Tang Da Wu

Don't Give Money to the Arts

1995

Cloth jacket

82 × 98 cm

Collection of National Gallery Singapore

Look, Think and Connect!

1. Look closely at this artwork. What are three adjectives that you would use to describe it?
2. What do you think the text on this jacket suggests? What makes you think so?
3. Do you think it is important to fund local art projects and artists? Why?
4. What would you do to support local art projects and artists?
5. Imagine you are an artist addressing the same topic of local arts funding. What text would you embroider on the jacket? Why?

Artwork Story

Don't Give Money to the Arts, a performance by Tang Da Wu at the inauguration of a major arts festival in 1995, is one of Tang's most iconic works. It addressed pressing issues in the local arts scene at the time in a bold and activist manner. In the festival, the artist approached then-President Ong Teng Cheong, asked him for permission to put on the jacket, then presented him with a letter, which read: "I am an artist. I am important." When asked about the intention behind his performance, the artist explained that he wanted to let the president know that "the wrong kind of art"—presumably the modernist, abstract art displayed in the festival—was being funded.

Visit **DBS Singapore Gallery 3** to view this artwork.

Artist's Biography

Tang Da Wu (1943–) is an iconic figure in the history of contemporary art in Singapore. He works with a wide range of media such as drawing, painting, sculpture, installation and performance art, and is recognised for exploring socio-political and environmental issues through his artworks. In 1988, Tang co-founded The Artists Village, one of Singapore's leading contemporary art collectives. He has exhibited widely at numerous exhibitions over the years, and represented Singapore at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007.

Find Out More:

Goh, Wei Hao. "Performing Uninvited: Tang Da Wu and *Don't Give Money to the Arts*." National Gallery Singapore. https://www.nationalgallery.sg/magazine/performing-uninvited-tang-da-wu-dont-give-money-to-the-arts (accessed 9 December 2021).

Lee, Wen. *The Future of Imagination 3: International Performance Art Event, 10–14 April 2006 at the Singapore Art Museum & The Substation*. Singapore: Future of Imagination Organizing Committee, 2006.

National Heritage Board. *Telah Terbit (Out Now): Southeast Asian Contemporary Art Practices During the 1960s to 1980s*. Singapore: National Heritage Board, 2007.

Sabapathy, T. K., ed. *Intersecting Histories: Contemporary Turns in Southeast Asian Art*. Singapore: School of Art, Design and Media, Nanyang Technological University, 2012.

Toh, Charmaine, ed. *Earth Work 1979: Tang Da Wu*. Singapore: National Gallery Singapore, 2016.

Quek, Bruce. "Tang Da Wu." Infopedia. https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1541_2009-10-29.html (accessed 9 December 2021).

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