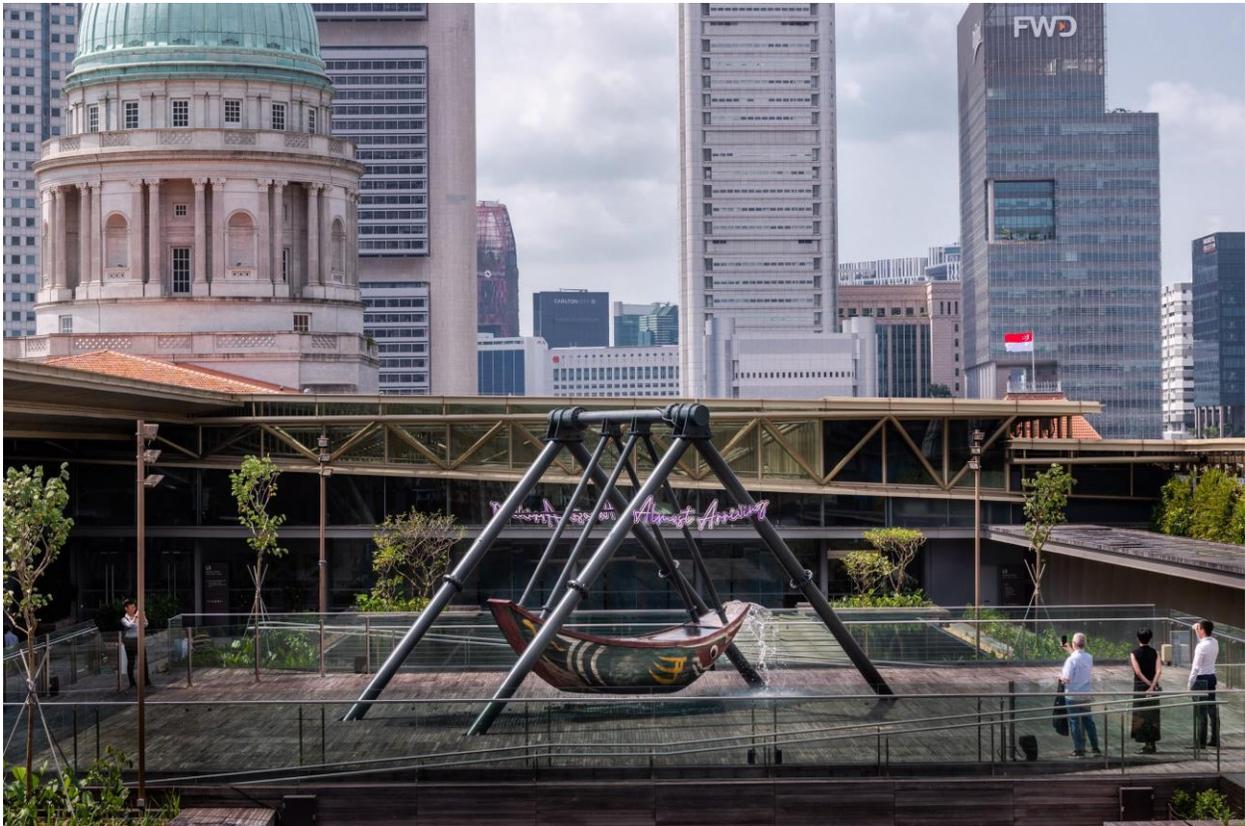


MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Sailing the South Seas in National Gallery Singapore's Roof Garden

The first kinetic sculpture to be installed at the Ng Teng Fong Roof Garden responds to the surrounding architecture of the Civic District and Singapore's identity as a maritime nation.

