

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR CULTURE AND SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, MR JEK YEUN THONG, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE NATIONAL DAY ART EXHIBITION AT THE VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL ON FRIDAY, 5 AUGUST '77 AT 5.30 PM

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In setting priorities for growth and development in Singapore, we have had, of necessity, to give greater emphasis to economic development than to social cultural development. As a result of this approach, we have had fairly steady growth of the economy accompanied by a substantial increase in the standard of living of our people. Although priorities for government resources have been for the economic sector, the promotion of cultural activities should not be neglected. The achievements in the cultural scene in terms of activities such as musical concerts, dance and drama performances and art exhibitions, during the past five years, have been satisfactory due to efforts both in the private and the public sectors.

Within a small budget, the Ministry of Culture has been able to step up its efforts in organising cultural activities. The number of art and photographic exhibitions has increased and more concerts are organised,

In 1976, the Ministry further diversified its programme of activities to include literary and creative works. Presently, the Ministry has plans to organise a Play Writing Competition, details of which will be announced soon. All these competitions are designed to encourage and develop an interest in our young people in creative writing and to provide them with suitable opportunities.

Cultural organisations in the private sector have also intensified their activities in recent years. More than ten new art and photographic societies were registered in the past 4 years and the number of activities organised increased significantly.

With the successful implementation of our family planning programme and the growth of smaller families, more and more parents are sending their children to study music, painting and other art forms. This is very encouraging and with proper guidance and training, I believe we should see an increased crop of young artists and a significant growth in the general standard of art.

Singapore is full of resources for creative work. The rich, colourful and diversified cultures derived from Malay, Chinese, Indian and Western civilisations provide our artists with a wide variety of subjects and things to choose from for their art works. For example, the varied and interesting traditions and customs of the different ethnic groups and their colourful costumes could be vividly portrayed by our artists. Apart from depicting our cultural heritage, there are ample opportunities available to our artists to portray the changing life styles resulting from our industrialisation and intensified urban redevelopment programmes. Apart from broadening the subject matter for their works, artists should learn and acquire new techniques which will help to improve their skills. This, coupled with higher creativity, should enable artists to raise the standard of art to a higher level and to hopefully lead to the emergence of new art forms typical of Singapore.

I am happy to announce here that the Tat Lee Bank has kindly donated \$5,000/- to acquire some suitable paintings for the National Museum art collection from this Exhibition. This is a direct support to the artists. I hope that it will set a good example for other commercial organisations to follow. With positive support from the business community, I believe that Singapore will be able to make greater achievement in cultural promotion.

I congratulate those whose works have been selected for this Exhibition and have now the great pleasure to declare the Exhibition open.

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