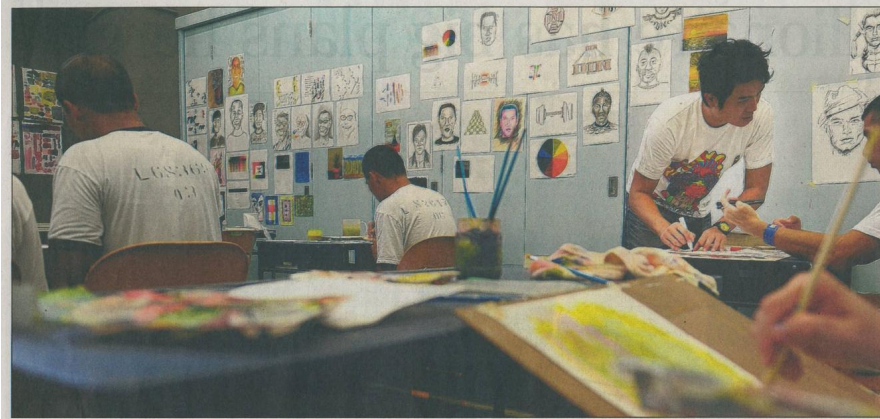


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 SUBJECT: Inmates learn new strokes in art course



Lasalle instructor Luis Lee giving an inmate art tips during a lesson at Changi Prison's Visual Arts Training Centre. Inmates will get a certificate at the end of the course. ST PHOTO: BRYAN VAN DER BEEK

Inmates learn new strokes in art course

By Goh Yi Han

THE regimented confines of prison life are not usually associated with fine art and free expression.

However, inmates are now experiencing life through art with a new certificate programme established by the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) and the Lasalle College of the Arts.

The programme, conducted by Lasalle instructors, introduces inmates to art concepts and educates them in techniques such as drawing lines and using colour in paintings.

It will allow them to build up a portfolio of work, giving them opportunities to further their education in the fine arts and pursue relevant employment after their release.

Selected inmates, who attend the nine hours of lessons per week, will receive a certificate of completion awarded by the school at the end of the five-week course – a first for art programmes run by the SPS.

Interested inmates must have displayed good conduct and show a positive learning attitude. They also have to undergo a basic art course, during which their artistic abilities are assessed.

Currently, 10 individuals have qualified for the programme and are attending lessons at the Visual Arts Training Centre in the Changi Prison Complex.

Mr Luis Lee, who is the instructor for the programme, said the inmates are encouraged to express themselves freely through their art. "They are well-behaved and show eagerness to learn, which is encouraging," he said.

For inmate Ah Fei (not his real name), who is interested in pursuing design-related work after he completes his sentence next year, the classes give him time to escape from his surroundings.

"Although we are physically restricted and less free in here, when we are painting, it is almost as though we are not in prison," said the 42-year-old.

Ms Phang Sook Sieng, the head of programmes at SPS, said the response has been encouraging. "We hope that those on the course will not only learn useful skills, but also gain creative insights into themselves and their lives that will help them contribute to society," she said.

Apart from the new Lasalle art course, the SPS also runs other art courses and programmes such as music lessons.