

MEDIA RELEASE

Strategic directions set for National Art Gallery, Singapore with company incorporation and appointment of Chief Executive Officer

Singapore, 17 March 2009 – The Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) has named Mr Michael Koh as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of The National Art Gallery (*working title*), Singapore's first visual arts company established under the National Heritage Board (NHB). Presently the CEO of NHB, Mr Koh will hold both appointments concurrently. Mr Kwok Kian Chow will assume the position of Director of The National Art Gallery, Singapore, in addition to his current role as Director of the Singapore Art Museum.

Results of museum director search

2 The appointments were made after an extensive international and local search for a suitable museum director for the Gallery. A Search Committee, led by Mr Koh Seow Chuan, Deputy Chairman of the National Art Gallery Steering Committee, was formed to identify and propose potential candidates for the post of Museum Director of the National Art Gallery. The Committee considered and interviewed several local and international candidates. At the end of the year-long process, MICA accepted the following recommendations from the Search Committee:

- (i) Given its size and ambitions, the Gallery should be managed by a strong team with complementary strengths in management as well as curatorial knowledge and expertise, led by a CEO.
- (ii) Mr Michael Koh to assume the position of CEO of The National Art Gallery, Singapore, to lead and manage the Gallery.
- (iii) Mr Kwok Kian Chow, current Director of the Singapore Art Museum, to assume the position of Director of The National Art Gallery, Singapore. He will lead the professional curatorial, collections, programming and partnership aspects of the Gallery.

3 Mr Koh Seow Chuan remarked, “Mr Michael Koh has led NHB admirably under his stewardship. As an architect by training, Mr Koh would be in the best position to manage the Gallery’s design and construction phase. His strong leadership and management skills, combined with Mr Kwok’s deep knowledge of Singapore and Southeast Asian art, would help the National Art Gallery fulfill its ambitions as a landmark visual arts institution.”

Strategic directions on the Gallery’s design

4 The National Art Gallery is designed as a vibrant civic and creative space, accessible to everyone and for all Singaporeans to enjoy. In the Gallery’s plans, the architects have created several spaces where visitors will enjoy free access. These free spaces include:

- (i) A Singapore Art Gallery, dedicated to showcasing Singapore art and rich art heritage
- (ii) A unique Children’s Gallery, perhaps the first of its kind in Southeast Asia, specially designed and programmed to engage and educate school children and families about art.
- (iii) A large rooftop plaza with many public spaces, a variety of restaurants, art installations and public programmes. This will be a civic piazza in the sky for all Singaporeans and visitors to enjoy, with great views of the Padang and Marina Bay.

These free spaces will be complemented with other ticketed exhibition spaces housing the Gallery’s permanent Southeast Asian collection, as well as international travelling shows.

5 To help the team review some of these proposed plans, MICA has recently appointed an independent Design Review Panel, comprising prominent experts from the fields of building architecture, landscape architecture, and engineering. The primary responsibility of this Panel will be to review the architectural and engineering design aspects of the gallery. This due diligence process ensures transparency and forms a part of MICA’s on-going public and expert consultations on this project.

Incorporation of The National Art Gallery, Singapore

6 The National Art Gallery, Singapore was formally incorporated as a company limited by guarantee under NHB on 16 January 2009. The National Art Gallery has a clear mandate - to contribute to building Singapore as a regional and international hub for the visual arts. To achieve this, the Gallery will focus on the display, appreciation, promotion, research and study of Southeast Asian and Singaporean art, as well as play host to international art exhibitions. The National Art Gallery, Singapore will remain as the institution's working title until a complete branding and naming exercise for the Gallery is undertaken in about a year's time.

7 Along with the formation of the company, the Gallery is in the process of assembling a Board of Directors, headed by Mr Koh Seow Chuan as Chairman. The Board's immediate priorities within the next few years would be to oversee the transformation of the buildings and the establishment of The National Art Gallery, Singapore.

8 The National Art Gallery's corporate headquarters will be located at 61 Stamford Road #02-01, Stamford Court Singapore 178892. The public may contact the Gallery at phone +65 6332 4491 (during office hours) or email nhb_nationalartgallery@nhb.gov.sg with effect from 1 April 2009.

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Notes to Editor

About the National Art Gallery, Singapore

The National Art Gallery, Singapore (*working title*) is a new visual arts institution which will contribute to building Singapore as a regional and international hub for visual arts. It will focus on the display, appreciation, promotion, research and study of Southeast Asian and Singaporean art, as well as play host to international art exhibitions.

Situated in the heart of the Civic District, the City Hall and adjacent former Supreme Court building - two important heritage buildings symbolic of Singapore's nationhood - will be converted to house this exciting new visual arts venue, and is anticipated to be completed by 2013. The National Art Gallery will be a civic and creative space, established for the enrichment, enjoyment and engagement of Singapore residents and visitors from all over the world. Information on the National Art Gallery is available at www.nationalartgallery.sg.