

Media Release

For immediate release

Walk into international artist Rirkrit Tiravanija's largest bamboo maze and discover a teahouse at National Gallery Singapore

This participatory installation encourages social engagement to blur the line between art and its audiences

Singapore, 23 January 2018 – National Gallery Singapore collaborates with internationally renowned artist Rirkrit Tiravanija to present his largest bamboo maze installation at its Ng Teng Fong Roof Garden from 24 January 2018 to 28 October 2018.



Named *untitled 2018 (the infinite dimensions of smallness)*, the immersive installation which stands at a towering four metres high, draws its inspiration from materials, craftwork and architecture from Asia. The maze references traditional hand-built bamboo scaffolding found across Asia, while the Japanese tea house evokes the rich culture of tea with its centuries-old ceremonies. Visitors are invited to navigate through the bamboo maze as they go in search of finding something special such as the wooden teahouse located at its centre, and along the way, encounter and interact with each other.

This deceptively simple concept continues Rirkrit's artistic focus on participatory works that blur the line between art and its audiences, while leveraging his strength and inclination towards the gesture of hospitality. By devising and provoking human encounters in spaces

that are embodied in architectural structures like the bamboo maze and teahouse, he encourages visitors to pause, make time and space to experience something new.

Mr Low Sze Wee, Director (Curatorial, Collections and Education) of National Gallery Singapore, said “*untitled 2018* is a testament of the Gallery’s mission to bridge the connection between art and the public, and cultivate an art-loving community. In working together with Rirkrit Tiravanija - one of the most important and influential contemporary artists of our time, who is richly informed by his own history and experience of Southeast Asia - we aim to present art made accessible and inclusive through its social setting, inspired by Asian culture, architecture and craft. It presents an experimental stage for people who are curious to discover the unknown, to reconnect with one another at a more direct and personal level. In addition to his work in the UOB Southeast Asia Gallery, this installation serves to showcase Rirkrit’s long and deep practice in the contemporary art field.”

This is Rirkrit’s second major solo project in Singapore. Having lived in various countries, his works reflect the constant negotiation between diverse cultures as he constructs communal environments that draw audiences to be part of his work. For example, one of his most iconic works in 1992, *Untitled (Free)* transformed spaces in museums and galleries worldwide into a place of communion where he served rice and Thai curry to visitors, thereby creating temporary but meaningful bonds between him and his audience.

Complementing the installation is a diverse range of interdisciplinary public programmes including tea ceremonies by Japanese performance artist Mai Ueda, monthly tea ceremonies, Rirkrit Day with a colloquium, screening of the documentary on the making of the installation, and various performances.

The Ng Teng Fong Roof Garden Commission series invites one leading international artist each year to present a site-specific work that is inspired by Southeast Asia’s rich cultural heritage and complex histories from a contemporary perspective. The first commission was by Vietnamese-born Danh Vo (2016–2017). The Ng Teng Fong Roof Garden Gallery 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: <https://www.nationalgallery.sg/see-do/programme-detail/709/ng-teng-fong-roof-garden-commission-rirkrit-tiravanija>

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Annex A: Biography of Rirkrit Tiravanija

Annex B: Programmes

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About National Gallery Singapore

National Gallery Singapore is a visual arts institution which oversees the largest public collection of modern art in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Situated 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 venue. Reflecting Singapore’s unique heritage and geographical location, the Gallery features Singapore and Southeast Asian art from Singapore’s National Collection in its long-term and special exhibitions. The Gallery also works with international museums to jointly present Southeast Asian art in the global context, positioning Singapore as a regional and international hub for the visual arts.

In 2016, the Gallery won the awards for “Best Attraction Experience”, “Breakthrough Contribution to Tourism” and “Best Customer Service (Attractions)” at the prestigious Singapore Tourism Awards for its role in adding to the vibrancy of Singapore’s tourism landscape.

Annex A: Biography of Rirkrit Tiravanija



Rirkrit Tiravanija

(Image courtesy of Annette Aurell)

“I am interested in interaction between the work of art and the audience, and in doing so, I try to set up a condition by which the work is dependent on its audience. Without the viewer (the interaction of the viewer), the work would not be complete.”

– Rirkrit Tiravanija.

Rirkrit Tiravanija (b. 1961, Buenos Aires, Argentina) lives and works in New York, Berlin, and Chiang Mai. Since the late 1980s, his practice has focused on social engagement through the construction of communal environments that invite viewers to interact with each other and the work. He has held numerous solo exhibitions internationally, including at the Guggenheim Museum, New York (2005), Centre Pompidou, Paris (2012), Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2015) and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2016). He was awarded the Hugo Boss Prize in 2004.

ANNEX B: Programmes



Rirkrit Tiravanija, Untitled (running out of time), 2013, featuring performance by Mai Ueda. Photo courtesy of MONA Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia/Rémi Chauvin

TEA GATHERING BY MAI UEDA

Sat – Sun 27 – 28 Jan | 2 – 5pm | 30mins per session
Ng Teng Fong Roof Garden Gallery | Free

Immerse yourself in the art and beauty of a contemporary tea ceremony with artist Mai Ueda. Ueda makes use of these ceremonies to reflect on globalisation, and to bring people together to share knowledge in fresh and innovative ways.

SUNDAY TEA CEREMONIES

Sun 4 Feb, 4 Mar, 1 Apr, 6 May, 3 Jun, 1 Jul, 5 Aug, 2 Sep,
7 Oct | 2–6pm | Ng Teng Fong Roof Garden Gallery | Free

On the first Sunday of the month, enjoy the rare experience of a tea ceremony held within the installation.

STUDENT RESPONSES

Sat 7 Apr | 3–4pm | Various locations | Free

Art and dance students from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts present a series of movement pieces choreographed for different spaces in the Gallery.

Sat 19 May | 3–4pm | Various locations | Free

Students from School of The Art's Department of Music present compositions inspired by Tiravanija's relational, experimental and performative art practice.

RIRKRIT DAY

Sat 16 Jun | 11am–7.30pm | Various locations | Free

Delve deeper into Rirkrit Tiravanija's practice through a day of exciting programmes. Hear the artist and international experts discuss his collaborative approach to art through relational aesthetics and architecture; watch a film on the making of the commission; participate in tea ceremonies and view his other works on display in the Gallery. The day closes with the official launch of the exhibition catalogue.