

## An Artistic Collaboration Founded on Visual Dialogue: National Museum of Singapore and The Ryan Foundation jointly debut *Unhomed Belongings*

*Exhibition by Lucy Liu and Shubigi Rao explores mutual commonalities and differences in history, culture, identity and relationships, offering museum-goers the opportunity to reflect upon social themes such as identity, loss, and finding a sense of belonging in both society and self.*



**Singapore, 10 January 2019** – Museum-goers will now be able to view the first-ever documentation of an artistic dialogue between American actress and artist Lucy Liu, and Asia Pacific Breweries (APB) Foundation Signature Art Prize Jurors' Choice Award recipient, Shubigi Rao from Singapore. Co-presented by the National Museum of Singapore and private non-profit arts organisation The Ryan Foundation, the exhibition *Lucy Liu and Shubigi Rao: Unhomed Belongings* is now open to the public for free from 12 January to 24 February 2019.

*Unhomed Belongings* features 15 artworks by the creative minds of Liu and Rao, revealing striking overlaps in the artists' perspectives and subject matter, despite their physical distance and different backgrounds.

### **Discovering artistic bonds through open discourse**

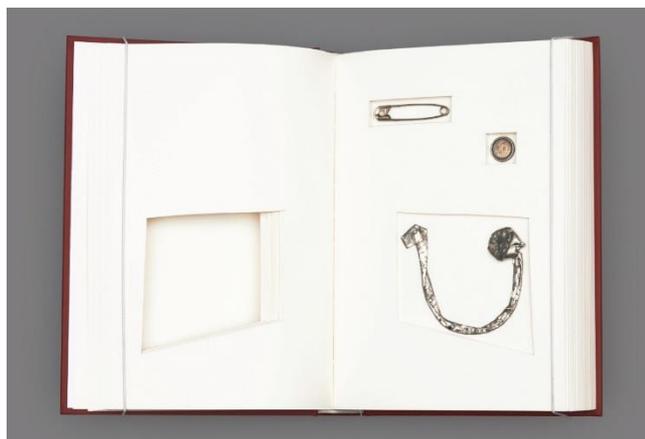
Through virtual cross-continental conversations and an exploration of their respective works, Liu and Rao, who hitherto have never met in person, developed into 'visual pen friends'. Their shared chemistry quickly grew apparent as they discovered many parallels in their work and cultures which have shaped

their outlook and art. The exhibition title, *Unhomed Belongings*, was jointly proposed by the artists as it resonated with them on many levels — from the repurposed objects used in their craft, to the ideas and subtext infused within them.

**Lucy Liu, artist, award-winning actress and director** shared: “Many people know me as an actress, but visual art has always been an equally important part of my life. My work is personal in nature — inspired by my memories and experiences, by shifting notions of security and salvation, and how these experiences and ideas manifest themselves physically in the body. It is exciting to be able to connect with new audiences through all expressions of art, and I am so excited to exhibit my works in Singapore for the first time, presented in conversation with Shubigi Rao, a Singaporean female artist. I would like to thank The Ryan Foundation and the National Museum of Singapore for their incredible efforts in making this possible.”

**Shubigi Rao, artist, writer and award recipient of the Juror’s Prize Award at the APB Foundation Signature Art Prize last year**, said, “Subjectivities are often disregarded, which is why I believe Lucy and I situate the personal as integral to our work, in ways that include the viewer, and to find common cause. In our conversations, Lucy and I recognised an overlap in our sensibilities — from the way we are drawn to books and discarded objects, to our articulations of loss and un-homing — informed by mutual currents of thought, longing, and anxiety. It’s a joy to be exhibiting with her, and I’m grateful to the National Museum of Singapore and The Ryan Foundation for this opportunity.”

### **An exploration of contemporary social themes**



**Lucy Liu, *Lost and Found (Book 3)*, 2013, paper and found materials, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of artist.**

Liu’s artwork addresses themes of security, salvation, and the long-term effects of personal relationships on our physical and emotional selves. As part of the museum’s efforts to shift the museum-going experience from a largely personal one to a shared journey, *Unhomed Belongings* provides visitors with the opportunity to contribute to the artistic outcome of the exhibition, with their active participation feeding into the very subject matter of the exhibition – the theme of belonging and

rediscovery. A key artwork featured in *Unhomed Belongings* is an installation titled *Lost and Found*, which consists of discarded objects Liu collects on her travels, hidden in around 200 handmade books. Visitors are encouraged to pick up the books and open them, and free to replace them anywhere within the installation. In doing so, they partake in a cycle of rediscovery; the lost objects gain new meaning not only through the narrative that Liu has created for them within her books, but also through the constant re-ordering of the books themselves.



