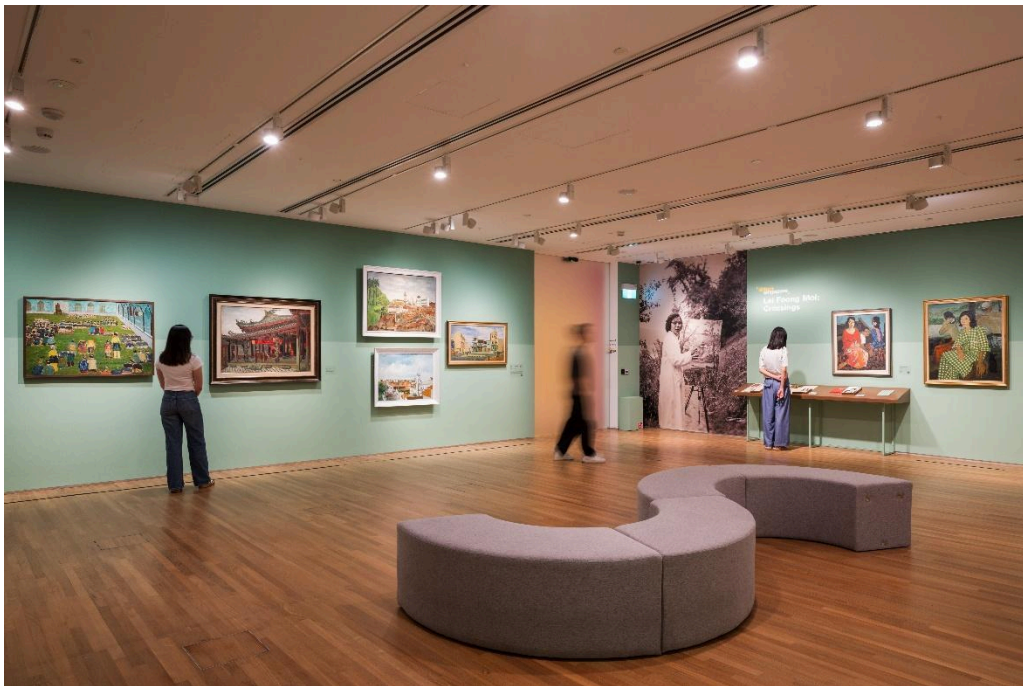


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**National Gallery Singapore presents first solo exhibition in 60 years
dedicated to Nanyang artist Lai Foong Moi**

Lai Foong Moi: Crossings spotlights one of Singapore's trailblazing women artists, tracing her enduring legacy and contributions as an artist and educator.



Installation View, *Lai Foong Moi: Crossings*, National Gallery Singapore, 2026

SINGAPORE, 14 August 2026 – National Gallery Singapore presents *Lai Foong Moi: Crossings*, the first solo presentation of underexplored Nanyang artist Lai Foong Moi since the 1960s. Running from 14 August 2026 to 3 October 2027, *Crossings* brings together paintings and archival materials that offer new perspectives on Lai's artistic legacy, including her contemplative portrayals of identity, gender, labour, and urban life during the 1960s to 1970s – a period of profound transformation in Singapore and Malaya.

Born in Malaya, Lai graduated from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) in 1954 before continuing her studies at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris on a French Government scholarship. During her time in Paris, she also exhibited her work. Upon her return to Singapore in 1958, Lai became the first Malayan-born woman to hold solo exhibitions in Singapore and the Federation of Malaya. While celebrated during her lifetime, her practice has received comparatively limited attention within the histories of Singaporean and Malaysian art. *Crossings* offers a timely opportunity to revisit her work and recognise her enduring influence as both an artist and educator.



Installation View, *Lai Foong Moi: Crossings*, National Gallery Singapore, 2026

Taking its title from two paintings created by Lai in 1964 and 1965, *Crossings* is framed around moments of transition, encounter, and becoming. The title speaks not only to Lai's own journeys across Malaya, Singapore, and Paris, but also to a time when the region was negotiating new ideas of identity, nationhood, and cultural modernity. By situating her artistic ambitions and practice within these broader social transformations, the exhibition invites visitors to discover how Lai offered a distinctive perspective on modern life at a pivotal moment in Singapore's history.

As the second edition of National Gallery Singapore's Dalam Singapore series – which spotlights significant yet underexplored artists and stories from Singapore's art history through the Gallery's research, insightful curation, and engaging programming – *Crossings* reintroduces Lai's practice to a new generation of audiences while deepening understanding of her place within Singapore's artistic heritage.

Despite being recognised as one of the region's notable women artists during her lifetime, Lai and her practice have received comparatively little scholarly attention. Through paintings and archival materials, the exhibition traces the breadth of her artistic journey and the sensitivity with which she portrayed individuals navigating a period of profound change.

