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Media Release

National Gallery Singapore welcomes Ng Eng Teng's *Mother and Child* sculpture into the embrace of the National Collection

This iconic sculpture is the latest donation to the world's largest institutional collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian art

10 May 2018, Singapore – Dubbed fondly as the grandfather of Singapore sculpture, Cultural Medallion recipient – the late Dr. Ng Eng Teng is remembered for his distinctive, large-scale sculptures that depict whimsical interpretations of humanist themes, bringing vibrancy to public spaces in Singapore. In recognition of his contributions to Singapore through these public commissions, one of his iconic masterpieces – *Mother and Child* – will now be accessioned into the National Collection, joining seminal works by other pioneering artists, including Liu Kang and Georgette Chen.



Image of Mother and Child situated in Tampines Central Park

The three metre-tall sculpture was donated to the state by the late Dr. Ng's family. Cast in bronze, the sculpture features a mother in the intimate act of lifting and holding her child, conveying the caring and warm love of a mother towards her child.

Cast in bronze in March 1996, the distinctive bronze signature piece is the second and last large sculpture in Dr Ng Eng Teng's series of work on the subject of *Mother and Child* and is currently situated at Tampines Central Park. Singaporeans would also recognise a similar work which used to be displayed outside Far East Shopping Centre in 1980, and was one of the signature features of the Orchard Road landscape then. Following the donation, the sculpture will be installed in front of the Gallery, and become part of the Gallery's façade on a long-term basis from 2019.

Dr. Eugene Tan, Director of National Gallery Singapore said, "Ng Eng Teng played many roles in the development of art in Singapore. He was one of our pioneer artists, a mentor, and more importantly an inspiration to young artists today to push the boundaries of art boldly while keeping closely connected to the audience. We are very grateful to his family for this generous donation of *Mother and Child*, which will allow generations after to learn and appreciate his contributions to Singapore's art scene."

"The family is pleased that Eng Teng's *Mother and Child* has found a long-term and prominent place in Singapore's national visual art institution in the civic district. It is wonderful that locals, as well as many tourists, will get to enjoy the sculpture which holds a special place in our hearts. This would be in keeping with Eng Teng's wish for his large, durable, bronze sculptures to be sited outdoors for general public viewing," said Ms. Jacqueline Ng, sister of the late Ng Eng Teng and representative of the Ng family.

The Gallery previously received major donations including more than 500 works by various Singapore artists from art collector and the Gallery's founding chairman Mr. Koh Seow Chuan, as well as more than 120 works by renowned Malaysian artist Latiff Mohidin from art collector Mr. Yeap Lam Yang. The Gallery also received a recent donation of 28 artworks and archival materials by Singapore artists Mr. Lim Yew Kuan and Mr. Lim Hak Tai, from their families in 2016.

Dr. Tan shared, "Our collection was historically formed through the goodwill of private supporters and artists. Private support has always been integral to building our collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian art. The strengthening of the National Collection allows us to

deepen our research and scholarship, and help us present Southeast Asian art to the world and to the greater community.”

Besides the donation of artworks, the Gallery’s Art Adoption and Acquisition (AAA) Programme provides an opportunity for art supporters to “adopt” key artworks of historical and artistic significance from the Gallery’s Singapore and Southeast Asia collection or to make a donation to the programme. Funds from the programme will go towards strengthening the National Collection through the acquisitions of new artworks, deepening research and scholarship, and enhancing our mission to showcase Singapore and Southeast Asian art to the world. To date, donors including the Yong Hon Kong Foundation, BinjaiTree, Lam Soon Cannery Pte. Ltd, Emma and Joseph Cherian and other donors have contributed over \$10 million in support of the Gallery’s AAA programme.

Visitors looking to learn about the origins of the National Collection can also visit the latest exhibition *(Re)collect: The Making of our Art Collection* at the Singtel Special Exhibition Gallery happening from 11 May to 19 August 2018.

