

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**National Art Gallery Mourns the Passing of Artist and Donor Wu Guanzhong**



Wu Guanzhong  
*Zhangjiajie* 张家界  
1997  
Ink and colour on paper  
145 x 368cm  
Gift of Wu Guanzhong  
National Heritage Board Collection

26 June 2010 - The National Art Gallery, Singapore and the Singapore Art Museum of the National Heritage Board is deeply saddened by the passing of renowned Chinese artist Mr Wu Guanzhong late Friday night at 11.57 pm in a Beijing Hospital on 25 June 2010. Wu passed away peacefully at the hospital together with his family members. He was 91 years of age.

2 On behalf of both museums, Mr Kwok Kian Chow, Director of the National Art Gallery, Singapore, said, "We are deeply saddened by the demise of Mr Wu Guanzhong, one of the leading Chinese artists over the last century and a dearly beloved friend of Singapore. A giant amongst artists of his generation, Wu was an inspiration to many and a towering figure in the artistic world. His matchless act of philanthropy to our National Collection and to the people of Singapore will always be deeply appreciated. We extend our deepest condolences to his family and loved ones.

3 In 2008, Wu Guanzhong donated to the national collection of Singapore his largest and most comprehensive collection of 113 oil and ink paintings presented to a public museum. Together with an earlier donation of one work, the Singapore collection of 114 works painted over five decades represents Wu's entire creative oeuvre. These works were valued back then at about SGD\$73.7 million. They represent the highest valued donation of artworks to any museum in Singapore.

4 Born in Yixing, Jiangsu Province, in 1919, Wu studied at the China Art Academy of Hangzhou in 1936 and was trained in oil and ink painting, graduating from the academy in 1942. From 1946 to 1950, he traveled to Paris to study at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts on a government scholarship. Wu painted primarily in oil from the 1950s to the year 1974, when he transited to ink painting, calling the moment an "entrepôt" (an intermediary period) in his transition from oil to ink.

5 One of China's most gifted artists, Wu Guanzhong epitomised the brilliance of cross cultural insights in his artistic creations. The artist painted with a warmly felt spirit of sharing, and his artistic works skillfully blended one's life experiences, learning encounters and creative visions. Wu Guanzhong called this creative tension the "unbroken kite-string."

6 A key significance of Wu Guanzhong's painting is the crossing and synthesising of both oil and ink art forms. Wu's approach paid homage to their respective art historical and aesthetic contexts, and he stood right in the middle of the crossroads of the painting traditions of the East and the West. Celebrated by international art scholars, Wu's signature style of crisscrossing and repetitious lines captured a vivid representation of "life-forces" which energized foliage, landscapes and old trees.

7 A prolific writer, Wu's literary and art theoretical writings were recently anthologised in a seven-volume publication. His reputation has so impressed art historian Michael Sullivan that he was singled out together with Vincent Van Gogh as a rare example of an artist who was deeply thoughtful and articulate with both the brush and the pen. Van Gogh, along with Shitao and the writer Lu Xun, were regarded by Wu as creators who inspired him most.

8 To honour the memory of the great artist and his unparalleled act of philanthropy to Singapore, the National Art Gallery will be naming a gallery after Wu Guanzhong in its future premises. Works from his sizable donation will be rotated for public viewing in the future gallery. Members of the public are invited to view Wu's works currently displayed at Singapore Art Museum.

**Media enquiries**

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**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 will be converted to house this exciting new visual arts venue. The National Art Gallery will be a civic and creative space, 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).