

MEDIA RELEASE

ART ALL AROUND YOU – DISCOVER SCULPTURE ANEW THROUGH LANDMARK SURVEY

*First major exhibition in 30 years traces sculpture's evolution over two centuries through
iconic and never-before-seen works*



Singapore, 21 July 2022 – From national monuments and local landmarks to even temporary installations, sculpture enlivens spaces from our shopping malls to the Central Business District. Visitors can now get up-close and learn more about the significance of this key art form at National Gallery Singapore's latest exhibition, ***Nothing is Forever: Rethinking Sculpture in Singapore***. The exhibition is set to take visitors on an intriguing journey of how sculpture, so prevalent in our local urban landscape, has helped shape art and even Singapore society as we know today. The first major sculpture exhibition in 30 years, *Nothing is Forever* will delight and surprise visitors as they immerse themselves in the realm of three-dimensional art to uncover the evolution of local sculptural practices in a **free-for-all** exhibition, held from 29 July 2022 to 5 February 2023.

Nothing is Forever traces the changing definitions of sculpture in Singapore from the 19th century till present day, as it also celebrates the significance of this artistic medium and its impact on our local artistic landscape. From funerary artefacts recovered from Bukit Brown

Cemetery to artworks created from everyday items and modern works that challenge traditional definitions of sculpture, the exhibition will intrigue visitors with the shifts over the making and thinking of this three-dimensional medium.

Dr. Eugene Tan, Director of National Gallery Singapore, says, “By presenting the first major local survey on sculpture in 30 years, the Gallery seeks to expand scholarship and raise awareness of Singapore’s vibrant art history. Drawing from historical and cultural references alongside ground-breaking artistic practices, *Nothing is Forever* spotlights sculpture’s pivotal role in the development of Singapore’s art landscape through surprising and novel sculptural forms beyond familiar solid mediums. We hope this exhibition intrigues visitors and prompts them to view sculpture through renewed lenses, and inspires them to realise that art is all around us.”

Rethinking sculpture with new perspectives: Exhibition sections and highlights

The exhibition’s title *Nothing is Forever* is drawn from a quote by Singaporean contemporary artist Tang Da Wu. The co-founder of Singapore’s first arts colony, The Artists Village in 1988, Tang questioned and expanded the notion of sculpture to consider ephemeral elements such as light, wind, and rain as materials for sculpture, apart from typically sturdy materials such as bronze. Similarly, this exhibition challenges boundaries of what defines sculpture by presenting new forms which were not previously recognised as sculpture.

Some sculptures see a repurposing of everyday objects, such as Lim Leong Seng’s *New Era* (1976, remade 2022), a column of air-filled plastic bags attached to a string and suspended from the ceiling of The Spine Hall. Reflecting on a new era in time when plastic bags had been introduced to Singapore, Lim repurposes these humble disposable receptacles into aesthetic objects. Meanwhile, seminal contemporary artist Tang Da Wu’s remake of *Cloud of ’68* (1971, remade 2022) remarks on the student riots he witnessed in Paris in 1968 through an assemblage of bricks and metalwire.

Audiences can also expect to see welcome elements of the familiar, ranging from religious figures to national icons. For the first time, Hindu temple sculptures donated by the Hindu Endowments Board are presented within a fine art context and suggested as important components of Singapore’s modern art history. The Merlion makes an appearance through Ang Song Nian’s work *Your Blank Stare Left Me at Sea* (2013), a collection of Merlion memorabilia figurines which reflect upon Singapore’s search for a national identity. Finally,

visitors to *Nothing is Forever* will see a maquette, or miniature preliminary model, of Ng Eng Teng's *Mother and Child* (1996) which sits by the Gallery's façade facing the Padang.

The exhibition presents a range of works that encapsulate its pursuit of rethinking sculptural practices and forms. These aspects are brought to life in the show's displays of performative and installative works such as Lee Wen's *Journey of a Yellow Man No. 2: The Fire and The Sun* (1992). A leading performance artist, Lee Wen had participated in the International Sculpture Symposium in Gulbarga, Karnataka, India in 1992. Having bore witness to social crises during his visit, he combined the mediums of sculpture and performance to remark on their 'usefulness'. Presented in a series of photographs, viewers see Lee Wen—with his body painted yellow—mid-movement as a fleeting object moving through the wheat fields of the surrounding area.

