

ART IS ALIVE IN SASARAN

This fishing village in the district of Kuala Selangor has been hosting international art festivals for a decade — raising art appreciation among the villagers

“Art is not for the artist alone, it is for everyone.” This is Ng Bee’s belief, and it is what prompted the 67-year-old artist to organise an international art festival in his home village of Sasaran in 2008.

“I wanted to combine the talent of artists from

around the world with the village’s energy, to introduce art to the villagers so they would have a deeper appreciation of art in its many forms,” he says.

Ng was born in Sasaran, a fishing community first settled sometime in the 1920s. It was earlier known as Sungai Buloh, after the river, but there was another village upstream by the same name. The current name of the village originated from the target (“Sasaran”) used by the British police force at the shooting range on a hill near the village. Before long, the name caught on and locals began to call their village Sasaran to avoid confusion.

It is in this village that Ng has pursued his craft for the past four decades. A graduate of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in Singapore, Ng spent five years in Paris, furthering his studies at École Nationale Supérieure Des Beaux-arts. His works have been exhibited around the world, including in Japan, South Korea, Egypt and Romania.

His desire to share his love and passion for art



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- 01. Cheeky dog
- 02. One of the many murals in Sasaran
- 03. Octopus in the toilet — what a nightmare!
- 04. Sasaran is an art village

PLACES & LANDMARKS



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was seeded more than a decade ago.

“I love my hometown, this is my base, and I believe that art is for everyone. So I thought why not bring artists here and introduce art to the village?” he says.

But the idea received a lot of resistance. “It took me about two years, talking with the village head, to convince the villagers that this was a good idea. We needed their co-operation — providing space for the artists to stay and even hosting the artists in their homes,” says Ng. It was not an easy task. “They asked me why I wanted to have such a festival, and why have it Sasaran and not KL.”



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05. Right on target - Sasaran Art Gallery

06. Installations and artwork at Sasaran Art Gallery

07. Ng Bee's dream was to turn his home village into an art village, where art is appreciated by everyone alike

08. Art is all around in Sasaran



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SASARAN ART GALLERY

B104 Jalan Sasaran,
Sungai Buloh,
Jeram

Opens from 10am to 6pm, daily except Mondays

09. Sasaran Art Gallery was opened in 2017

10. & 11. Murals are everywhere in Sasaran

12. Sasaran Art Gallery

Ng and a handful of villagers eventually won over the rest of the village and the maiden art festival was held in 2008. Spanning 10 days, 35 artists from nine countries took part. The workshops and events were held at SJK (C) Chung Wah in Sasaran, and it was a success, says Ng. “At first, the villagers did not participate, but one villager went up to an artist who was working on a sculpture using old metal or wood. He was curious as to why the artist was using these scraps, then another villager joined in to see what the artist was doing. Before long the artists would be talking to the villagers about their craft, and that is how the villagers’ appreciation of art grew.”

Since that first art festival, through the Sasaran Arts Association — made up of about 50 villagers — Ng has organised four international art festivals, the last one in 2017. Art has left an indelible mark on this community. All around Sasaran you will

find murals on many of the buildings, most painted during the art festivals.

The Sasaran Arts Association also received support from the local authorities and state government to build the Sasaran Art Gallery, which was completed in October 2017. “But we are in need of more assistance, especially for the maintenance of the art gallery and to conduct art activities,” says Ng, disclosing that the villagers are currently bearing the expenses to upkeep the gallery.

“More tourists are aware of our village and the art gallery and sometimes they visit by the busloads, but they leave the premises and toilets dirty ... that’s something that needs to be addressed too,” he laments, adding that monetary support from the public and art enthusiasts would go a long way towards supporting the art gallery and its activities. 🌈

Text & photos by Sreerema Banoo