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Media Release

A Journey Between the Worlds of Southeast Asia and Europe – The Extraordinary Lives and Works of Raden Saleh and Juan Luna

*An unprecedented showcase of masterpieces from around the world by two of
Southeast Asia's greatest painters gathered at National Gallery Singapore*

Singapore, 9 November 2017 – During the height of colonial rule in Southeast Asia in the 19th century, two young men from Indonesia and the Philippines sailed across the ocean to Europe, to train under great painters of their time. They steadily earned their place within European art worlds, and their successes there made them national heroes in their respective homelands.

From 16 November 2017, these two luminaries will be the subject of the exhibition ***Between Worlds: Raden Saleh and Juan Luna*** at National Gallery Singapore. The exhibition unites, for the first time, an array of their masterpieces loaned from private and public collections around the world that traces their artistic journey from Southeast Asia to Europe and back again. It also tells of their struggle to reconcile their love of homeland with their ambitions in Europe, where they established their careers.

A Comparative Journey of Two 19th Century Masters from Southeast Asia

Despite hailing from different countries and being active at different times of the 19th century, the artists shared a similar journey as Southeast Asian artists who received opportunities to hone their craft in Europe.

Raden Saleh (c.1811 – 1880) – Conferred the title of “King’s Painter” by King Willem III of the Netherlands, Raden Saleh was the first Indonesian artist to receive training in Europe, from landscape, genre and portrait artists from the Netherlands. He went on to receive acclaim in Germany and Paris for his signature Orientalist animal hunts and fights. A leading example is *Boschbrand* (Forest Fire) (1849), on display at the Gallery’s UOB Southeast Asia Gallery. This immense painting of 3 x 4 meters depicts a dramatic scene of animals chased by flames over the edge of a precipice.

Juan Luna (1857 – 1899) Taken under the wing of Spanish painter Alejo Vera, the Filipino artist Juan Luna studied in Madrid and Rome. His painting *Spoliarium* earned him fame in Spain and won him the First Class Medal in Spain’s annual art exhibition in Madrid in 1884. Luna then moved to Paris, participating in the salons there while exhibiting and accepting commissions in Spain.

Titled *Between Worlds: Raden Saleh and Juan Luna* to signify the artists’ lives between Europe and their home countries, this exhibition takes an exploratory look at each artist’s work

over their illustrious careers across different time periods. It examines their ability to work with varied techniques learned from European artists and how their work developed over time, while offering an insight into their lives as Southeast Asian artists working in Europe.

Dr Eugene Tan, Director of National Gallery Singapore said, “Raden Saleh and Juan Luna are two of the earliest and most significant artists who propelled the prestige of Southeast Asian art around the world in the 19th century. Given the National Gallery Singapore’s commitment to furthering the understanding of Southeast Asian art globally, we are excited to be organising this extensive exhibition featuring their paintings from across the world. *Between Worlds* will enable the works of Saleh and Luna to become more accessible to our audiences while furthering our understanding of the art histories of Southeast Asia in the 19th century.”

Bringing the World to National Gallery Singapore

The exhibition is a culmination of four years of effort by the Gallery’s curators – Russell Storer, Clarissa Chikiamco and Syed Muhammad Hafiz – to bring together more than 100 paintings, drawings and archival materials from Southeast Asian, European and American museums and private collections, for the very first time.

Russell Storer, Deputy Director, Curatorial & Collections of National Gallery Singapore said, “Raden Saleh and Juan Luna have works in the collections of some of the world’s leading museums. In bringing this extraordinary group of works together, we have worked closely with these museums as well as private collectors, libraries and archives. With their support, we have been able to shape a rich and expansive exhibition that will enable people to learn about the remarkable lives and careers of Raden Saleh and Juan Luna, and to appreciate the impact they made in the art worlds in Europe as well as in Southeast Asia.”

With close collaboration with specialists on Raden Saleh and Juan Luna and 19th century Southeast Asian history, the exhibition endeavours to further the study of both artists, including new insights on their work, their lives, and their influence on modern art in their respective countries.

Significant artworks in the exhibition include two landscape paintings of Java by Raden Saleh from the collection of the Smithsonian, on public display for the first time; as well as the spectacular *Arab Horseman Attacked by a Lion* (1842).



[From left] Raden Saleh, *Six Horsemen Chasing a Deer* 1860, Collection of Smithsonian American Art Museum; and Raden Saleh, *Arab Horseman Attacked by a Lion*. 1842. Private collection

Highlights of the Juan Luna works on display include *Cleopatra* (1881) - a dramatic depiction of Cleopatra's death which won him his first major prize in Europe; and *Les Ignorés* (The Unknown Ones) (1890-91), one of his major surviving works in Realism that marked a shift in his focus from historical paintings to paintings that reflect contemporary social realities.



[From left] Juan Luna, *Cleopatra*, Collection of Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, Spain; and Juan Luna, *Les Ignorés* (The Unknown Ones), Collection of Biblioteca Museu Víctor Balaguer, Vilanova i la Geltru, Spain

Between Worlds: Raden Saleh and Juan Luna will be held at the Singtel Special Exhibitions Gallery. Ms Chua Sock Koong, Group CEO of Singtel, the Lead Sponsor of the exhibition said, "As Asia's leading telecommunications group, we are pleased to support this fascinating exhibition which throws the spotlight on two extraordinary Southeast Asian artists who gained recognition in the foremost art capitals in Europe and shaped the art history of this region. We hope visitors will enjoy their works which reflect their experiences living between two diverse cultures and societies, and exemplify the strength of Southeast Asian art."

The exhibition is part of *Century of Light*, a special presentation of two exhibitions focusing on art of the 19th century. The complementary exhibition, *Colours of Impressionism: Masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay* traces the history of Impressionism through the theme of colour, and features important works by masters such as Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir and Paul Cézanne. Both exhibitions will be held from 16 November 2017 to 11 March 2018.

Entry to the exhibition costs \$15 for Singaporeans and Permanent Residents, and \$25 for non-Singaporeans. Concessions rates are also available at \$10 and \$20 respectively.

Century of Light is supported by Lead Sponsor Singtel, Major Sponsor Changi Airport Group, Official Radio Stations 88.3Jia FM & Power 98FM and Supporters Air France, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and the Tote Board Group which comprises the Tote Board, Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club.

For more information about the exhibition, please visit www.nationalgallery.sg/centuryoflight.

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About National Gallery Singapore

National Gallery Singapore is a visual arts institution which oversees the largest public collection of modern art in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Situated in the heart of the Civic District, the Gallery is housed in two national monuments—City Hall and former Supreme Court—that have been beautifully restored and transformed into this exciting venue. Reflecting Singapore’s unique heritage and geographical location, the Gallery features Singapore and Southeast Asian art from Singapore’s National Collection in its long-term and special exhibitions. The Gallery also works with international museums to jointly present Southeast Asian art in the global context, positioning Singapore as a regional and international hub for the visual arts.

In 2016, the Gallery won the awards for “Best Attraction Experience”, “Breakthrough Contribution to Tourism” and “Best Customer Service (Attractions)” at the prestigious Singapore Tourism Awards for its role in adding to the vibrancy of Singapore’s tourism landscape.