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**National Gallery Singapore presents**  
***Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective;***  
**an exhibition honouring a modern art pioneer from Singapore**

*Rediscover the quiet brilliance of master sculptor and printmaker Kim Lim in the most comprehensive major museum showcase of her works to date*



**SINGAPORE, 25 September 2024** – National Gallery Singapore presents *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective* – the most comprehensive museum survey to date of Singapore-born British artist Kim Lim’s work. This landmark exhibition is organised into four thematic and periodic sections, each highlighting Lim’s predominant aesthetic preoccupations of the time. The exhibition is the third installment of the Gallery’s four-part SG Artist series.

Opening on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024, *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective* marks the first rigorous attempt to reposition Lim as a major figure in 20th-century sculpture and printmaking. Unprecedented in its scope, the exhibition features over 150 works, including critical sculptures and prints spanning four decades, as well as maquettes, never-before-seen photographs, and archival materials. The artworks and archival materials provide fresh insights into Lim’s artistic journey, philosophy, and creative relationships and showcase how she used the power of suggestion and metaphor to masterfully balance light, space, and rhythm to great effect.

Dr. Eugene Tan, CEO and Director of National Gallery Singapore says, “We are honoured to celebrate the life and work of Kim Lim, an extraordinary Singapore-born artist who has contributed to global art histories. Leaving Singapore for London at just seventeen, Lim gained considerable recognition for her art during her lifetime. She developed a distinctive Minimalist artistic language, informed by her travels between Europe and Asia and marked by subtlety, resolve, and occasional playfulness, offering a counterbalance to the male-dominated sculptural traditions of the 20th century. However, like many artists who moved abroad, Lim's contributions were sometimes overlooked until recently. Since its opening in 2015, the National Gallery Singapore has presented Lim's artworks in various exhibitions, with the view that a retrospective for her was imperative. As such, *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective* attempts to remedy the historical exclusion of female artists from art history. The time to rediscover Kim Lim is now.”

Alex and Johnny Turnbull (Estate of Kim Lim), say, “We are honoured to see our mother, Kim Lim, celebrated in this major retrospective at the National Gallery Singapore. Although she spent much of her artistic life in the UK, she remained deeply connected to Singapore and Asia, which is also vividly evident in her artworks. We are thrilled by the growing international recognition of her artistic legacy and are proud to have this comprehensive exhibition of her work in Singapore, where her art and remarkable life can continue to inspire and resonate with new audiences.”

Mr Yuen Kuan Moon, Singtel Group's Chief Executive Officer, says, “Singtel is proud to support this landmark retrospective on the visionary artist, Kim Lim. As a company with a strong heritage closely interwoven with Singapore, we recognise the importance of nurturing and celebrating our arts and artists. This exhibition is a testament to the high calibre of art talents emerging from Singapore and their ability to stand on the global stage. We are honoured to partner with National Gallery Singapore to bring works of key figures in art history to the public and contribute to a greater appreciation of their influence.”

## Kim Lim, master sculptor and printmaker



Kim Lim in her studio. c. late 1960s. © Estate of Kim Lim. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2023. Photo: Jorge Lewinski.

Kim Lim (1936–1997) belonged to the first generation of diaspora and immigrant artists who moved to the United Kingdom after the Second World War to pursue art education. In 1954, she left Singapore for London to study at the St. Martin's School of Fine Art and later at the Slade School of Fine Art.

Throughout her career, Lim pursued printmaking and drawing in tandem with her sculptural work, moving between these disciplines with material and technical agility. Although her aesthetic sensibilities evolved, her works are connected by her enduring interest in the language of abstraction and the qualities of light, space, and rhythm.

During her years in Britain, Lim resisted the cultural signifiers often used to frame her life and work. As a foreign female artist working in a male-dominated art world, she refused to let others define her art through narrow lenses. Her practice results from a balance between references and resistance to dominant Euro-American discourses on Minimalism and abstraction.

