

# THE STRAITS TIMES

## Visual artist bags top prize at President's Young Talents awards



Visual artist Weixin Quek Chong, 30, received the \$20,000 Grand Prize from President Halimah Yacob at the President's Young Talents awards yesterday at the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) at 8Q.

She was one of five finalists for the seventh edition of the prize, Singapore's only mentoring, commissioning and award programme for emerging Singaporean artists aged 35 and below.

Her installation, titled *sft crsh ctrl*, makes use of materials such as silk twill, latex sheets and faux fur. It is being exhibited, together with the works by the other finalists, at the museum until Jan 27.

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# Risk elements help visual artist clinch grand prize

Use of materials like faux fur in installation pays off at President's Young Talents awards

Olivia Ho

Taking a risk with unusual materials paid off for visual artist Weixin Quek Chong, who clinched the Grand Prize at the President's Young Talents awards yesterday.

Chong, 30, was one of five finalists for the seventh edition of the prize, Singapore's only mentoring, commissioning and award programme for emerging Singaporean artists aged 35 and below.

At yesterday's ceremony at the Singapore Art Museum at 8Q (SAM at 8Q), she received the \$20,000 prize from President Halimah Yacob, who was the guest of honour.

Chong's installation, titled *sft crsh ctrl*, in which materials such as silk twill, latex sheets and faux fur are draped over frames or billow from the ceiling, is meant to challenge viewers' attempts to rationalise the artwork.

The jury panel said in a statement that Chong's work "stood out for its command of space and material, and the fluidity with which she executed her concept".

"We also recognise Weixin's work contains elements of risk integral to contemporary practice," the panel added, referring to the unconventional nature of the materials used.

The panel comprised artist and art educator Vincent Leow; artist Kumari Nahappan; Standard Chartered Bank managing director Michelangelo Samson, who chairs SAM's acquisitions committee; Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore director Bala Starr; and Dr June Yap, director of curatorial, programmes and publications at SAM.

Chong said she was "very shocked" at the win. She had spent more than six years dreaming of the work before the award gave her the chance to realise it.

"I've been practising art for 10 years and the main difficulty has been finding time and support. The prize will really help me keep devel-



President Halimah Yacob with (from left) Debbie Ding, Yanyun Chen, Singapore Art Museum chairman Edmund Cheng, Weixin Quek Chong, Zarina Muhammad and Hilmi Johandi at the ceremony last night. The jury panel said the installation by Chong, who won the Grand Prize, "stood out for its command of space and material, and the fluidity with which she executed her concept". ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

oping my art."

The other finalists this year were Yanyun Chen, Debbie Ding, Zarina Muhammad and Hilmi Johandi, who is a National Arts Council Young Artist Award recipient.

The five artists, shortlisted from a longlist of 15, were given more than six months to work on their commissions under the guidance of the curator-mentors who had nominated them for the prize. This year's curator-mentors were artists Grace Tan, David Chan, Jason Wee and Zaki Razak, and art historian

and curator Roger Nelson.

An exhibition of the works opened at SAM at 8Q on Oct 4 and will run until Jan 27 next year.

Chen, 32, won the \$5,000 People's Choice Award for her work, *The Scars That Write Us*. More than half of the visitors to the exhibition voted for the work, which features keloid scars.

"It heartens me that scars, as a repository of memories and narratives, can have voices of their own and can remind us that they are beautiful in their own way," she

said. "May we all come to terms with our wounds."

The President's Young Talents programme was inaugurated in 2001 by SAM. It takes place every two years, although it was skipped in some years because of major shows at SAM.

Prominent names that have emerged from previous editions include film-maker Boo Junfeng and visual artists Heman Chong and Donna Ong.

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## PRESIDENT'S YOUNG TALENTS 2018

**WHERE:** Singapore Art Museum at 8Q, 8 Queen Street

**WHEN:** Till Jan 27, Saturdays to Thursdays, 10am to 7pm; Fridays, 10am to 9pm

**ADMISSION:** Free for Singaporeans and permanent residents, \$6 for foreigners

**INFORMATION:** [www.singaporeartmuseum.sg](http://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg)