

NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

27 SEP 2024-  
2 FEB 2025

# KIM LIM

The — Space — Between

A Retrospective



SINGTEL SPECIAL EXHIBITION GALLERIES 2 & 3

[nationalgallery.sg/KimLim](https://nationalgallery.sg/KimLim)

LET *Art* SURPRISE YOU

The spaces  
in between are  
as important as the  
things themselves,  
like the spaces between  
musical notes. Without  
them it would be chaos.  
There are certain things in  
the physical world that we  
can't see but are important,  
like pulse.

-Kim Lim

As part of National Gallery Singapore's SG Artist series, *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective* marks the most comprehensive exhibition to date of Singapore-born British artist Kim Lim.

Once overlooked, this exhibition acknowledges Lim's profound impact by tracing the evolution of her practice over four decades, highlighting her unique approach to Minimalism, influenced by material cultures across her travels. Featuring key sculptures and prints spanning her career, along with maquettes, previously unseen photographs and archival materials, the exhibition reveals how Lim's cultural in-betweenness shaped her artistic style and her resistance to the pressures of identity labels.

Discover how she masterfully balanced space, light and rhythm through the power of suggestion and metaphor, creating works of profound subtlety and depth.



Kim Lim in her studio. c. late 1960s. © Estate of Kim Lim. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2023. Photo: Jorge Lewinski.

The Singapore-born British artist **Kim Lim** (1936–1997) devoted over four decades to abstract sculpture and printmaking. In 1954, Lim left Singapore for London to study art at the St. Martin's School of Fine Art and later the Slade School of Fine Art. During her student years, Lim's works were characterised by the use of wood and industrial materials. After her first retrospective exhibition in 1979, Lim returned to carving in stone.

Throughout her career, Lim pursued printmaking and drawing in tandem with her sculptural work, moving between these mediums with material and technical deftness. Although works from both periods have different aesthetic sensibilities, they are connected by her enduring interest in the qualities of light, space and rhythm.

## SECTION 1

### Early works: Assembling, Delineating

In 1954, Lim enrolled in St Martin's School of Art, London. However, she felt stifled by her school's focus on figuration. She sought other means to pursue her interest in abstraction and transferred to the Slade School of Fine Art in 1956, where she picked up expressive printmaking techniques like etching, lithography and screenprinting. Visits to museums and libraries and extensive travels exposed Lim to a wide range of material cultures and architectural sites in Europe and Asia, where she found inspiration in the visual legacies of early civilisations. She considered these experiences her "main art education." These early influences reveal the beginnings of Lim's enduring interest in abstract forms, informed by diverse art historical references. This section also traces recurring ideas in Lim's works, particularly the evolution of her column-based sculptures.

1



Image credits: © Estate of Kim Lim. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024.

**1** *Pegasus*. 1962. Wood, 106.7 × 29.5 × 33 cm.

Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

**2** *Echo*. 1967. Stainless steel, enamel paint and zinc coating, 77 × 80 × 80 cm.

Gift of William Turnbull. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

**3** *Borneo I*. 1964. Wood and paint, 160 × 73.5 cm.

Collection of Kim Lim Estate/Turnbull Studio, London.

## SECTION 2

### Keen Edges, Eccentric Colour

From the mid- to late 1960s, Lim emphasised the frontal encounter of her sculptures. She noted that "walking around [them] will provide an explanation rather than a discovery." She favoured using industrial materials such as painted steel, aluminium and fibreglass. These works gained currency amongst a generation of sculptors who were moving away from the monolithic, carved-and-modelled works of Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. Lim featured in important exhibitions alongside figures like Philip King, Anthony Caro, Lynn Chadwick, Eduardo Paolozzi and William Turnbull. This section explores Lim's articulations of colour across different media and her use of repeated contours or concentric lines to create physical and emotional senses of visual rhythm that extend beyond the object.

2



3



**4** *Intervals I + II*. 1973. Pine, dimensions variable.

Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

**5** *Interval Series*. 1972. Screenprint on acetate, 60 × 57 cm.

Collection of Kim Lim Estate/Turnbull Studio, London.

**6** *Langkawi*. 1988. White Sicilian marble, 120 × 27.9 × 17.8 cm.

Gift of Dr. Arthur Lim Siew Ming. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

**7** *Kudah*. 1989. Rose aurora marble, 112.4 × 42.5 × 27.3 cm.

Private collection.

