



40 UNDER 40 2016

Be they creators, entrepreneurs, champions for the marginalised or innovators ushering in scientific discovery, this year's spirited up-and-comers remind us that status quos are meant to be broken. Brought to you

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CYRIL WONG



As an openly gay poet, Cyril Wong has had to fight many battles in Singapore. "Censorship, homophobia, a conservative and small-minded prejudice against introspection in Singapore literature: These things shaped the lowest moments in my writing life — when publishers, media and other older writers did all they could to stop me from publishing what I wrote about," says Wong, whose works are unabashedly confessional and often political.

Despite these hurdles, Wong has emerged as one of Singapore's leading contemporary poets, with works published in international titles. The 2005 National Young Artist Award recipient was also recently named co-winner of the Singapore Literary Prize for English poetry for *The Lover's Inventory*, his latest collection of works.

While the country's literary scene is a lot more diverse now, Wong cautions we should never be complacent as "Singapore is a constant pendulum between mindless conservatism and a possible future of boundlessly intelligent liberalism".

Wong is also passionate about teaching and mentoring young writers, and has this to say to young creatives striking out on their own: "Be patient and learn to weather rejection because it will come in ways that are both professional and downright hurtful. There will always be people who hate you for who you are and what you do — learn to engage productively and compassionately with them."

