

Cheatsheet Michael Lee

Known for building intricate paper sculptures to explore our relationship with living spaces, 42-year-old local artist Michael Lee's works have been displayed everywhere from Telok Blangah MRT station – an absorbing text diagram cascading down a two-storey pillar titled 'Notes Towards a Museum of Cooking Pot Bay' – to international biennales. He's back this month with a new series that sees him using a range of materials he's relatively new to, such as neon lights. **Gwen Pew catches up with him to find out more.**



1 He might not have been where he is now without mahjong: 'My earliest memory of being creative – and destructive – was whenever the adults took breaks from their games. I would rush in to work the tiles: stacking them into precarious structures and watching them tumble, much to the players' dismay.'

2 He sees his latest works as a continuation of his fascination

with space as a metaphor for and reflection of humanity: 'For the first time, however, I am showing collages, a ready-made, a piece of modified furniture, a curtain installation and a neon piece. These are methods I would not have used even a year ago.'

3 He's proficient in paper-crafting, but he tries to push himself to try new things: 'Making collages and sculptures using paper is second nature to me, but preference is not always a productive starting point for creativity – challenge is, and so is the delusion that it is still possible to make something fresh, if not totally new. Lately, I enjoy taking a step back and letting materials offer me instructions of what to do

with and to them.'

4 His title piece, which reads 'Machine for Living Dying In', is done in neon lighting: 'Neon offers a sense of pride and confidence about embracing the aspect of reality that to live is to die a little each day.'

5 As someone whose works constantly deal with urban memory and fiction, he believes that it's simplistic and even dangerous to assume the two entities as opposites: 'Because of our limited memory, we have no choice but to fill in with our vivid imagination; otherwise, it will be filled in by others, in ways not necessarily to our benefit.'

Michael Lee: Machine for Living Dying In is at Yavuz Fine Art until **21 Sep.**