

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

*For immediate release*

### **Dr Eugene Tan takes over as the new Chief Executive Officer of National Gallery Singapore and Singapore Art Museum from 1 April 2024**

**Singapore, 13 March 2024** – Dr Eugene Tan, current Director of National Gallery Singapore (the Gallery) and Singapore Art Museum (SAM) will be appointed as Chief Executive Officer of the Gallery and SAM on 1 April 2024. He will also take on the role of Head of the Visual Arts Cluster (VAC), which comprises the Gallery, SAM and STPI. He succeeds Ms Chong Siak Ching, who is retiring from her roles.

#### **Incoming Chief Executive Officer**

Dr Eugene Tan was pivotal in shaping the key museological and curatorial aspects of the Gallery and SAM since he was appointed as Director in 2013 and 2019 respectively. Under his leadership, the Gallery and SAM have become tentpoles in Singapore’s visual arts landscape. Their exhibitions, research and offerings shine a light on our homegrown talents and distinctive art history, while celebrating artistic dialogue and exchanges with Southeast Asia and the world. He has significantly influenced the intellectual framework guiding the development of our National Collection, bringing the best of our region’s visual arts to the international arena. His leadership has seen the initiation of ambitious exhibition programmes, including forging partnerships with international museums such as Centre Pompidou, Paris, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA) and the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (MOMAT). In addition to his achievements, Dr Tan has curated various exhibitions, notably the Singapore Pavilion at the 51st Venice Biennale (2005), the inaugural Singapore Biennale (2006), and most recently, *Ho Tzu Nyen: Time & the Tiger* (2023), a mid-career survey of Young Artist Award recipient Ho Tzu Nyen. He has also published widely and presented at conferences and symposia internationally.

Mr Edmund Cheng, Chairman of Singapore Art Museum, said, “Eugene has championed the arts even before his time with the Gallery and SAM. Working closely with Siak Ching for more than 10 years as a curator and administrator, he has helped to shape Singapore’s visual arts into a lively

and vibrant scene, with much to offer in terms of beauty, creativity, rigour, and enrichment in our lives. His passion for the arts and the institutions is unparalleled, as he embodies the values of progress, inclusivity, and excellence that we have worked so hard to build over the past decade. We thank Siak Ching for her stewardship in the arts and are confident that Eugene will continue to lead the Gallery and SAM to greater heights, as we continue to nurture a deeper appreciation of art and artists in our society.”

### **Appreciation for Ms Chong Siak Ching**

Ms Chong Siak Ching has been the CEO of the Gallery and the Head of VAC since 2013. For more than a decade, she oversaw key milestones in Singapore’s visual arts scene, including the development and launch of the Gallery in November 2015. She led the Gallery in its vision of becoming a progressive art museum for the people, where it presents inclusive and diverse programming for all walks of life, while housing the world’s largest public collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian modern art. Championing access to art for everyone, Ms Chong has steered SAM towards a new chapter of growth that involves bringing contemporary art into every day, found spaces.

Mr Peter Ho, Chairman of National Gallery Singapore, shared, “Siak Ching has been an inspiration and a driving force for Singapore’s visual arts during her tenure. We are grateful for her visionary leadership, which raised the bar for artistic excellence as the Gallery and SAM became leading arts institutions in our region and the world. We thus embarked on an extensive and comprehensive search process to protect and grow this legacy, where Eugene emerged as the best candidate to further the growth of both institutions. Part of the Gallery’s mission is to promote a greater understanding of Southeast Asian art and art histories within a global context. Under Eugene’s leadership, the Gallery has presented numerous prolific exhibitions that have presented a critical Southeast Asian perspective of the region’s art history. The ongoing *Tropical: Stories from Southeast Asia and Latin America*, for example, is the first large-scale museum exhibition in the world to take a comparative approach across the two regions united by their shared struggles against colonialism. As the Gallery continues to build the most comprehensive collection of Southeast Asian art from the 19th century to the present day, coupled with Eugene’s ambition for both institutions to be recognised alongside top museums in the world, there is no one more befitting for the role.”

