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Media Release

**Portraits of the People: A cumulation of self-portraits by
Singaporeans from all walks of life**

A permanent structure to commemorate Singapore's Golden Jubilee celebrations

Singapore, 25 November 2014 – Sketching one's own portrait could well replace 'selfies' as a trend, judging by the infectious response to *Portraits of the People*.

In celebration of Singapore's 50th anniversary next year, National Gallery Singapore is rallying all of Singapore to self-sketch their portraits and reflect on the National Pledge through *Portraits of the People*. Many of these self-portraits will subsequently be etched onto a permanent commemorative walkway – the *Art Connector* – as a tribute to the people for their contribution in building Singapore.

Portraits of the People, a travelling community engagement programme which started in early November, will be held in 50 different locations island-wide over the next six months. These will include shopping malls, community organisations, libraries and schools. In December, a dedicated website will be launched to allow more people to participate from home or office, as well as Singaporeans living overseas.

A montage of self-portraits collected will be artistically curated to form the centrepiece of the *Art Connector*, the 290-metre walkway aptly named not only for its link between City Hall MRT station to the entrance of the new Gallery along Coleman Street, but also as a metaphor for bridging art and the community.

Self-portraits reflective of Singapore's rich diversity

Participants at the *Portraits of the People* events will be provided with a tablet and guided on-site by facilitators through the creative, easy-to-follow process of self-sketching. After the artwork is complete, participants select and reflect on the part of the National Pledge which most resonates with them.

Dr. Eugene Tan, Director of National Gallery Singapore, said, “*Portraits of the People* provides our society with an introspective platform to reflect on the personal journey that they have taken with Singapore over the past 50 years, and contemplate their hopes and dreams for a happy and progressive Singapore.

“The process of self-sketching is also akin to one’s expression of art. By contributing their self-portraits to the *Art Connector* we hope people will have a closer affinity to the Gallery, which is for everyone. Art plays a part in all our lives and as Singapore’s new national arts institution, we believe that art should be accessible and relevant to all, allowing for creative expression, communal connection and self-reflection,” said Dr Tan.

The creative concept

The Art Connector’s creative team is led by FARM, a cross disciplinary, award-winning design studio, in collaboration with Grace Tan, recipient of the Young Artists Award 2013. Together the team took inspiration from the built and natural topography of Singapore and the rich tapestry of its people.

The structure of the connector will use a mix of materials and textures which represent the Singapore milieu – including concrete, earth clay, iron oxides, granite and quartzite. The centerpiece, made up of the collection of self-portraits, will use materials like copper as the main texture. FARM will also commission four artists to design segments of the National Pledge through colorful, vibrant renderings along the Art Connector.

“The inspiration for us literally came from the ground up,” said Ms Tan. “The making of the *Art Connector* starts with the foundation of Singapore and builds on the story of the nation through the many different people who have come together to participate in *Portraits of the People*.”

Portraits of the People is currently at Velocity until 28 November 2014, and at United Square from 11 to 28 December 2014. It will move on to other venues till end of April 2015. Check the Gallery’s [Facebook page](#) for the latest updates on *Portraits of the People*.

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ABOUT NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

National Gallery Singapore is a new visual arts institution which manages the largest public collection of Southeast Asian and Singapore art from the 19th century to the present day. 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 outstanding collections and innovative programming, positioning Singapore as a regional and international hub for visual arts.

Situated in the heart of the Civic District, the Gallery is housed in the City Hall and adjacent former Supreme Court building – two important heritage buildings symbolic of Singapore's nationhood. Opening in 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.

ABOUT GRACE TAN

Formally trained in fashion design, Grace Tan began her practice in 2003 under the kwodrent series to explore the design and construction of clothing based on the study of rectangle, material, and construction method. Over the years, Tan's wearable works evolved into larger sculptural objects and site-specific installations. Tan has exhibited extensively within Singapore and internationally on platforms including Singapore Biennale 2013, Fukutake House / Setouchi Triennale 2013, President's Young Talents 2013, State of Design [Melbourne] from 2008 to 2010, London Design Week 2006, and Aichi World Expo 2005. She has been commissioned by the Singapore Art Museum, Esplanade: Theatres on the Bay, The Substation, Downtown Line Little India Station, DUO, and Marina One. Tan was awarded the distinguished President's Design Award for Building as a Body in 2012 and the Young Artist Award in 2013.

ABOUT FARM

FARM is a cross disciplinary design practice and architecture atelier which works on a diverse range of projects. These include architecture & interior design, product design & merchandising, graphic design & branding, art installation & sculpture, exhibition design & curatorial work. A community-centred arts organization, FARM believes in cultivating a culture of imagination and joyful creativity. Since 2005, FARM has worked on community projects which promote the arts. These include national public art competitions and events, free quarterly talks by designers and artists, among others.

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