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Media Release

**Labour of Love: National Gallery Singapore and
Channel NewsAsia Present The Worlds of Georgette Chen**

*Cast, crew and producers' efforts create a fascinating and insightful look into the life of
one of Singapore's most renowned painters*

Singapore, 24 April 2015 – Presented by National Gallery Singapore, *The Worlds of Georgette Chen*, a three-part docudrama, will be broadcast on Channel NewsAsia from 29 April 2015. Georgette Chen (1906 – 1993), one of Singapore's most prominent pioneer artists, was not only a prolific oil painter but had also contributed immensely to the education of many Singapore artists.

A labour of love saw tremendous commitment from the cast, producers and crew, and every effort possible was made to ensure that the authenticity of the times and minutiae of Georgette's life were captured in brilliant detail. This included everything from locating rare mementoes such as Georgette's and her first husband Eugene Chen's letters seeking her father Zhang Jingjiang's approval of their marriage; the family's postcards exchanged during their Paris and China days; rare photos of Georgette's last years; and even unearthing a rarely seen self-portrait of the artist. Georgette's neighbour, who shared the painting with producers of the docudrama, had known Georgette since his childhood days. He related many wonderful personal anecdotes and allowed the painting to be filmed, adding to Georgette's artistic legacy.

The production team also spared no effort in tracking down many of Georgette's friends and acquaintances, including Dorothy Chen-Courtin and her family who sat for Georgette's largest painting in the Gallery's collection. The Chens, who now live in the United States, shared interesting insights into Georgette's personality and painting process, and also allowed the use of a rare film on Georgette and the family captured in Penang in the 1950s.

The docudrama includes interviews with Georgette's nephew who lives in Beijing and Eugene Chen's grandson who is based in China. The series also includes extracts from the unpublished memoir of Georgette's sister, Helene, that provided insights into their childhood and Georgette's growing artistic talents.

"This project was a journey of discovery for all of us here at the Gallery. Even though we had reams of details about Georgette's life, being able to speak to the people who were her friends, relatives and acquaintances was a revelation," said Dr Eugene Tan, Director, National Gallery Singapore. "Their memories and shared experiences of Georgette brought her unique personality and precious talent to vivid life, painting a picture of Georgette that would not have been possible to do in any other way."

Painstaking efforts were made to recreate the details and characteristics of the different time periods of Georgette's life. This required the creation of sets for scenes set in Paris, New York, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Penang and Singapore within a limited time and budget, and which tested the design team's ingenuity and resourcefulness. An exhaustive search was made all over Singapore to find suitable props, wallpaper and furniture, while an old disused school was used to recreate different locations, such as the Hong Kong Hotel in Kowloon where Georgette and Eugene were arrested by the Japanese in the 1940s and the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in the 1950s.

"Channel NewsAsia's producers gave the programme the edge with deep research and authentic details," said Ms Debra Soon, Head, News & Premier, MediaCorp Pte Ltd. "They unearthed some otherwise unknown information and artefacts, including Georgette's husband's letters and finding her old neighbour in Siglap, who owned one of her self-portraits, and down to specifics like the vintage Morris Minor that she drove. This is the value of the collaborative efforts between our researchers and the Gallery, and it is heartening to note that we have helped contribute to the collective consciousness of the nation and to play our part in celebrating Singapore's 50th anniversary."

For MediaCorp actress Rui En, the role of Georgette Chen proved to be one of her most challenging to date. Rui En had to pick up several lines in Malay and French. She also had to juggle a hectic filming schedule while devoting time to learning the basics of sketching and painting. As a result, Rui En's effortless portrayal of Georgette parallels the artist's virtuosity.

Besides acting, Rui En had the opportunity to showcase her singing talent. Viewers will be delighted to hear the leading lady sing two Malay songs and a French lullaby in the series.

“It was a challenge as well as a privilege to play Georgette Chen because she was such an inspiration, with her own thoughts, ideals and indomitable will to be the best that she could be,” said Rui En. “This role has given me a greater appreciation for the visual arts, and I believe that viewers will be fascinated by the talent and determination of Singapore artists through this docudrama”.

The docudrama will be telecast at 8pm on 29 April, 6 May and 13 May 2015 on Channel NewsAsia. Artworks by Georgette Chen will be on display in the DBS Singapore Gallery when the Gallery opens.

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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 nationhood. Opening later 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.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Kevin Foo
Devries Global for the National Gallery Singapore
Tel: 6825 8246
Email: kfoo@devriesglobal.com

Sybil Chiew
National Gallery Singapore
Tel: 6690 9446
Email: sybil.chiew@nationalgallery.sg