

Vietnamese artist Tiffany Chung's installation was inspired by memories of her flood-hit home

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One of Tiffany Chung's most vivid memories of her home in Da Nang, Vietnam, was of a flood that devastated the area when she was 10.

The year was 1979 and she recalls having to get in and out of her house on a small boat.

The Vietnamese artist remembers that her family had to stack beds on top of one another so that they could remain dry while asleep. One morning, she woke up to see her mother's long hair floating in the water below.

"It was quite a scary sight. It would make quite a good movie, though. I was so young, I just remembered it to be quite fun," she says with a laugh.

Her memories got her thinking when she was working on The River Project at the Campbelltown Arts Centre in Sydney last year, which brought together artists from the Asia-Pacific region who work with river systems.

She studied maps of the lower Mekong region, which includes Vietnam, and her interest in urban development became the inspiration for her latest work, a commission for this year's Singapore Biennale, which is on from Saturday till May 15.

Her work, titled *stored in a jar: monsoon, drowning fish, color of water and the floating world, 2011*, is installed at the National Museum of Singapore. It features a miniature floating city that proposes ecologically sustainable ways of living for the future.

Around 1988 or 1989, the 41-year-old moved to the United States with her family after the Vietnam War ended, and stud-



ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Artist of the floating world: Tiffany Chung's installation which features a miniature floating city.

# Water world

ied photography at California State University, Long Beach, before pursuing her master's degree in Sculpture and New Forms at University of California, Santa Barbara.

She returned to Vietnam in 2000 and did extensive research in Japan as well.

She explains her interest in floating cities: "These days, the media is so obsessed with global warming, and there

are always reports on how cities will be flooded. Floating towns are also a strong movement in architecture, with architects in Denmark and the Netherlands, to name a few, thinking of building floating cities."

So she began looking at vernacular structures in Cambodia, Thailand, Japan and Vietnam, and incorporated them into her floating village.

In her research, she also learnt about the arcology movement, and was intrigued by Arcosanti, an experimental eco-town in Arizona in the US, that began construction 40 years ago. Arcology refers to the concept of ecological human habits which make efficient use of land and resources.

It was the brainchild of Italian architect Paolo Soleri who believed in minimis-

book

## STORED IN A JAR: MONSOON, DROWNING FISH, COLOR OF WATER AND THE FLOATING WORLD

Where: National Museum of Singapore  
When: From Saturday till May 15, 10am to 7pm  
Admission: \$10 for adults, \$5 for senior citizens and students, available at the National Museum and other Singapore Biennale venues



ing human impact on the environment.

"Everyone wants to be eco-friendly, with harvesting rain water, floating gardens, vertical gardens and solar panels. But I realised that actually, these floating gardens and rain water harvesting practices already exist in these floating towns," she says.

"It is a more sustainable way for the locals, who are working with materials that they can procure and build. And it has worked for them for so many years."

But she adds that she is not a tree hugger, and says that her apartment in Ho Chi Minh City is not the most eco-friendly. "I think it is a given that if you care about the environment, that you will try to be more green. But I don't want to talk about it, it's too boring. I prefer to see this work as preserving the local way of life."

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