

LIFESTYLE | ARTS

8 works to watch at Sotheby's Singapore Modern and Contemporary Art auction 2026

By Hashirin Nurin Hashimi | Jan 22, 2026



COVER “The Arrival of Spring in Woldgate, East Yorkshire” (2011) by David Hockney, from the artist’s celebrated series of iPad drawings created in 2011. This marks the artist’s auction debut in Singapore

Staged during Singapore Art Week, Sotheby’s upcoming Modern and Contemporary Art auction brings together Southeast Asian masters, European modernism and rigorously experimental contemporary practices



Returning to [Singapore Art Week](#) on January 25 , Sotheby's Modern and Contemporary Art auction brings together works that privilege rarity, material intelligence and historical depth over spectacle. Exhibited at The Edition Singapore from January 21 to 24, the sale reflects a market increasingly shaped by collectors attuned to context and craft.

Anchoring the auction are two museum-grade works by early Southeast Asian masters: Walter Spies' *Die Schlittschuhläufer (The Ice Skaters)* (1922), a rare pre-Java painting that illuminates the artist's formative imagination, and Raden Saleh's *The Eruption of Mount Merapi, by Day* (1865), appearing at auction for the first time after more than a century in private hands.

The sale also bridges regional and global narratives. Three works from [David Hockney's](#) groundbreaking 2011 iPad series mark the artist's auction debut in Singapore, while Marc Chagall's *Couple et mimosas* brings European modernism into intimate dialogue with personal myth and memory.

Contemporary voices are led by Pacita Abad and I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih, whose works foreground embodied experience and emotional urgency, alongside Singapore artists Anthony Poon and Jane Lee, whose practices reflect sustained engagements with abstraction and material experimentation.





Painted prior to Walter Spies' relocation to Java and Bali, this rare early work offers a glimpse into the artist's autobiographical imagination before his defining Southeast Asian chapter. The moonlit composition—skaters gliding across ice—carries a quiet surrealism that anticipates the lyrical, cross-cultural sensibility for which Spies would later become known. With few pre-war works surviving and even fewer appearing at auction, its re-emergence underscores Spies' foundational role in shaping modern art narratives in the region.

Raden Saleh, “The Eruption of Mount Merapi, by Day”, 1865



Fresh to market after more than a century in a European private collection, this painting marks a historic appearance at auction. Raden Saleh's daytime depiction

of Mount Merapi's eruption is unique within his celebrated series, combining Romantic drama with empirical observation. As Indonesia's first "modern" artist, Saleh occupies a pivotal position in global art history, and this work exemplifies his ability to translate lived experience into monumental visual record.

David Hockney, "The Arrival of Spring in Woldgate, East Yorkshire", 2011 (three works)





Making their auction debut in Singapore, three works from David Hockney's landmark iPad series signal a turning point in contemporary art's relationship with digital media. Created entirely on an iPad and printed on paper, the series captures seasonal change with immediacy and intimacy while challenging traditional hierarchies of medium. Their inclusion reflects growing regional interest in works that combine canonical authorship with technological experimentation.

Marc Chagall, "Couple et mimosas", 1960



Radiant and lyrical, *Couple et mimosas* distills Marc Chagall's most enduring motifs—love, memory and colour—into a single, intimate composition. Depicting the artist with his late wife Bella amid a burst of mimosa, the work synthesises personal mythology with painterly exuberance. Originating from the artist's estate and later used to produce an important lithograph suite, the painting carries both emotional and art-historical resonance.

Pacita Abad, “Assaulting the Eye with Ecstasy”, 1984

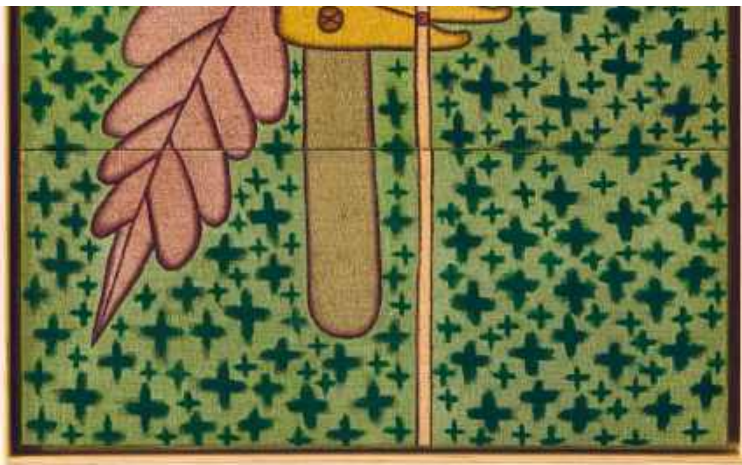


Executed during a formative decade of Pacita Abad's practice, this exuberant work exemplifies her radical approach to colour, texture and political presence. Dense with surface energy and chromatic intensity, it reflects

Abad's refusal of restraint—both formally and ideologically. As institutional reassessment of her work continues globally, early pieces such as this stand out for their historical significance and enduring contemporary urgency.

I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih, “Buah Kesukaanku”, 1996





Intimate yet confrontational, this work captures I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih's unflinching exploration of desire, trauma and female subjectivity. Painted during a period of increasing artistic confidence, it reflects her singular visual language—direct, symbolic and emotionally charged. As recognition of her practice grows beyond Indonesia, works like this underscore her importance within Southeast Asian contemporary art histories.

Anthony Poon, “Colour Waves”, 1986





A disciplined exploration of chromatic rhythm and optical movement, *Colour Waves* reflects Anthony Poon’s rigorous engagement with abstraction. Rooted in systematic variation rather than expressive gesture, the work from the collection of Raffles City, Singapore exemplifies the artist’s contribution to the country’s modernist legacy—one grounded in structure, restraint and conceptual clarity.

Jane Lee, “Painting Is – 3 Phases”, 2022



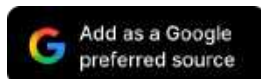
Rejecting the brush in favour of industrial processes, Jane Lee's work reconsiders painting as material event rather than image. In *Painting Is – 3 Phases*, accumulated layers of pigment form a sculptural surface that collapses distinctions between painting and object. The work speaks to a contemporary sensibility attuned to process, material intelligence and the expanded field of painting.

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