

New high-tech art storage in Changi

International auction house Christie's will take up about 40 per cent of it

deepika shetty

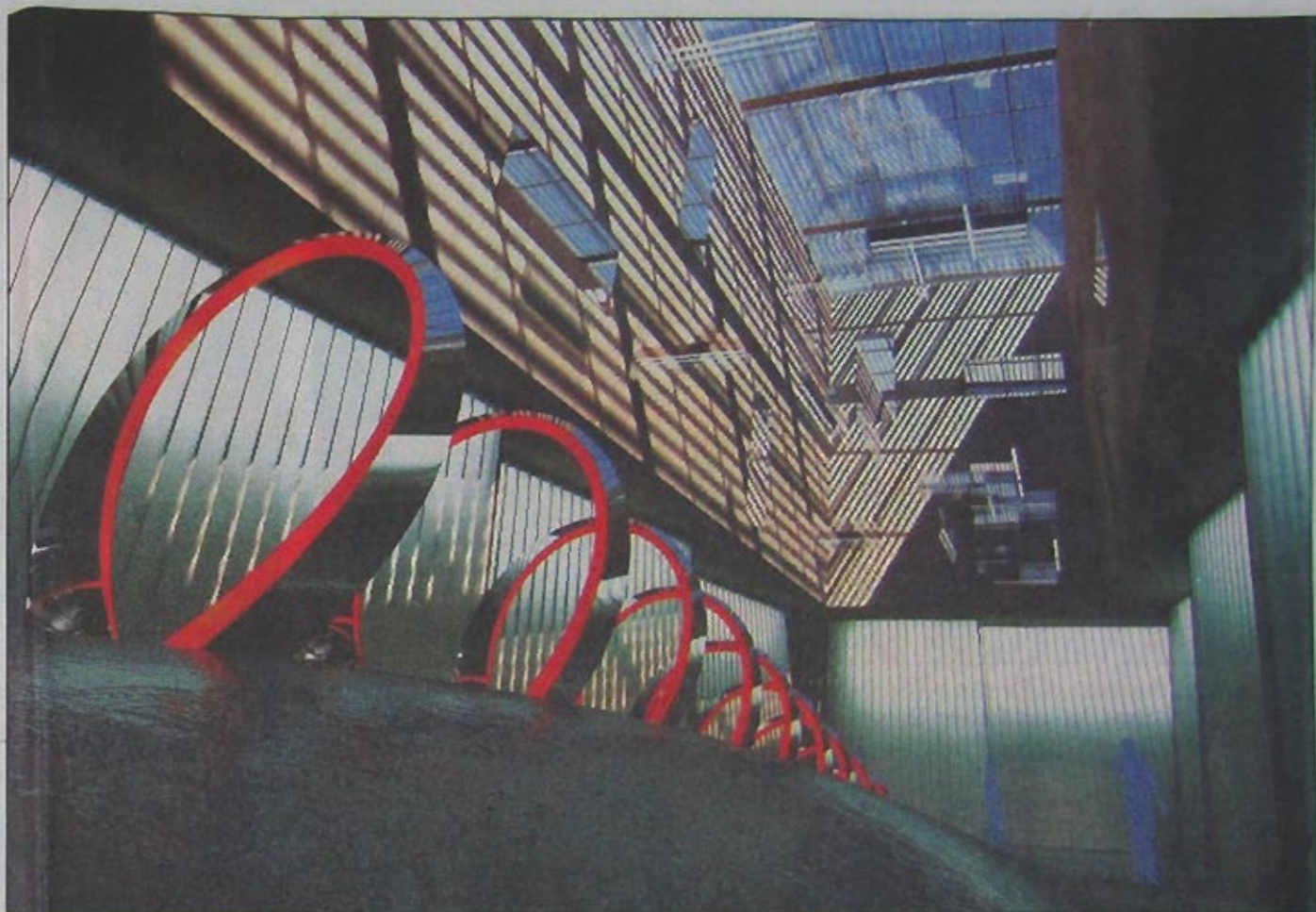
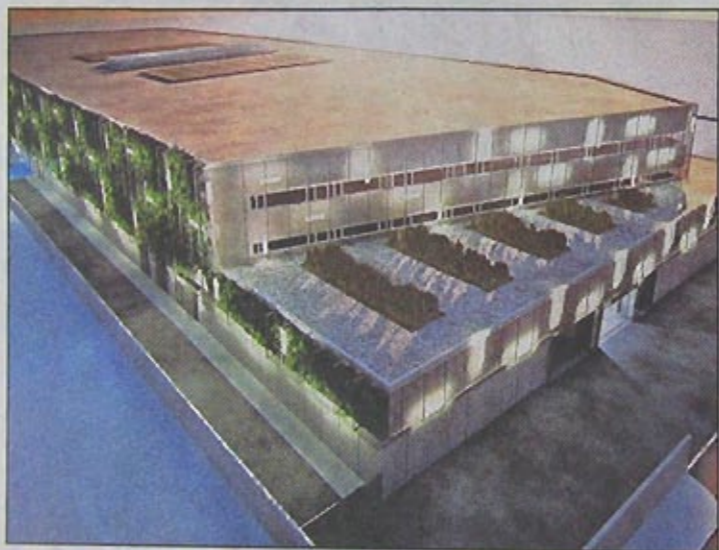
A \$70-million storage facility will be opening near Changi Airport in January next year, giving art collectors here and in the region a place to park their pieces.