The exhibition's works reside within four thematic sections—Power, The Spiritual, The Corporeal, and Making, Unmaking and Remaking—allowing visitors to trace the changing roles and functions of sculpture over time. Beginning with Power, audiences will discover the perennial role sculpture has played in our society and urban environment. The subsequent sections, The Spiritual and The Corporeal, reveal the medium's representations of culture, spirituality and sacrality, along with artists' explorations into portraying the human form. In the final section Making, Unmaking and Remaking, the exhibition reveals how artists pushed the boundaries of technique and materiality, defying traditional definitions of sculpture in myriad ways.

Additionally, the exhibition celebrates the rich history of sculptural practices within Southeast Asia, honing in on the six ASEAN Sculpture Gardens located in public parks situated in various regional capitals: Bandar Seri Bagawan, Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, and Singapore. A project that commenced in 1981 to help foster and symbolise regional cultural solidarity among ASEAN member countries, each site features commissioned works by artists of the six nations. As part of *Nothing is Forever*, the Gallery is presenting a 360-degree video interactive installation which takes visitors on a journey around the region to virtually explore the ASEAN Sculpture Gardens. From 29 July, visitors will be able to virtually explore Singapore's ASEAN Sculpture Garden, located at Fort Canning Park—the first Sculpture Garden to be spotlighted via the interactive feature. Throughout the exhibition, new interactive journeys focused on the various ASEAN Sculpture Gardens will be introduced. Visitors may access this experience via a physical installation located at The Spine Hall, or on the web via the exhibition website nationalgallery.sg/nothingisforever.

Curatorial programmes, talks and tours

Visitors interested in exploring the dynamic landscape of sculpture in Singapore can attend public programmes such as curatorial tours. They may also learn more about *Nothing is Forever* and its related programmes via the *Art Journeys* function at <https://web.nationalgallery.sg/> or through the Gallery's new interactive Activity Cube and Digital Self-Service Kiosks. Audio guides are available in English.

Nothing is Forever: Rethinking Sculpture in Singapore runs from 29 July 2022 to 5 February 2023 at National Gallery Singapore's Ngee Ann Kongsi Concourse Gallery and The Spine Hall, both located within the Level B1 Basement Concourse in the City Hall Wing. Admission is free for all visitors, including non-Singaporeans.

More information can be found in the following annex or visit the website for the latest updates on the exhibition. Media assets are available via this [link](#).

- *Annex A – Nothing is Forever: Rethinking Sculpture in Singapore Exhibition Sections and Artwork Highlights*

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About National Gallery Singapore

National Gallery Singapore is a leading visual arts institution which oversees the world's largest public collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian modern art. Situated at the birthplace of modern Singapore, 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 64,000 square metre venue. Reflecting Singapore's unique heritage and geographical location, the Gallery aims to be a progressive museum that creates dialogues between the art of Singapore, Southeast Asia and the world to foster and inspire a creative and inclusive society. This is reflected in our collaborative research, education, long-term and special exhibitions, and innovative programming. The Gallery also works with international museums such as Centre Pompidou, Musée d'Orsay, Tate Britain,

National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (MOMAT) and National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA), to jointly present Southeast Asian art in the global context, positioning Singapore as a key node in the global visual arts scene.

In 2020, the Gallery was the only museum in Southeast Asia that received a ranking in The Art Newspaper's annual global survey of attendance at art museums, taking 20th place. It was the first museum in Asia to receive the Children in Museums Award by the European Museum Academy and Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums in 2018. The Gallery also won the awards for "Best Theme Attraction" at TTG Travel Awards 2017, "Best Attraction Experience", "Breakthrough Contribution to Tourism" and "Best Customer Service (Attractions)" at the prestigious Singapore Tourism Awards in 2016 for its role in adding to the vibrancy of Singapore's tourism landscapes.

