

For immediate release

Media Release

National Gallery Singapore Connects Five Award-winning ASEAN Film Directors to Celebrate Southeast Asian Art

Singapore, 19 May 2016 – National Gallery Singapore today announced a first-ever collaboration with five award-winning ASEAN film directors to celebrate Southeast Asian art. Titled *Art Through Our Eyes*, the directors will create short films inspired by the Gallery’s Southeast Asian art collection to give audiences unique and dramatised interpretations of the exhibits, and deepen their appreciation of modern art from this region.

Each of the five directors – Apichatpong Weerasethakul (Thailand), Brillante Mendoza (Philippines), Eric Khoo (Singapore), Ho Yuhang (Malaysia) and Joko Anwar (Indonesia) – handpicked a masterpiece from the 19th and 20th century as inspiration for their short films. The selected artworks include *Merapi, Eruption By Day* (1865) and *Merapi, Eruption By Night* (1865) by Raden Saleh, *Marketplace during the Occupation* (1942) by Fernando Cueto Amorsolo, *Portable Cinema* (1977) by Chua Mia Tee, *Aku* (1958) by Latiff Mohidin and *Wounded Lion* (c. 1839) by Raden Saleh.

“We are excited to work with all five film directors who have produced award-winning bodies of work. The collaboration is part of National Gallery Singapore’s efforts to present not only unique perspectives about Singapore and Southeast Asian art but also to make it accessible globally to diverse audiences,” said Dr Eugene Tan, Director, National Gallery Singapore.

“Art transcends nationalities and we hope this project can spark cross-border dialogues about Southeast Asian art. We want to create a sense of curiosity when audiences view the films and encourage them to form their own connections with and interpretations of the artworks when they visit the Gallery.”

The film project follows the success of the Gallery's *My Masterpiece* series where 12 well-known Singapore personalities shared their take on different paintings. Through such initiatives, the Gallery hopes to establish new connections with a wider regional audience and to encourage stronger appreciation of Southeast Asian modern art.

The film collaboration is supported by the Singapore Film Commission (SFC), in line with efforts to nurture a vibrant film sector. The short films will be separately produced in the directors' home countries, and showcased together later this year.

Mr Joachim Ng, Director of the Singapore Film Commission (SFC), said, "Leveraging the emotive power of films to bring the stories behind the works of art to life is a wonderful initiative which SFC is happy to support. Bringing together such a distinguished group of filmmakers to realise this idea is icing on the cake, which will enable more people to better appreciate both film and art from Singapore and Southeast Asia."

– End –

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. Opened 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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ANNEX A

QUOTES FROM FILM DIRECTORS

"When I was in Singapore last year, I had this great encounter with the paintings of Raden Saleh, the legendary artist from Indonesia. He painted two volcanoes erupting at different times of the day. I was struck by the intensity of light and the political message behind them. I am very honoured and happy to be invited by National Gallery Singapore to join this short film series, and I look forward to paying tribute to this great artist through my film."

- Apichatpong Weerasethakul (Thailand)

"National Gallery Singapore has undertaken the momentous task of creating a cohesive narrative of Southeast Asian art. I am excited to support their efforts in invoking a greater appreciation of art through my short film."

- Brillante Mendoza (Philippines)

"I simply adore the paintings of Chua Mia Tee and would put him up there with Edward Hopper. I love the way he captures a moment so beautifully. His paintings are truly inspirational and I wish to encourage a greater audience to view them at the National Gallery Singapore."

- Eric Khoo (Singapore)

*"There's a jungle of emotions in the Southeast Asian artworks at the National Gallery Singapore. Latiff Mohidin's *Aku* struck me with its particular defiance. I know this feeling like a waking dream, and a film is very much like a waking dream where stories come alive. I'm happy to be part of this collective dreamscape."*

- Ho Yuhang (Malaysia)

"National Gallery Singapore is trying its best efforts to preserve and conserve the cultural and art heritage of Southeast Asia. I am very honoured and happy to be a part of this project to celebrate Southeast Asian art."

- Joko Anwar (Indonesia)

ANNEX B

PROFILES OF FILM DIRECTORS

Apichatpong Weerasethakul (Thailand)

Apichatpong Weerasethakul is a Thai independent film director, screenwriter and film producer. All his films are set in his native Thailand and explores themes such as dreams, nature, sexuality, and politics.

His films have received numerous awards, including two prizes from the Cannes Film Festival. His feature *Syndromes and a Century* (2006) was the first Thai film to be selected for competition at the Venice Film Festival. In 2010, he was awarded the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival for *Uncle Boonmee who can Recall his Past Lives*. His video installations and other works have also attracted great acclaim at major international exhibitions such as Documenta (13), the Istanbul Biennial, and the Sydney Biennial. In 2008, he became the first artist to receive the Fine Prize from the 55th Carnegie International. Apichatpong also received the Sharjah Biennial Prize at the 2013 Sharjah Biennial 11, UAE. He's also a recipient of the Fukuoka Prize, Japan, 2013. In late 2014, he received the Yanghyun Art Prize, one of the most prestigious prizes in Korea. In 2016, a retrospective of his films was presented at Tate Britain, UK.