Following Lai Foong Moi's artistic journey



Installation Views, *Lai Foong Moi: Crossings*, National Gallery Singapore, 2026

The exhibition traces Lai's artistic journey from her formative years at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts to her studies at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where she exhibited regularly at prestigious salon exhibitions. After returning to Singapore in 1958, Lai joined her alma mater as an educator and taught there for more than three decades. Through paintings, photographs, exhibition catalogues, and archival materials, visitors can gain new insights into her artistic



development, early achievements within local and international art circles, and her enduring influence as an artist and educator.

Lai's paintings offer a contemplative perspective on everyday life in Singapore during the 1960s to 1970s. Against a background of rapid transformation, she captured nostalgic scenes through unexpected, quiet moments of pause and contemplation – from labourers at rest to scenes of stillness within a changing urban landscape. Together, these works invite visitors to consider the uncertainties and complexities of life during this formative period in Singapore's history.

Lai Foong Moi: Crossings at National Gallery Singapore

Lai Foong Moi: Crossings runs from 14 August 2026 to 3 October 2027 at Dalam Singapore, within the DBS Singapore Gallery 3. General Admission applies (free for Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents). For more information, please refer to the attached annexes or visit <https://www.nationalgallery.sg/sg/en/exhibitions/Lai-Foong-Moi-Crossings.html>.

Media assets are available through this [link](#).

- [Annex A](#): *Lai Foong Moi: Crossings* Exhibition Highlights and Key Artworks
- [Annex B](#): *Lai Foong Moi: Crossings* Curatorial Programmes

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About National Gallery Singapore

National Gallery Singapore is a leading visual arts institution and the largest modern and



contemporary art museum in Southeast Asia. Dedicated to making art accessible to all, the Gallery engages audiences of all ages through its exhibitions, educational programmes, and public festivals.

Home to the world's largest public collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian art, the Gallery is redefining the region's art history through pioneering research, strategic acquisitions, and thoughtfully curated exhibitions. By offering new perspectives, it recontextualises the region's artistic contributions within global narratives.

Located in the heart of the Civic District, the Gallery is housed in two national monuments – the City Hall and former Supreme Court – making it an iconic cultural landmark where architectural grandeur meets deep historical significance.

A vibrant cultural destination, the Gallery has been ranked among Asia's Top 10 most visited museums by The Art Newspaper since 2019. It has also received accolades at the Singapore Tourism Awards, including "Best Leisure Event" for Light to Night Festival 2020 and "Outstanding Leisure Event" for Gallery Children's Biennale 2021.

As a registered Charity and an Institute of Public Character, the Gallery relies on public support to expand its collection, advance research, and bring art to more people, shaping cultural discourse and inspiring creativity for generations to come.

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 × 65 cm. Collection of Singapore Airlines Limited.



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



Lai Foong Moi. *Lady*. 1966. Oil on canvas, 100 × 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

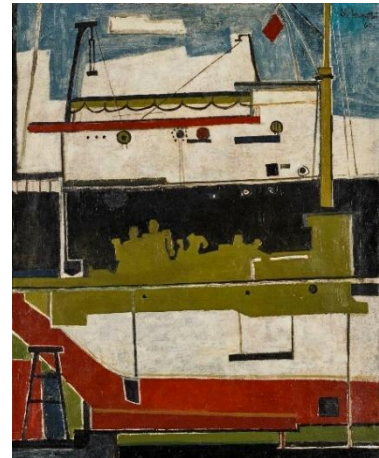
Rather than depicting the grand narratives of nation-building, Lai turned her attention to the everyday experiences of ordinary people. Her paintings of labourers and urban landscapes linger on moments of pause, contemplation and stillness, offering an intimate perspective on modern life in a rapidly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

Annex B: *Lai Foong Moi: Crossings* Curatorial Programmes

Exhibition Programmes	
Activities	
Learning Station	
Date & Time:	14 August 2026 – 3 October 2027 10am – 7pm daily
Venue:	City Hall Wing, Level 2, Outside DBS Singapore Gallery 3, Dalam Singapore
Description:	Explore Lai Foong Moi's Trishaw Rider through this hands-on and immersive experience. Touch, discover, and step into the trishaw to imagine life in Singapore's past. As you appreciate the artwork, take time to reflect on the experiences of the workers who contributed to Singapore's growth and leave a message of appreciation for their hard work and dedication.
Tour and Opening Programme	
Curator Tour	
Date & Time:	Friday, 18 September 2026 7.30pm – 8.30pm
Venue:	City Hall Wing, Level 2, DBS Singapore Gallery 3, Dalam Singapore
Admission Details:	Standard: \$45 Concession: \$40
Description:	What does it mean to live through a period of profound change? How are identities shaped and reimagined in moments of transition? Led by curator Teo Hui Min, this special evening tour of <i>Lai Foong Moi: Crossings</i> explores these questions through the work of Nanyang artist Lai Foong Moi (1931–1995). Framed through the theme of "crossing(s)" as a state of transition and negotiation, the exhibition zooms into the artist's practice in the 1960s, a pivotal decade in Lai's practice and in the history of Singapore's nationhood. From portraits of working women to scenes of a rapidly changing city, Lai's paintings offer a nuanced glimpse into the aspirations, uncertainties, and everyday experiences of a society in transition. Join us and discover how her works illuminate the crossings and transformations that have shaped generations.

