



## 72-13 Creatives-in-Residence Programme

The 72-13 Creatives-in-Residence (CIR) Programme is a key component of Singapore Creative Arts Nucleus (SCAN) – an organic interface between the arts and the creative industries.

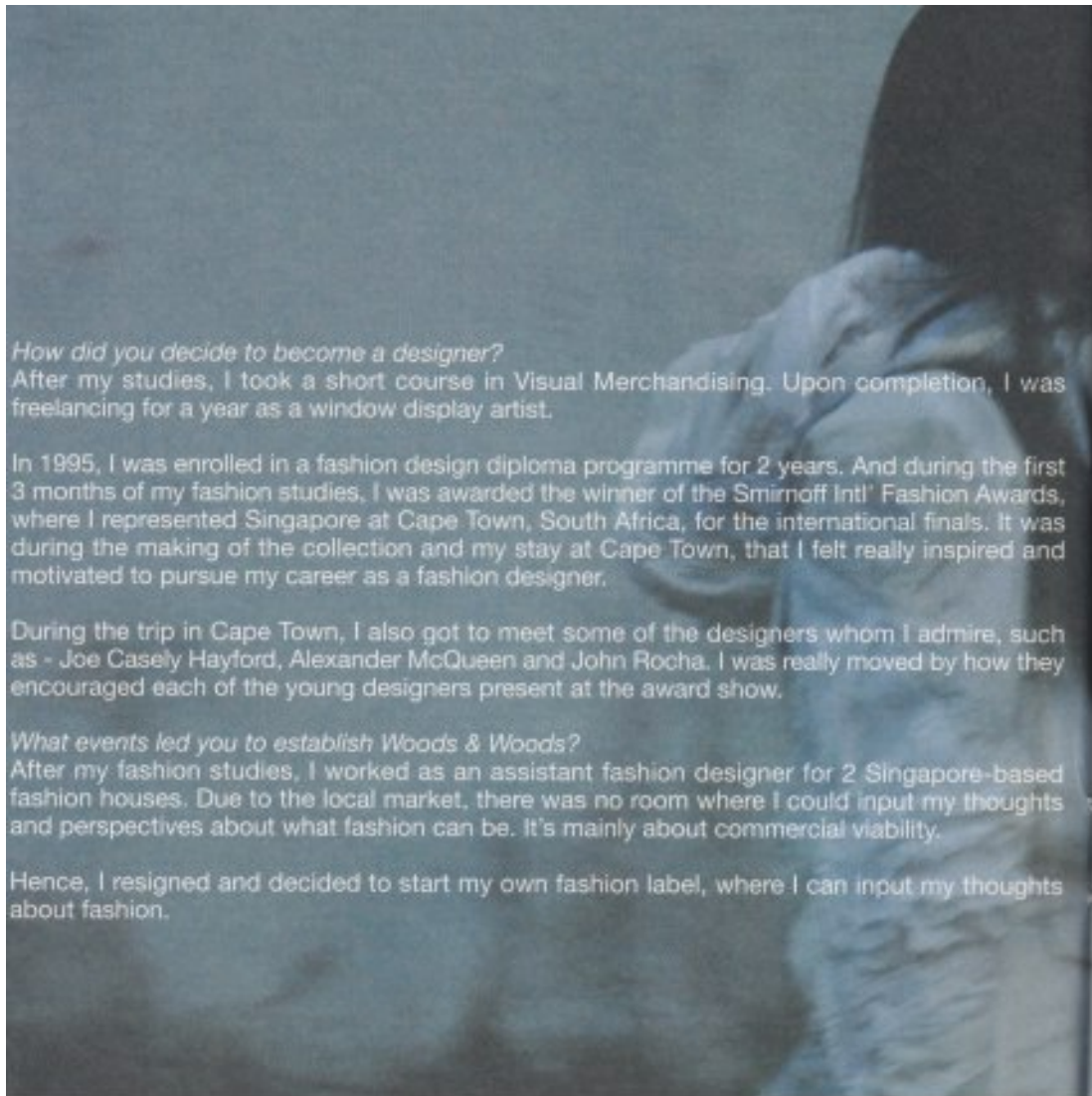
The birth of this incubation scheme came about when TheatreWorks moved to its new home at 72-13 in September 2005.

And since 2006, 72-13 has invited a list of unconventional candidates such as Brian Gothong Tan, Ho Tzu Nyen, The Observatory, FARM, Rizman Putra, Furious, Joavien Ng, Tan Pin Pin, Ng Yi-Sheng, Charles Lim, and Jonathan Sew of Woods & Woods to be our Singaporean Creatives-in-Residence.