Enriching her formal education through her extensive travels across Europe, East Asia, and Southeast Asia, Lim drew from diverse sources of inspiration to develop a distinctive visual language. Immersed in the diverse material cultures and architectural sites she encountered during her journeys, Lim's art reflects her transcultural experiences and sensibilities. This unique approach earned her recognition within local and international art circles during her lifetime. Although Lim's work was overlooked for some time following her untimely passing,

recent major institutional shows, such as those at Tate Britain (2020-2021) and Hepworth Wakefield (2023-2024), have sparked a global revival, underscoring the continued relevance and resonance of her rich artistic practice today.

**Introducing the foundations of Lim's artistic explorations in *Early Works: Assembling, Delineating***



Installation view, *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective*, National Gallery Singapore, 2024.

The exhibition opens with Lim's early works, revealing how vertical and architectonic structures have been key sculptural forms since her student years. Lim explored diverse methods of delineating surfaces and constructing verticality, including stacking, segmentation, and alternation, to develop a rhythmic range of columnar expressions. Encountering Romanian pioneering artist Constantin Brâncuși's sculptures through books was formative to her sculptural sensibility. The titles of her early works, such as *Samurai* (1961), *Pegasus* (1962), *Ronin* (1963), and *Centaur II* (1963), suggest her interest in elemental and archaic forms. These explorations laid the foundation for her enduring focus on the spatiality and scale of abstract forms, which continued to shape her practice throughout her career.



Kim Lim. *Centaur II*. 1963. Bronze and wood, 146.3 × 51.1 × 25.4 cm. Collection of M+ Museum, Hong Kong. Museum purchase and gift of Turnbull Studio, 2020. © Estate of Kim Lim. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024.

Lim deliberately forewent traditional plinths, placing her sculptures directly on the floor to suggest that they rise from the ground rather than be merely supported by it. Pieces like *Centaur II* (1963) exemplify her early mastery of form and material through their verticality and balanced composition. In the 1960s, when women sculptors like Lim were underrepresented in a sculptural scene dominated by hypermasculine ideals, *Centaur II* introduced a delicate and nuanced interpretation of strength and height. The sculpture's dynamic interplay of slender, teal-green, bronze stalks rising from a stack of alternating curved wooden blocks sharply contrasted with the era's emphasis on masculine power and solidity.

This first section offers visitors insight into the evolution of Lim's formal interests, showcasing her column-based sculptures as a recurring signature style throughout her career. Her continual revisiting of these forms with fresh perspectives reveals her cyclic working method and provides visitors with a deeper understanding of her artistic journey.

## Lim's bold shift to industrial materials in *Keen Edges, Eccentric Colour*



Installation view, *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective*, National Gallery Singapore, 2024.

After Lim's student years, she moved away from traditional sculptural methods and moved to industrial materials such as engineered blockboard, steel, aluminium, and fibreglass for her sculptures. She also sprayed brightly coloured industrial paint onto her sculptures, which gave them a uniform and flat finish that concealed the materials' natural textures and characteristics. This approach accentuated the geometric precision of her forms and planes, highlighting her ability to achieve expressive effects through restrained and deliberate means.



Kim Lim. *Echo*. 1967. Stainless steel, enamel paint and zinc coating, 77 × 80 × 80 cm. Gift of William Turnbull. Collection of National Gallery Singapore. © Estate of Kim Lim. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024.

During this period, Lim wanted to “make a clear, unfussy statement of form” and focused on formal qualities such as colour, edge, and negative space. In *Echo* (1967), the contrast of its vivid vermilion interior against its exterior's deep magenta emphasises the sculpture's form,

drawing the viewer's focus to the sculpture's edges. The piece simultaneously contains and negates space to present negative volume without relying on mass or bulk. Its squat form and sharp edges contrast with Lim's earlier tall, upright works, using its rounded contours to manipulate space and its surfaces to highlight its shell-like quality and flatness.

