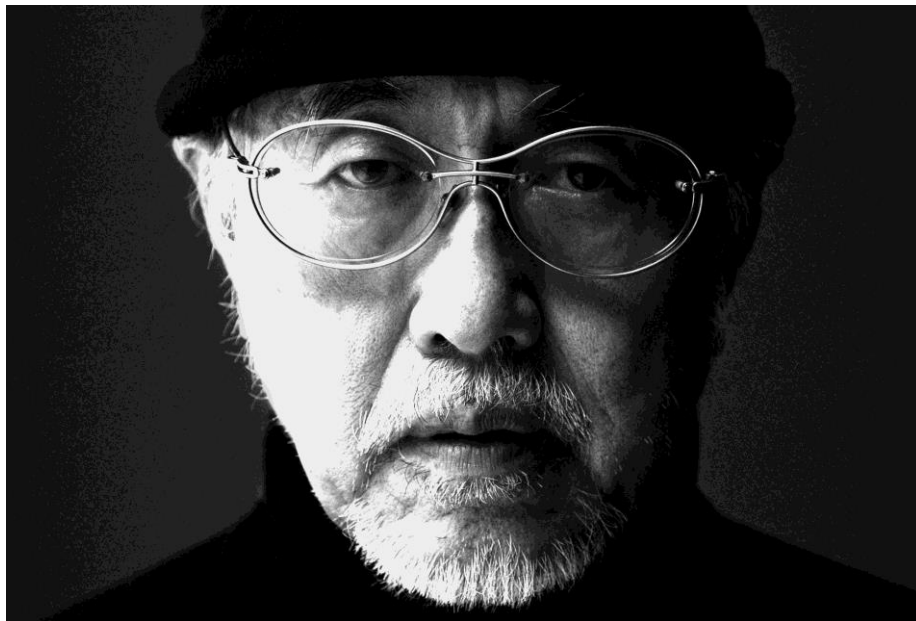


Media Release

For immediate release

National Gallery Singapore presents its first photography exhibition, spotlighting Chua Soo Bin and his first retrospective

*Titled **Chua Soo Bin: Truths & Legends**, the exhibition will chart the career of the Singapore photographer and Cultural Medallion recipient to deepen the understanding of the craft in Singapore's art history*



Singapore, 28 November 2019 - National Gallery Singapore spotlights its photographic collection with the first retrospective of local photographer and Cultural Medallion recipient, Chua Soo Bin, in the exhibition, ***Chua Soo Bin: Truths & Legends***. Featuring close to 100 photographic works alongside archival materials, the exhibition, which runs from 6 December 2019 to 28 June 2020, will chart Chua's remarkable decades-long career. It will give prominence to some of these pivotal works in the development of photography in Singapore, a history which is traditionally overlooked, and explore the timelessness and intricacy of his portraiture against the backdrop of a thriving social media photography scene today.

Chua Soo Bin is known for his ability to tell complex stories through his photographs. His portraits are sensitive and nuanced, built on his mastery of the medium and understanding of his subjects. His skill is most clearly seen in his renowned *Legends* series. These definitive portraits of 14 Chinese ink masters such as Ye Qianyu, Lu Yanshao and Singaporean ink artist, Chen Wen Hsi offer a rare insight into the lives and personalities of these towering figures. This critically-acclaimed photographic series also earned Chua the Cultural Medallion in 1989, and highlighted the work of a Singaporean photographer to the rest of the world.

“Spotlighting the works of Singapore artists and educating the public of their artistic practices continue to be a priority for the Gallery. While photography has traditionally been under-researched in Singapore, it has played a significant role in our art history. The iconic works of Chua Soo Bin are excellent examples of the potential of photography as an art form. It has been exactly three decades since *Legends* was completed. We hope that this retrospective will raise awareness of Chua’s significant contributions to Singapore’s art scene as a photographer, a gallerist, art dealer and art patron. At the same time, visitors will be inspired to learn more about Singapore’s very own photographers and reflect on the changing role of photography,” said Dr Eugene Tan, Director of National Gallery Singapore.



(L-R) Portraits of ink masters, Lu Yanshao, Ye Qianyu and Chen Wen Hsi (1985 - 1988) featured in Chua’s *Legends* series

Chua Soo Bin: Truths & Legends comprises three thematic sections. The first and largest part of the exhibition features the *Legends* photographs. Exhibiting alongside the portraits of the 14 ink masters is a selection of ink paintings by these artists, and notes by renowned Chinese art

historian Liu Xilin, who knew these men personally. Collectively, they add a new dimension to the stories revealed in the portraits to enrich the viewing experience.

The second section delves into the candid and informal portraits taken by Chua of modern Chinese ink artist Wu Guanzhong, over two decades. These photographs reveal different aspects of Wu's life, from his constant sketching to his vivacious personality and love for his family, as well as the rapport between artist and photographer.



Portraits of Chinese ink artist, Wu Guanzhong by Chua Soo Bin

The final section examines Chua's life, from his early years in advertising to the many ways in which he has contributed to the art scene in Singapore. In addition to his earlier pictorial and commercial photographs alongside archival materials, visitors can also view a short 1989 documentary about Chua to trace the development of his art practice and learn more about his artistic process.

Chua Soo Bin: Truths & Legends is curated by Charmaine Toh from National Gallery Singapore. A series of complementary programmes through the course of the exhibition will also reflect the changing role of photography in today's digital culture.