## Thought Fashion: Jonathan Seow + Woods & Woods

Jonathan Seow, fashion designer & founder of acclaimed clothing label Woods & Woods, is 72-13's collaborative CIR working in applied arts and design. He's currently organising RESUSCITATION, a 10-day exhibition @ our space consisting of a shop installation (with Theseus Chan from WORK), a fashion show and an open call for design.



*How did you decide to become a designer?*

After my studies, I took a short course in Visual Merchandising. Upon completion, I was freelancing for a year as a window display artist.

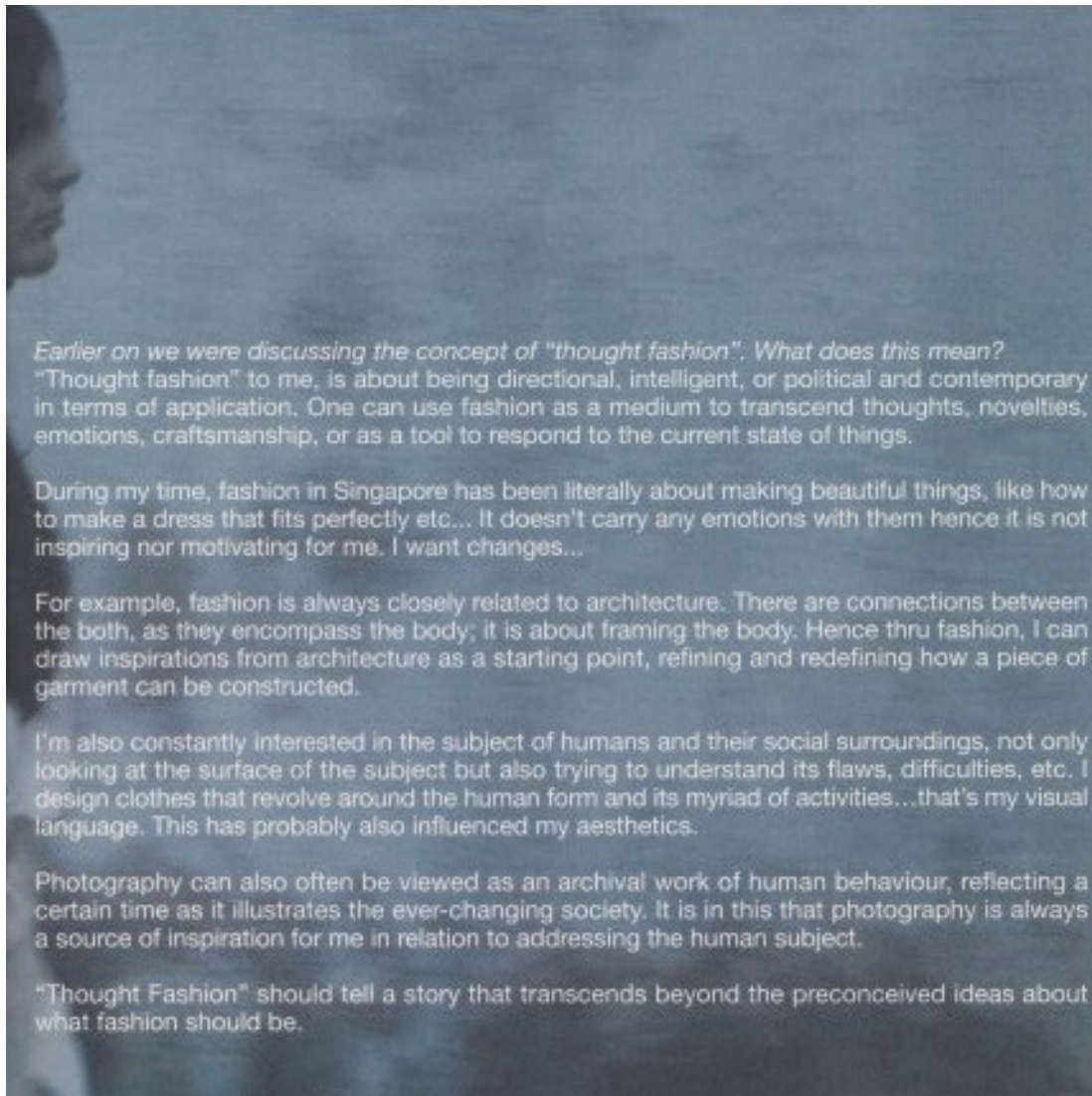
In 1995, I was enrolled in a fashion design diploma programme for 2 years. And during the first 3 months of my fashion studies, I was awarded the winner of the Smirnoff Intl' Fashion Awards, where I represented Singapore at Cape Town, South Africa, for the international finals. It was during the making of the collection and my stay at Cape Town, that I felt really inspired and motivated to pursue my career as a fashion designer.