(From top) **Shubigi Rao, *Useful Fictions*, 2013**, mixed media on paper; **Shubigi Rao, *Written in the Margins*, 2018**, single channel video. Images courtesy of the artist.

Leaning towards installations that are immersive and often tongue-in-cheek, Rao's series of drawings from *Useful Fictions* regards the human need to construct illusions; a need for the comfort of falsehood that stems from ineradicable anxiety about our futures. Her selection of photo-works from across the world, *The Wood for the Trees*, features displaced books and libraries, while her short film *Written in the Margins* describes ways in which knowledge and identity are inextricable — the loss of one leads to the erosion of the other.

Through their delicate yet deliberate craftwork, Liu and Rao transform the ordinary into the conceptual, and the salvaged into the sublime. Presented in thoughtful conversation, Liu's installation *Lost and Found* echoes Rao's *Pulp* (Volumes 1 and 2), where the artists invite viewers to examine found objects that may seem ordinary at first glance but possess peculiar character when observed up-close.

**Iman Ismail, Curator, National Museum of Singapore**, said: “At the National Museum, we are always seeking new and creative ways to present meaningful content that resonates with a wider audience.”

“We invite visitors to interact with and interpret the works from both artists, as well as to reflect upon social themes such as identity, loss, and finding a sense of belonging in both society and self. Through the visual dialogue between kindred spirits Rao and Liu, we also hope to highlight that there are often more similarities among people than differences, and that we are all connected in some tangible way.”

“It is important for The Ryan Foundation to be a platform with an international outlook that encourages diverse cultural exchanges around art. The Singapore art scene is developing, and it is timely to show two artists who happen to be strong women as they navigate themes of identity and growth with such honesty and strength. We connected instantly with Lucy and her art, and knew at once we had to share her powerful work with everyone,” said **Ryan Su, founding director of The Ryan Foundation**. “We are committed to raising the profile of contemporary art in Singapore and Asia by collaborating with international artists to present publicly engaging content.”

The exhibition will be on view from 12 January to 24 February 2019 at the museum’s Stamford Gallery, Level 1. Admission is free for all.

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Please refer to the attached media factsheet for further details on the exhibition and the [exhibition website](#). For event listings, please see listings write-up attached.

**FB** [national.museum.of.sg](#) | **IG** [natmuseum\\_sg](#)

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### **About the National Museum of Singapore**

With a history dating back to 1887, the National Museum of Singapore is the nation’s oldest museum with a progressive mind. Its galleries adopt cutting-edge and multi-perspective ways of presenting history and culture to redefine conventional museum experience. A cultural and architectural landmark in Singapore, the Museum hosts innovative festivals and events all year round—the dynamic Night Festival, visually arresting art installations, as well as amazing performances and film screenings—in addition to presenting thought-provoking exhibitions involving critically important collections of artefacts. The programming is supported by a wide range of facilities and services including F&B, retail and a Resource Centre. The National Museum of Singapore re-opened in December 2006 after a three-year redevelopment. It refreshed its permanent galleries and re-opened them in September 2015 for Singapore’s Golden Jubilee. In 2017, it celebrated its 130th anniversary. For more details, please visit [www.nationalmuseum.sg](http://www.nationalmuseum.sg).

## About The Ryan Foundation

The Ryan Foundation is a Singapore non-profit arts organisation that aims to increase arts awareness and accessibility by developing ambitious projects and exhibitions in Singapore and around the world. Founded by lawyer, art collector and patron Ryan Su, the Foundation serves as a lively and accessible platform in the local and regional art scene with a mission to bring new audiences to art. Previous exhibitions organised by The Ryan Foundation include *Andy Warhol: Social Circus* in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur (featuring the largest collection of Warhol's Polaroid photography ever exhibited in Asia), *Ryder Ripps' Diventare Schiavo* in Venice and Singapore (a virtual reality artwork that challenged the boundaries of contemporary art) and *Re|Collecting Asia: Selections from Singapore Private Collections* featuring the collections of young Singapore-based art collectors.

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