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Annex A: About Dr. Ng Eng Teng and *Mother and Child*

Annex B: About National Gallery Singapore’s Art Adoption and Acquisition Programme

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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: About Dr. Ng Eng Teng and *Mother and Child*

About Dr. Ng Eng Teng

One of the most prolific modern sculptors in Singapore, Ng Eng Teng (1934 – 2001) produced numerous innovative works over a span of four decades. These include large-scale public sculptures, which are displayed throughout Singapore, to life-sized and smaller ones. Two of his most iconic public sculptures are *Wealth and Contentment*, both produced in 1974 and are, currently, located outside the National University Cultural Centre after being moved from the Plaza Singapura Shopping Complex.

After undergoing his formal training at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) where he built a strong foundation in drawing and painting, Ng went on to study ceramics in the United Kingdom in the early 1960s. Upon graduation, he worked as an industrial pottery designer in Ireland for two years before returning to Singapore in 1966. These various stints equipped him with not only the creative and conceptual approaches but also the necessary technical vocabulary to deal with the three-dimensional form and with different materials.

Upon returning here, he set up a studio and built a kiln at his family residence in Joo Chiat. It was only in 1969 that he pursued a full-time career as an artist after working as a visual aids officer with the International Planned Parenthood Federation for two years. He exhibited at the first Singapore sculpture exhibition that was held at the National Library in 1967. Three years later, he held Singapore's first one-man exhibition of sculpture, painting and ceramics. He was conferred the Cultural Medallion Award by the Singapore government in 1981. Furthermore, his works were featured in shows around Asia and Australia, and in 1990, he received the ASEAN Cultural Award of Visual Arts (Sculpture).

About *Mother and Child*

This bronze sculpture belongs to the iconic “Mother and Child” series created by the artist. Ng Eng Teng, whose oeuvre dealt primarily with the figure and the human condition, believed that humanity began with the family where children would learn values through the dynamic relationships with their parents. The artist has articulated the supportive role that a mother plays in her offspring's life through various compositions, making the mother and child a recurring motif in his body of works. Some sculptures, for instance, poignantly portray the child sitting restfully on the mother's lap or in her embracing arms. In this particular work, the mother's large hands protectively press her child close to her side.

Ng was also interested in the approaches by which the body could be articulated in modern and contemporary expressions. In the early stages of his practice, Ng rendered the body in a realist manner, but later, pursued abstraction and sought to develop fresh forms as seen with the stylised figures of the mother and the child in this work. In addition to using cement fondu and clay to create his sculptures, he worked with bronze as it allowed him to produce extended shapes such as elongated arms and necks.

A sculpture that was cast in Taiwan, “Mother and Child” was left behind in the late artist’s studio for several years. It has been temporarily sited at Tampines Central Park and will be moved to National Gallery Singapore where it will be installed on the existing pavement structure in front of the Gallery, becoming part of its façade that faces the Padang. It is also the last monumental work produced by the artist. Another work, which was produced in 1980 and also entitled “Mother and Child”, is located at Orchard Parade Hotel.

Annex B: National Gallery Singapore’s Art Adoption and Acquisition Programme

The Art Adoption and Acquisition (AAA) Programme provides a rare opportunity for art supporters to “adopt” key artworks of historical and artistic significance from the Gallery’s Singapore and Southeast Asia collection. Funds from the Programme go towards strengthening the National Collection through the acquisitions of new artworks, deepening research and scholarship, and enhancing our mission to showcase Singapore and Southeast Asian art to the world.

An art adopter can adopt an artwork individually or as a group. In gratitude for the support, art adopters will be acknowledged alongside their artwork in perpetuity. Art supporters can also make a donation directly to the AAA Programme.

You may view key artworks available for adoption and the adopted artworks on the Gallery website: <https://www.nationalgallery.sg/join-give/make-a-gift/art-adoption-acquisition>