During the trip in Cape Town, I also got to meet some of the designers whom I admire, such as - Joe Casely Hayford, Alexander McQueen and John Rocha. I was really moved by how they encouraged each of the young designers present at the award show.

*What events led you to establish Woods & Woods?*

After my fashion studies, I worked as an assistant fashion designer for 2 Singapore-based fashion houses. Due to the local market, there was no room where I could input my thoughts and perspectives about what fashion can be. It's mainly about commercial viability.

Hence, I resigned and decided to start my own fashion label, where I can input my thoughts about fashion.



*Earlier on we were discussing the concept of "thought fashion". What does this mean?*

"Thought fashion" to me, is about being directional, intelligent, or political and contemporary in terms of application. One can use fashion as a medium to transcend thoughts, novelties, emotions, craftsmanship, or as a tool to respond to the current state of things.

During my time, fashion in Singapore has been literally about making beautiful things, like how to make a dress that fits perfectly etc... It doesn't carry any emotions with them hence it is not inspiring nor motivating for me. I want changes...

For example, fashion is always closely related to architecture. There are connections between the both, as they encompass the body; it is about framing the body. Hence thru fashion, I can draw inspirations from architecture as a starting point, refining and redefining how a piece of garment can be constructed.

I'm also constantly interested in the subject of humans and their social surroundings, not only looking at the surface of the subject but also trying to understand its flaws, difficulties, etc. I design clothes that revolve around the human form and its myriad of activities...that's my visual language. This has probably also influenced my aesthetics.

Photography can also often be viewed as an archival work of human behaviour, reflecting a certain time as it illustrates the ever-changing society. It is in this that photography is always a source of inspiration for me in relation to addressing the human subject.

"Thought Fashion" should tell a story that transcends beyond the preconceived ideas about what fashion should be.



*What traditions, which designers, inspire you?*

My approach to fashion is always about classic and contemporary ideologies... I translate these two by balancing craftsmanship on one hand and perpetuating fashion in a modern context on the other, hence always reviving something new.



Designers such as Josephus Thimister, Carol Christian Poell, Christian Blanken, Cristobal Balenciaga, Azzedine Alaïa, Adeline André etc, have always been a motivation for me, as they constantly position fashion in a different context yet, always keeping their integrities clear as fashion designers.



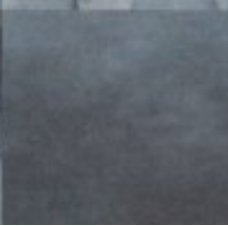
*Tell us about your design process. What steps do you take before creating a collection?*

I always like to start on fabrics first, and thru the selection of fabrics, give them a deserving form based on the different characteristics each different textile embodies. Of course the fabrics will be chosen from the inspirations behind each seasonal collection.



Subsequently sketches will be made till I get a desired form and proportion. Thereafter I'll make a detailed technical drawing based on the sketch, and use it for pattern-making, creating the first prototype.

Adjustments will be made again on these prototypes to achieve a desired effect, and only then, will we proceed for production.



*What's your motivation for the RESUSCITATION project?*

I guess what we hope to respond to the burgeoning design scene, by bringing together a pool of designers and/or creatives that share similar values, while creating a voice in what we believe in as an industry.

Anything else you'd like our readers to know?

Over the past 10 years working as a fashion designer in Singapore, we have started to witness "thought fashion" formulating in this part of the world. We hope all interested members of the public will engage with us and have a different viewpoint about our creations. Where the fashion and design scene strives to be progressive, we need all the support that a young fashion industry needs, in order to achieve greater effects.

We hope people can be compassionate to what we believe in, and help support the growth of the industry and understand the difficulties and limitations faced by a Singaporean designer. We need to start looking inwards in order to sustain a burgeoning design industry that is less superficial and more concrete.

Here, the saying "Break a leg" takes on an almost literal meaning. The fact that this place also lacks sub-cultures and activities is also disadvantageous for new designers attempting to draw inspiration for their collection. All in all, here is more fiction than fact about our fashion industry and what truth lies seems to be superficial.

necessary approval.

