

NAFA Alumni Kaki Series

“Do you wanna build a snow (sculpture)?”



Loh Tze Joo, Edmund Chan and Gregory Chan of the 2019 Snow Lions team

Friendship through sand and snow

Our new NAFA Kaki Series features alumni groups who have come together with their NAFA ex-schoolmates to form artistic groups to reach greater heights together in their careers after graduation.

Friends who weather storms together, stay together; such is the case for The Snow Lions.

The longstanding team consists of NAFA Fine Art Alumni spanning three decades (1989 – 2012) and other local snow sculptors. The 2019 team recently won 4th place at the annual Sapporo Snow Festival*.

Edmund Chan (FA) of the winning group shares with us what it takes to build a huge snow sculpture within days at the Sapporo Snow Festival.

DO YOU HAVE AN INTERESTING ALUMNI STORY TO SHARE?

Send us your stories & photos to alumni@nafa.edu.sg.

We will feature them on our Facebook/Instagram pages!

Looking for :

- NAFA Alumni Solo Features
- NAFA Alumni Couples/Groups

SAPPORO SNOW FESTIVAL

The first Sapporo Snow Festival was held in Odori Park in 1950, with only six snow statues made by local high school students. It is now a major winter event of Sapporo, of which the Sapporo Snow Sculpture Competition is one of the highlights. In 2019, a total of nine countries participated in the competition, with the Singapore team represented by The Snow Lions clinching fourth place and Thailand winning first place.

THE SNOW LIONS

NAFA FINE ART ALUMNI (1989 - present)



1. Hi Edmund, please share more on your teammates from NAFA and how did your group come about? What do you specialise in?

Since 1988, Singapore has been represented at the Sapporo Snow Sculpture Competition by veteran snow sculptors who have since passed the baton on to the current team. I was first approached by my NAFA lecturer, Mr Lim Soo Ngee (FA, 1989) in 2009 to help my senior Mr Nelson Lim (FA, 2001) for a sand sculpture event organised by Sentosa. My fine art background helped me pick up sand and snow sculpting quickly. After the event, I was recruited to join my senior and another leading snow sculptor, Mr Loh Tze Joo to be part of their competing team in Sapporo.

To give ourselves a better form of identity as Singaporean snow sculptors, I named the team "The Snow Lions" which we have used to this day. To stay dynamic and creative, we always try to bring in new artists for fresh ideas. Recent teams include NAFA alumni such as Priscilia Kheng (FA, 2009) and Woo Mun Seng (FA, 2012), not forgetting past alumni who participated in the competition way before us, Nelson Lim and Lee Cai Jun (FA, 2006). Everyone is like a big family on The Snow Lions team.

2. Share with us your thoughts on winning 4th place at the annual Sapporo Snow Sculpture Competition. What challenges did you meet?

There have been many challenges along the way. One constant and most obvious challenge was to overcome the weather elements. The rule for the competition was to complete building our large-scale snow sculpture within four days. As it is summer year-long in Singapore, there is no way we can train with real snow before the competition. We could only visualise our concept and train onsite during the competition each year.

The weather at the competition can be quite unpredictable, while one moment it could be snowing so heavily that our vision is hindered, the next moment temperatures may rise making the snow block too soft to sculpt. All these factors can hinder our team's progress to complete the sculpture in time.

Hence, we had to have good planning and flexibility to work around the weather and time limitations. We also have to be physically and mentally strong, working 12 hours for four days straight (to build our snow sculpture). Backaches and muscle sores have become a norm for us through the process.

3. How has working as a team with your ex-NAFA schoolmates benefited you in your career after graduation?

Working with ex-NAFA schoolmates encouraged greater creativity as we can explore new ideas/concepts with each other.

Working with familiar faces definitely helped as teamwork and good communication is essential in this competition, we can also recognise and understand each other's strengths and weaknesses, putting away individual egos and getting the big sculpture done together.

Everyone understands that we are representing Singapore as a team and not as individual artists. The competition definitely taught me the importance of teamwork and benefited me at my workplace at STPI (Singapore Tyler Print Institute), where I work as a Papermaker as well.

Ultimately it is always a fun and enjoyable process!



**'XYZ Star' by The Snow Lions
4th Place,
Sapporo Snow Sculpture
Competition, Japan, 2019**



**National Day 2007
Fine Art Class of 2009**

4. Share with us a shared fun memory you had with each other while at NAFA / at Sapporo?

There are too many memorable moments!

Each year, there will be a van selling hot sweet potatoes at the Sapporo Snow Festival.

On one occasion, we wanted to try it so badly that we stopped carving midway and chased after the van down the street. It tasted so good...and the scene was so funny with the group of us running after the van that we made friends with the sweet potato seller. The following year he still remembered us when we went back!

5. What advice would you like to share with your juniors who may want to go into the same careers as you did?

I am sure there are lots of advice out there, eventually everyone is unique and carves their own path. Though no two people will share the same career or life experience, my advice is to do what you like and do it well, and to seize opportunities to learn new things when you see them.

Find out more on The Snow Lions artists here: <https://thesnowlions.com/artists>