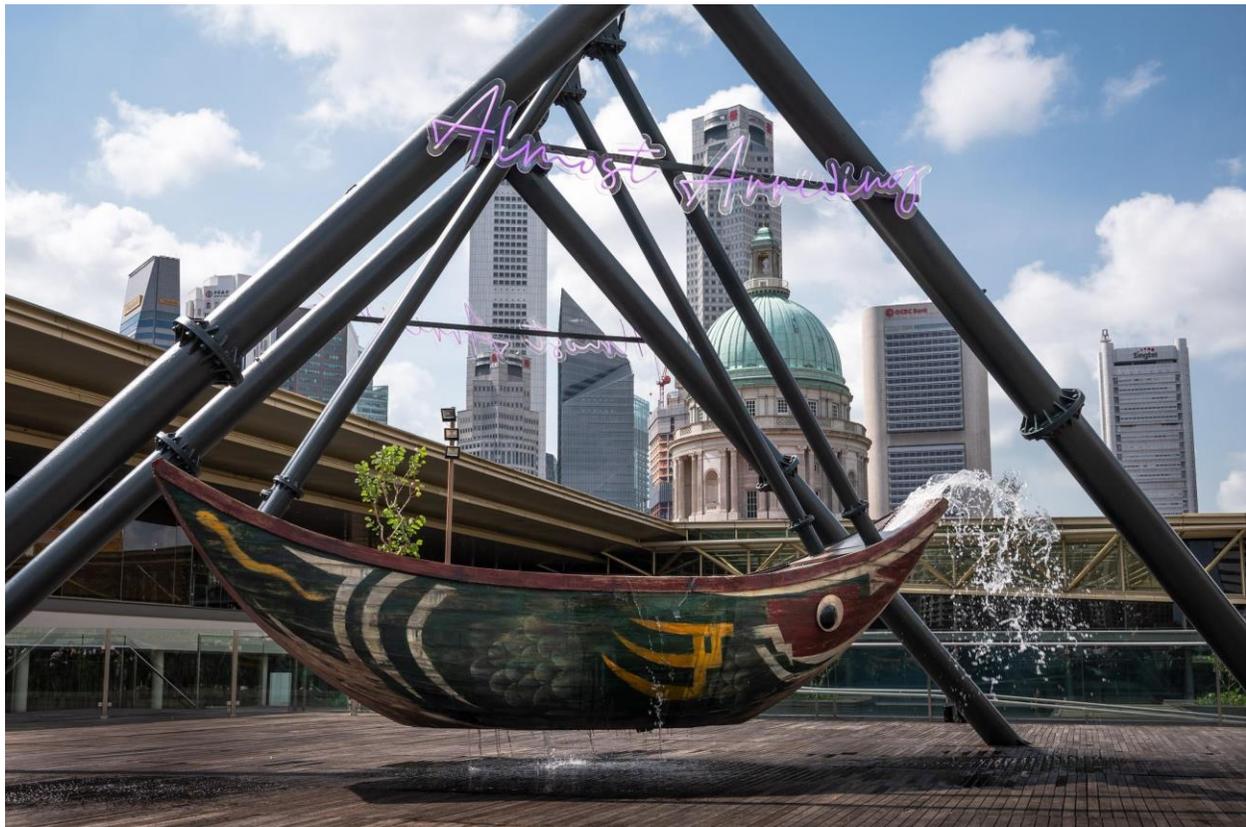


Singapore, 13 January 2020. National Gallery Singapore presents its fourth commission in the Ng Teng Fong Roof Garden Commission series, 浮槎 *Fú Chá*, by one of China's foremost contemporary artists, Cao Fei. On display from 17 January to 25 October 2020, this will be the first kinetic sculpture to be installed at the Roof Garden, comprising a spectacular five-metre tall structure of a swinging wooden ship, accompanied by four different soundscapes.

Standing amidst the architectural landmarks of the Civic District, 浮槎 *Fú Chá* responds to the *feng shui* of its site. The work provides a unique perspective on the region's history of migration, in which people set sail to often distant lands in search of new livelihoods. Its title refers to a

Chinese fable about a raft that traverses both the Milky Way and the sea, suggesting faraway journeys in unexplored waters. At the same time, it also engages with Singapore's identity as a historic port, shaped by the numerous diasporic and migrant communities which have made it the contemporary cosmopolitan city-state it is today.

Dr Eugene Tan, Director of National Gallery Singapore, said, "Each edition of the Ng Teng Fong Rooftop Garden Commission enables us to further the understanding of Southeast Asia's heritage and histories from a contemporary perspective. Informed by her personal history and experiences with Southeast Asia, Cao Fei tells unique stories of migration in the region. We hope this art installation will inspire new dialogues on our heritage, while presenting another engaging experience for our visitors at our Roof Garden."