General admission applies for ***Chua Soo Bin: Truths & Legends***. For more details, visit www.nationalgallery.sg/truthsandlegends

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Annex A: [Exhibition Highlights](#)

Annex B: [Five things to know about Chua Soo Bin](#)

Annex C: [Programmes](#)

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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: Exhibition Highlights

	<p>Chua Soo Bin <i>Legends (Huang Junbi)</i> 1985–1988 Photograph, inkjet print on paper mounted on dibond, 100 x 71 cm Gift of the photographer Collection of National Gallery Singapore</p> <p>Chua shows Huang Junbi doing his daily morning exercise in his garden. He wanted to capture the daily lives of artists, and not simply the moments when they were making their work.</p>
	<p>Chua Soo Bin <i>Self-Portrait</i> 1970s Photograph, inkjet print on paper mounted on dibond, 100 x 71 cm Image courtesy of the photographer</p> <p>Chua quit the advertising industry and opened his own photography studio in 1972. He made this self-portrait to promote his services as a photographer.</p>



Chua Soo Bin
Legends (Ye Qianyu)
1985-1988
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper, 40 x 50 cm
Gift of the photographer
Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Chua made this image to mark Ye's decision to hang up his brush. Ye wrote a poem for Chua in return, which includes these two lines: "A timely rain when my little courtyard suffered resettlement, painting thoughts fade depending only on threads of ideas."



Chua Soo Bin
Wu Guanzhong
1994
Photograph, inkjet print on paper, 40 x 50 cm
Image courtesy of the photographer

Chua accompanied Wu Guanzhong on many of Wu's study trips around the region. Here, Wu is seen sketching on a boat in Thailand.



Chua Soo Bin
Liu Kang
2003
Photograph, inkjet print on paper, 50 x 40 cm
Image courtesy of the photographer

Chua photographed a series of remarkably intimate portraits of Liu Kang just a year before Liu passed away. They show Liu not only as an artist, but also as a husband, father and grandfather.



Chua Soo Bin
Ng Eng Teng
1989

Photograph, inkjet print on paper, 40 x 50 cm
Image courtesy of the photographer

Chua captured this image of Singaporean sculptor Ng Eng Teng with a fisheye lens, echoing the spherical form of the sculpture that Ng is holding.

Annex C: Programmes

PANEL DISCUSSION | *LEGENDS IN THE MAKING*

Fri 6 Dec 2019 | 6.30pm – 7.45pm | The Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium | Free, registration required

Chua Soo Bin, Li Xingjian and Liu Xilin will discuss Chua's renowned *Legends* series, which comprises iconic portraits of 14 established Chinese ink masters. Learn about the stories behind the photos as Chua and Li share more about working together, and gain insight into the significance of these ink masters captured from Liu, a researcher and art critic.

The session will be conducted in Mandarin, with simultaneous interpretation in English, and will be moderated by local art critic Teo Han Wue.

ARTIST TALK | LI XINGJIAN

Sat 7 Dec 2019 | 1pm – 2pm | City Hall Wing, Level 4, Wu Guanzhong Gallery | Free for exhibition ticket holders, registration required

Artist Li Xingjian was a long-time student of ink master Li Keran. Hear from Li Xingjian as he reminisces about his time under Li Keran's mentorship, and explores how this relationship has shaped his personal artistic practice.

The session will be conducted in Mandarin and facilitated by prominent local art critic Teo Han Wue.

TALK | MUSINGS ON A MASTER: QI BAISHI

Sat 7 Dec 2019 | 2.30–3.30pm | City Hall Wing, Level 4, Wu Guanzhong Gallery | Free for exhibition ticket holders, registration required

What can a painting of a humble housefly tell us about its artist, the traditional Chinese ink master Qi Baishi? Liu Xilin, art historian and former Academic Director of the National Art Museum of China, will delve into the life and practice of this famed artist, sharing highlights from his research and book.

The session will be conducted in Mandarin and facilitated by prominent local art critic Teo Han Wue.

CURATOR TOURS

- Sat 14 Dec 2019, noon–12.45pm [English], Free (registration required)
- Sat 18 Apr 2020, noon–12.45pm [English], Free (registration required)
- Sat 20 Jun 2020, noon–1.15pm [Mandarin], Free (registration required)

Join the exhibition curators as they trace the evolution of Cultural Medallion recipient Chua Soo Bin's photographic practice in this survey of close to 100 works. The show is the first retrospective for Chua after a six-decade career, and expands our understanding of his contributions to art in Singapore.

Participants of the Mandarin tour on Sat 20 Jun 2020 will also learn about the Chinese ink masters featured in the *Legends* series and the relationships that Chua cultivated with them.

RESONATES WITH: *THE OPERA PEOPLE*

Sat 25 Jan 2020 | 2pm, 3pm, 4pm | Padang Atrium

Enjoy a multidisciplinary performance of by The Opera People (TOP), a modern opera company that aims to redefine the experience of opera for live and online audiences through the use of technology.

A SOMATIC SERIES BY VINCENT YONG

Sat–Sun 15–16 Feb | 2.30pm and 4.30pm | City Hall Wing, Level 5, Rooftop Studios

Movement educator and art therapist Vincent Yong translates the art featured in *Truths and Legends* into a bodily experience in this unique somatic movement workshop. The participatory programme begins with a 30-minute workshop, followed by a 45-minute in-gallery experience which culminates in a group performance.