

INSIDE: SHOP ON THE FLY | THE REAL MALDIVES | FRANK GEHRY, STARCHITECT

# SILVERKRIS

THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF SINGAPORE AIRLINES

**India tales**  
sand, snow, stone & sea

**Singapore in  
technicolour**

**Florence's art  
of seduction**

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THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT: An umbrella called Asian Dreamtime, a wistful tribute to strong Asian women from the past; Massage chair, inspired by one of Singapore's more colourful neighbourhoods, Geylang; Forgotten Flowers, another tribute to Asian women; and the cheekily-titled Fresh As a Daisy, which is actually the name of the shop. (OPPOSITE PAGE).

## Life in technicolour

SilverKris toasts Singapore on her 42nd birthday in August, with a kaleidoscope of works by artist Ketna Patel, who brilliantly captures the city-state's colourful culture and many quirks. >>

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# TOUCHDOWN: SINGAPORE



When an artist describes herself as "happily culturally schizophrenic, yet deeply grounded

in an evolving Asian culture", you can be sure her body of work will be nothing short of punchy, evocative and exceptional.

Ketna Patel, Africa-born, British-educated, and now a Singapore resident, is enthusiastic about her adopted home, and it shows.

Like visual snapshots crowded into a single frame, Patel's chosen medium takes the form of collages – framed and resin-coated photos, newspaper cuttings, fabric, prints and paintings are all combined into an energetic whole that's hard to ignore. Sometimes the compositions even compress time by placing snippets from old books next to contemporary imagery. Verging on advertising art, you either love it or you don't.

Explains Patel, "I have deliberately chosen collage as a technique because it allows me to juxtapose narratives and extrapolate and exaggerate."

Why? "We human beings are extremely conditioned. We do not notice things around us.

"These works are inspired by the world around me which is multi-layered and plural. The most rapid changes happen on the streets. And it is at this level that my storytelling starts."

She tells her stories – of Singapore, and other Asian countries – by juxtaposing images, sometimes clashing, sometimes complementary – the lotus flower and man in suit, celebrity faces and ordinary folk, rickshaws and hawkers, local food and misspelt menus. "I try to compress an illustrious past, a changing present and a rapidly >>



# SINGAPORE DURIAN KING



**THIS PAGE:** Singapore Durian King, so titled because, during durian season, the ordinary man is king if he sells it. **OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP:** Singapore Crossword, about the cultures which come together to form a new one; Married in Singapore, which captures a no-frills picture of domesticity, with a hint of romance.



FROM TOP: Washinton Cake House, a tender misspelling; Asia Bagus, about the obsession with the way we look; Table, the way of the new kopi tiam (Singapore-style coffee shop).

unfolding future, so the observer gets multiple messages...in a few seconds they have to get the message – this is Singapore, this is what I see.”

For Patel, it's all about building bridges between cultures by showcasing everyday, ordinary life as opposed to stereotypes perpetuated by media. She seeks to validate and celebrate the individual versus “the hive”, and to treat contemporary lifestyle as an organic art-form in itself.

Patel has exhibited her works in places as far-flung as New York, London, Rome, Kenya, Oman, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and India. Art-lovers may soon get to sit on, walk around or turn on her art if her prototypes for alternative canvases of communication – lifestyle products such as furniture, kitchen cabinets, table lamps, carpets, linen and more – become reality. ■

Adapted from text by Usha M. Nathan, Contributing Editor, Singapore Art Gallery Guide.