

For Immediate Release

UOB reaffirms its support for Southeast Asian art through renewed partnership with National Gallery Singapore



Ms Chong Siak Ching (left), CEO of National Gallery Singapore and Mr Wee Ee Cheong, Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of UOB, in front of UOB Southeast Asia Gallery

23 January 2024 - National Gallery Singapore is pleased to announce the extension of its enduring partnership with UOB for an additional five years. As a Founding Partner of the Gallery since 2015, UOB has continuously championed visual arts in the region, emphasising a shared commitment to promoting Southeast Asian art as well as fostering community outreach and educational initiatives.

This renewed collaboration will enhance the world's largest collection of modern Southeast Asian art through important acquisitions for the UOB Southeast Asia Gallery, having already welcomed over 2.6 million visitors since its inception. The collaboration will also provide naming opportunities in two spaces: the UOB Discovery Space and the UOB Theatrette.

UOB's role as a leading patron of art in Asia is a legacy spanning more than four decades. Through flagship programmes such as the UOB Painting of the Year, the Bank has remained at the forefront of elevating the region's artistic landscape, encouraging the growth and recognition of talents while fostering a deeper appreciation of artistry among audiences. UOB's commitment to building a brighter ASEAN future parallels National Gallery Singapore's role as a champion of Southeast Asian art. UOB's dedication aligns with the Gallery's mission to

preserve and present Southeast Asian art collaboratively with the region and in relation to global modernisms, signalling a shared vision for a dynamic ASEAN future.

Ms. Chong Siak Ching, Chief Executive Officer, National Gallery Singapore, said: “National Gallery Singapore is honoured that our Founding Partner, UOB, will continue to support our mission to promote modern Southeast Asian art to the world. We look forward to enhancing the UOB Southeast Asia Gallery with key artwork acquisitions and engaging diverse audiences through interactive and educational experiences via the UOB Discovery Space and UOB Theatrette. The renewed relationship will strengthen our ability to enrich lives through art and solidify our position as a leading global cultural institution.”

Mr Wee Ee Cheong, Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, UOB, said: “UOB is pleased to extend our strategic partnership with National Gallery Singapore to present the best of Southeast Asian art to the world. This partnership reflects UOB's long-term commitment to the region. Appreciating and creating art can help uplift spirits and connect communities. We hope that this partnership will further promote cross-cultural understanding and nurture promising art talents. We are honoured to continue to play a part in contributing to the art scene locally and regionally.”

New Acquisitions Offer Continuous Surprises for Visitors



Lê Phổ. *Jeune fille en blanc* (Young Girl in White). 1931. Oil on canvas, 81 × 130 cm. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Situated within the historic former Supreme Court building, the UOB Southeast Asia Gallery offers an insightful journey through Southeast Asia's artistic heritage, showcasing a carefully curated ensemble of approximately 300 artworks across 15 galleries. Continuously evolving, the Gallery regularly introduces new acquisitions and engaging programming to captivate visitors, with approximately 20% of the artworks being refreshed annually. The works from the National Collection featured in the UOB Southeast Asia Gallery have also been loaned to

several critical international exhibitions over the years, including the 58th Carnegie International (2022-2023) and Sharjah Biennial 15 (2023).

Among the latest additions, Lê Phổ, *Jeune fille en blanc* (Young Girl in White), takes centre stage in UOB Southeast Asia Gallery 5, symbolising a pivotal period of artistic evolution. Its inclusion reinforces the narrative of the evolving expressions of regional artists amidst the shifting socio-political landscape of 1920s-1940s.

Senior Curator Phoebe Scott notes, “Le Pho's *Jeune fille en blanc* is a rare, early painting by this important artist, which we are delighted to have been able to add to our collection. The work shows Lê Phổ's subtle and considered approach to painting in a period when artists across Southeast Asia were forging their own distinctive approaches to modernism.”

With the generous support from UOB towards new acquisitions moving forward, the Gallery hopes to further enhance its holding of such exceptionally significant works from Southeast Asia in the National Collection.



Artist unknown. *Pair of Preah Bot paintings depicting Jatayu and the Vanaras*. c.1900. Tempera on canvas, 199.5 x 81.5 cm (left) 202 x 79.5cm (right). Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Since the inception of National Gallery Singapore in 2015, curators have been dedicated to evolving the narrative of the UOB Southeast Asia Gallery. These incremental changes reflect new research and critical thinking about the region's art as it develops, and include new acquisitions.

