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Subject: (Embargoed) Speech by Mr Wong Kan Seng, 7 Jun 2000, 7.00 pm

Singapore Government

MEDIA RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR WONG KAN SENG, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS, AT THE OPENING OF *VISIONS & ENCHANTMENT: SOUTHEAST ASIAN PAINTINGS*, ON 7 JUNE 2000, 7.00 PM, AT THE SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good evening.

National Archives of Singapore
Integral Member of Southeast Asia

An exhibition such as this allows viewers to appreciate and understand Southeast Asian art. It is also a timely reminder of the importance of the region to us.

2 Singapore is plugged into the global economy. But it is in Southeast Asia where our heritage lies. It is Southeast Asia that we are an integral part of, whether as a member of ASEAN or as a member of the many other regional business or professional groupings.

Renaissance

3 The word “Renaissance” reminds one of the post-medieval European Renaissance. But it would be pretentious of us if we believe that we are striving for that kind of “Renaissance”. In the Singapore context, it is the spirit of creativity, innovation and multi-disciplinary learning, and of socio-economic and cultural vibrancy that we hope to create. Our arts and heritage agencies can play a role in this too.

4 We also aspire to be one of the global nodes for the arts and to provide an interesting and dynamic place for Singaporeans and foreigners to work and live in Singapore.

Bringing Arts to the People

5 To achieve this objective, the Singapore Art Museum has initiated programmes to stimulate appreciation and understanding of heritage and art.

6 To do this, we cannot confine arts programmes to a selected few. Rather, we have to bring such programmes to the people. For instance, the Museum works with the People’s Association, or PA, to promote art and art education in Singapore.

7 One of the activities organised was the SAM-PA Children’s Art Exhibition on display at the Museum last December. More than 2,000 visitors attended the Open Day, and more than 4,000 visitors viewed the children’s works during the period of the exhibition. There was also good participation for the Visual Arts Festival for Children which was attended by about 2,500 visitors.

Private Collections

8 A significant feature of this evening exhibition is that many of the pieces on display are borrowed from private collectors. In fact, many excellent pieces of Southeast Asian art are in private hands.

9 It is through exhibitions such as this, that paintings which would otherwise be rarely seen, can now be appreciated by the public. Apart from patronage of art and contributing to the cultural economy, private collectors play a key role in sharing with the public the enjoyment of art – whether it be through donations of works, short-term or long-term loans to the museums. It is also from such works

of masters that our young artists can learn and gain inspiration to produce good pieces which we can enjoy.

10 It is my pleasure to declare the exhibition open. Thank you.

National Archives of Singapore