL ARCHITECTS, ATELIER HOKO