## SECTION 3

### Light, Space and Rhythm

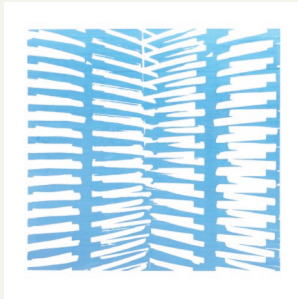
From the mid-1960s to 1970s, Lim's approach to sculpture became more serial and modular to explore how repetition creates rhythm. She used fabricated materials like wood and aluminium to create basic formal units, and playfully arranged them in the exhibition space to set up a pattern of shadows. Although these works have a mathematical quality, they are informed by unseen rhythms and intervals, like a beating heart, a melody, or the natural cadences around us, suggesting influences distinct from prevailing developments in British and American Minimalism.

4\*



\* This artwork will be displayed in a different configuration in the exhibition.

5



6

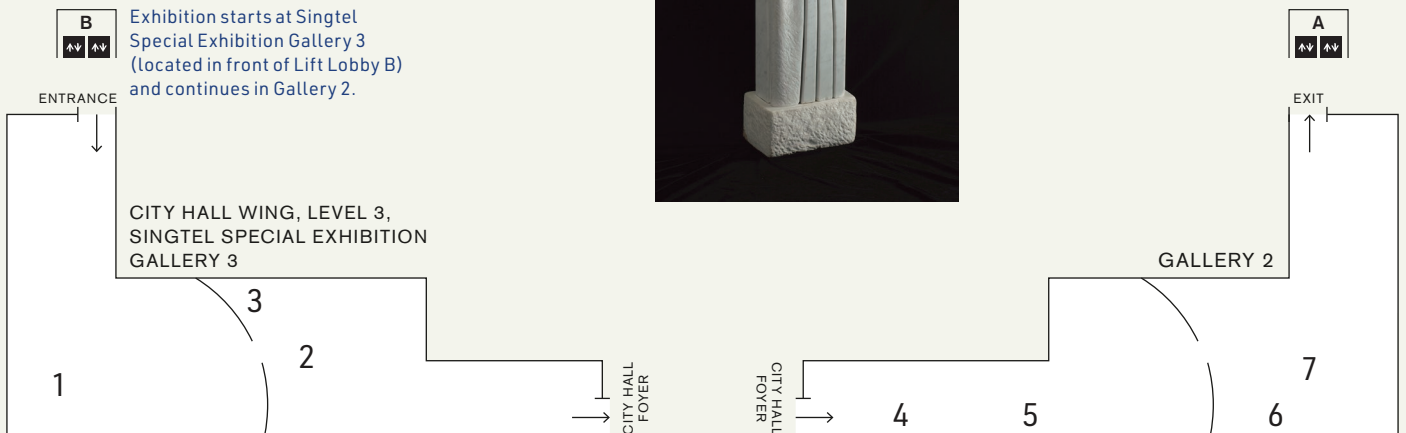


## SECTION 4

### The Weight of a Line

After her first major retrospective in 1979, Lim became "aware of the pull between the ordered, static experience and the dynamic rhythms of organic structured forms." This led to a significant shift from working in wood, steel, and other materials to carving in stone. Lim distilled her observations of the natural world into powerful stone sculptures filled with overtones of natural phenomena like the erosion of water or cracking from heat. By carefully shaping the contours of the stone and carving lines of varying weights, Lim used light as a crucial partner in defining the sculpture's form.

7



# PROGRAMMES

In conjunction with the exhibition, we are bringing together a variety of discussions, tours and screenings for you to unpack and connect with Kim Lim's practice, key ideas and artworks. For more information about the programmes, please visit [nationalgallery.sg/KimLim](https://nationalgallery.sg/KimLim).

## PODCASTS — Women and Minimalism

Did you know that the Gallery also produces podcasts? In this episode, curators Joleen Loh and Goh Sze Ying share more about the contributions of women in the development of Minimalist art, discussing artists like Kim Lim, Midori Takada, Anne Truitt and Charlotte Posenenske.



Scan the QR code to listen to this episode on Spotify!

## PERFORMANCES — Performance response by Zee Zunnur

Sun 27 Oct | 2.30pm, 4pm | City Hall Wing, Level 3, City Hall Foyer

Choreographer and dance artist Zee Zunnur—along with her collaborator Safuan Johari—responds to the themes and stories behind Kim Lim's artistic journey, and explores how they interweave with her own practice as a movement artist.

