

What's on the WALL?

Street art in Singapore is witnessing a renaissance of sorts. Sneha Thomas introduces us to some of the vibrant murals

There are the shiny skyscrapers and towering metal cranes. There are the busy malls and local markets. But amidst all this are several stunning urban artworks that dot Singapore's streets. Created by local artists and those from across the world, these artworks reflect not only Singapore's present but also its past with Malay, Arab, Indian and Chinese settlers. Here are six of our favourite murals around town!

Little India

The bustling streets of Little India offer a glimpse of Indian culture, tradition and cuisine to Singapore residents and travellers. For the local Indian community, the bylanes of the neighbourhood and stores selling Indian goods, are a reminder of home. Amidst it stands the vibrant Tan Teng Niah bungalow, the last remaining Chinese villa in Little India. Built in 1900, the conserved two-storey heritage house is said to have belonged to Tan Teng Niah, an influential Chinese businessman. A spectacular mix of Chinese and European architectural styles, the eight-room villa offers a palette of bright colours, making it a popular spot for photographers and Instagrammers.



Haji Lane

The bird by graffiti artist Didier Jaba Mathieu on the walls of Piedra Negra cafe in Haji Lane can't be missed. The previous blue artwork was revamped in 2018 and holds a place of pride in the colourful lane filled with quirky shops and artisanal cafes. Take a walk down the alleyway lined with murals by some of the top street artists,

including Jaba, whose works are spread all over the area dating back to 2011.

Once dominated by Muslim pilgrims returning from Haj, (annual pilgrimage to Mecca), the old shophouses in the lane have now been turned into stunning cafes serving Arab-Muslim cuisines, and stores selling everything from art to clothing.



Kampong Glam area

Dramatic is the word that can best describe the black and white portraits by Mohammad Azlan Ramlan or Ceno2, the well-known Singaporean graffiti artist, on the walls of Singapura Club restaurant. It is located at Haji Lane in the Kampong Glam area, which used to be known as the Arab quarter. Home to the beautiful Sultan Mosque, the neighbourhood includes an interesting mix of fabric stores, cafes serving Middle Eastern delicacies and chic gift shops, all rolled into one heritage district. The portraits represent the history of Singapore through people of different communities who used to live here. The ordinary lane of the early 90s is now a bustling street that is extremely popular with tourists and locals alike.

Near Amoy Street

A classic Ceno, the portrait of a laughing Samsui woman is iconic. She seems to be laughing at the world, proudly showing off an extra long finger nail!



Chinatown

The “Lion Dance Head Maker”, is one of the several murals that dot the streets of Chinatown in Singapore. It features a man making giant puppet heads used in the Chinese traditional lion dance. Two boys sitting next to the man are seen banging drums used in the dance.

On its right is the mural known as “Mamak shop”, representing an Indian man

selling sundry goods. These artworks showcase scenes or trades that were once commonly found in Singapore’s Chinatown area. Chinatown, with an amalgamation of old and new, was the home of Chinese immigrants who had settled in Singapore in the 1830s. Today, the neighbourhood is dotted with stores selling Chinese goods and restaurants serving traditional food, prayer flags and paper lanterns.



Jalan Pisang

It’s almost impossible to miss the gigantic mural of a young girl cuddling a lion cub as you walk through Jalan Pisang facing Victoria Street. Created by Lithuanian artist Ernest Zacharevic, it’s located next to a smaller alley with several other small murals.

To try a street art tour of Singapore you can start at Tiong Bahru, proceed to Chinatown. From here stroll towards Keong Saik Road and make your way towards the Working Capitol Building. Your last stop in the neighbourhood will be at Amoy Street. Next up should be Little India, Haji lane and then Everton.

The author-photographer is a travel blogger and the opinions expressed in the feature are her own