

SPEECH BY MR LIM GUAN HOO, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
CHINESE PAINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY EXHIBITION PRESENTED
BY THE NATIONAL MUSEUM AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM YOUNG
PEOPLE'S GALLERY ON FRIDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 1976 AT 5.30 PM

There has been a spate of art exhibitions and contests in Singapore signifying an upsurge of enthusiasm and interest in this field of cultural activities. This is as it should be. Today's exhibition of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy by school children, which is the first of its kind to be presented by National Museum Education Service, is yet another example of this obvious trend of cultural development in the Republic.

As Wang Kuo-wei (1877-1927), one of the greatest Chinese scholars in the last century, had rightly pointed out in his Gen-chien Tz'u-hua (Poetic Remarks in the Human World), in tz'u, the scene of poetry is of predominant importance. The same is applicable to painting and even calligraphy. Although 'scene of poetry' is something more in the realm of imagination rather than reality, it nevertheless refers to the intellectual crystallisation of the actual experiences the poet or the painter has and his deep insight into what he has seen and thought of in the more mundane world. The scene of poetry is not a groundless creation. It is a creation by those who can widen the world by creating worlds (Ching-Chieh 境界).

In the realm of art, the word 'world' may be given a different definition when used to delineate the cultural boundaries for the East and West.

We in Singapore have the advantage of receiving an abundance of cultural resources from different streams. Geographically, Singapore is situated at the meeting point of the East and West. Through cultural confluence and the efforts on the part of the artists and painters to absorb the desirable cultural influences from different sources, we will be able to widen our horizon and enlarge our cultural world. The merger of the two worlds, the East and the West, is possible in the realm of art. There are world-renowned painters who have reaped the benefits of such 'merger'. Shi Pei Hong, for example, was known to have introduced innovation to his style by absorbing the influence from Western paintings. Traditionally, Singapore artists and painters do not seem to have confined their contributions to a particular form of art activities. They have

presented a great variety of art works under different themes and styles.

There is also a wide geographical coverage in their works. One salient feature is the coverage of the Southeast Asia region. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Singapore paintings are considered unique in style and have often attracted the **attention** of foreign visitors.

I would like to **encourage** our talented young to work hard to enrich our cultural 'life. Young people must be involved in the development and promotion of cultural activities. They form a large part of the population. The more they are involved in cultural activities, the greater contributions they can make towards nation building. For the society depends on them to gain immunization from the undesirable influence of sub-culture.

The role of the National Museum **is** also significant to the whole community and especially to the young. It offers an important supplement to classroom education by crystallizing theoretical teaching into solid reality. For education at the Museum takes the shape of the exhibition of original objects. Schools generally do not have the opportunity of confronting students with a three-dimensional reality.

I congratulate the National Museum for having successfully organised this Chinese Painting and Calligraphy Exhibition.

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