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SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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SPEECH BY MR JEK YEUN THONG, MINISTER FOR CULTURE,
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY
FRENCH PAINTINGS AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM ON FRIDAY,
6 JUNE 75, AT 5.30 P.M.

(Delivered by Haji Sha'ari Tadin, Sr Parl Sec to the
Minister for Culture)

This Exhibition of Contemporary French Paintings is particularly welcome.

It follows in the wake of the French Technical Exhibition held in March this year and is in the long line of high quality exhibitions brought to our Republic through the good office of the Embassy of France over the years.

The National Museum alone had held recently no less than two exhibitions from France, one of Picasso's Etchings and Lithographs in September 74 and the other of Six French Masters of Photography just concluded in April.

Apart from their particular interest, exhibitions play an important part in promoting goodwill and cooperation between peoples. It is an excellent means of spreading the message of friendship through fostering an understanding of the cultural values which are made manifest by the exhibits presented.

By organising this Exhibition of Contemporary French Paintings, the National Museum, working in cooperation with the Embassy of France, has sought to give to the people of Singapore an opportunity to view sixty-six (66) original oil paintings by thirty-six (36) of the best contemporary French artists. These paintings summarise the major art movements in France over the last thirty years, revealing the exuberant activity and zeal of contemporary French painters.

The style and content of the paintings represented in the exhibition may appear strange in many instances to the Singapore public at large, although they are not unfamiliar to a number of Singapore artists who exercise a preference for the abstract medium of expression. Nevertheless, the paintings do reflect the result

of the vicissitudes of life encountered by the contemporary French artists and their struggles to arrive at a medium of expression which best fit their artistic and cultural environment, which has its basis in the civilisation and traditions evolved in Europe throughout the ages and intensified in France over the last century.

I trust that the people of Singapore will find in the exhibition much to understand and enjoy.

Living in a global city, we have come to encounter much of the influences from both the East and West. Those influences which serve to uplift, and to strengthen the moral fibres of our society, we welcome.

With our own traditions to build upon, and with appreciation of all that is best and valuable in the life of other nations, we can find strength in efforts to forge an identity of our own. This should be forward-looking and attuned to face the future with confidence -- and made manifest, not least of all, in our artistic and cultural pursuits.

Our thanks go to the Embassy of France and the French Association for Artistic Action for arranging this Exhibition of Contemporary French Paintings. It is one of the gratifying results of an extensive programme of friendly cooperation between France and Singapore.

I have now great pleasure in declaring the exhibition open.
