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National Art Gallery, Singapore Begins Physical Construction

Groundbreaking Ceremony Heralds Start of Civil Works transforming City Hall and Former Supreme Court Buildings into Future Gallery

SINGAPORE, 27 January 2011 – The National Art Gallery officially broke ground at the Former Supreme Court and City Hall buildings today, with Mr Lui Tuck Yew, Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, presiding over the ceremony as its Guest-of-Honour. The ceremony marked the beginning of an estimated 44 months of extensive preservation, remodeling and building works for the two 80 year old buildings, linking them together to become the future National Art Gallery, Singapore.

Occupying a total floor space of 60,000 square metres, the new Gallery will be the largest visual arts venue in Singapore when it opens its doors from 2014 onwards. The Gallery will house permanent and temporary galleries showcasing local, regional and international works of art, alongside specially-designed interactive and programming spaces. It will also feature an open rooftop plaza and garden offering spectacular views of the city, creative art installations, areas for mass appeal public programmes as well as restaurants and specialty retail shops to cater to visitors from all walks of life.

To attract more Singaporeans and visitors to the Gallery, access to selected spaces within the Gallery will be free. They include the Singapore Gallery where artworks by leading local artists over the decades are showcased; a unique Children's Gallery where young children can engage with art through educational and interactive tools, and the Building History Gallery, which will relate the fascinating stories behind the City Hall and former Supreme Court Buildings.

“Our aspiration for the Gallery is to make it an integral part of the recreational lifestyle of every Singaporean and a must-see destination for every tourist. Through its various exhibitions, programmes, and facilities, the Gallery could play a catalytic role in making visual art more enjoyable, accessible and relevant to the public. We will transform these historical spaces into a community and civic destination - one where people from all walks of life can enjoy, explore and engage with art, while helping to shape Singapore into a global city for the arts,” said Mr Lui Tuck Yew.

Mr Michael Koh, CEO of National Heritage Board and National Art Gallery, Singapore, added, "The former Supreme Court and City Hall buildings are icons in their own right. We have a challenging task of rejuvenating these buildings into an art museum of international stature while maintaining a deep respect for the original architecture of these buildings. My colleagues and I are glad to work together with Takenaka-Singapore Piling Joint Venture on the important construction phase of the project. We look forward to creating a cultural icon that is endeared in the hearts and minds of all Singaporeans and visitors alike.”

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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, and is anticipated to be completed by 2014. 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.