



Macpherson: Kay Kok
Chung Oi's *Virtuous Cycle*

THE CIRCLE LINE SHOW

16 MRT stations, 16 art works. We pick the best (and not so good) of the lot



MAYO MARTIN
mayo@mediacorp.com.sg

IT IS time to top up your EZ-link card. You're going to an art exhibition.

With 16 MRT stations on the Circle Line fully functional for the past two weeks, it's easier than ever to get around (on a budget).

But more than that, it also means 16 new works from local artists are now up for your viewing pleasure, courtesy of the Land Transportation Authority's Circle Line Art scheme, which follows the similar concept of putting artworks in the North-East Line stations.

Most of the works are by young contemporary artists so they look fresher compared to some of the now dated works on the NEL (the hand imprints in Hougang are just downright creepy while the reliefs at Outram Park remind us of Han Solo when he was trapped in carbonite for Boba Fett in *Star Wars*).

The other thing we realised was that MRT commuters can be one tough audience. While a handful of commuters would stop briefly and take notice (or even photograph) one or two works, the majority would simply walk right past.

Or would rather watch those horrible soap opera skits masking as homeland security videos again and again. And again.

The best of the lot work because they have the fortune of being placed in strategic positions in the stations where people can actually see them. Not only that, but they were both eye-catching

THE ART CIRCLE

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and conceptually sound.

In contrast, the less effective works seem to be the more "contemplative" works — the abstract and photography pieces that would be more appropriate for gallery or museum viewing. Not when you're late for work.

But more than that, a number of the Circle Line art works seem out of place — positioned awkwardly beside escalators or staircases or right over the top-up booths, where you obviously can't linger in front of — unless you risk a "tsk" from an impatient uncle or auntie who wants to queue up.

That said, we've done your homework for you and come up with our picks of Circle Line art (a lot of them don't have plaques yet, which might change your perception of the works in the future).

Now hurry up and top up that EZ-link card.

» Continued on T6

ARTS

» Continued from T4

SEE LAH

► **Bras Basah**

The Amazing Never Ending Underwater Adventures! (right) The humongous wall on which video artist Tan Kai Syng's work (the only video art piece on the Circle Line) is projected on makes sure you'll notice this loud, fun and accessible work about, well, taking a trip, rather clearly. The booming, upbeat electronic music soundtrack by sound artist Philip Tan certainly helps. If you decide you want to view the video in its entirety, the station has a few foyers where you can just stand without impeding harried commuters. The downside? The projection only comes on at 7.30pm.

► **Promenade**

Dreams In Social Cosmic Odyssey (below) Stepping out of the train, you notice a black "puddle" on the floor. Look up and see what seems like a bunch of different "disco balls". Move to one side and you realise they're actually these tear/globule-like chandeliers. :phunk Studio's installations (there's another one at the entrance) mix style and just a wee bit of quirkiness to whet your curiosity.



Lady Gaga would love to take a ride on these gigantic "disco balls".



Next stop: Tate Modern?

► **Marymount***Superstring* (below)

Joshua Yang's *Superstring* line drawing piece on the wall where the top-up machine booths are located is sleeker and clean and doesn't have that gritty, nervous energy found in this series' previous incarnations. We were to prepared to give it a miss until we saw a huge anamorphic art image of the station you can clearly make out as you go down the escalator.



Perspective is everything.

► **Esplanade***Let The Show Begin* (top right)

This blown-up black and white reproduction combining seven wood block prints by the late Lim Mu Hue is massive, detailing scenes of various aspects of theatre from the past, including shadow puppetry. It's fittingly in the station that leads to the country's ground zero for performance art. Look for it near the escalator.

► **Bartley***The Coin Mat* (left)

Oh dear, another glittery mosaic wall, we thought, as we rode up the escalator looking for the art piece. Turns out, it was Jane Lee's floor-to-ceiling glasswork comprising 164,800

one-cent coins (so now you know how much it's at least worth). The top-up machine area seems an awkward space to put up any work, but this one, obviously, fits its space to a T.



Stop and stare ... just don't miss your show at the Esplanade.

SEE HOW

► **Tai Seng***Equilibrium* (below)

Another work that plays with geometric shapes, Francis Ng's work is a great example of something that would look good in a gallery or a museum but is wasted here.



The visual impact of this *Equilibrium* is regrettably lost in transit.

Its visual impact plays on the transparency of the glass revealing layers of triangles – but you can't see anything because of the glaring reflection of the harsh light. Well actually you do see something. Fingerprints left by its handlers. A real pity.

► **Mountbatten***Lord Mountbatten Thinks Of Pink* (below)

The concept behind Jason Wee's diptych photo piece is the most ingenious of the entire lot — how Lord Mountbatten thought it was cool to paint warships pink, inventing "Mountbatten Pink" as a camouflage colour in 1940. It also makes for a good photo op, as our photographer attests. But as much as we think it's a potential thumbs up, like Ng's work, we

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think it's the kind of art work that really needs a bench in front of it. We honestly thought it was a very creative tourism ad without the logo.