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Celebs make up some of the new faces the National Heritage Board has roped in to reach out to new audiences

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ARTS REPORTER

A TOUCH of showbiz has come to the National Heritage Board (NHB): Actor Qi Yuwu has been appointed to one of its boards.

But there is a reason for this. It turns out that the China-born actor collects contemporary Chinese art and has led a tour at the Singapore Art Museum (SAM).

The 30-year-old is one of a motley crew of 19 new faces appointed to various museum boards under NHB.

They are drawn from diverse fields such as academia, banking, media and retail, and include former songbird and public relations consultant Kit Chan, singer-composer Dick Lee, chief executive of MediaCorp Raintree Pictures Daniel Yun and film-maker Tan Pin Pin.

Other names from the corporate world include Deutsche Bank's chief country officer for Singapore Ronny Tan, and Mr Chia Ngiang Hong, group general manager of property giant City Developments Limited.

The new recruitments are because the NHB – a statutory board which aims to promote a vibrant culture and heritage sector in Singapore – hopes to tap into the new members' expertise, expand its outreach and engage new audiences.

That is where board members like Qi come in.

He is on a subsidiary board overseeing SAM because, as an NHB spokesman puts it, "he helps NHB plug into the creative and entertainment industries and helps us reach new audiences, particularly the heartlanders".

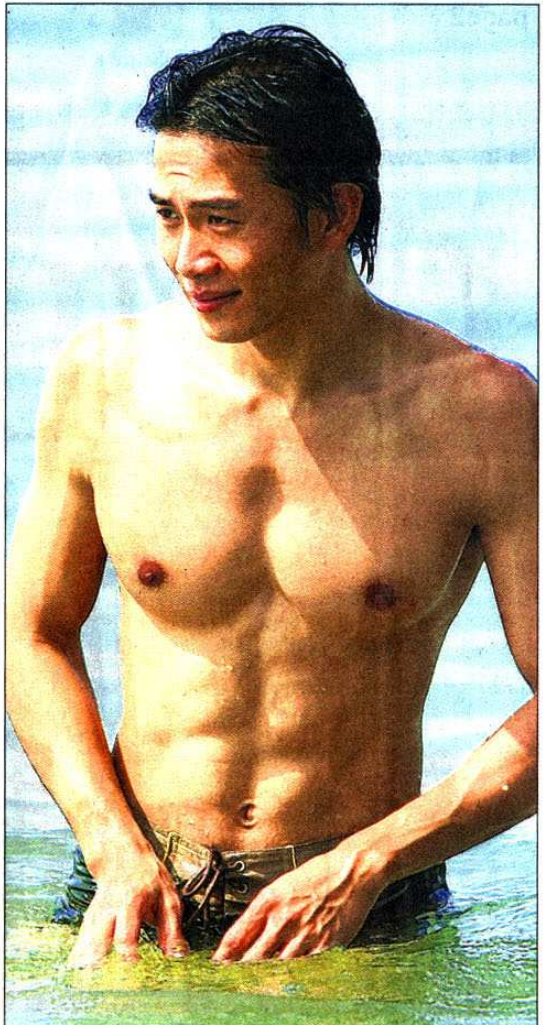
He adds: "A popular actor who recently graced the big screen with 881 and Home Song Stories, Qi possesses a strong mass appeal among people of all ages. His participation in SAM will help NHB to endear itself to a wider group of museum-goers."

The actor says: "Hopefully I can dispel the myth that art is deep and difficult, and that only a special group of people can understand it. Art should belong to everyone."

He started taking steps towards that goal in May, when he conducted a tour of



LIGHTS, CAMERA, MUSEUM: The National Heritage Board hopes new recruits Qi Yuwu (right), Kit Chan (above) and Dick Lee (below) will bring new ideas to the arts table.



PHOTOS: RAIN TREE PICTURES, MEDIACORP, PA TALENT

a solo exhibition by famous Chinese contemporary artist Zeng Fanzhi at SAM.

His tour attracted some 100 art lovers – and fans – to the museum, and he says he will do more of them.

The actor also has a growing art collection by Chinese artists such as Lin Tianmiao and Su Xinping.

He says: "When I look at the artworks, I feel relaxed and very moved. I'm inspired to continue working as an actor."

Kit Chan, 34, who has been appointed to NHB's main board, thinks the diversity of the appointments is a good thing.

She says: "Some of us are not your typical 'serious' or authoritative figures. But I

think that is precisely why we were invited in the first place. A balance of points of view, perspectives, the different backgrounds and contacts we come with make the new boards more diverse and dynamic."

Others already have plans. Dick Lee, 51, who joined the board overseeing the National Museum, is mooted the idea of a glamorous gala dinner, like the famous one at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

He says: "I would like to make the museum more active, bring more people in, and, in general, make it more stylo."

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