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Media Release

Le Pho's Artwork, a Perfect Fit for Ashley Isham

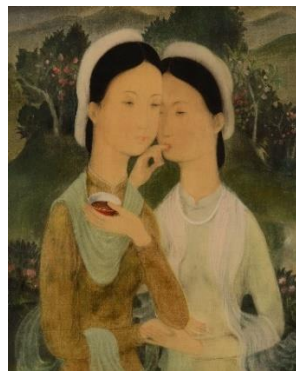
Singapore, 16 November 2015 – National Gallery Singapore marries fine art with high fashion with its reveal of award-winning fashion designer Ashley Isham as the latest ambassador for its *My Masterpiece* series. Acclaimed sartorialist and designer of haute couture Mr Ashley was struck by the sensual details in *Harmony in Green: The Two Sisters* by Vietnamese artist Le Pho and drew a personal connection in his journey of venturing alone overseas.

“Just like how Le Pho’s works have a distinctive Vietnamese soul, there’s a Singaporean flavour to my own designs,” said Mr Ashley. “The two ‘sisters’ also remind me of my two younger sisters. As a Singaporean living in London, my amazingly supportive family back in Singapore means a lot to me.”

A well-travelled, prominent designer with a dazzling clientele that includes stars like Lady Gaga, Christina Aguilera and Kylie Minogue, as well as British and international royalty, Mr Ashley is nonetheless strongly rooted to home through fond memories of Singapore, and continues to be inspired by its urban garden landscape. Describing the depicted landscape, “The lush garden in the background reminds me of one place I will never forget – home.”



Ashley Isham



Le Pho. *Harmony in Green: The Two Sisters*. c. 1938.
Gouache on silk, 54 x 45 cm. Collection of National Gallery Singapore. Image courtesy of National Heritage Board.

The artwork (c. 1938) is a demonstration of the adaptive use of Western painting techniques on silk, now a medium associated with Vietnamese modern art. One of the masters of 20th century Vietnamese painting, Le Pho's artworks are among the most highly-prized and sought-after creations from his country.

In 1925, the artist enrolled in the École des beaux-arts d'Indochine (Indochina School of Fine Arts), Hanoi, Vietnam, founded by the French painter Victor Tardieu. Under the tutelage of Tardieu, Le Pho was introduced to practices new to Vietnamese art such as Western techniques of realistic painting in oils. To create their own distinctive modern style, the Vietnamese students at the art school also experimented with using local materials, such as silk and lacquer, to create their paintings. Le Pho's style was characterised by refinement and harmony.

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 Ashley Isham's video and find out more information about Le Pho's *Harmony in Green: The Two Sisters* 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.

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 in 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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