

Annex A: *Lai Foong Moi: Crossings* Exhibition Highlights and Key Artworks

A life shaped by crossings

Lai Foong Moi: Crossings traces the life and artistic journey of trailblazing Nanyang artist Lai Foong Moi (1931–1995), whose practice unfolded during a period of profound social transformation in Singapore and Malaya. Taking its title from two paintings created by Lai in 1964 and 1965, the exhibition draws on the idea of "crossings" as moments of transition, encounter and becoming. Through paintings and archival materials, visitors discover how Lai's personal and artistic journey from Malaya to Singapore and Paris, and later as an educator at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), intersected with changing ideas of identity, nationhood, and modernity.



Lai teaching at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts Graduation Magazine, 1962. Reproduction, 2026. Image courtesy of Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Singapore.

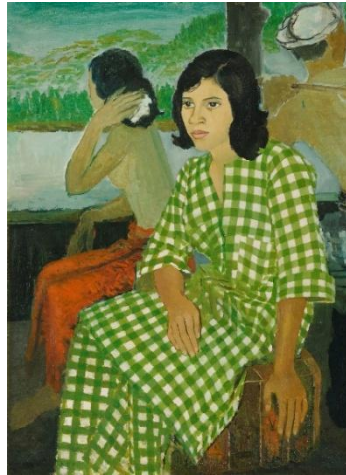
The exhibition also features archival materials documenting Lai's studies in Paris, her early solo exhibitions and her 36-year teaching career at her alma mater NAFA, offering new insights into her artistic legacy and enduring contributions to Singapore's art history.

Identity and modernity through the human figure

At the heart of *Crossings* are Lai's contemplative portrayals of individuals navigating moments of transition. Her portraits of women examine questions of identity, modernity, and representation through subtle variations in dress, posture, and setting. Rather than presenting fixed identities, these works invite visitors to consider how individual experience intersects with broader social change.



Lai Foong Moi. *Crossing (Home Coming)*. 1964. Oil on canvas, 77 x 65 cm. Collection of Singapore Airlines Limited.



Lai Foong Moi. *Crossing*. c. 1965. Oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm. Private collection.



Lai Foong Moi. *Lady*. 1966. Oil on canvas, 100 x 54 cm. Collection of Dr and Mrs Tan Chong Guan.

Among the exhibition's highlights are *Crossing (Home Coming)* (1964), *Crossing* (c. 1965) and *Lady* (1966). Though sharing the same title, *Crossing (Home Coming)* and *Crossing* present markedly different representations of fashion, posture, and gender. Created around the time of Singapore's independence, both paintings explore tensions between tradition and modernity, possibly alluding to this symbolic moment of national formation. *Lady* (1966) continues these explorations through an introspective female figure whose quiet presence invites questions about identity and self-presentation.

Quiet observations of a changing society

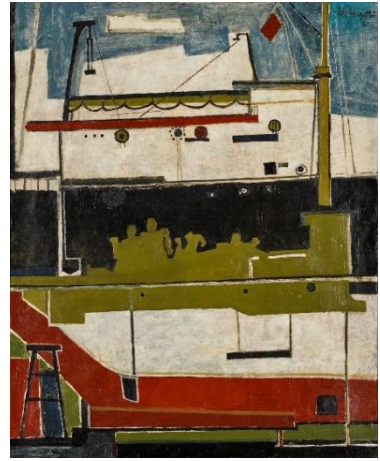
Rather than depicting the grand narratives of nation-building, Lai turned her attention to the everyday experiences of ordinary people. Her paintings of labourers and urban landscapes linger on moments of pause, contemplation and stillness, offering an intimate perspective on modern life in a rapidly transforming Singapore.



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



Lai Foong Moi. *Trishaw Rider*. 1961. Oil on canvas, 75.3 × 48 cm. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.



Lai Foong Moi. *Repairing*. 1960. Oil on canvas, 81.5 × 65 cm. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Works such as *Labourer (Lunch Break)* (1965), *Trishaw Rider* (1961), and *Repairing* (1960) foreground the individuality and humanity of workers at a time when traditional forms of labour were gradually disappearing from Singapore's landscape. By capturing such moments of rest rather than productivity, Lai resists reducing her subjects to symbols of economic progress, instead inviting viewers to reflect on their lived experiences and place within society.



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



Lai Foong Moi. *A View of Lion City Singapore*
(Aerial View). 1974. Oil on canvas, 80 × 110
cm. Private collection.



Lai Foong Moi. *Morning Street, Malacca*. 1959.
Oil on canvas, 52 × 99 cm. Private collection.

Lai's reflections on the changing urban environment further expand this perspective. Rather than portraying Singapore and Malaysia as triumphant symbols of post-independence development, works including *Singapore Street Scene (Looking along Victoria Street with the Convent Chapel in the Corner)* (1958), *A View of Lion City Singapore (Aerial View)* (1974), and *Morning Street, Malacca* (1959) evoke an atmosphere of ambiguity and quiet reflection. Through these familiar yet contemplative scenes, Lai offers an alternative perspective on urban transformation that foregrounds questions of belonging and the place of the individual within an evolving society.