

**MEDIA RELEASE**



Liu Kang, *Life by the River*, 1975, oil on canvas, 126 x 203 cm, collection of National Heritage Board

***Exhibition on Notable Artist Liu Kang to Commemorate Centennial Year of his Birth***

Singapore, 28 July 2011 – To commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the birth of Liu Kang, a highly regarded and respected Singapore artist, the National Art Gallery, Singapore is organising *Liu Kang: A Centennial Celebration*. Featuring 100 artworks, sketches, writings and artefacts, the exhibition invites art enthusiasts and visitors alike to explore the life and mind of the prolific artist known for being one of the founders of the Nanyang movement. Visitors can also learn about his artistic beliefs and his insights on art and culture.

The late Liu Kang (1911 to 2004) played a key role in the development of Singapore's art scene. In 1952, along with Cheong Soo Pieng, Chen Chong Swee and Chen Wen Hsi, Liu made the historic field trip to Bali. The visual inspiration gathered then provided the

catalyst for some of his later works. In the eyes of many arts scholars, the Bali trip was regarded as a milestone event contributing to the birth of the Nanyang art style - an important juncture in Singapore's art history.

Liu dedicated more than 33 years of his life to art education. He played a leading role in promoting the arts to the community and served as the President of the Society of Chinese Artists for more than a decade. Although the society was located in Singapore, it united artists from all across Southeast Asia, including Thailand and Vietnam. He was also one of the founding members of the Singapore Art Society, which warmly welcomed anyone interested in art, regardless of ethnicity or nationality.

Mr Kwok Kian Chow, Director of the National Art Gallery, Singapore, said, "Believing that art is 'the spirit and soul of a people', Liu Kang emphasised the importance of raising artistic standards and art appreciation within the community. A key player in realising the Nanyang School in art, he played a strong and significant influence on the next generation of artists in Singapore. We are happy to put together this exhibition to showcase his distinctive painting style and legacy."

Launched in the conjunction with this exhibition is the Gallery's second title in the Asian Artist Series featuring the artistic talents of Southeast Asia. Entitled *Liu Kang: Colourful Modernist*, the monograph presents Liu Kang in his voyage as an astute observer, commentator and visionary of modernity in Singapore art history. The publication offers fresh insights on the artist's engagement with European and Chinese modernists in a Singaporean context. Previously unpublished archival photographs, along with 200 illustrations, are included in the publication.

For the first time, a range of limited-edition merchandise featuring Liu Kang's colourful artworks has also been specially produced for sale at the Museum Shops. More information on the publications and merchandise is available in Annex B and C.

*Liu Kang: A Centennial Celebration* is the latest in the series of research exhibitions organised by the Gallery, following *Realism in Asian Art*, *The Story of Yeh Chi Wei* and *Cheong Soo Pieng: Bridging Worlds* exhibitions held last year. These exhibitions enable the Gallery to garner audience reactions and feedback, while fine-tuning our ideas and concepts. Organised by the National Art Gallery, Singapore and supported by the National Heritage Board, the exhibition will be on display at the Singapore Art Museum from 29 July to 16 October 2011.

– END –

Please refer to the following Annexes for more information:

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### **Notes to Editor**

#### **About the National Art Gallery, Singapore**

The National Art Gallery, Singapore (*working title*) is a new visual arts institution which will contribute towards positioning Singapore as a regional and international hub for visual arts. It manages the world's largest public collection of modern Southeast Asian and Singapore art. The Gallery focuses on displaying, promoting and researching these artworks, relating them to the wider Asian and international contexts, and hosting international art exhibitions.

Situated in the heart of the Civic District, the City Hall and adjacent former Supreme Court building - two important heritage buildings symbolic of Singapore's nationhood - will be converted to house this exciting new visual arts venue. Slated to officially open in 2015, 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 Art Gallery is available at [www.nationalartgallery.sg](http://www.nationalartgallery.sg).

## **Annex A**

### Artist biography

Liu Kang was born in Yongchun, Fujian Province, China in 1911. When he was six, he moved to Muar, where he received his primary school education.

