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SPEECH BY MR JEK YEUN THONG, MINISTER FOR
CULTURE AND SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, AT THE
OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION: ART 77
HELD IN COMMEMORATION OF THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY
OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM
ART GALLERY ON SUNDAY 21 AUGUST 1977 AT THE
NATIONAL MUSEUM ART GALLERY AT 5.30 P.M.

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The cultural scene in our Republic is lively.

There has been growing support for an increasing number of art exhibitions. This is all to the good as there is need for a balance between economic and cultural development in our community's efforts in nation-building.

The aim behind art education and the promotion of culture is not to train all children in school or every adult person into becoming professional artists, musicians, dancers or writers. Rather, it is to nurture, to sharpen and to develop the creative instincts which are in all of us. It is also to provide us with the skill, the knowledge and the ability to appreciate the abiding values which are found in things artistic and creative so that we may become better all-round personalities. Those with a calling to adopt art, music, dance and writing as a career have the encouragement to embark on a profession with the arts if they have been given the necessary training, especially when they are young.

Besides, there are other benefits to be derived when our citizens are imbued with senses and a mental attitude attuned to the ideals of beauty and a bias for things creative. These may be manifested in many ways, as, for example, in having more attractive packages, labels and designs for our manufactured products which add to the nation's earnings and therefore a higher standard of living and a better life for all.

Civic consciousness can also be fostered if everyone is trained to show a greater concern for beautification of the environment by keeping our public parks spick and span even without notice boards or a policeman around; or by having our Housing Board lifts kept clean and functioning well.

If we have a greater sense of beauty, it will also be an automatic reaction, and a preference, on our part to have paintings, sculptures or other works of art in our homes in place of some gaudy posters of film stars, pop singers and musicians with long hair.

To satisfy this need of a better environment to live in, our artists can make their contribution by pricing their works in such a way that not only the affluent but also the ordinary worker can afford to purchase a work of art once in a while. To the majority of artists, and even to those who are already established, this should make sense, for they would both be making their contribution to the betterment of society as a whole and be helping themselves to be financially more successful by having more of their works sold at the same time.

This evening the National Museum Art Gallery celebrates the first anniversary of its official opening. It had, in the past year, continuously held exhibitions which were both local and international in character. It had also organised workshops, such as on batik art, and lecture-demonstrations, such as on Chinese calligraphy and seal-carvings. It had experimented successfully on exhibitions with varied themes, such as on Large Paintings, on Colour, on Traditional Chinese Art and so on. It has now planned, for the end of the year, an exhibition on photography in which most of our shutterbugs can participate, considering that its theme is on "Life As I See It".

I am confident that the National Museum Art Gallery will grow from strength to strength and will play its rightful role as the national art centre in our Republic.

I wish it every success in the future and I have now very great pleasure in declaring its First Anniversary Art Exhibition open.