



# CHANNELS & CONFLUENCES

A History of Singapore Art

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The 1980s also saw the emergence of a new group of modernist painters such as Simon Wong, Jimmy Quek (Prabhakara), Ng Yak Whee and Jimmy Ong. Wong's work, as in **Resurrection** [118], suggests a pop and graphic flavour while the works of Quek (**Impression** [119]) and Ng (**Crossroads** [120]) show painterly abstract qualities.

Jimmy Ong is best known for his vigorous drawings which are often charged with so much energy that even a still-life of everyday things resonates as an unsettling emotion in a viewer. **January December Skin** [121] captures a state of physical and emotional metamorphosis.

In 1984, another major art college, St Patrick's Art Centre, was established. It is known today as the La Salle-SIA College of the Arts. The establishment of La

Salle indicates the rapidly-enlarging art population. Its curriculum incorporates visual arts, pottery, design, music and theatrical arts. With English as the main medium of instruction, the college reaches out to the English-educated in Singapore where the visual arts, given Chinese migrant roots, have been primarily linked with Chinese culture.

The founder of La Salle is Brother Joseph McNally, an accomplished artist who returned from Columbia University with a doctoral degree in art education in 1972. For McNally, art is reflective and contemplative; a major concern in his work is to give life and spirit to matter: "Matter's inertia must be given energy; in the same way, people must be given spirit – i.e., 'inspired'. Art has this function in society."<sup>94</sup>

It was during his years in New York that McNally revived his earlier interest in sculpture. An excellent example of his work is **Hostage** [122] in the Singapore Art Museum collection.

