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SPEECH BY MR LEE KHOON CHOY, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE (PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE) AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION AT THE OPENING OF THE ONE-MAN ART EXHIBITION BY SIE SIOE HO AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM ART GALLERY ON 11 NOV 81 AT 5.30 PM

This is an unusual Exhibition by an unusual man. I say unusual because Sie Sioe Ho has had two major cancer operations, once 15 years ago when he lost his voice and later last year when he lost his nose. Yet he is cheerful and full of life. He still paints, not to please his viewers, but to express his emotions, his moods and his philosophical thoughts.

Artists like Sie Sioe Ho are hard to come by. This is because artists as human beings must live. If they are dependent on their paintings to live, they must paint, to a large extent, to please their public. In that sense they are not free to paint according to the dictates of their emotions or thoughts, whatever they may be at that particular point of time when they are painting. Artists who are dependent on the patronage of the public for their livelihood must paint works that sell. This means that their painting must appeal, must be pleasing, and must conform to certain accepted norms and conventions. They have to confine themselves also to certain subjects, themes and styles which appeal. Otherwise, the paintings may not sell.

Sie Sioe Ho, fortunately, is not dependent on his paintings for a living. An artist of intense sensitivity, he paints according to the dictates of his emotions, feelings and thoughts. Be that as it may, his paintings, however, do not reveal a tinge of despair or a mood of self-pity for someone who has undergone two cancer operations within the last 16 years. Although his paintings reflect both the beautiful and ugly and the wholesome and morbid, he shows us that what is ugly can be beautiful in the hands of a skilful artist. He portrays the world as it really is. He does not believe in concealing its ugly side.

It is difficult to categorise Sioe Ho's works because he has no one particular style. Viewing his works superficially, his paintings

seem to be a combination of naturalism, expressionism and abstract art all rolled into one. You may even find a fusion of western and oriental elements. Some of his paintings, to the uninitiated eye, appear confused. In others, you may detect the influence of various painters and styles. Sioe Ho, however, is not bothered by these labels. Viewers who are keen to immerse themselves in his works will gradually begin to understand and appreciate something of the myriad feelings of the artist. The viewers will discover and experience for themselves feelings they never imagine they were capable of experiencing.

Not only is Sioe Ho a gifted and accomplished artist, he is also a courageous and selfless person with an indomitable will to live. Other men with a lesser fighting spirit would have succumbed in their battle against cancer. But not so with Sioe Ho. Despite his personal sufferings and pain, as a result of two operations, he is undaunted in staging this exhibition. To cap it all, he has also decided to donate the proceeds from the sale of his paintings to the PA Community Development Fund. I want him to know that we truly appreciate this very generous and thoughtful gesture. I want to thank the Singapore Art Society for co-organising this exhibition, Mr Tong Tjoe for his sponsorship and various other individuals for helping.

I have pleasure in declaring open this art exhibition.

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