

# National Art Gallery, Singapore

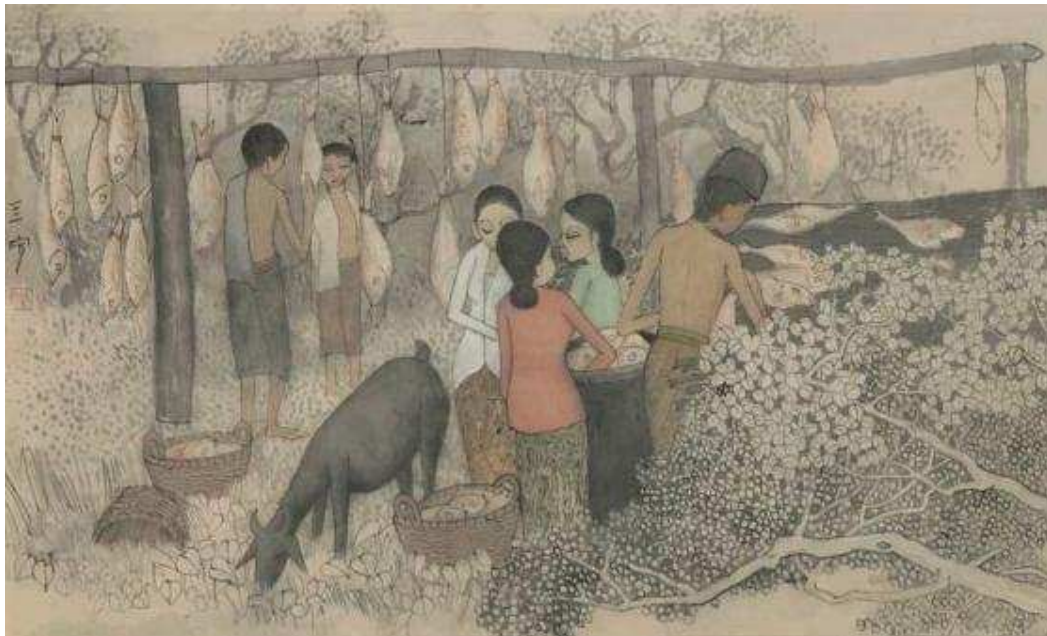
A National Heritage Board Museum

**EMBARGOED – To be released on 15 September 2010, 7:00pm**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **National Art Gallery, Singapore Showcases Lifetime Work of Cheong Soo Pieng**

***Leading Artist's Process of Art Making Featured for the First Time***



*Drying Salted Fish, 1978, 55.5 x 88.5 cm, Chinese ink and colour on cloth, Collection of National Heritage Board*

**15 September 2010** – Do you know that leading artist Cheong Soo Pieng’s “Drying Salted Fish” painting is featured on the back of Singapore’s Portrait Series \$50 note? One of the most prominent names in the Singapore art scene, Cheong Soo Pieng is best known for contributing towards the Nanyang style of art. In *Cheong Soo Pieng: Bridging Worlds*, visitors can relive the process of art making from Soo Pieng’s eyes for the first time. They can also view contemporary artworks created by upcoming artists Chua Kaifang, Michael Lee, and art collective Vertical Submarine that are inspired by Soo Pieng.

Considered a leading pioneer artist in Singapore, Soo Pieng's innovative and distinctive approach to art creation exerted a major influence on Singapore's visual art scene. Having taught for many years at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), Soo Pieng was a mentor to many and widely regarded as a dynamic teacher. Under the tutelage of the founder of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Art, Mr Lim Hak Tai, Soo Pieng's art-making techniques were a unique blend of West and East. His works were often focused on themes and subjects inspired by his Southeast Asian surroundings.