Art inspiration:

	<p>Raden Saleh</p> <p><i>Merapi, Eruption by Day</i></p> <p>1865</p> <p>80 x 120 cm</p> <p>Oil on canvas</p> <p>Collection of the Tan Family</p>
	<p>Raden Saleh</p> <p><i>Merapi, Eruption by Night</i></p> <p>1865</p> <p>80 x 120 cm</p> <p>Oil on canvas</p> <p>Collection of the Tan Family</p>

Brillante Mendoza (Philippines)

Brillante Mendoza is one of the most prominent Filipino filmmaker today, being the first Filipino to have competed and won in three major international film festivals. He started as a Production Designer in various films and Television advertisements. In 2005, he founded Centerstage Productions (CSP), an independent film production outfit that aims to rethink and rebrand Filipino cinema by producing meaningful and relevant films. He is often regarded by film critics as a “neo-realist” for depicting social realities and lives of ordinary people in extraordinary situations.

Brillante’s notable achievements include the Best Director award in the Cannes Film Festival for *Kinatay* in 2009, Caligari Film Award in 2007 for *Tirador*, and the La Navicella Venezia Cinema Award in the Venice Film Festival 2012 for *Thy Womb*. He was recently honoured with the chevalier de l’ordre des arts et des lettres from the French Minister of Culture.

Art inspiration:



Fernando Cueto Amoroso

Marketplace during the Occupation

1942

57 x 82 cm

Oil on canvas

Collection of National Gallery Singapore

Image courtesy of National Heritage Board

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Philippines.

Eric Khoo (Singapore)

Award winning film maker Eric Khoo is credited with reviving the Singapore film industry in 1995 with his maiden feature *Mee Pok Man*. He is the first Singaporean to have his films invited to major film festivals including Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Toronto and Telluride. *Be with Me* opened Directors Fortnight Cannes in 2005; *My Magic* competed for the Cannes Palme d’Or in 2008.

In 2010 Khoo was profiled in Phaidon Book’s *Take 100 The Future of Film -100 New Directors* and The Pomidou Centre in Paris held a retrospective of his films. Another Cannes highlight, his first animated feature *Tatsumi* (2011) also made its North American premiere at the Museum Of Modern Art.

A recipient of the Singapore Cultural Medallion and France’s Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Letters, he was Jury President at The Rotterdam International Film Festival in 2012.

As founder of Zhaowei Films, he has produced many Singapore films including Boo Junfeng’s second feature *Apprentice* which premiered at Cannes Un Certain Regard 2016.

Art inspiration:



Chua Mia Tee

Portable Cinema

1977

Oil on canvas

78.5 x 79.4 cm

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Collection of National Gallery Singapore

Image courtesy of National Heritage Board

Ho Yuhang (Malaysia)

Ho Yuhang was born and raised in Petaling Jaya, just outside the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur. He took a degree in engineering at Iowa State University in the US, but opted for a career in TV production when he returned to Malaysia.

His debut feature, *Min* (2003), was financed by television and shot on digital video, but was invited to many film festivals as a film and won the Special Jury Prize at the Festival des 3 Continents in Nantes, France. His subsequent features and shorts have been invited to an ever-widening circle of festivals and have won several more prizes, including the NETPAC Award and the Tiger Award for Best Short at International Film Festival Rotterdam (for *Sanctuary* and *As I Lay Dying* respectively). It was followed by his third feature film, *Rain Dogs*, which became the first Malaysian film to enter the Venice Film Festival in 2006. His widely anticipated fourth feature *At the End of Daybreak* received the NETPAC Award at the Locarno Film Festival and garnered seven Best Actress Awards for lead actress Kara Hui. He won the Financial Times' Emerging Voices film award for his short *Trespassed* in 2015. His latest film is *Mrs K*, a Malaysia-Hong Kong co-production.

Art inspiration:



Latiff Mohidin

Aku

1958

40 x 30 cm

Oil on board

Collection of National Gallery Singapore

Image courtesy of National Heritage Board

Joko Anwar (Indonesia)

Joko Anwar is an award-winning writer and director who has built an international reputation through the screenings of his work at the prestigious film festivals including Rotterdam, Sitges, London, Busan, Vancouver and many others.

Some of Joko's notable achievements include the Jury Prize at the New York Asian Film Festival for *Kala*, and Best Film at the Pucheon International Fantastic Film Festival for *The Forbidden Door* in 2009. His first feature, *Jani Joni* (2005) was also selected for screening in several prestigious film festivals, including Sydney Film Festival and Pusan International Film Festival. In addition, *A Copy of My Mind* (2016) was in competition in Venice Film Festival and selected at Toronto Film Festival.

Apart from writing and directing his own scripts, Joko also writes screenplays for other directors, including a sex comedy *Quickie Express*, which won Best Film of 2008 at the Jakarta International Film Festival.

Art inspiration:



Raden Saleh

Wounded Lion

c. 1839

88 x 108.5 cm

Oil on canvas

Collection of National Gallery Singapore