

For immediate release

Media Release

**Award winning director Anthony Chen reveals his favourite
Masterpiece from National Gallery Singapore’s collection**

Singapore, 8 April 2015 – Georgette Chen’s *Self Portrait* (1946) is arguably one of her most recognisable creations. Through the artwork’s three dimensional quality and realism, the artist was captured in a moment in time, her emotions laid bare on her face.

It is no wonder that award winning Singaporean director, Anthony Chen, was irresistibly attracted to this artwork, and calls it his favourite artwork in the Gallery’s collection.

“I’ve always been drawn to self-portraits. They reflect so much about an artist’s perception of oneself. There is a wonderful ambiguity in her expression. You see an inner strength and determination in her eyes, but at the same time sadness. Might it come from the fact that it was painted a year after the world war in 1946, or perhaps the recent loss of her husband?” mused Anthony.



Award winning Singaporean director, Anthony Chen



Georgette Chen. *Self Portrait*. 1946. Oil on canvas, 22.5 x 17.5 cm. Gift of Lee Foundation. Collection of National Gallery Singapore. Image courtesy of National Heritage Board.

In her self-portrait, Georgette is dressed in a dark cheongsam that resonates with her dark hair tied in a curled bun. Light appears to fall from the right of the image, creating highlights and reflections on her garment, hair and the left side of her face. Subtle shades of grey define the shadows on the arch of her neck and right cheek. With the dark garment and hair, the artist was able to bring out the glow on her face in this painting, giving it prominence and attention.

“I love the details in what is seemingly a very simple portrait: the curls on her fringe, the bright red lipstick, the patterns on the collar of her cheongsam dress. Focusing on details, the small things, has very much been a part of my filmmaking, which is why it speaks to me immediately. This painting really grows on you, and it keeps you wanting to gaze at her so much.” Said Anthony.

One of Singapore’s most famous artists, Georgette is known for her Post-Impressionist style oil paintings. She was a forerunner of the local visual arts scene, and contributed to the birth of the Nanyang School in Singapore.

As one of Singapore’s leading directors, Anthony Chen put Singapore on the global filmmaking map with his first feature film effort, *Ilo Ilo*, which is also the first Singaporean film to win the coveted Camera d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2013. Since then, the film has won numerous awards including the Sutherland Prize for the Best First Film at the London Film Festival, and Anthony also made history by becoming the first Singaporean to win Best Film and Best New Director at the 50th Golden Horse Awards in Taipei.

“My Masterpiece” showcases a different artwork every month throughout 2015, with the campaign having already unveiled popular MediaCorp artiste Joanne Peh, celebrity chef Willin Low, one of Singapore’s most distinguished writers, Professor Edwin Thumboo, with their favourite artworks from the Gallery. The collection of works encompasses diverse periods marking key moments in the art histories of Singapore and Southeast Asia. They will be introduced to the public by well-known personalities from all walks of life, and will be featured in the Gallery’s permanent galleries when it opens to the public.

Georgette Chen’s *Self Portrait* (1946) will be exhibited in the DBS Singapore Gallery when the Gallery opens in November this year. You can find view Anthony’s thoughts on *Self Portrait* and find more information about the artwork on the Gallery’s Facebook page [here](#).

Educating and Inspiring Singaporeans

“My Masterpiece” is the first of an exciting line-up of initiatives and activities that will bring Singaporeans closer to their arts heritage. There will be numerous opportunities for the public to get sneak previews of the facilities and artworks on display before the Gallery opens.

The Gallery aims to capture the artistic spirit of Singapore and Southeast Asia. By sharing stories of our region’s distinctive art within the global context, we seek to be a leading visual arts institution that inspires and engages our people and our neighbours, creating a dialogue between the art of Singapore, Southeast Asia and the world. We also seek to encourage a deeper appreciation of art, and foster a greater sense of national and cultural pride.

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ABOUT NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

National Gallery Singapore is a new visual arts institution which oversees the largest public collection of modern art in Singapore and Southeast Asia. The Gallery is dedicated to collaborative research, education and exhibitions, highlighting the importance of modern art in Southeast Asia in a global context. The Gallery also provides a unique visitor experience through its outstanding collections and innovative programming, positioning Singapore as a regional and international hub for the visual arts.

Situated in the heart of the Civic District, the Gallery is housed in the City Hall and adjacent former Supreme Court building – two important heritage buildings, symbolic of Singapore’s history. Opening in November this year, the Gallery will be a leading civic and cultural destination established for the enrichment, enjoyment and engagement of Singapore residents and visitors from all over the world. Information on the National Gallery is available at www.nationalgallery.sg.

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