### **Unveiling *Light, Space, and Rhythm* as sculptural materials**



Installation view, *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective*, National Gallery Singapore, 2024.

The exhibition's third section, which begins in Singtel Gallery 2, focuses on Lim's profound exploration of light and space rather than the traditional emphasis on mass and volume. During the mid-1960s to 1970s, Lim adopted a serial and modular approach to sculpture, utilising materials like wood and aluminium to create basic units that can be arranged to cast varying shadow patterns. Her work from this period shifted their loci from the structures themselves to the "spaces in-between", allowing light and space to play significant roles in shaping the appreciation of her works.



Kim Lim. *Intervals I + II*. 1973

Pine, dimensions variable. Collection of National Gallery Singapore. © Estate of Kim Lim. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024.

\*This artwork will be displayed in a different configuration in the exhibition.

A key feature in this section is the coming together of Lim's *Intervals* series (1973) from the National Collection and the Tate Collection to showcase various possibilities for configuring the work. The series features ladder-like wooden structures, each with spines and prongs. Devoid of a clear orientation — top, bottom, front, or back — works from the series may be arranged according to configurations predetermined by the artist.

When propped against walls or laid supine on floors, the structures are carefully lit to cast shadows that echo their forms, multiplying their lines of rhythm. Lim used space, or “intervals” as the title suggests, to transform light and space into sculptural elements, highlighting the significance of the negative “in-between” spaces, revealing her structures' endless possibilities as visitors move around and encounter them from various angles.



## Feel *The Weight of a Line* in Lim's stone sculptures



Installation view, *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective*, National Gallery Singapore, 2024.

The exhibition concludes with works from Lim's late period from 1979, a significant turning point in her practice. After working with wood, fibreglass, steel, and bronze for over twenty years, Lim shifted her focus to carving in stone. This change was sparked by her first survey exhibition in 1979 at the Roundhouse Gallery London, which made her "aware of the pull between the ordered, static experience, and the dynamic rhythms of organic structured forms." She turned to more organic forms, rhythms, and lines, distilling her observations of the natural world around her. Lim wanted to create metaphors that would "ricochet in the viewer and cross various boundaries of experience – to trigger responses beyond the object itself."



Kim Lim. *Kudah*. 1989. Rose aurora marble, 112.4 × 42.5 × 27.3 cm. Private collection. © Estate of Kim Lim. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024.

*Kudah* (1989) exemplifies Lim's keen interest in using lines and contouring to define form and rhythm. Here, a more organic form replaces marble's typical architectural associations. Lim emphasised the stone's subtle qualities through gentle undulations and vertical incisions on its surface to create gentle contrasts of light and shadow. The sculpture appears as though a large block of stone has been sliced, with the remaining section suggesting the head and neck of a horse. Lim's precise carving — one line extending from the base and another descending from the top — guides the viewer's gaze and introduces a rhythmic structure within the piece. The title *Kudah* refers to the Malay word for "horse" and evokes the knight in chess. Lim, who enjoyed playing chess with her husband, sculptor William Turnbull, often referenced chess pieces in her work from the late 1950s onward. *Kudah*, alongside other stone works from Lim's late period, showcases Lim's mastery of carving on stone and her enduring exploration of light and space as sculptural materials.

## Understanding Lim's process of making and the ideas she kept close



Installation view, *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective*, National Gallery Singapore, 2024.

Visitors are also invited to delve into Lim's artmaking process. *The Space Between. A Retrospective* unveils rarely displayed photographs and maquettes from Lim's studio, offering insights into the ideas that the artist kept close. These elements are interwoven throughout the exhibition, enriching the viewer's understanding of each section. Alongside her sculptures and prints, the displays include her maquettes, travel photographs, printing plates and wood blocks, sketchbooks, and studies. Although the artist preferred to convey meaning without straightforward representation, these materials reveal the profound influences of Lim's travels and cosmopolitanism on her practice. This comprehensive view unveils new facets of Lim's artistic practice, highlighting her innovative approach and enduring artistic legacy.

*Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective* runs from 27 September 2024 to 2 February 2025 at the Singtel Special Exhibition Galleries 2 & 3, Level 3, National Gallery Singapore. Visitors can purchase Special Exhibition Passes at \$25 each (\$15 for Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents) which provides access to both *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective* and *Teo Eng Seng: We're Happy. Are You Happy?*.

Visitors can enjoy an early bird promotion of 10% off Special Exhibition or All Access Gallery Passes when booking through the Gallery's website by 31 October 2024. Singtel subscribers and UOB cardmembers can also benefit from special discounts, with more details on their respective web pages and apps. Gallery Insiders enjoy free unlimited access to the exhibition.

More information can be found in the following annexes, or you may visit [nationalgallery.sg/kimlim](https://nationalgallery.sg/kimlim). Media assets are available via this [link](#).



- [Annex A](#): *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective* Exhibition Highlights
- [Annex B](#): *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective* Exhibition Programmes

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**About National Gallery Singapore**

National Gallery Singapore is a leading visual arts institution that oversees the world's largest public collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian modern art. Situated at the birthplace of modern Singapore, in the heart of the Civic District, the Gallery is housed in two national monuments - City Hall and former Supreme Court - that have been beautifully restored and transformed into this exciting 64,000 square metre venue. Reflecting Singapore's unique heritage and geographical location, the Gallery aims to be a progressive museum that creates dialogues between the art of Singapore, Southeast Asia and the world to foster and inspire a creative and inclusive society. This is reflected in our collaborative research, education, long-term and special exhibitions, and innovative programming. The Gallery also works with international museums such as Centre Pompidou, Musée d'Orsay, Tate Britain, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (MOMAT) and National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA), to jointly present Southeast Asian art in the global context, positioning Singapore as a key node in the global visual arts scene.


In 2020, the Gallery was the only museum in Southeast Asia that received a ranking in The Art Newspaper's annual global survey of attendance at art museums, taking 20<sup>th</sup> place. It was the first museum in Asia to receive the Children in Museums Award by the European Museum Academy and Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums in 2018. The Gallery also won the awards for "Best Theme Attraction" at TTG Travel Awards 2017, "Best Attraction Experience", "Breakthrough Contribution to Tourism" and "Best Customer Service (Attractions)" at the prestigious Singapore Tourism Awards in 2016 for its role in adding to the vibrancy of Singapore's tourism landscape.



## Annex A: *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective Exhibition Highlights*

### Section 1: *Early works: Assembling, Delineating*



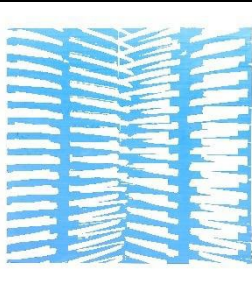
	<p>Kim Lim  <i>Pegasus</i>            1962            Wood, 106.7 × 29.5 × 33 cm            Collection of National Gallery Singapore            © Estate of Kim Lim            All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024</p>
	<p>Kim Lim  <i>Centaur II</i>            1963            Bronze and wood, 146.3 × 51.1 × 25.4 cm            Collection of M+ Museum, Hong Kong            Museum purchase and gift of Turnbull Studio,            2020            © Estate of Kim Lim            All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024</p>
	<p>Kim Lim  <i>Split Red</i>            1960            Screenprint on paper, 39 × 58.5 cm            Collection of Kim Lim Estate/Turnbull Studio,            London            © Estate of Kim Lim            All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024</p>

### Section 2: *Keen Edges, Eccentric Colour*




	<p>Kim Lim  <i>Echo</i>            1967            Stainless steel, enamel paint and zinc coating,            77 × 80 × 80 cm            Gift of William Turnbull            Collection of National Gallery Singapore            © Estate of Kim Lim            All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024</p>
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	<p>Kim Lim <i>Borneo I</i> 1964 Wood and paint, 160 × 73.5 cm Collection of Kim Lim Estate/Turnbull Studio, London © Estate of Kim Lim All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024</p>
	<p>Kim Lim <i>Water Piece</i> 1979 Bronze, 11 × 51 × 51 cm, 2/3 UK Government Art Collection © Estate of Kim Lim All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024</p>

