

Media Release

Olivia Lum reminisces about humble childhood in latest *My Masterpiece*

Singapore, 9 July 2015 – Olivia Lum, Executive Chairman and Group CEO of Hyflux, revealed little-known details of her childhood as she selected the latest addition to the *My Masterpiece* series. The painting *Drying Salted Fish* by Cheong Soo Pieng brought to life sight and smell that were all too familiar to Ms Lum as she recounted her past. The successful entrepreneur was named today by National Gallery Singapore as the seventh advocate in the *My Masterpiece* campaign.

“The salted fish reminds me of the time when I first came to Singapore. I was living at a place on top of a salted fish market, and I can still remember the smell on my school uniform. This painting reminds me of my school and childhood days. It is very meaningful. It is about life,” said Ms Lum.

Despite her tough growing up years, having been abandoned at birth and raised in poverty, Ms Lum overcame the odds and founded a hugely successful business. Apart from her vision of providing the world with clean water, the founder of Hyflux also believes in giving back to society and has served in several public service sectors, including her role as Nominated Member of Parliament from 2002 to 2004.

Not forgetting her roots, Ms Lum connected with the painting because it reminded her fondly of the marketplace she knew as a child. She said, “It’s a place where people network, where people talk about their lives, about all kinds of things. Nowadays, you don’t see this kind of marketplace in Singapore anymore.”

Artist Cheong Soo Pieng is regarded as one of the Nanyang artists, and was the first artist to be awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in 1962 by the Republic of Singapore. He is also the first Singaporean artist to have his artwork featured on a UNESCO stamp. His painting *Drying Salted Fish* depicts a group of Malay villagers drying salted fish, an ingredient widely

used to prepare Southeast Asian delicacies. The image of his artwork can also be found on the back of the \$50 note in the Portrait Series of Singapore's currency.



Olivia Lum
Executive Chairman and Group CEO
of Hyflux



Cheong Soo Pieng. *Drying Salted Fish*. 1978.
Chinese ink and colour on cloth, 55.5 x 88.5 cm.
Gift of Trans Island Bus Services Ltd.
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 express their unique connection with these artworks. The other ambassadors in the *My Masterpiece* campaign include popular MediaCorp actress Joanne Peh, celebrity chef Willin Low, distinguished writer Professor Edwin Thumboo, comedian Kumar Chinnadurai, entrepreneur Elim Chew and award-winning director Anthony Chen.

You can view Olivia Lum's video and find out more information about Cheong Soo Pieng's *Drying Salted Fish* on the Gallery's Facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/nationalgallerysg/videos/1150821098266945/>

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 November 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 will contribute towards positioning Singapore as a regional and international hub for visual arts. It manages the largest public collection of visual arts from Southeast Asia and Singapore from the 19th century to the present day. 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 National Gallery Singapore has been beautifully restored and transformed from the former Supreme Court and City Hall buildings – two important heritage buildings of Singapore’s nationhood – into this exciting new visual arts venue. Opening in November 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 Gallery is available at www.nationalgallery.sg.

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