



Biology and history create art

A group of local artists are using science to create a new interpretation of an Indian epic

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WOULD you wear a dress made of fermented wine or bacteria? Perhaps not. And they seem unlikely to attract most fashionistas... wait, Lady Gaga might be interested!

These dresses are products of some imaginative minds that are trying to blend science and art and the whole process is called biological art. A group of four artists, led by senior research fellow at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts Dr S. Chandrasekaran, recently started the Infinite Saree project – a series of biological art workshops held at the PSB Academy in Tiong Bahru.

Dr Chandrasekaran tells tabla! that the goal is to have multiple workshops involving artists who work with different genres using DNA, bacteria and biological science to generate ideas and materials that will eventually be used in their final work – the staging of a scene from the Mahabharatha where Draupadi is publicly disrobed by Dushasana after her husband loses to Dushasana's brother in a game of dice.

The Singaporean artist adds that his purpose is to create public awareness for biological art through theatre.

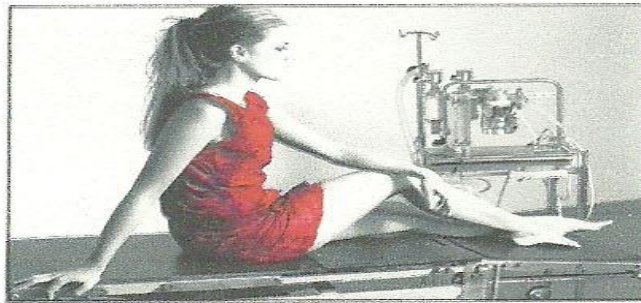
The "biological" input comes from Australian artist Gary Cass who runs biological art workshops in Perth and believes that the double helix, fungus and bacteria can be used as sources of artistic inspiration. Mr Cass, who learnt his craft in Australia, is of the view that biological art pushes boundaries: "We are taking artists out of their comfort zone and it forces them to think creatively and out of the box."

Singaporean dancer and choreographer Santha Bhaskar, who was involved in the workshops and will be choreographing the Infinite Saree theatre performance, thinks biological art is an innovative approach to creating new artistic work.

"I believe that science was the reason that the arts were created," she says. "When the great masters came up with the musical notes Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, science influenced them but this idea has been lost in translation as it passed down the generations. So we're actually connecting the past with what we know now."

For now, the team will be experimenting with different biological art pieces for the final production which it hopes to stage early next year.

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Science meets art... or the other way around? A wine fermented dress (top) and jellyfish DNA in bacteria shaped as a cow (above).

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GARY CASS