Unfortunately the technical progress in Singapore does not extend to good manufacturing resources for designers too. Most local factories have either shut down completely or relocated to China, which makes manufacturing and production rather inaccessible for new start-ups due to quantity requirements. Also the support granted for our seasonal shows is rather minimal and require extraordinary expenditures of time from the designers before even receiving the fashion weeks, thanks to those cities' strong and supportive infrastructure.

Singapore also has neither the expertise nor the infrastructure to promote young local fashion designers. It's taken us this long to be able to present our collection in a fashion capital [Paris], while young and progressive designers based in the fashion capitals are presented during the country's support in the area of design has proven to be missteps as far as promoting the industry. I definitely can't agree more that Singapore is a country driven by economics. Most of the time I find it very stifling to be based here in a country where the arts and cultural developments are not a main priority. Even though Singapore has been disseminating slogans about supporting and promoting the arts and design, there's been no action to back up these words. Most of the country's support in the area of design has proven to be missteps as far as promoting the industry.

What can be done to improve Singapore fashion?

RESUSCITATION by Jonathan Seow / Woods&Woods

May 2009 @ 72-13



**An anti-thesis to the homogeneity of fashion.**

Jonathan Seow wants to bring forth the meaning of fashion and its relevance to visual arts, design, and music. He wishes to rediscover and in the process, redefine the state of art and fashion in Singapore today.

Through a series of art installations that take the form of photography; live presentations; sounds; video; and clothing objects, Jonathan puts together RESUSCITATION – an art / fashion exhibition brought forth by 4-representations. It points out pertinent social issues that art and fashion stand for and speaks also of the spillage over into other art forms; eventually questioning new standards and interpretations of what is contemporary fashion.

It can be said that the exhibition serves as a rhetorical rebuke, a social enquiry, a state of being, a call to action and a piece de resistance that attempts to make sense of our multi-disciplinary universe – in turn, working, collaborating and participating with like-minded creatives and newer talents uncovered from the woodwork.

As part of the process, emerging fashion design talents are invited via a submission call to contribute their individual artistic interpretations of a fashion brief in addition to the criteria of introducing used-clothing in their creations. RESUSCITATION will select six emerging designers to continue with the process, their designs will be created and showcased during the 10-day art/fashion exhibition at 72-13.

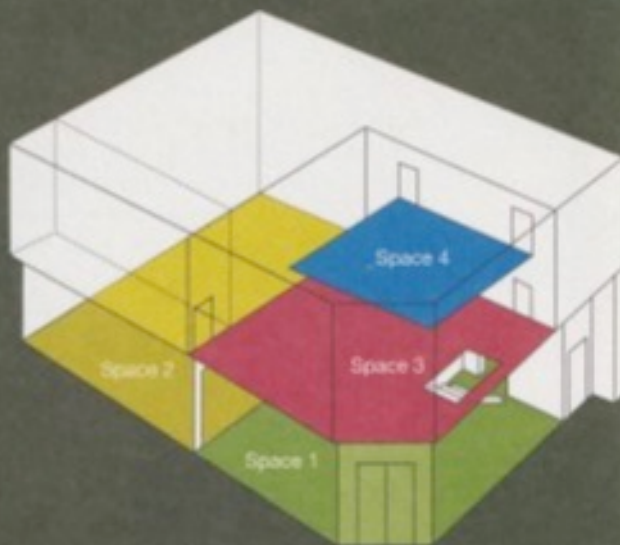


## About 72-13

A converted rice warehouse, 72-13 is the home of TheatreWorks ([www.theatreworks.org.sg](http://www.theatreworks.org.sg)). The space is flexible enough to be a gallery, a cinema and a theatre. Its primary purpose, through SCAN (Singapore Creative Arts Nucleus) and the ICAA (International Centre of Asian Arts), is to foster collaborations, house residencies from creatives around the world and to encourage hybrid expressions from young Singaporeans. TheatreWorks, responding to the needs of contemporary Asia, has consciously created 72-13 to have a wider and a more inclusive agenda.

## Open Call

72-13 invites creatives to apply to hold once-off non-profit events in the space. TheatreWorks will provide the space free of charge barring technical charges. Please write to Tay Tong at [tworks@singnet.com.sg](mailto:tworks@singnet.com.sg) - curation process will apply.



**THEATREWORKS**

72-13 Mohamed Sultan Road, Singapore 239007 • [www.72-13.com](http://www.72-13.com) • T: (65) 6737-7213 F: (65) 6737-7013  
With support from National Arts Council, NAC Arts Housing Scheme, Lee Foundation and Hong Leong Foundation