



Artist Jakkai Siributr (left) checks out the stupas at the exhibition. Each stupa, which is made of knitted hemp, is threaded before it is suspended from a metal grid (above).

A matter of life and death



Thai gallery assistant Wirat Phenguntr (above) hangs the stupas on a metal grid, while artist Jakkai Siributr (right) prepares the knitted hemp figures for installation. ST PHOTOS: SEAH KWANG PENG



Behind The Scenes

Seah Kwang Peng

An exhibition on the stupa as a symbol of Buddhism is now on at the Asian Civilisations Museum. Featuring 29 exhibits from the museum's collection and one installation work by Thai artist Jakkai Siributr, it showcases stupas from the 3rd to the 20th century.

Curated by Briton Theresa McCullough, the exhibition revolves around how the stupa is the principal monument of Buddhism. Ms McCullough, a senior curator with the museum, says: "Stupas are found all over Asia, even in Singapore. This exhibition explores the complex beliefs about life and death expressed by this structure."

On why the stupa is a symbol of Buddhism, she says: "Stupas take on different forms in the regions where Buddhism has been practised. They can be domed, cylindrical or pyramidal. The pagodas of China and Japan are an extension of these ideas."

The highlight of the exhibition is an installation art by Siributr. Made up of 750 knitted hemp Buddha figures, the exhibit took three men, including the 43-year-old artist, more than two days to install. Titled *Shroud*, the figures hang from a height of 4.6m, forming a pyramidal stupa. With this fluid and fragile art piece, Siributr alters the traditional solid structure of the stupa, and invites viewers to think about the meaning of the form and the practices around the stupa.

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Book it

EXPLORING THE COSMOS: THE STUPA AS A BUDDHIST SYMBOL

Where: Asian Civilisations Museum, Shaw Foundation Foyer
 When: Till Aug 18, 1 to 7pm (Mondays), 9am to 7pm (Tuesdays to Sundays), 9am to 9pm (Fridays)
 Admission: \$8. Free for children aged six and below, and for Singaporean and permanent resident students, teachers, full-time national servicemen and seniors aged 60 and above. Fifty per cent discount for foreign students and foreign seniors aged 60 and above, and 50 per cent discount every Friday, 7 to 9pm
 Info: www.acm.org.sg

The Shroud (background) made up of hemp stupas and hung by hemp strings.