

# Family Artful Conversations: Art & Identity

For children age 10 to 14 years old



Here are **three tips** for engaging an art conversation with children at home

- Take some time to look closely with your children and have them talk about their observations about the artwork.
- Follow up their observations with a question such as “What makes you think this way?”
- Look out for some visual elements found in the artwork. What shapes, colours and patterns can you see?

# Artwork 1

DBS Singapore Gallery 2



Chua Mia Tee  
*National Language Class*  
1959  
Oil on canvas, 112cm x 153cm  
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

## Let's explore! Looking at art through questions

1. Who do you think these people in this artwork are?
2. What do you think they are doing?
3. Look at the colours used in the artwork. How has the artist portrayed the mood of the place at that time?
4. Think about the number of languages you know. How does the ability to speak different languages shape your identity?
5. How do you think languages shape a country's identity?
6. Do you think having a "national language" is important?

# Artwork 1

DBS Singapore Gallery 2



Chua Mia Tee  
*National Language Class*  
1959  
Oil on canvas, 112cm x 153cm  
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

## About the artwork

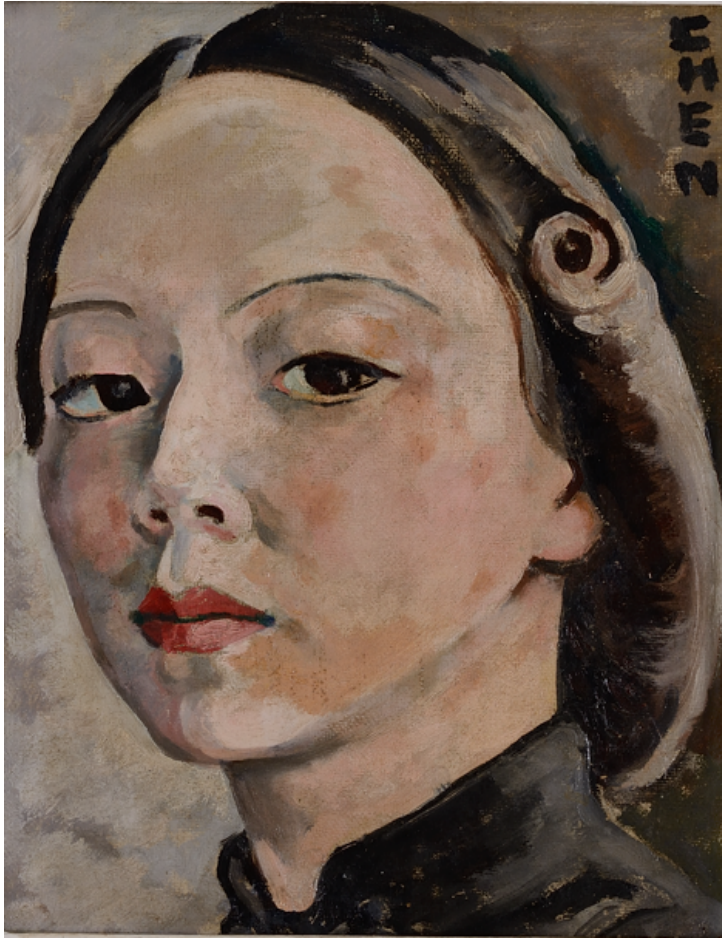
While *National Language Class* portrays a scene in a classroom, artist Chua Mia Tee communicates as an important historical event through the painting. At that time, the Ministry of Culture promoted Malay to become the national language of Singapore. Chua included many details, such as words on the blackboard and the students' facial expressions to highlight the painting's wider historical significance.

## About the artist

Chua Mia Tee and his family came to Singapore in 1937 to flee the Sino-Japanese conflict. Chua was six years old at the time. As a child, he often watched his father draw and developed an interest in painting and drawing at a young age. He created several paintings in the 1950s, a decade of political unrest in Singapore. *National Language Class* was one of the paintings he created to express his concerns for the society.

