

Children's Activity Guide: Artful Adventures with Cheong Soo Pieng

Recommended for Ages 6–12

Please note that some artworks in the exhibition may contain nudity. Viewer discretion is advised.

Cheong Soo Pieng *Layer by Layer*



Cheong Soo Pieng in his studio with a metal relief work. Digitised by National Gallery Singapore Library & Archive with kind permission from Cheong Leng Guat.

Meet Cheong Soo Pieng, a leading figure in Singapore's art history! He was born in China in 1917 and came to Singapore in 1946. He was known for his style that brought together Western and

Eastern painting techniques to portray Southeast Asian subjects. From an early age, Cheong Soo Pieng loved to draw. He drew and painted people, sights and sounds from his daily life.

Embark on a journey to discover the artist's creative experiments in art with this activity guide!

From Sketch to Painting



Cheong Soo Pieng. *Indian Men with Two Cows*. 1948. Oil on canvas, 75.3 × 104.5 cm. Gift of the Loke Wan Tho Collection. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

What makes a painting?

As part of their preparation process, some artists make a sketch before they start painting! Sketches can be quick, capturing the main idea or composition without needing to focus on every detail. Sketching also allows artists to try out different ideas.

Sketches were a way for Cheong Soo Pieng to quickly record his impression of a scene. Let's look at the sketches next to the artwork *Indian Men with Two Cows*. Do you notice any similarities or differences between the sketch and the painting?



[Not titled] (*Back View of Two Cows*). Undated. Pen on paper, 13 × 9 cm. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Artist Cheong Soo Pieng painted *Indian Men with Two Cows* not long after he came to Singapore in 1946. Imagine how exciting it must have been to explore new surroundings and discover new sights and sounds!

This painting reflects the artist's eagerness to seek out and adopt new motifs to include in his artworks. Just like him, you too can find inspiration by exploring new places, trying new activities and meeting new people.

Go to the last page for a sketching activity!



Choosing a Support

Take a closer look at Cheong's artworks and try to match the supports to the artworks!

Artworks



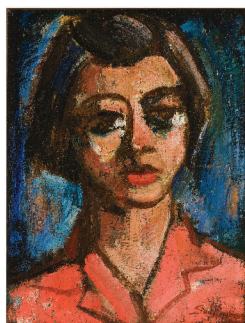
Indian Men with Two Cows



Drying Salted Fish

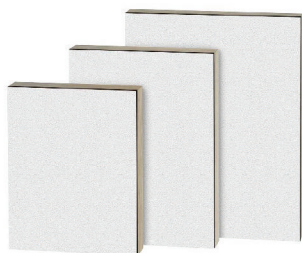


[Not titled] (*Three Malay Women and Boy*)

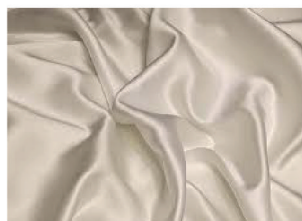


Portrait

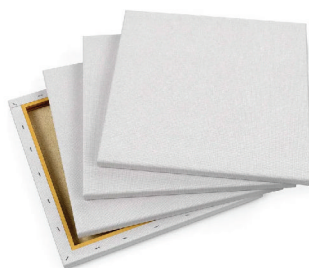
Supports



Paper and hardboard



Silk



Canvas



Wood

Answers:
Indian Men with Two Cows - Canvas
Drying Salted Fish - Silk
Portrait - Wood
[Not titled] (Three Malay Women and Boy) - Paper and hardboard

From top:

Cheong Soo Pieng. *Indian Men with Two Cows*. 1948. Oil on canvas, 75.3 × 104.5 cm. Gift of the Loke Wan Tho Collection. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Cheong Soo Pieng. *Drying Salted Fish*. 1978. Chinese ink, liquid ink and watercolour on silk, 55.5 × 88.5 cm. Gift of Trans Island Bus Services Ltd. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Cheong Soo Pieng. [Not titled] (*Three Malay Women and Boy*). 1959. Oil on paper, marouflaged on hardboard, 49 × 59 cm. Gift of the Loke Wan Tho Collection. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Cheong Soo Pieng. *Portrait*. 1948. Oil on wood, 39 × 29.5 cm. Private collection. © Family of Cheong Soo Pieng.

From the 1940s to 1950s, Cheong Soo Pieng worked with a variety of supports for his paintings. In art, a support is the main layer onto which paint is applied, such as canvas or paper.