### Section 3: *Light, Space and Rhythm*

	<p>Kim Lim <i>Intervals I + II</i> 1973 Pine, dimensions variable Collection of National Gallery Singapore © Estate of Kim Lim All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024 *This artwork will be displayed in a different configuration in the exhibition.</p>
	<p>Kim Lim <i>Irrawaddy</i> 1979 Pine, dimensions variable Collection of National Gallery Singapore © Estate of Kim Lim All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024</p>
	<p>Kim Lim <i>Interval Series</i> 1972 Screenprint on acetate, 60 × 57 cm Collection of Kim Lim Estate/Turnbull Studio, London © Estate of Kim Lim All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024</p>

**Section 4: *The Weight of a Line***

	<p>Kim Lim  <i>Langkawi</i>            1988            White Sicilian marble, 120 × 27.9 × 17.8 cm            Gift of Dr. Arthur Lim Siew Ming            Collection of National Gallery Singapore            © Estate of Kim Lim            All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024</p>
	<p>Kim Lim  <i>Kudah</i>            1989            Rose aurora marble, 112.4 × 42.5 × 27.3 cm            Private collection            © Estate of Kim Lim            All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024</p>
	<p>Kim Lim  <i>Spring I, II, III, IV</i>            1996            Cut and folded paper, 45 × 45 cm            Private collection. Courtesy Ben Hunter,            London.            © Estate of Kim Lim            All Rights Reserved, DACS 2024</p>

## Annex B: *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective Exhibition Programmes*

For an updated listing of programmes, please visit [nationalgallery.sg/kimlim](https://nationalgallery.sg/kimlim)

Programmes	
<b>Leaving to Thrive   A panel discussion with Erika Tan, Mintio &amp; Zee Zunnur</b>	
Date and Time:	26 October 2024, Saturday   2 – 3.30pm
Venue:	National Gallery Singapore, Supreme Court Wing, Level 5, Classroom
Admission Details:	Register for free online at <a href="https://leavingtothrive.peatix.com/">https://leavingtothrive.peatix.com/</a>
Description:	<p>Join us for a panel discussion featuring artists who have spent time abroad, particularly in the UK, drawing parallels with Kim Lim's experiences. The conversation will explore their diverse backgrounds, artistic practices, and the impact of their travels on their work.</p> <p>We will delve into their motivations for leaving and returning, examining how travel and migration offer conditions that foster artistic growth. Topics will include the influence of different cultural milieus, artistic discourse, institutional interests, and the freedom of expression they encounter abroad.</p>
<b>Performance Response by Zee Zunnur</b>	
Date and Time:	27 October 2024, Sunday   2.30pm, 4pm 9 November 2024, Saturday   2pm – 5pm
Venue:	City Hall Wing, Level 3, City Hall Foyer
Admission Details:	Walk-in
Description:	Choreographer and dance artist Zee Zunnur, together with her collaborator Safuan Johari, respond to the themes and stories behind Kim Lim's artistic journey and how they interweave with her own practice as a movement artist.
<b>Paper Folding Workshop with Fiona Seow</b>	
Date and Time:	9 November 2024, Saturday   2pm – 5pm
Venue:	City Hall Wing, Level 3, City Hall Foyer
Admission Details:	\$30 per pax, spaces are limited. Register online at <a href="https://nationalgallery.sg/kimlim">nationalgallery.sg/kimlim</a> .