It is being built by Singapore FreePort, a company which operates a round-the-clock free trade zone modelled after the Swiss Freeports in Zurich and Geneva.

The facility, located near the airport's Terminal 3, offers 22,500 sq m of storage space, about the equivalent of five football fields. Some 40 per cent of it will be taken up by auction house Christie's.

There will also be a phase two of the project. To be completed in 2014, it will offer another 24,000 sq m of space and cost about \$70 million.

Mr Alain Vandenborre, 48, president and co-founder of The Singapore FreePort, said yesterday after signing an agreement with Christie's Fine Art Storage Service that Singapore is perfect for such



The exterior and interior design of the new Singapore FreePort, which will be connected to the airport for the quick and safe transfer of collectibles. The storage facility will have strong rooms and huge vaults and can store everything from artworks to vintage cars. ST PHOTOS: LIM WUI LIANG

a facility. "Nowhere else in the world can you find a country so secure, so stable and so supportive of the arts," he said.

Apart from an international name such as Christie's, other clients could include new art collectors from countries in the Middle East and Russia.

Shareholders in the project include Singapore's National Arts Council and the National Heritage Board and the project is supported by the Economic Development Board.

The Singapore FreePort will be direct-

ly connected to Changi Airport for the rapid and safe transfer of collections and valuables.

As the facility enjoys Free Trade Zone status, clients who store their artworks there will not pay duties or taxes until they leave the zone and enter customs territory for local consumption.

It will have strong rooms, huge vaults, showrooms and photo studios. It can store everything from art and diamonds to vintage cars and even cigars. Besides these, the building will also have support

features such as private viewing rooms, restoration workshops and offices for shipping agents.

It will boast cutting-edge security technologies. A high concrete wall surrounds the premises and it is patrolled by trained armed guards around the clock.

The security systems are said to be so sensitive that they will even be able to detect bird droppings hitting the building.

And before they check-in, the collectibles will undergo security checks to

ensure no prohibited objects such as firearms and drugs are hidden within.

Mr Lee Suan Hiang, National Arts Council chief executive, said: "This is a milestone development and will play a very important part in attracting high net worth art collectors to Singapore.

"It is a strong vote of confidence for Singapore and is a breakthrough for Asia. Apart from collectors, this will also help us attract key players in the art business."

deepikas@sph.com.sg