

Media Release

Elim Chew's Positive Outlook Shines Through in the My Masterpiece Series

Singapore, 10 June 2015 – National Gallery Singapore today announced designer Elim Chew as the next advocate for the My Masterpiece campaign. Like many of the other personalities in the My Masterpiece programme, Elim chose a painting that both resonated on a personal level and provided an outlet for individual interpretation: *Self Portrait* by Lee Man Fong.

“This piece is special because the artist offers the viewer two options to interpret the painting: the positive and the negative. Will the viewer focus on the flowers? Or will they focus on the broken sculptures behind the artist?” asks Elim.

Elim is known for her entrepreneurial pursuits and involvement in several public service, youth and community groups. The founder and president of 77th Street is also an advocate for societal change and a firm supporter of social enterprises that help their beneficiaries overcome challenges in life.

“When I look at the painting I focus on the flowers surrounding the artist. In my life, I would equate those flowers to my friends and family who surround me and encourage me,” continues Elim. “As a business owner I face many challenges on a daily basis, and I have to ask myself if I will view my challenges with a positive or a negative lens. When I am surrounded by family and friends, it is easy to see the positive side of life despite the challenges.”

Lee was a prominent figure in the history of Nanyang art, best known for his idyllic paintings of rural landscapes, fauna and portraits. Lee was also one of the three first-generation Indonesian painters who obtained their formal art education in the Netherlands. His Western academic training is reflected in the painting, where he juxtaposes the technique he was taught in the West with the symbolism typical of Eastern painting.



Elim Chew



Lee Man Fong. *Self Portrait*. 1958.
Oil on canvas, 99 x 102 cm. Gift of Mr and Mrs Putra Masagung. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.
Image courtesy of National Heritage Board.

For the rest of the year, the Gallery will continue to unveil significant artworks which encompass diverse periods, marking key moments in the art histories of Singapore and Southeast Asia. The artworks were created by pioneering artists from the region and personally chosen by 12 local personalities who, in their own way, felt a connection with these artworks. Other figures who have participated in the My Masterpiece campaign include: popular MediaCorp actress Joanne Peh, celebrity chef Willin Low, distinguished writer Professor Edwin Thumboo, comedian Kumar Chinnadurai, and award-winning director Anthony Chen.

You can view Elim Chew's video and find out more information about Lee Man Fong's *Self Portrait* on the Gallery's Facebook page [here](#).

Educating and Inspiring Singaporeans

My Masterpiece is the first of an exciting line-up of initiatives and activities that will bring Singaporeans closer to their arts heritage leading up to the opening of the National Gallery Singapore in October 2015. The Gallery aims to capture the artistic spirit of Singapore and Southeast Asia. By sharing stories of our region's distinctive art within the global context, we seek to be a leading visual arts institution that inspires and engages our people and our neighbours, creating a dialogue between the art of Singapore, Southeast Asia and the world. The Gallery also seeks to encourage a deeper appreciation of art, and foster a greater sense of national and cultural pride.

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ABOUT NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

National Gallery Singapore is a new visual arts institution which oversees the largest public collection of modern art in 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 outstanding collections and innovative programming, positioning Singapore as a regional and international hub for the 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 later this year, 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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