In 1926, Liu Kang returned to China to study at Jinan Academy (上海暨南大学附中). He attended a two-month vacation art course at the Shanghai College of Fine Arts (上海美术专科学校), during which his artistic talent was given recognition. Thereafter, he was admitted into the second year of the art programme at the college.

In 1928, Liu Kang joined the Xinhua Arts Academy (新华艺术专科学校). Upon graduation he went to Paris, attending classes at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière from 1928 – 33. During his stay in Paris, Liu Kang was greatly influenced by artists such as Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh and Henri Matisse.

Besides being an artist, Liu Kang was also involved in teaching. In 1933, he started on his first teaching job at the Shanghai College of Fine Arts, where he taught Western art. From 1937 – 42, he also taught art at Chung Cheng High School and the Nanchiau Teachers' Training School. Following the Japanese surrender in 1945, Liu Kang resumed teaching at Chung Cheng High School. Other schools he had previously taught at include the Chinese High School, Nanyang Girls' High School, Nan Hua Primary School and Dunman Government Chinese Middle School. Liu retired from teaching in 1971.

Liu Kang was also the president of the Society of Chinese Artists from 1946 – 58. He founded the Singapore Art Society in 1949 and was its president from 1968 – 79. He was also the chairman of the National Day Art Exhibition Committee from 1969 – 77 and of the Visual Arts Advisory Committee in the Ministry of Culture from 1978 – 81.

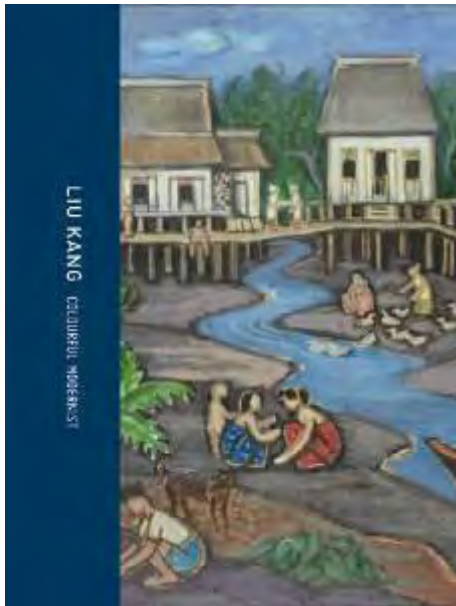
In 1952, Liu Kang, together with Cheong Soo Pieng, Chen Wen Hsi and Chen Chong Swee, went on a learning expedition to Bali. Following the trip, the group held the "Bali Exhibition" at the British Council Hall in Singapore. This exhibition has been widely perceived as marking the beginning of the Nanyang School.

Liu Kang received the Public Service Star Award in 1970 and was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in 1996. In 1999, he was awarded the title of Officier dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Order of Arts and Letters) for strengthening cultural exchange between France and Singapore.

In 2004, Liu Kang passed away at the age of 93.

## Annex B

Publications by the National Art Gallery, Singapore



### **Liu Kang: Colourful Modernist**

S\$42.05 (excl. GST)

Available at Museum Shop, Kinokuniya and Select Books

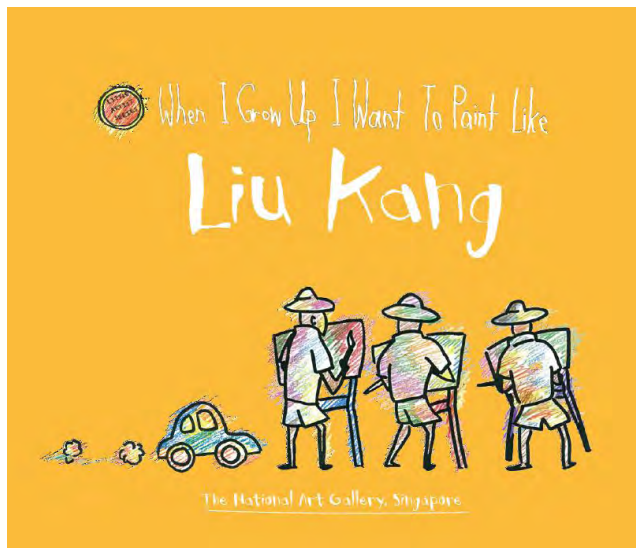
ISBN-13: 978-981-08-8675-2

284 pp.