Mr Kwok Kian Chow, Director of the National Art Gallery, Singapore, said, "Cheong Soo Pieng's work espouses the concept of a bridging of worlds - between that of the traditional and contemporary; Western pictorial conventions with Chinese ink painting and Southeast Asian ornamentation and subject matter; and that of his own environment and inner worlds. Through the fresh approach of bringing together both the old and the new, *Cheong Soo Pieng: Bridging Worlds* serves as an important cultural conduit demonstrating Soo Pieng's artistry and continued relevance to artists and audiences today."

### **Shining the Spotlight on Soo Pieng's Artistic Journey**

*Cheong Soo Pieng: Bridging Worlds* marks the first time the Gallery is approaching an exhibition from the perspective of artistic processes - a departure from prior retrospective exhibitions that examined artists' life and works in chronological order. Through a series of 300 artworks, sketches and never-before-seen archival materials, visitors can gain deeper insights of Soo Pieng's artistic mind, understand his motivations and influences, and appreciate his process of art-making and creation.

To gain a deeper insight of Soo Pieng's extraordinary journey, readers can pick up a copy of the exhibition monograph, *Cheong Soo Pieng: Visions of Southeast Asia*. The first in the Cheong Soo Pieng and the first in the National Art Gallery's Asian Artists Series, it features a series of essays and materials that will present the reader with the breadth and complexity of this Nanyang artist's extensive oeuvre. Rare personal photographs, as well as recently unearthed drawings, sketches, watercolours and woodcut prints are featured in this seminal publication.

### **Involving Contemporary Artists and Inspiring Future Artists**

For the first time, the National Art Gallery, Singapore has invited two young artists - Chua Kaifang, Michael Lee, and an art collective, Vertical Submarine, to develop new works that are responses to Soo Pieng's. The works produced by these young artists reflect their contemporary perceptions of Soo Pieng's art and artistic processes, exploring his continued relevance to today's artists. This experimental approach is a pre-cursor to the Gallery's long term plans to engage with young artists by encouraging them to develop fresh interpretations of the artworks and legacies of artists from the past.

Budding artists of tomorrow can also model themselves after the master artist at the specially conceived Children's Art Studio. Designed to resemble an artist's studio, kids can enjoy splashing good fun creating their own masterpieces while being guided by professionals.

### **"Salted Fish" – the Gallery's First Children's Storybook**

To reach the next generation of art and museum lovers, the Gallery is collaborating with artists and illustrators to develop books for children under the Dreaming Art Series. Targeted at children aged 4 and above, this series celebrates the enduring legacy of our artists through the eyes of a kid. For each title, a writer and artist or illustrator are commissioned to produce a story featuring an iconic work of art brought to life in a fun and easy to read book.

"Salted Fish", inspired by Cheong Soo Pieng's painting by the same title, is the first book to be launched in this series. Written by the Gallery's own Assistant Director of Publications, Dr Yeo Wei Wei and illustrated by local artist, Ye Shufang, it explores Soo Pieng's *Drying Salted Fish* painting through the adventures of lead characters, Lynn and her favourite toy, Cotton Bunny. The book is slated for release on 2 October 2010, and will be available at selected bookstores.

### **Enriching Audiences from 6 to 60**

Responding to public feedback from earlier exhibitions, activity and multimedia stations have been installed at key points throughout this exhibition, to allow children and adult visitors to

engage with the featured themes and artworks. This novel and immersive approach is accompanied by a comprehensive series of public and educational programmes tailored at museum audiences of all ages. From a 'Salted Fish' treasure hunt for toddlers, hands on puppet making for primary schoolers, to curator tours and art historical talks for adults, there will be something for everybody. Visitors can log on to the exhibition microsite at [www.nationalartgallery.sg/csp](http://www.nationalartgallery.sg/csp) for more details and to sign up for the different programmes.

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***Cheong Soo Pieng: Bridging Worlds***

*A research exhibition by the National Art Gallery, Singapore*

*Galleries 1.10, 2.10, 3.10, Singapore Art Museum*

*15 September- 26 December 2010*

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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 2013. 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).