

**NATIONAL
GALLERY
SINGAPORE**

singapore stories

**Pathways &
Detours in Art**



DBS SINGAPORE GALLERY

singapore stories: pathways & detours in art

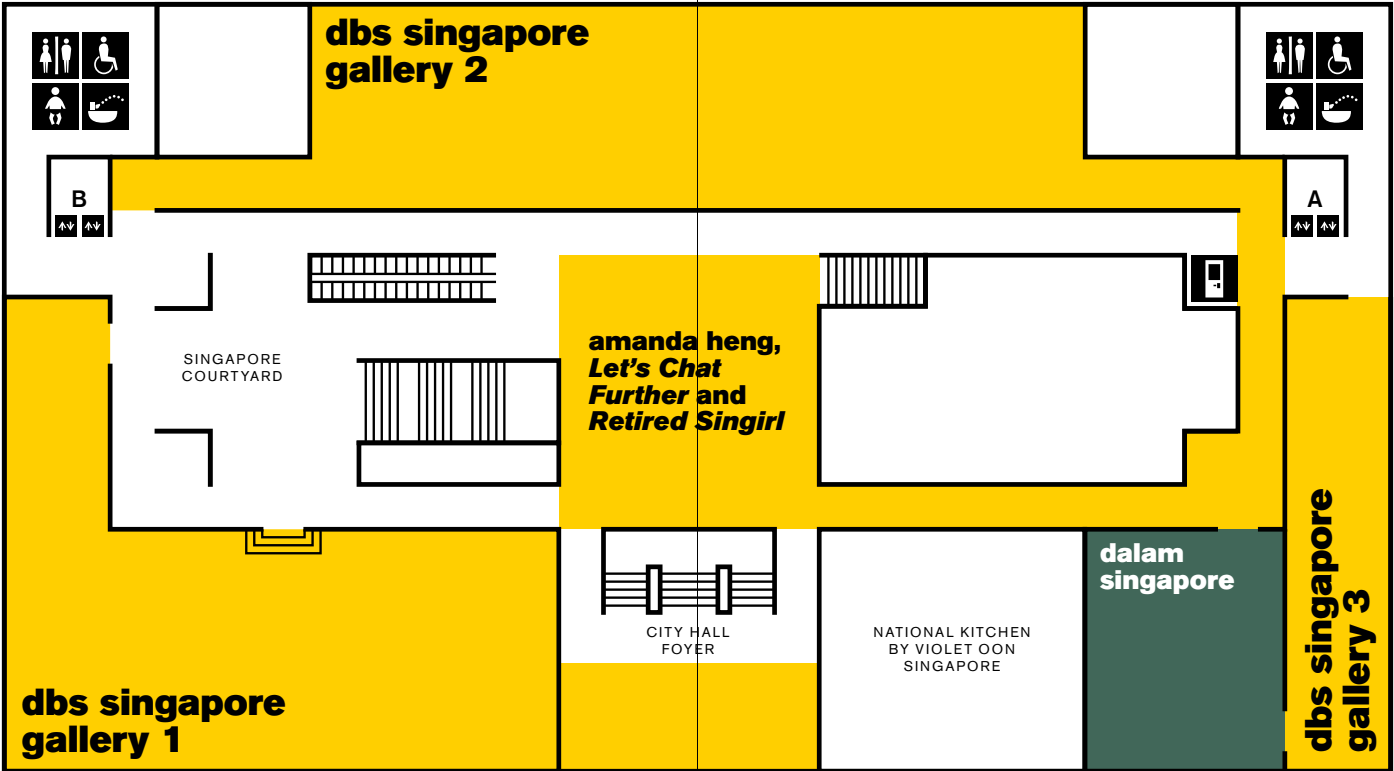
ON COVER
Wee Kong Chai. Detail of *Storyteller*. 1962.
Oil on canvas, 68.5 × 122 cm.

Housed in the historic City Hall building, the DBS Singapore Gallery presents more than 350 artworks that tell a layered, ever-changing story of Singapore's art history. Told through different perspectives, these stories offer us ways to relook at how Singapore's art history has been written.

Through iconic masterpieces and new artworks from the National Collection, the exhibition explores how artists have responded to societal changes in and beyond Singapore since the 19th century.

By embracing an expanded view of Singapore's art, the exhibition creates multiple new entry points into socio-political and cultural conversations, highlighting how our artists have made contributions across disciplines and visual cultures.





**city hall wing, level 2,
dbb singapore gallery**

early expressions of community and identity



Liu Kang. *Working at the Brick Factory*. 1954.
Oil on canvas, 97.8 × 128.6 cm.
Gift of the artist's family.