Born and raised in Guangzhou, China, a historic centre of foreign trade and commerce, Cao Fei's family has many links to *Nanyang*, which was a key point of departure for the concept of the commission. A Chinese term, *Nanyang* translates to 'the south seas', which was how Chinese migrant populations historically described geographical Southeast Asia. The term is also used to

refer to the art styles and cultural movements that emerged in the region in the first half of the 20th century.

Bridging reality and fantasy, Cao's work uses nautical imagery to point toward the historical and contemporary flows of peoples and cultures which have transformed this region, including Singapore's own identity as a port city shaped by its diverse communities. The design of the ship is inspired by boats typical of this region, with decorative motifs intended to provide protection and guidance, including a pair of eyes to help the vessel find its way back to land. Visitors will notice that water—which would normally surround a ship on the ocean—fills the boat's interior, with waves splashing out as the ship swings back and forth. This mysterious and poetic combination of movement, sound, and surging water responds to the *feng shui* of this particular site, while suggesting a magical voyage to faraway places. The work suggests the hopes and dreams of migrants seeking a new life, as well as the looming dangers of sailing to an unknown land with little chance of return.

Cao's dynamic installation sits surrounded by the civic structures of the Supreme Court and Parliament House, while looking out over centres of commerce and entertainment in the Central Business District and Marina Bay. A reflection of Cao's ongoing interest in the social histories of Asia and the surreal experiences of global capital, 浮槎 *Fú Chá* also brings to mind the orchestrated pleasures of amusement parks, suggesting Singapore as a construct where any variety of experiences can be readily obtained.

Cao Fei shared, "I perceive the Roof Garden as a stage where the installation goes beyond a sculpture to take on the role of a performance for visitors. As they immerse themselves in the movement and soundscape of the work, I would like to invite them to embark on this journey with us; riding through the uncertainties of present day, while remaining hopeful of the possibilities in the future."

浮槎 *Fú Chá* is curated by Sam I-shan and Cheng Jia Yun from National Gallery Singapore. Visitors can also participate in its complementing programmes such as a talk by Cao Fei, film screenings, performances and a guest lecture that explore themes in the work such as Asian maritime histories.

The Ng Teng Fong Roof Garden Commission series invites one leading international artist each year to present a site-specific work that reflects upon Southeast Asia's rich cultural heritage and complex histories from a contemporary perspective. Previous artists commissioned for the series include Danh Vo, Rirkrit Tiravanija and Charles Lim Yi Yong. The Ng Teng Fong Roof Garden Commission is made possible through a gift by Far East Organization.

Admission to the Ng Teng Fong Roof Garden Gallery is free. For more information, please visit: www.nationalgallery.sg/caofei.

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Annex A: Biography of Cao Fei

For media enquiries,

Tate Anzur

Ho Xiu Xian
DID: 6568 9151
Mobile: 9732 3205
Email: xiuxian.ho@tateanzur.com

Hilary Tan
DID: 6568 9155
Mobile: 8727 4845
Email: hilary.tan@tateanzur.com

National Gallery Singapore

Rajeswary Shamugham
DID: 6697 9188
Email: rajeswary.shamugham@nationalgallery.sg



About National Gallery Singapore

National Gallery Singapore is a leading visual arts institution which 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 metres 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 2019, 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 32nd 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. For more information, visit <https://www.nationalgallery.sg>.

Annex A: Biography of Cao Fei



Cao Fei (b. 1978, China) is one of China's foremost contemporary artists. Her practice uses moving image, photography, installation and performance to explore the daily lives of people navigating accelerated changes in social, political and technological landscapes.

The artwork at National Gallery Singapore will be the first of a series of solo presentations by Cao in 2020 before her exhibitions at the Serpentine Gallery, London and UCCA Beijing.

The internationally renowned artist roots her projects in historical research, as well as art and film histories. At the same time, she embraces mass cultures like cosplay, games, popular music and social media to reflect on the human condition, and the realities of global flows in contemporary post-capitalist societies. Some of her known works include *RMB City: A Second Life City Planning* (2007) that reimagines the future of China's cities in online virtual world *Second Life*, *La Town* (2014), where a mythical metropolis is destroyed by dystopic forces, and *Asia One* (2018) that examines technology's effect on human relations. She lives and works in Beijing, China.