Annex A: *Nothing is Forever: Rethinking Sculpture in Singapore Exhibition Sections and Artwork Highlights*

SECTION 1: POWER

Highlight work



Anthony Poon. *Colourdance*. 1987. Acrylic on canvas over wood relief, 200 x 200 x 10.5 cm. Gift of the National Arts Council. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Anthony Poon created the sensation of movement using overlapping layers of canvasses that had been shaped and pristinely coloured. *Colourdance* was one of the winning entries of a competition held in 1986 by the Ministry of Community Development and the National Theatre Trust. Such competitions were significant in enabling the production of many large-scale site-specific artworks.

About this section

The first section, Power, takes visitors on a journey through Singapore's urban landscape, highlighting iconic public monuments and sculptural commissions around the island to reveal sculpture's impact on architecture and society. Through the archival materials related to Rodolfo Nolli, an Italian sculptor who came to Singapore in the late 1920s, Singaporeans can appreciate the contributions of our forefathers towards the building of landmarks such as City Hall and Former Supreme Court, now home to National Gallery Singapore. Pedestrians will also be surprised by a maquette, the preliminary model, of Ng Eng Teng's beloved *Mother and Child* (1996) which sits on the Gallery's façade.

SECTION 2: THE SPIRITUAL

Highlight work



S. Chandrasekaran. *Earth* #04. 1994. Terracota, 21 x 20 x 4.5 cm. Collection of the artist.

This terracotta sculpture was made during his apprenticeship in India in 1994. His use of clay obtained from earth sourced in India, embodies fragility in the material itself, relating back to the Trimurti whereby Lord Brahma creates the universe, Lord Vishnu preserves it, and Lord Shiva destroys it to recreate a better one by removing its imperfections and illusions.

About this section

The Spiritual broadens definitions of sculpture through the influence of local culture and spiritualities. For the first time, Hindu temple sculptures donated by the Hindu Endowments Board are presented within a fine art context and suggested as components of Singapore's modern art history. These sculptures, which iconographies are rooted in religion, are juxtaposed against sculptures in the following section that embody artists' distinct interpretations of culture and spirituality, such as Goh Ee Choo's *Light, Knowledge, Structure* (1993). An installative work that prompts viewers to question the social and cultural constructs we live in, Goh used light to exemplify the spiritual experience to dispel darkness caused by ignorance.

SECTION 3: THE CORPOREAL

Highlight work




About this section

The Corporeal investigates how the physical human form has been a prime inspiration for artists to explore and advance ideas of representation, abstraction and even time-based concepts of sculpture. It features works like Latvian-born Dora Gordine's *Indian Head* (c.1930-1933), representative of the artist's explorations into portrayals of our Southeast Asian population, and photo documentation of Singapore artist Lee Wen's performance, *Journey of a Yellow Man No. 2: The Fire and The Sun* (1992), wherein the artist explored the 'usefulness' of sculpture and performance in

<p>Vincent Hoisington. <i>Entrepreneur</i>. c. 1969. Polyurethane paint on aluminium, 180 x 104 x 14 cm. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.</p> <p>This work is a significant example of Hoisington’s technique of working with industrially supplied aluminium from 1955 onward. The metal sheet has been shaped precisely to create contours and patterns in high relief, the myriad shades of polyurethane paint emphasizing metallic qualities of the base material.</p>	<p>relation to ongoing environmental and social crises.</p>
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SECTION 4: MAKING, UNMAKING AND REMAKING

<p>Highlight work</p>  <p>Ng Eng Teng. <i>Growth Form</i>. 1962. Ciment fondu, 46 x 53 x 60 cm. National University of Singapore Museum Collection.</p> <p>By interlocking formal elements that embody both solidity and space, the work threw out conventional ideas that sculpture had to be a solid monolith. Cast using ciment fondu, the spherical form split open in the middle, from which a wedge-like form emerges, pointed upwards—captures both solidity and space.</p>	<p>This final section of the exhibition explores how artists galvanised the evolution and new forms of sculpture and modern art history in Singapore. They did so through the use of non-conventional presentations and materials, steering away from traditional ways of thinking about art by re-examining attributes previously used to define sculpture. A highlight work within this section is Lim Leong Seng’s <i>New Era</i> (1977), which is comprised of air-filled plastic bags attached to a string and suspended from the ceiling of The Spine Hall. Through the work, Lim transforms these ubiquitous aspects of daily life into contemplative receptacles.</p>
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