



Lee Man Fong

Self Portrait

1958

Oil on canvas

99 × 102 cm

Gift of Mr and Mrs Putra Masagung
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

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Look, Think and Connect!

1. In this painting, the artist depicts himself looking into a mirror as he paints. How would you describe his facial expression and posture?
2. Observe the objects surrounding the artist. Why do you think he chose to depict these objects?
3. Where do you think the artist is in the painting? What makes you say that?
4. If you could ask the artist three questions about this work, what would they be?
5. If you were an artist painting a self-portrait, what objects would you include in your painting? Why?

Artwork Story

In this painting, the artist Lee Man Fong is in his studio, surrounded by the tools and objects of his profession. The busts and plaster casts suggest his familiarity with the traditions of European art. Other influences are also apparent: the chrysanthemums, which are common motifs in Chinese ink paintings, reflect his interest in and understanding of classical Chinese ink aesthetics. The artist's light attire situates him in the tropical climate of Southeast Asia, the region he called home. This combination of subjects from both Eastern and Western cultures can be understood as a visual representation of the various cultural sources that influenced his works.

Visit **DBS Singapore Gallery 1** to view this artwork.

Artist's Biography

Lee Man Fong (1913–1988) was born in Guangzhou, China and moved to Singapore at an early age. To support his family, Lee drew cartoons for newspapers, painted billboards for advertising agencies, and briefly worked as an art editor for a Chinese newspaper in Jakarta before becoming a partner at an advertising agency in 1936. After the end of the Japanese Occupation, Dutch viceroy Hubertus van Mook recommended Lee for a scholarship to Holland. Lee spent six years studying art in the Netherlands, returned to Indonesia in 1952 and served as the curator of the presidential palace's art collection from 1961.

Find Out More:

Chng, Nai Wee. "Lee Man Fong." Biotechnics. http://biotechnics.org/2lee_man_fong.html (accessed 7 December 2021).



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Ouyang, Xing Yi, *Nanyang Huabo Li Man Feng*. Beijing: People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 1998.

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(accessed 7 December 2021).

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