Singapore Stories opens with images of the city under British colonial rule in Malaya. Against this backdrop, artistic communities emerged in the 1930s to 1950s, creating spaces where artists could exchange ideas and grapple with the role of art in Singapore. As artists explored themes of belonging and identity in times of social change, art became a way to express both personal and collective identities, anchored in the everyday lives of those who called Singapore home.

This space features a spotlight on early moving images. Visitors are invited to pause and settle into refurbished cinema seats and enter the world of Singapore's early film industry.



Exhibition views of *Singapore Stories*.

new artistic forms and languages



Jaafar Latiff. [Title Unknown]. c. 1976.
Batik and acrylic on canvas, 86.8 × 86.7 cm.
Gift of family of the late Jaafar Bin Abdul Latiff.
© Family of Jaafar Bin Abdul Latiff.

Following independence in 1965, Singapore rapidly industrialised and urbanised, fuelling the growth of fine-art education and commercial design. New artistic forms flourished, as artists sought fresh ways of making and thinking about art. The search for the “new” extended beyond painting into a wide range of mediums including ink, sculpture, ceramics, printmaking, and photography. At the same time, figuration, central to art education, remained a point artists continued to return to. Artists revisited and reimagined the human figure as a way of questioning identity.

Through artist-focused clusters and individual creations, the exhibition explores the adventurous spirit that underpinned the artists' practices, as they moved between abstraction and figuration, and the intersections of art with disciplines like literature, illustration, and graphic design.



Eng Tow. *Grey Shadows*. c. 1970s.
Quilted stitching on cotton ticking, 110 × 110 cm.
© Eng Tow.



Vincent M. Hoisington. *Civilisation*. c. 1970s.
Polyurethane paint on board, 131.5 × 284 cm.

challenging artistic conventions

From the 1980s to the 2000s, Singapore's cultural scene grew increasingly dynamic, as artists organised their own spaces and events beyond official institutions. The Singapore Festival of Arts in 1982 offered a glimpse of what was possible. Amid socio-economic changes, artists formed loose collectives and established semi-permanent art spaces across the country. Art surfaced in unexpected places, from rural outskirts and shopping malls to disused electric substations and historical shophouses.

These artist-led platforms sparked discussions on alternative art, performances, installations, and interdisciplinary collaborations across theatre and the visual arts.



Chua Chye Teck. *My Ah Kong's Big House*. 1999.
Wood, paint and recycled washing boards, Dimensions variable.
Collection of Singapore Art Museum.



Vincent Leow. *Rooster*. 1989.
Oil on canvas, 176 x 258 cm.
This acquisition was made possible with donations to
the Art Adoption & Acquisition Programme.

Let's Chat Further (2025 –)* and *Retired Singirl (2026 –)

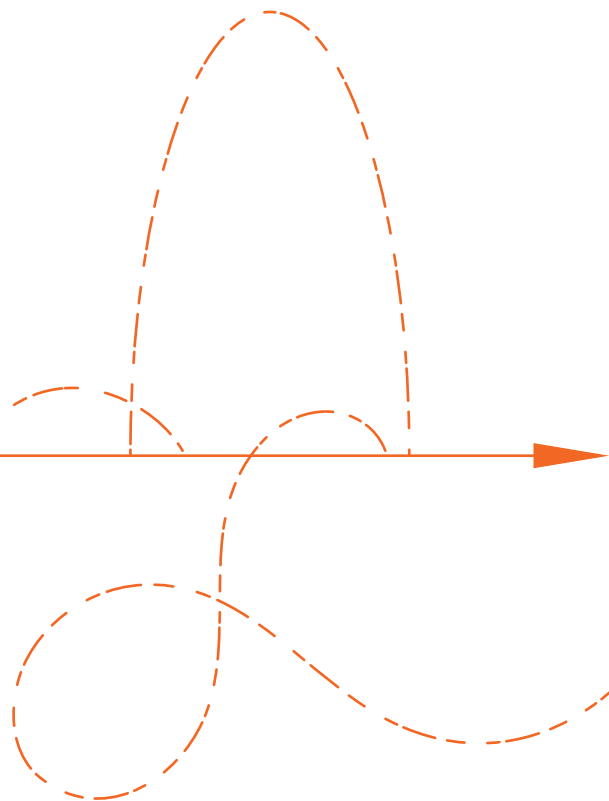


Installation view of *Let's Chat*, 1996.
Digitised by National Gallery Singapore Library & Archive
with kind permission from Amanda Heng.

At the centre of City Hall Wing, Level 2 is a space featuring newly commissioned artworks by Singapore artist Amanda Heng. In Heng's *Let's Chat Further (2025 –)* and *Retired Singirl (2026 –)*, visitors can drop in and engage in a series of conversations that considers Singapore's art history, and how people, rather than national policy, form collective identities.