In the first quarter of 2024, a rotation of artworks in UOB Southeast Asia Gallery 1 and 2 will bring a new perspective to the beginnings of the Gallery's narrative, showing how a dynamic history of trade and exchange in the arts of the region pre-dated and overlapped with the

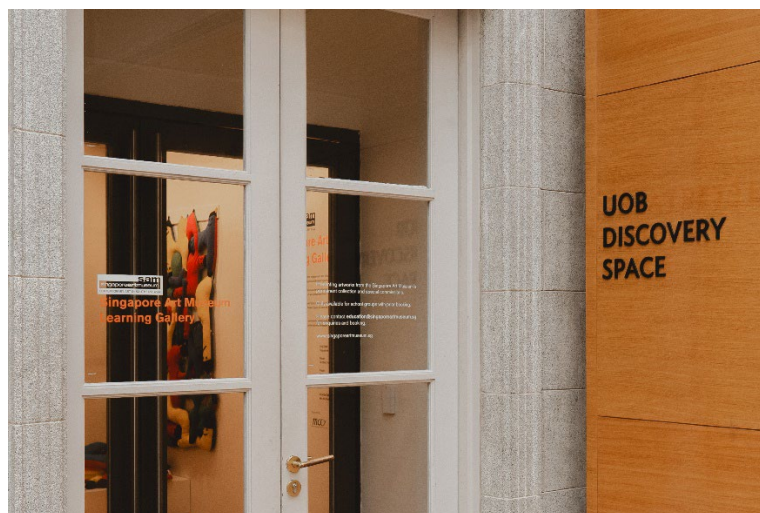
Western influences of the 19th century colonial period. For instance, a newly displayed acquisition of a pair of c. 1900 Cambodian *preah bot* (painted scroll) paintings show the modern evolution of Buddhist temple painting.

The Gallery's commitment to modern Southeast Asian art innovation is evident in *Dalam Southeast Asia*, a project space located within the UOB Southeast Asia Gallery. Launched in 2021, the Gallery is proud to welcome its fourth iteration of the series in April 2024, *Dalam Southeast Asia: Figuring A Scene*.

The upcoming exhibition looks at the procedure of “figuring” as embodying both a material and its means, while it happens in a setting, or a scene, like in a narrative or in drama, through the artworks in the National Collection as well as a new artist commission.

Beyond the Gallery's walls, the institution shares its expertise in modern and contemporary Southeast Asian art through a partnership with the National University of Singapore, where its joint Minor in Art History was ranked 4th in the world for art history in the 2023 QS World University Rankings.

Naming Opportunities of Two Spaces



UOB Discovery Space

Complementing the UOB Southeast Asia Gallery are two spaces which enhance the Gallery's research and exhibition of Southeast Asian art: UOB Discovery Space and UOB Theatrette.

The UOB Discovery Space will showcase works and narratives created by communities and students in response to the Southeast Asian works that are featured in the Gallery's outreach and school programme. Visitors will learn more about these artworks through the perspectives

of different communities and young audiences, to develop deeper personal connections while appreciating the language of art.



UOB Theatrette

The UOB Theatrette will continue to showcase outstanding moving image artworks from the region to spark dialogues between the National Collection and contemporary art practices. It will also be a key venue for the Gallery's well received festival on international films on art, *Painting with Light*.

New Programming for Greater Accessibility to All Audiences



A family exploring a programme, 'How to Art With Friends', in the UOB Southeast Asia Gallery

The UOB Southeast Asia Gallery has fostered a profound connection with diverse audiences including regular in-Gallery sessions, where curators and artists engage in intimate dialogues about artworks or its Resonates with Residency where local artists respond to the Gallery's regional collection. The UOB Southeast Asia Gallery also hosts students of all ages to kindle respect cultural awareness and an appreciation of the region's rich artistic history.

Emphasising a commitment to continuous evolution, the UOB Southeast Asia Gallery consistently introduces new programming, resonating with its mission to reach out to an ever-expanding and diverse audience. During Light to Night Singapore 2024, the Gallery debuted a new programme, 'Dungeons and Dragons: The Art Quest' within UOB Southeast Asia Galleries 3 and 5, as part of the festival's objective for art to remain accessible to people of all ages. Guided by skilled Dungeon Masters, players will traverse a vibrant world where they will make decisions that resonate with the emotions and themes found in National Collection works like Raden Saleh's *Boschbrand (Forest Fire)* and Pratuang Emjaroen's *Red Morning Glory and Rotten Gun*.

As National Gallery Singapore continues to evolve and expand its artistic landscape, the longstanding partnership with UOB stands as a testament to their shared commitment to celebrating Southeast Asian art and culture. With the renewal of this collaboration, the Gallery is poised to embark on a transformative journey by continuing to strengthen its offerings with significant art acquisitions, new research and narratives, whilst extending the reach of Southeast Asian art to new audiences through new programming in the newly named spaces. The Gallery looks forward to welcoming diverse audiences to explore these dynamic enhancements, fostering a deeper appreciation for the region's rich artistic legacy.

#####

For further information, please contact:

National Gallery Singapore

Kerrie Wee

kerrie.wee@nationalgallery.sg

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 20th 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 nationalgallery.sg, or follow its dedicated social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram at <https://facebook.com/nationalgallerysg> and [@nationalgallerysingapore](https://instagram.com/nationalgallerysingapore) respectively.