

**NATIONAL
GALLERY
SINGAPORE**

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**「dalam
singapore」**

Lai Foong Moi: Crossings



DBS SINGAPORE GALLERY

A flexible annexe space next to DBS Singapore Gallery 3, Dalam Singapore presents focused exhibitions that reinvigorate and deepen understanding of Singapore's artists and art through new research, insightful curation, and engaging programming.

The Malay word *dalam* means “inside” and is used when inviting someone to enter a place or room. The word also carries esoteric undertones, suggesting “deep within” or “interior”: the part of the self that can be perceived but not fully known.

The exhibitions at Dalam Singapore will be periodically refreshed.

This exhibition is in English, with room sheets in 中文, Bahasa Melayu, and தமிழ்.

ON COVER
Crossing (Home Coming), 1964. Oil on canvas, 77 x 65 cm.
Collection of Singapore Airlines Limited.

Lai Foong Moi: Crossings

Crossings brings together works by Lai Foong Moi, whose paintings attend to the lives unfolding across shifting territorial borders and emerging national stories. Her works reveal the interior lives of those within this process of transition, expressed through moments of pause and contemplation. Through her depictions of everyday life in a rapidly changing Malaya and Singapore, Lai traces how people navigate a world being reshaped around them. *Crossings* is her first solo presentation since the 1960s.



Lai Foong Moi painting in Germany, 1955.
Digitised by National Gallery Singapore Library & Archive
with kind permission from the artist's family.

Born in Malaya, Lai Foong Moi (1931–1995) trained at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in Singapore and the École des Beaux-Arts in France. She returned to Singapore in the late 1950s to a world negotiating ideas about nationhood, modernity, and belonging. Her paintings of women, labourers, and the city ask questions about individual experience during a period of profound change.

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Negotiating the Modern City

Lai's paintings of labourers and the urban environment resist expected images of post-independence Singapore. In place of bustling streets and a lively Singapore River, Lai's city is quiet and still, imbued with a subtle sense of estrangement. Within these spaces, labourers appear in moments of rest, leisure, or reflection. Often seen as marginal to the societies whose infrastructure they construct, they bring a sense of humanity to these changing environments.



Singapore Street Scene
(Looking along Victoria Street with the Convent Chapel in the Corner).
1958. Oil on canvas, 65 x 89.5 cm.
Collection of National Library, Singapore.



Labourer (Lunch Break).
1965. Oil on canvas, 104 x 67 cm.
This work has been collectively adopted by [Adopt Now] supporters.
Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

The frontal posture, worn lines, and weathered expression of a male labourer contrast with the back view of a samsui woman. Although presented together, their diverging postures suggest different degrees of visibility within a marginal segment of society.

By the mid-1960s, such forms of manual labour were being phased out. Instead of portraying labour as a symbol of collective progress, Lai focuses on the individual migrants who shaped the city. Her works invite us to consider what modernity meant for these marginalised figures.

TOURS & PROGRAMMES

In conjunction with the exhibition, we are bringing together a variety of public talks, tours, and workshops that offer deeper insights into its themes. For more information, please visit nationalgallery.sg/Crossings.

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ACCESS RESOURCES

OPENING HOURS

Daily 10am–7pm
General ticket sales end
30 minutes before closing time.



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