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Speech of Mr Ong Soo Chuan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and L.P. for Nee Soon, at the opening of the "Art for Everyone" Exhibition organised by the Ministry of Culture and the People's Association at the Nee Soon Community Centre at 8.00 p.m., Friday, 6th April, 1973.

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In a young country such as Singapore, economic and cultural developments constitute an integral part of the process of nation-building, the former for raising the standard of material life and the latter for the improvement of mental and spiritual well-being which in turn helps to promote physical health.

The fine arts constitute a noble pursuit. They provide a means of portraying life as it really is and an effective vehicle of expression. They serve to beautify the living environments. In a multi-racial and multi-cultural society such as Singapore, they also contribute positively to inter-racial understanding, harmony and hence national unity.

The fine arts, which include oil painting, water colour, ceramics and wood-carving, have been made a compulsory subject in schools because of their importance. Moreover, in order to enhance their appreciation of the fine arts and develop their creative power, the students are encouraged to participate in all extra-curricular activities connected with the subject.

In recent years, Singapore has seen a beehive of activities in the field of art including a great number of art exhibitions both big and small. With the full support of the Ministry of Culture, a series of "Art for Everyone" exhibitions have been held, both to assist

the budding artists and to bring art to the masses. Such exhibitions are instrumental not only in developing the creative power among the young people, thereby raising their artistic standards, but also in enhancing their interest in the learning of art and their aesthetic appreciation.

In our present-day industrial society, there is a pressing need for talents in applied art as such talents take a long time to train. The Art for Everyone exhibitions have the effect of bringing forth an interest in art among the people.

Unfortunately, some young people have adopted the decadent part of the western culture uncritically. Sporting long hair and clad in outlandish clothes, these people can be seen loafing in groups of three or five in the street all day long. They take to drugs and have no desire to get ahead, pleasure-seeking being their only business in life. They have virtually become a hindrance to nation-building.

How should young people spend their leisure? We should induce them to spend it on wholesome cultural and recreational activities or artistic pursuits. Such activities or pursuits will be conducive to their mental and physical well-being and career by keeping them away from drug addiction.

The Ministry of Culture has organised this Art for Everyone exhibition for the prime purpose of popularizing art so that it will not become or remain the monopoly

of a few people. The works on display are of a high standard. They are meaningful works of depth and value.

I now have the pleasure of declaring the exhibition open.

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