

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NATIONAL ART GALLERY, SINGAPORE MOVES INTO NEXT PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT WITH SINGAPORE'S LARGEST PERMANENT DISPLAY OF LOCAL ART

SINGAPORE, 27 March 2012 – The National Art Gallery, Singapore is on track for its grand opening in 2015. Progress on its design and construction is moving smoothly as planned in the former City Hall and Supreme Court buildings.

Development Progress on Track

Much progress has been made on the Gallery's design and construction site works. Two new public civic spaces for Singaporeans to relax and enjoy art have been designed on the roof-tops of former Supreme Court and City Hall buildings. These will be for public programmes and changing environmental art exhibitions. Micropiling is now being carried out to stabilise and strengthen the old buildings' existing facades, which are to be preserved as part of their status as National Monuments. Cleaning out of the interior has begun with the demolition of architectural elements, which will be followed by specific structural demolition in some areas of the buildings.

To ensure that the key architectural and historic features of the Gallery are preserved, conservators are carrying out material tests, removing historically-significant structures and fittings for off-site cleaning and restoration works before subsequent reinstallation. Many parts of the buildings are to be preserved *in-situ* in accordance with conservation guidelines. This makes for a very tight and constrained site as the construction machinery has to be manoeuvred around existing walls, columns and door openings.

Mr Michael Koh, CEO of the National Art Gallery, Singapore and National Heritage Board (NHB), said, "Our building conservation process is progressing well, with testing by conservators revealing original materials and structures that were previously concealed with the passing of time. We are excited to see the original fabric of the buildings slowly becoming evident and we can now catch a glimpse of how these iconic buildings were constructed almost 80 years ago. We look forward to showcasing this slice of previously hidden history to the public when we open in 2015."

Strengthening of Board and Management

The Gallery is now moving into its next phase of development in the lead up to its opening. Since August 2011, a full Board has been formed. Five industry and government leaders have joined the Board to provide guidance and strategic leadership in key areas. They are Mr Kwee Liong Seen, Mr Edwin Low, Ms Ng Hsueh Ling, Dr Suriani Suratnam and Mr Liew Choon Boon (representing the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts). These esteemed individuals will further strengthen the existing board which comprises Mr Koh Seow Chuan, who is Chairman of the Board, Mr Hsieh Fu Hua, Ms Jane Ittogi, Mr Benson Puah, and Mr Michael Koh. In addition, Mr Hsieh Fu Hua has been appointed as Deputy Chairman from 1 March 2012 to assist the Gallery's Chairman Mr Koh in driving key strategic areas.

In his close to three years as concurrent CEO of the National Art Gallery, Singapore and CEO of NHB, Mr Michael Koh has been instrumental in giving crucial input to the architectural, operational and exhibition aspects of the project. With the development and planning phases well underway, the Gallery is now moving into its next phase of management development and operational readiness. It is thus timely to conduct a search for a new full-time Director to succeed him in providing full-time leadership in both professional and executive areas. The new Director will be expected to position and connect the Gallery favourably in international and local circles, and strengthen its profile as a leading player in the visual arts scene.

Upon the successful recruitment of the Director, Mr Michael Koh will step down as CEO of the Gallery. He will however continue in his role as the CEO of NHB and will remain as a Board Member in the Gallery's Board to ensure continuity and a smooth transition.

Permanent Exhibition Design Underway

The Gallery is now developing exciting content and programmes in preparation for its opening. It will be the only art gallery in the world that reflects on the special qualities of Southeast Asian and Singapore art, creating new exhibitions that will tell innovative stories on Southeast Asia and Singapore art and set it in the global context. The exhibitions will provide an insight into the diversity yet commonality of values such as harmony and beauty that are embodied in Southeast Asia and Singapore art. This strategic concept will position the Gallery as a regional visual arts hub with a strong focus on research and scholarship.

Occupying a sprawling 60,000 square metres of built area, the Gallery is anchored by two permanent core galleries - Singapore and Southeast Asia. Detailed work is well underway on the storylines, artworks, and exhibition designs for these and other art display spaces.

Mr Koh Seow Chuan, Chairman of the National Art Gallery, Singapore, said, "The Gallery has made significant progress since its incorporation in January 2009. Our aim is to build a warm and welcoming space for the arts where we can narrate fresh stories on the beauty, diversity and harmony of Singapore and Southeast Asia, as well as to celebrate our region's unique artistic achievements in visual arts. To ensure that our gallery will be warmly embraced by the community, we have consulted artists, art societies, architects, and members of the public to seek their collective dreams and wishes for these iconic buildings. We continue to welcome public feedback to make this a welcoming space for all."

About the National Art Gallery, Singapore

The National Art Gallery, Singapore (*working title*) is a new visual arts institution which will contribute towards positioning Singapore as a regional and international hub for visual arts. It manages the world's largest public collection of modern Southeast Asian and Singapore art. The Gallery focuses on displaying, promoting and researching these artworks, relating them to the wider Asian and international contexts, and hosting international art exhibitions.

Situated in the heart of the Civic District, the City Hall and adjacent former Supreme Court building - two important heritage buildings symbolic of Singapore's nationhood - will be converted to house this exciting new visual arts venue. Slated to officially open 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 Art Gallery is available at www.nationalartgallery.sg.

Media Enquiries

Sybil Chiew
Manager, Integrated Marcoms
& Audience Development
National Art Gallery Singapore
T: +65 6332 5620
E: sybil_chiew@nationalartgallery.sg

Connie Lee
Assistant Director, Marketing
National Art Gallery, Singapore
T: +65 6332 5183
E: connie_lee@nationalartgallery.sg