

*Born in Singapore, 1946.  
Professional sculptor.  
Cultural Medallion recipient, 2014.  
Works in wood, stone and bronze.  
Lives in Singapore and in Merritt, B.C., Canada.*

## **Artistic style**

Chong Fahcheong has a varied style, ranging from the abstract to the figurative. He uses his medium to its fullest potential, often making a commentary on society and social issues. Many of his works comment upon the pursuit of position, wealth and power. He also has a whimsical side. His works portray a sense of humour that can be appreciated by adult and child alike. He loves exploring his Asian and specifically Singaporean heritage. As a self-taught artist, Fahcheong has created an individual style all his own.

## **Biography**

In 2014, Chong Fahcheong was awarded his country's highest accolade for artistic pursuit – the Cultural Medallion. It was recognition of the artist's dedication to his art, a lifetime's work that has resulted in a number of his iconic sculptures dotting different parts of the island.

This exemplary career began when Fahcheong, a young art teacher, left teaching in 1978 to become a professional artist. In these more-than-30 years, he has participated in numerous art exhibitions, symposiums and workshops, held several one-man shows, and created sculptures for public and private enjoyment. He began his career carving in wood and soon progressed to working with marble, granite and other stone as well as casting in bronze.

As a young person, he completed his school studies in Singapore, then went to Penang, Malaysia, where he became a teacher. After some time teaching in Malaysia, he returned to Singapore to continue his studies at the University of Singapore, graduating with a Bachelor of Social Sciences degree in 1971. This was followed by a Diploma in Curriculum Studies in Art and Design from the City of Birmingham Polytechnic, United Kingdom.

From this point on, he eschewed a formal art education in favour of practice, experimentation and experience. However, in 1996, he was a participant at the Art Institute at Capilano College, North Vancouver. (The Art Institute is a one-year post-graduate certificate programme offering advanced studies to artists with several years of experience in sculpture or printmaking.)

Education and sculpture are inseparable for Fahcheong – he is continually learning and exploring his art; developing it is a lifelong process while sharing his knowledge and skill is an important corollary of his life as a sculptor.

Fahcheong taught art in Singapore and Malaysian schools for many years. When the SIA-LaSalle College of Art and Design (formerly LASALLE) in Singapore was formed in 1984, he was one of its founding art lecturers. When he moved to British Columbia, Canada in 1989, he quickly became involved with the Nicola Valley Institute of

Technology as a visiting lecturer.

When he began carving, he did so in wood, creating sculptures from the many tropical woods that were available, such as teak, mahogany, chengal, jambu, and rambutan. In Canada, he explored the possibilities of temperate species like pine, cedar, birch and juniper. His ventures into stone began with the pure white Italian marbles of Carrara and Pietrasanta, and rapidly progressed to sculpting granite, jade and other stones. He has also worked with marble from the limestone hills of Ipoh, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Besides carving, Fahcheong works in bronze, using the lost wax method of casting. His bronze sculptures were created in foundries in Western Australia, Thailand, and Canada.

Often, he brings together his knowledge of working with many different kinds of material, blending these elements into harmonious combinations of wood, stone and bronze.

Fahcheong has taken part in many sculpture workshops and symposiums. In 2002, he was a participant in the Okanagan-Thompson International Sculpture Symposium held in the Okanagan region of British Columbia, Canada. As a result of this symposium, "Romp", a bronze sculpture of three children playing on large boulders, now stands on the shores of Okanagan Lake in the town of Penticton. The nearby West Kelowna, BC, community is home to "Girl in the Cloud", a marble sculpture completed in 2003. In 2005, he attended the Second International Sculpture Symposium in An Giang Province, Vietnam. An Giang Province now has possession of "ha-ha.com", another marble sculpture that plays on the combined idea of luck, various manifestations of wealth, and a laughing Buddha.

Fahcheong is one of Singapore's pioneer sculptors. In recognition of this, the National Museum of Singapore invited him in 1991 to show his works at a national sculpture exhibition, Sculpture in Singapore. The museum, now known as the Singapore Art Museum, has a strong collection of his sculptures.

Fahcheong was honoured to be the sculptor chosen by the Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts to design and produce a unique gift for the world leaders who attended the 2009 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation conference in Singapore. Each national representative received a bronze sculpture as a gift from the Singapore government. The design idea is based on an infinity ring, which has surfaces that have been worked upon with motifs to illustrate the cooperation of the APEC countries.

Publically, he has contributed many memorable sculptures to the Singapore artscape. These are mainly stone and bronze sculptures in monumental sizes. They can be found in highly visible parts of Singapore, from the Housing Board's Toa Payoh Central and the Singapore Botanic Gardens to the quieter spaces of the National University of Singapore and private housing condominiums.

But perhaps the most visible, well-loved and frequently photographed of Fahcheong's public sculptures in Singapore is the "First Generation" bronze work of five young boys in the buff jumping into the Singapore River in front of Fullerton Hotel. This iconic piece harks back to a time when the sculptor was a boy and scenes of children playing in the river were not uncommon.

In 2011, Fahcheong held a solo exhibition of his smaller sculptures. This show, Passages, was held at his studio-cum-workshop in Emily Hill, Singapore, and highlighted the fact that the artist is as adept at creating works in many other materials besides bronze, wood, stone and jade. Passages was a precursor to an much larger

exhibition called Textures, Tones & Timbres held in 2013 at the National University of Singapore Museum. In a sense, this show was a “coming home” for Fahcheong to his alma mater.

In 2014, this lifetime of dedication to the practice of sculpture was recognised and rewarded when Fahcheong was awarded the Cultural Medallion. The Cultural Medallion is presented to Singaporeans whose artistic excellence and contribution and commitment to the arts have enriched and helped shape Singapore’s cultural landscape.