## Artwork 2

DBS Singapore Gallery 1



Georgette Chen  
*Self-Portrait*  
c. 1946  
Oil on canvas, 22.5cm x 17.5cm  
Gift of Lee Foundation  
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

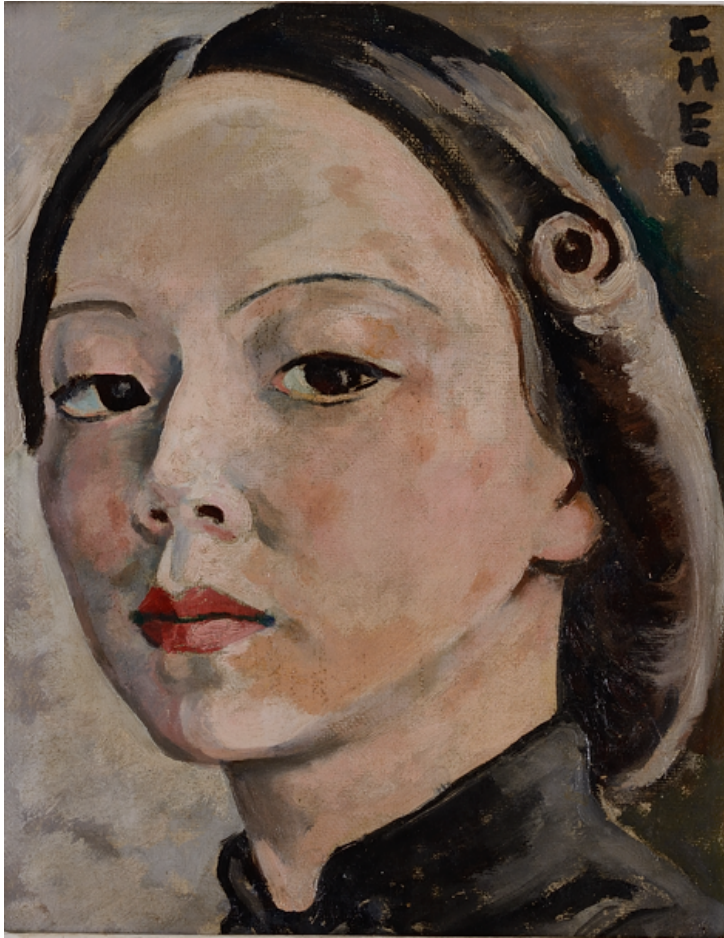
### Let's explore! Looking at art through questions

1. Describe the gaze of the individual in this painting. How would you describe her mood?
2. What do you think this lady is thinking about?
3. Why would an artist create a self-portrait?
4. Do you think a self-portrait should be created in the likeness of its painter? Why or why not?
5. If you had to create a self-portrait, how would you portray yourself and how would it reflect your identity?
6. If you have to construct a self-portrait in words, how would you describe yourself? How do you think others would describe you?



## Artwork 2

DBS Singapore Gallery 1



Georgette Chen  
*Self-Portrait*  
c. 1946  
Oil on canvas, 22.5cm x 17.5cm  
Gift of Lee Foundation  
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

### About the artwork

The lady in this portrait is the artist herself, Georgette Chen. It was painted two years after the passing of her husband, Eugene Chen. In this portrait, she gazes directly at us, neither smiling nor frowning, her chin raised ever so slightly. She seems to have an air of confidence. In the 1920s, Georgette Chen had become known in Paris for her collection of earlier works.

### About the artist

Georgette Chen led an exciting life. She lived and studied in Paris, New York and Shanghai, later coming to Southeast Asia where she made Singapore her home. It was in Singapore that she created some of her most recognised works-paintings of life in Singapore, from festivals in kampong to colourful tropical fruits. She also learned Malay and later, adopted a local name, Chendana, a play on the Malay word for sandalwood.



**How does art affect the way we view ourselves? Through the artworks discussed, you have learned how artists explore different facets of their identity through their work, and how a work of art can be used to express one's identity. Besides helping us to understand things from multiple perspectives, art also provides us with the opportunity to make sense of ourselves and the world we live in.**