

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT.

MC.MAY.19/69(CULT)

SPEECH BY MR. WEE TOON BOON, AG. MINISTER FOR
CULTURE, AT THE OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION OF
FRENCH CONTEMPORARY TAPESTRIES AT THE SINGAPORE
CONFERENCE HALL ON THURSDAY 15.5.69 AT 5.30 P.M.

We live today in a world of great scientific advances which have brought mankind unprecedented benefits but which at the same time contain the seeds of evil and pain. In spite of the progress that mankind has made there is still much misunderstanding and tension and much of these stem really from the differences in customs and ideas, differences in wealth and economic growth. It therefore becomes all the more important for us to learn all what we can about the other peoples that make up the world and there is no better way of doing it than through music and art and science, which have no political or geographical boundaries just as sunshine and rain have none. Wisdom and knowledge are not the preserve of any particular country because every country has given something to the sum of artistic expression which has contributed to greater wisdom, tolerance and understanding.

The artist tells us what he thinks or feels in the language of colour and form. He wants others to share his joy or grief, his love or despair. He attempts to tell us more about the world and the people in it. We have to read and understand the language that he expresses in colours, pictures or music so that we will find ourselves communicating with his thoughts and feelings. It is therefore a privilege to have this opportunity to enjoy and appreciate the artistic efforts of international calibre at this French Tapestry Exhibition where the works of 16 well-known contemporary French artists have been assembled.

The story of Singapore since its founding in 1819 has been one of migrant communities, and thus international influences have contributed, and are still contributing, to its various facets of development. The 150th Anniversary of the founding of modern Singapore symbolises different things to different people, and also a whole variety of things to the same people. Indeed it symbolises what Singapore owes to international influences for its growth and development.

Though Singapore today is a humming, thriving and dynamic nation, its cultural attainment has not been as substantial as it should be. There still remains room and scope for improvement. There should be adequate creative power to establish Singapore as an international centre for the arts. In as much as it occupies a central and important position in trade, industry and tourism in this region, it should also be synonymous with international cultural activity that exerts and will continue to exert a harmonising influence. This exciting exhibition should serve to stimulate Singapore artists to greater effort. The mass of the people must of their own free will go forward to share the communication that good art will offer and provide; and they will do so only when it is relevant to their ways of life.

This exhibition will richly benefit our multi-racial society by the creative breezes and impulses which it generates, from what is good in the world of art, be it ancient or modern, European or Asian, since the work of masters in all styles and media has always the ring of truth and honesty that distinguishes the genuine from the false, the creative from the artificial, so that we can enrich ourselves spiritually and aesthetically in what would otherwise be a drab and forbidding world.

We are indeed grateful to the French Government for making available this fine Exhibition to the people of Singapore and I have no doubt that it is a prelude to many other exhibitions of the same high standard that will follow in due course.

I have now great pleasure to declare this Exhibition open.

MAY 15, 1969.

Issued at 1530 hours