Description:	Join this hands-on paper folding workshop to gain a better understanding of Kim Lim's preoccupations with form, space, rhythm and light in sculpture and expressing the essence of her materials. The workshop includes a short tour of the exhibition; exhibition entry is included in the fee.
<b>Workshop: Polymer Clay with WhyNotClay</b>	
Date and Time:	7 December 2024, Saturday   10am – 1pm
Venue:	City Hall Wing, Level 5, Rooftop Studios
Admission Details:	\$30 per pax, online registration available in November. Find out more at <a href="http://nationalgallery.sg/kimlim">nationalgallery.sg/kimlim</a>
Description:	In collaboration with Wendy from WhyNotClay, participants are invited to learn about Kim Lim's sculptural practice and her use of shapes, lines and forms through the hands-on experience of polymer clay making.
<b>Drop-in Activity at KCAE</b>	
Date and Time:	1 – 31 December 2024   10am – 7pm
Venue:	City Hall Wing, Level 1, Keppel Centre for Art Education
Admission Details:	Free, Drop-in
Description:	Join us for a family-friendly drop-in activity inspired by Kim Lim's artworks at the Keppel Centre for Art Education in December!
<b>Sculpture Trail Guide for Children</b>	
Date and Time:	Ongoing
Venue:	National Gallery Singapore, Singtel Special Exhibition Galleries 2 & 3
Admission Details	Special Exhibition Gallery Passes required.
Description:	Designed especially for kids, explore the wonders of sculpture and learn more about Kim Lim and other artists in our Sculpture Trail Guide. What are you waiting for? Grab your copy at the exhibition and start exploring now! Please note that limited copies are available.

## Tours

### Tour by Alex & Johnny Turnbull (Estate of Kim Lim)

Date and Time:	28 September 2024, Saturday   2pm
Venue:	National Gallery Singapore, Singtel Special Exhibition Galleries 2 & 3
Admission Details:	Register for free Online Special Exhibition Gallery Passes required.  Sign up link <a href="https://kimlimestatetour.peatix.com/">https://kimlimestatetour.peatix.com/</a>
Description:	Gain intimate insights from Kim Lim's sons Alex and Johnny Turnbull as they share reflections and memories of their mother and her works.

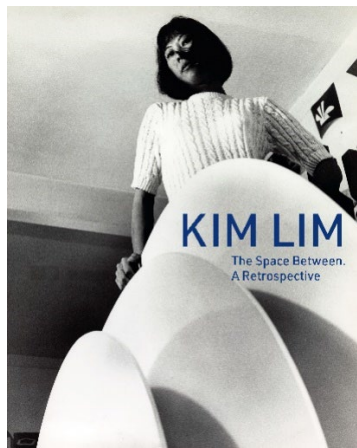
### Curator led Tours

Date and Time:	2 November 2024, Saturday   11am & 25 January 2025, Saturday   11am
Venue:	National Gallery Singapore, Singtel Special Exhibition Galleries 2 & 3
Admission Details:	Register for free Online and at our Tours & Programmes Counter, located at City Hall Wing, Level 1 Special Exhibition Gallery Passes required.

### Weekly tours

Date and Time:	English   Thu – Sun   3.30pm Mandarin   Sat – Sun   1.30pm
Venue:	National Gallery Singapore, Singtel Special Exhibition Galleries 2 & 3
Admission Details:	Register for free Online and at our Tours & Programmes Counter, located at City Hall Wing, Level 1 Special Exhibition Gallery Passes required.

## Exhibition Catalogue



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A catalogue for *Kim Lim: The Space Between. A Retrospective*, edited by curators Adele Tan and Joleen Loh, repositions the Singapore-born British artist as a pivotal figure in 20<sup>th</sup> century sculpture and printmaking. Featuring plates of over 70 selected works, a curatorial introduction and three illustrated essays, this catalogue provides a fresh overview of Lim's sculptural philosophy and offers new scholarly insights into her intellectual growth, artistic practice and creative relationships. It is available for purchase at the Gallery Store by ABRY, and select book retailers in Singapore, and internationally.

For more information, please contact  
[publications@nationalgallery.sg](mailto:publications@nationalgallery.sg).