

For immediate release

Media Release

JJ Lin Breaks the Mould with Lee Wen's Art

Singapore, 16 September 2015 – Mandopop star JJ Lin today added art ambassador to his multi-hyphenated title after becoming the latest to be appointed by National Gallery Singapore. Under the Gallery's *My Masterpiece* series, JJ selected Lee Wen's *Journey of A Yellow Man No. 11: Multi-culturalism* – an artwork that resonated with his life as a travelling artiste who produces music for an international audience.

“As a Singaporean living in a foreign city, I often find myself having to work much harder to connect on the same level with the local people,” said JJ. “Through music, I can express a part of a persona in different states of emotion, many times contrasting ones. And from the stillness of the subject in the tub, it makes me reflect, to always find balance in this ever-changing and fast-moving modern society.”

Going against the grain of cookie-cutter pop culture, the award-winning singer-songwriter has overcome all odds, including vocal cord injuries, to win the hearts of millions of fans. Mirroring his experience, JJ found that the subject painted yellow and curled up in a tub portrayed a strong sense of oppression amidst the struggle to break free from stereotypes. He added that “the [artist's] act of washing away the yellow paint reminds [him] to always go back to [his] roots, for self-realisation and growth”.



JJ Lin



Lee Wen. *Journey of A Yellow Man*
No. 11: Multi-Culturalism. 1997

Digital giclee print, 101.6 x 144.8 cm. Collection of National Gallery Singapore. Image courtesy of National Heritage Board.

The artwork (1997) is the documentation of a performance by artist Lee Wen during the Sept Fest Art Conference titled *Multiculturalism in Singapore: In Practice and on Paper*. The performance began with Lee presenting a monologue that critiqued the curatorial choices of an exhibition titled *Singapore Art 97*. In that exhibition, Lee contended that ink and watercolour artists were overrepresented, whilst performance, installation and experimental artists were absent. In his lecture, Lee raised several issues, ranging from the regimes that define art to the types of art that secure patronage and recognition. The final moments of the performance saw the artist stripping to his briefs, climbing into a bathtub and washing off the yellow paint on his body, performing a sort of a ritualistic expression of conflict and contradiction.

Lee's work has been strongly motivated by social investigations and psychological examinations about stereotypical perceptions of culture and society. He is a pioneer performance artist in Singapore best known for his Yellow Man performances which explore, interrogate and subvert ethnicity, the ethnic body, and the definition of artistic systems.

For the rest of this year, the Gallery will continue to unveil significant artworks which encompass diverse periods, marking key moments in the art histories of Singapore and Southeast Asia. The artworks were created by important artists from the region and personally chosen by 12 Singapore personalities who express their unique connection with these artworks. The other ambassadors in the *My Masterpiece* campaign are popular MediaCorp actress Joanne Peh, celebrity chef Willin Low, distinguished writer Professor Edwin Thumboo, comedian Kumar Chinnadurai, entrepreneurs Elim Chew and Olivia Lum, *Illo Illo* director Anthony Chen and actor-comedian Suhaimi Yusof. You can view JJ Lin's video and find out more information about Lee Wen's *Journey of A Yellow Man No. 11: Multi-Culturalism* 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 leading up to the opening of the National Gallery Singapore in November 2015. 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. The Gallery also seeks 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 of 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 art presentations and innovative programming, positioning Singapore as a regional and international hub for the visual arts.

Situated in the heart of the Civic District, the National Gallery Singapore has been beautifully restored and transformed from the former Supreme Court and City Hall buildings – two important heritage buildings of Singapore’s nationhood – into an exciting new visual arts venue. Opening on 24 November 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 Gallery is available at www.nationalgallery.sg.

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