On his appointment, Dr Eugene Tan said, “Having been part of National Gallery Singapore’s development over the past eleven years and Singapore Art Museum for five years, I am delighted to be given the opportunity to lead these two institutions into the future. At National Gallery Singapore, we have furthered the recognition of Southeast Asian art through exhibitions such as *Reframing Modernism: Painting from Southeast Asia, Europe and Beyond*, *Minimalism: Space Light and Object*, and *Tropical: Stories from Southeast Asia and Latin America*, which have challenged received art histories and de-centred the discourse on modern art by considering and highlighting contributions from Southeast Asia. At Singapore Art Museum, we have challenged what a museum of contemporary art needs to be in our time, creating new platforms for Singapore artists, as well as engaging new audiences through our Everyday Museum, which takes art into everyday spaces and communities. I look forward to building on these achievements at the two museums and to better engage our publics with deep and meaningful experiences with art through our programmes and exhibitions, as well as to furthering the global awareness and understanding of artists from Singapore and Southeast Asia through our thought-provoking exhibitions.”

For more information, please refer to the **Annex** below.

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## **About National Gallery Singapore**

National Gallery Singapore is a leading visual arts institution that oversees the world's largest public collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian modern art. Situated at the birthplace of modern Singapore, in the heart of the Civic District, the Gallery is housed in two national monuments - City Hall and former Supreme Court - that have been beautifully restored and transformed into this exciting 64,000 square metre venue. Reflecting Singapore's unique heritage and geographical location, the Gallery aims to be a progressive museum that creates dialogues between the art of Singapore, Southeast Asia and the world to foster and inspire a creative and inclusive society. This is reflected in our collaborative research, education, long-term and special exhibitions, and innovative programming. The Gallery also works with international museums such as Centre Pompidou, Musée d'Orsay, Tate Britain, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (MOMAT) and National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA), to jointly present Southeast Asian art in the global context, positioning Singapore as a key node in the global visual arts scene.

In 2020, the Gallery was the only museum in Southeast Asia that received a ranking in The Art Newspaper's annual global survey of attendance at art museums, taking 20th place. It was the first museum in Asia to receive the Children in Museums Award by the European Museum Academy and Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums in 2018. The Gallery also won the awards for "Best Theme Attraction" at TTG Travel Awards 2017, "Best Attraction Experience", "Breakthrough Contribution to Tourism" and "Best Customer Service (Attractions)" at the prestigious Singapore Tourism Awards in 2016 for its role in adding to the vibrancy of Singapore's tourism landscape.

For more information, visit [nationalgallery.sg](http://nationalgallery.sg).

## **About Singapore Art Museum**

Singapore Art Museum opened in 1996 as the first art museum in Singapore located in the cultural district of Singapore. Known as SAM, the museum presents contemporary art from a Southeast Asian perspective for artists, art lovers and the art curious in multiple venues across the island, including a new venue in the historic port area of Tanjong Pagar.

The museum is building one of the world's most important public collections of Southeast Asian contemporary art, with the aim of connecting the art and the artists to the public and future generations through exhibitions and programmes. SAM is working towards a humane and sustainable future by committing to responsible practices within its processes.

To find out more, visit [www.singaporeartmuseum.sg](http://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg).

## Annex: Biography of Eugene Tan



Eugene Tan has been Director of National Gallery Singapore since May 2013, and Director of Singapore Art Museum (SAM) since April 2019. Prior to this, he served as Programme Director (Special Projects) at the Singapore Economic Development Board and oversaw the development of the Gillman Barracks art district. He has also held various positions including Director of Contemporary Art at the Sotheby's Institute of Art – Singapore and Director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore. He received his PhD in Art History from the University of Manchester. He has curated numerous exhibitions including the inaugural Singapore Biennale in 2006 and the Singapore Pavilion at the 2005 Venice Biennale. Recent exhibitions he has curated include *Ho Tzu Nyen: Time and the Tiger* (2023) at SAM, as well as exhibitions at National Gallery Singapore including: *Awakenings: Art in Society in Asia 1960s-1990s* (2019), *Minimalism: Space, Light and Object* (2018); *Reframing Modernism: Painting from Southeast Asia, Europe and Beyond* (2016); *Between Dreams and Declarations: Art of Southeast Asia since the 19th Century* and *Siapa Nama Kamu? Art from Singapore since the 19th Century* (2015). Other selected exhibitions include: *Of Human Scale and Beyond: Experience and Transcendence* (2012) at the Hong Kong Art Centre, as well as solo exhibitions by Danh Vo (2016), Lee Mingwei (2010) and Jompot (2010). He is co-author of the publication *Contemporary Art in Singapore* (2007) and has written widely for exhibition catalogues and art publications, including Art Asia Pacific, Art Review, Broadsheet, among others. He was formerly a member of the Board of Governance of CIMAM, the International Association of Contemporary Art Museums and serves on the Board of the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (MuHKA) in Belgium and the International Advisory Board of the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan. He also lectures on Art History at the National University of Singapore.