## WORKSHOPS — Paper Folding Workshop with Fiona Seow

Sat 9 Nov | 2–5pm | City Hall Wing, Level 3, City Hall Foyer |  
\$30 per pax, spaces are limited

Join artist Fiona Seow in this workshop where you will make small sculptures from paper. In this way, participants can gain better insight into Kim Lim's preoccupations with form, space, rhythm and light, while also expressing the essence of the materials used.

## FAMILY AND KIDS PROGRAMMES — Drop-in Activity

Dec 2024 | City Hall Wing, Level 1,  
Keppel Centre for Art Education | Free

Join us for a family-friendly drop-in activity inspired by Kim Lim's artworks at the Keppel Centre for Art Education in December!

## FAMILY AND KIDS PROGRAMMES —

### Sculpture Trail Guide for Children

Designed specially for kids, explore the wonders of sculpture and learn more about Kim Lim and other artists in our Sculpture Trail Guide.

What are you waiting for? Grab your copy at the exhibition and start exploring now! Please note that limited copies are available.

# TOURS

## Weekly tours

Register for free at our Tours & Programmes Counter, located at City Hall Wing, Level 1

English | Thu–Sun | 3.30pm

Mandarin | Sat–Sun | 1.30pm

Combined tour with Teo Eng Seng (starts 11 Oct)

## Special Tours

Register for free online and at our Tours & Programmes Counter

Sat 28 Sep | 2pm

Led by the sons of the artist, Alex and Johnny Turnbull (Estate of Kim Lim)

Sat 2 Nov | 11am

Led by exhibition curator Adele Tan

Sat 25 Jan | 11am

Led by exhibition curator Joleen Loh

# EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

**Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective**

**Edited by Adele Tan and Joleen Loh**

**Paperback | 250 × 200 mm | 144 pages**

**SGD35 including GST**

**ISBN: 978-981-94-0224-3**

This exhibition catalogue repositions Singapore-born British artist Kim Lim as a pivotal figure in 20<sup>th</sup>-century sculpture and printmaking. As part of the first generation of diaspora and immigrant artists who arrived in Britain after World War II seeking an art education, Lim has often been overlooked. The exhibition at the National Gallery Singapore is thus an attempt to demonstrate her unique contributions and highlight how she drew upon aesthetic values from material cultures across Asia and Europe to develop her own artistic language.

Adroitly, Lim both referenced and resisted the burgeoning Euro-American discourse on Minimalism and abstraction, as well as the narrow cultural labels used to interpret her life and work. Featuring plates of approximately 60 selected works, a curatorial introduction and three illustrated essays, this catalogue provides a fresh overview of Lim's sculptural philosophy and offers new scholarly insights into her intellectual growth, artistic practice and creative relationships.

# MERCHANDISE

Don't forget to drop by The Gallery Store located at the City Hall Wing, Level 1 to browse our full range of exclusive merchandise. Why not take home a reminder of your visit to the exhibition?

## JOIN US

Unlock the world of art with National Gallery Singapore membership. Become an Insider and enjoy benefits such as free exhibition access, complimentary parking, dining and shopping discounts and more! Join a vibrant community of art enthusiasts and elevate your art experience.



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## SUPPORT US

As a registered Charity and an Institute of Public Character, National Gallery Singapore relies on your support to build collections, engage in research, develop programmes and bring art to everyone.



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# GALLERY PASSES

Purchase your Gallery Passes and register for programmes and tours at [tickets.nationalgallery.sg](https://tickets.nationalgallery.sg).

Ticket Type	Standard	Singaporeans/PRs*
<b>Special Exhibition</b> ( <i>Teo Eng Seng and Kim Lim</i> )	\$25	\$15
<b>All Access</b> (General Admission + Special Exhibitions)	\$30	-

**\$5 OFF CONCESSION** for children aged 7–12 | Seniors aged 60 and above | Full-time National Servicemen (NSFs) excluding foreign personnel | Overseas students and teachers<sup>^</sup>

**FREE ADMISSION** for Gallery Insiders | Children aged 6 and below | Local/locally based students and teachers<sup>^</sup> | Persons with disabilities (PWD) and their caregiver.

\* Rates for locals apply to Singaporeans and PRs.

<sup>^</sup> From qualifying institutions only. Valid verification is required.

## AN ACCESSIBLE EXPERIENCE FOR ALL

The Gallery is committed to creating an inclusive experience that can be enjoyed by visitors with access needs.



SCAN FOR  
ACCESS GUIDE

## OPENING HOURS

**Daily 10am–7pm**

General ticket sales end 30 minutes before closing time.



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## ENQUIRIES

6271 7000

[info@nationalgallery.sg](mailto:info@nationalgallery.sg)

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