Another technique Cheong used is marouflage, where one support is fixed to another support, like attaching a piece of paper onto a piece of cardboard.

Why not try experimenting with using different supports for your own artwork, just like Cheong did? You could paint on cardboard, fabric scraps or even rocks you find outside. Who knows, you might discover a new way to create art!

Unexpected Materials



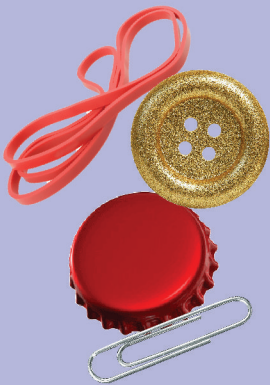
Cheong Soo Pieng. *Abstract II*. 1969. Painted and shaped aluminium sheets, zinc plated iron rods, tin plated copper rods, metal tacks and jute, mounted on synthetic fibre laid on board, 89 x 109 cm. Gift of the artist. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Cheong Soo Pieng produced a series of metal relief works, where he incorporated different kinds of industrial materials and everyday objects. He was like a treasure hunter, always on the lookout for unconventional objects to use in his art. He did not just stick to using paint and brushes.

Can you find the list of things the artist incorporated in *Abstract II*?

Word search:

- Aluminium
- Metal wire
- Metal pins
- Fabric



M	M	D	V	O	J	W	X	G	A
E	N	F	X	M	C	U	N	A	O
T	B	E	Z	S	O	M	K	G	O
A	L	U	M	I	N	I	U	M	R
L	J	C	A	T	K	Z	F	B	J
P	E	E	M	I	B	L	A	J	U
I	K	B	W	N	L	O	B	S	D
N	U	U	O	W	V	J	R	Y	G
S	M	E	T	A	L	W	I	R	E
M	O	U	W	D	E	H	C	T	R

Now it's your turn to go on a treasure hunt!

Look around your home for objects that catch your eye. It could be a shiny button or a colourful bottle cap. Gather them up and see how you can use them to create your own masterpiece!

M	D	A	V	O	J	W	X	G	A
E	N	F	X	M	C	U	N	A	O
T	B	E	Z	S	O	M	K	G	O
A	L	U	M	I	N	I	U	M	R
L	J	C	A	T	K	Z	F	B	J
P	E	E	M	I	B	L	A	J	U
I	K	B	W	N	L	O	B	S	D
N	U	U	O	W	V	J	R	Y	G
S	M	E	T	A	L	W	I	R	E
M	O	U	W	D	E	H	C	T	R

Answers:

Exploring Ink



Cheong Soo Pieng. *Drying Salted Fish*. 1978. Chinese ink, liquid ink and watercolour on silk, 55.5 × 88.5 cm. Gift of Trans Island Bus Services Ltd. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Does this painting look familiar? This iconic painting, *Drying Salted Fish*, is featured on the back of Singapore's \$50 banknote! Cheong Soo Pieng used Chinese ink painting techniques and a fixed-point perspective (more commonly used in Western artworks) to depict a local scene.

Did you know that *Drying Salted Fish* was made using different types of ink? This fascinating detail was discovered when curators and conservators analysed this artwork and compared ink samples under the microscope!



A microscopy image of the artist's seal shows that it was affixed on top of the painting. Courtesy of BARC Labs, the Heritage Conservation Centre (a division of the National Heritage Board, Singapore) and National Gallery Singapore.

Find the different types of ink he used!

1. _____ (NECIHSE IKN)
2. _____ (IQIUDL NIK)
3. _____ (OLTCORREAUW)



Answers: Chinese Ink, Liquid Ink, Watercolour

Seal

Seals are a special kind of stamp that can act as an artist's signature. In this artwork, Cheong Soo Pieng used a seal after he finished painting it. Seals can also be used to change the look of a work.

Try making your own seal!

Think of a symbol that represents you and draw it on the right. Share the meaning of your symbol with a family member or a friend.



Imagine that you are an artist making sketches for an artwork. Look around the Gallery for inspiration and make some quick sketches in the space below!

Continue your exploration at the Keppel Centre for Art Education

At the **Material Lab in Keppel Centre for Art Education**, you can explore and discover many other conventional and unconventional materials used by artists in Singapore and Southeast Asia!



Watch a storytelling session or create an artwork inspired by our art tutorials—there is always something for your children to explore at GalleryKids website!