The commissions expand on Heng's canonical durational performance and participatory artwork, *Let's Chat (1996)*, now part of Singapore's National Collection. Working with artificial intelligence human developers, Pantheon Lab, Lekker Architects, and other collaborators, the artist continues her interrogation of technology's influence on our identities – how we represent ourselves and relate to one another. Designed reflexively, visitors to *Singapore Stories* can use this space for rest, conversation as well as critical reflection.

**Retired Singirl (2026 –)* will be presented from late 2026.



programmes

In conjunction with *Singapore Stories* we are bringing together a variety of discussions, interactive tours and screenings for you to learn more about the exhibition.

For more information about the programmes, please visit nationalgallery.sg/SingaporeStories.

tours

Register for free at our Tours & Programmes Counter, located at City Hall Wing, Level 1.

English | Thu – Sun | 3.30pm

Mandarin | Sat – Sun | 2.30pm

resources

Podcast: The Padang Sessions

Discover the best conversations recorded live at the Gallery – handpicked talks and lectures for you to enjoy anytime, anywhere.



SCAN TO LISTEN

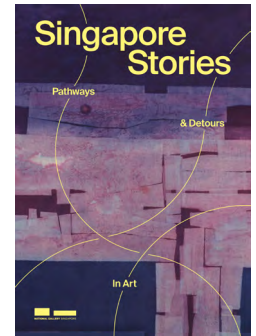
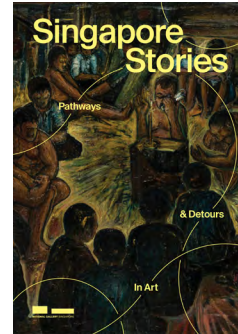
Art Hunt Trail

Pick up an Art Hunt Trail booklet and go on a self-guided adventure through *Singapore Stories: Pathways & Detours in Art*. Choose from three themed trails to discover artworks, fun facts, and hands-on activities.

Recommended for ages 4 to 8.

Pick up for free at City Hall Wing, Level 1, Keppel Centre for Art Education Reception.

exhibition catalogue



Singapore Stories:

Pathways and Detours in Art

132 pp | 89 Colour illustrations |

Paperback | S\$45 incl. GST |

Available for purchase at our museum store

Singapore Stories: Pathways and Detours in Art presents a fresh take on one of National Gallery Singapore's long-term exhibitions, exploring how the nation's art has reflected and shaped shifting ideas of identity, place, and community from the 19th century to today. This richly illustrated catalogue foregrounds the new exhibition narratives, highlighting the contributions of diverse artists, aesthetic experiments, and institutional changes. These are layered stories that unfold across time, disciplines, and perspectives, revealing the complexity and vivacity of Singapore's art scene.

merchandise

Remember your visit to this exhibition by bringing home some exclusive merchandise! Don't forget to drop by our museum shop located at City Hall Wing to browse the full range of merchandise, created especially for this exhibition.

JOIN US

Join a vibrant community of art enthusiasts as a National Gallery Singapore Insider or Patron. Enjoy free exhibition access, dining and shopping discounts, and more.



SCAN FOR MORE INFO

SUPPORT US

As a registered Charity and an Institute of Public Character, National Gallery Singapore relies on your support to build collections, engage in research, develop programmes, and bring art to everyone.



SCAN TO SUPPORT

AN ACCESSIBLE EXPERIENCE FOR ALL

The Gallery is committed to creating an inclusive experience that can be enjoyed by visitors with access needs.



SCAN FOR
ACCESS RESOURCES

OPENING HOURS

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



NationalGallerySingapore



新加坡国家美术馆

nationalgallery.sg

The DBS Singapore Gallery is made possible with the support of DBS.
Singapore Stories is supported by the Cultural Matching Fund.

Copyright in the content in this brochure may also reside in persons and entities other than, and in addition to, the Gallery. The Gallery seeks to share our artworks with as many people as we can. We are fully committed to respecting the intellectual property rights of others and always use our best efforts to obtain permission for artwork images used. Please contact us should you have any queries about this. Unless otherwise mentioned, the works are from the collection of National Gallery Singapore. All artwork images have been provided through the courtesy of National Heritage Board, Singapore. This brochure is published by National Gallery Singapore. All rights reserved. Materials in this publication may not be reproduced in part or in whole without written consent of the Gallery. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information within this brochure. However, changes are sometimes unavoidable and the Gallery reserves the right to make modifications to the programmes and ticketing policy without prior notice. Please visit www.nationalgallery.sg for the most updated information. The views and opinions expressed by speakers, facilitators and docents at the workshops and tours do not necessarily represent the position of the Gallery. Published in July 2026. All information is correct at time of print.

PLEASE RETURN THIS BROCHURE FOR RECYCLING