This monograph positions Liu Kang, one of Singapore's first generation artists, as observer, commentator, and visionary of modernity in Singapore art history. The contexts in which his works were created consist of a colourful map of diverse cultures, places, influences, from China, Europe and Southeast Asia.

The cross-cultural richness in Liu Kang's way of seeing and art making are explored in four essays by curators and art researchers. These essays present fresh insights about the artist's engagement with European and Chinese modernisms in a Singaporean context.

The book also contains close to 200 colour illustrations and archival photographs as well as an index and a glossary



### **When I Grow Up I Want to Paint Like Liu Kang**

S\$9.63 (excl. GST)

Available at Museum Shop, Kinokuniya and Select Books

ISBN: 978-981-08-7997-6

36 pp.

The book introduces the world of Singapore artist Liu Kang to young children ages four and above through fun and engaging ideas and activities.

The influence of cultural heritage and art from Europe and Asia is found everywhere in Liu Kang's colourful and lively paintings. Making pop-up pictures and creating one's very own Balinese headdress provide opportunities for play-based learning about different cultures. The book can be used at home or in the classroom.

Biographical information and colour images about the artist and his works are included. A glossary pitched at young readers is also included.



## Liu Kang: Essays on Art and Culture

S\$28.88 (excl. GST)

Available at Museum Shop, Kinokuniya and Select Books

ISBN-13: 978-981-08-7675-3

256 pp.

*Liu Kang: Essays on Art and Culture* is a testament to the inexorable passion of an artist who knew no boundaries. This collection of essays, which Liu Kang wrote over 44 years, offers an insight into the artist's myriad interests: interior design, music, literature, dance, photography, medical science, and the visual arts.

Throughout the essays, Liu Kang's contributions as a first generation Nanyang artist and art educator come to the fore through his thoughts and ideas about art societies, exhibitions, artists, the development of art education, and the growth of art in Singapore and the region.

Liu Kang wrote his essays in Chinese. They have been translated into English for this volume, and are accompanied by commentaries that help contextualise one's reading. This volume also contains snapshots of the artist's life – from old photographs of Liu Kang travelling or painting, to that of the people he wrote about in his essays.



## 刘抗 -文集新编

S\$28.88 (不包括消费税)

在Museum Shop, Kinokuniya 与 Select Books 出售

ISBN-13 : 978-981-08-8099-6

页数：256 页

《刘抗-文集新编》见证了一位激情无限的艺术家的跨越四十四年的文章，让我们洞见新加坡第一代艺术家刘抗多方面的兴趣：室内设计、音乐、文学、舞蹈、摄影、医学与视觉艺术。

为第一代南洋艺术家兼艺术教育家的刘抗，他的贡献通过他对艺术协会、画展、艺术家、发展艺术教育和发展新加坡与区域艺术的感想与意见，脱颖而出。

这本文集，不只包罗一位艺术家的思维，也表露了一位艺术开拓者的热忱。《刘抗：文集新编》同时也辅以评述，以及刘抗生活点滴的照片。

## Annex C

### Merchandise produced in conjunction with the exhibition



**Liu Kang's Abstract Fish Shawl**

100% Wool

Retail Price **S\$108.00**



**Liu Kang's Boats Shawl**

100% Wool

Retail Price **S\$108.00**



**Liu Kang's artworks  
Acrylic Fridge Magnet**

Acrylic

Retail Price **S\$8**



### **Liu Kang's Abstract Fish**

Polyester

#### **Tie Box set with Cufflink & Pocket Square**

Retail Price **S\$108**

#### **Tie**

Retail Price **S\$88**



### **Liu Kang's Souri Printed Ladies Tee**

Cotton Mix

(Available in S, M, L, XL)

Retail Price **S\$32**



### **Liu Kang's Abstract Fish iPhone 4 Back Cover**

Plastic

Retail Price **S\$10**



### Art-to-Go

Collector Satin Canvas **(Un-stretch)**  
Up to A1 Size

Retail Price **S\$180**



Collector Satin Canvas **(Stretched)**  
Up to A1 Size

Retail Price **S\$280**



### Liu Kang's Artworks Postcards

ArtCard Paper

Retail price **S\$2 per piece**