	** Please note that this tour will take place after the Gallery's opening hours. ** In addition to the tour, you will also receive two All-Access passes valid for 3 months (worth \$30 for Singaporeans/PRs, \$60 for Other Nationalities).
Between Portrait and Performance: A Dance Response and Dialogue on Lai Foong Moi	
Date & Time:	Sunday, 27 September 2026 3pm – 4.30pm
Venue:	City Hall Wing, Level 2, Singapore Courtyard
Admission Details:	Free admission, registration required
Description:	How do art and fashion shape the ways we see ourselves and each other? This opening programme brings together performance and conversation to explore the intersections of art, fashion, and identity through the works of Lai Foong Moi against the backdrop of 1960s Singapore. The programme opens with a performance by Angelene Wong (Fashion theorist, lecturer and performance artiste) featuring The Débutante, who reimagines the modern woman through posture and movement. In dialogue with the stillness and composed nature of Lai's portraits, dance animates the Gallery, transforming it into a space where past and present converge. The programme continues with a presentation by art and fashion historian Nadya Wang (Founder and Managing Editor of Art & Market and Fashion & Market), followed by a conversation with curator Teo Hui Min. Through the lens of fashion history, they offer new perspectives on Lai's artistic practice, examining how dress reveals ideas of self-fashioning, women's agency, and identity during Singapore's transition to independence. The programme concludes with a Q&A featuring all three speakers.
Workshops	
Seal of Identity: Chinese Seal Engraving with Mr Oh	
Date & Time:	Saturday, 15 August 2026 3pm – 6pm
Venue:	City Hall Wing, Level 5, Rooftop Studios 3 & 4
Admission Details:	\$45 per person; Gallery Insiders enjoy 15% off

Description:	Artists often leave behind more than images and objects; they leave behind traces of their identity, beliefs, and experiences. For both He Xiangning and Lai Foong Moi, art became a means of asserting their voice and presence within societies undergoing significant social and cultural change. In Chinese painting, seals serve as more than signatures. They are expressions of authorship, identity, and authority, marking the artist's presence within a work while contributing to its overall composition. Carefully carved and intentionally placed, seals have long been used by artists, scholars, and collectors as personal emblems that communicate individual character and values. Guided by artist Mr Oh Chai Hoo, this workshop invites participants to consider how marks, names, and symbols can communicate who we are. It introduces participants to the history, symbolism, and techniques of Chinese seal carving. Suitable for both beginners and enthusiasts, this workshop offers an accessible introduction to a traditional art form and the enduring relationship between art, identity, and self-expression.
Sketch Chapter: First Marks – Portrait Sketching inspired by Lai Foong Moi	
Date & Time:	Saturday, 5 September 2026 4pm - 7pm
Venue:	City Hall Wing, Level 5, Rooftop Studios 3 & 4
Admission Details:	\$35 per person; Gallery Insiders enjoy 15% off
Description:	As part of Sketch Chapter: First Marks, the Gallery's quarterly in-gallery sketching programme designed to activate the building, architecture and artworks through drawing, one of this year's guided sessions will respond to the works of Lai Foong Moi. Known for her portraits and depictions of human figures, Lai's paintings offer glimpses into everyday life in Singapore during the transformative decades surrounding independence. This facilitated session introduces participants to the fundamentals of portrait sketching, focusing on observing facial structure, gesture and expression.

Exhibition Catalogue (Digital)	
<i>Lai Foong Moi: Crossings</i> Available online at: https://www.nationalgallery.sg/en/learn-about-art/our-publications/digital-catalog/lai-foong-moi-exhibition-catalogue.html	Hailed as the “first Malayan-born woman to hold ‘one-man’ exhibitions of her work in Singapore and the Federation,” Lai Foong Moi is the latest artist to be included in the Dalam Singapore series. Featuring a curatorial essay alongside archival and visual materials, this digital catalogue provides a rare glimpse into Lai’s life and artistic practice within the social and political context of post-independence Malaya. Intended for readers interested in Singapore and Southeast Asian art, this catalogue sheds new light on Lai and reconsiders her place within the region’s art history.